

The Role of Women in the Būyid and Saljūq Periods of the Abbasid Caliphate (339-447/9501055&447-547/1055-1152): The Case of Iraq

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Abstract

The need for Muslim women's emancipation is very often tied to what some scholars argue is the Islamic oppression and victimization of women; by a religion they argue is strictly patriarchal. As one of the greatest documented eras in medieval Islamic history, the Abbasid Caliphate, has been one of the most widely covered by researchers of Islamic history studies and will be the case study of this thesis. Through a historical analysis, this study finds that despite the extensive coverage by researchers of the period, research on women and their roles during the time has not yet claimed its rightful status. Indeed, in comparison to the studies of Islamic history, the study of Muslim women remains, at best, undeveloped.

The lack of resources dealing with the roles of Muslim women in history and the subsequent sparse coverage of their achievements can be directly linked to the way people, both within academia and contemporary media, perceive women in Islam. This thesis merged the theories of Gaye Tuchman, Fatima Mernissi and S. Jay Kleinberg to form a troika through which the roles of Abbasid women may be re-assessed. As such, this research proposes a solution to remedy the invisibility of Muslim women and their roles in history: by creating a theoretical framework centred on the causes of said invisibility. In applying this framework, the thesis examines the textual materials by critically analysing the various aspects of women's role in Abbasid society including political, social and religious facets of life in the Būyid and the Saljūq periods.

This study of women, in said periods of Abbasid Iraq will highlight the major roles they played in shaping and developing Islamic society. It hence advances knowledge of this era in an original manner by the analysing of women's history in Islam, via a new approach.

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Table of Contents

Title	1
Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgemnt.....	3
Table of contents.....	4
List of Tables	6
Glossary	7
1.Introduaction.....	9
1.1 The Abbasid Caliphate: An Historical Background	10
i. The transition of Power and the Consequent Policy Changes	11
ii. The Emergence of the Būyid (reg. 339-447/950-1055)	12
iii. The Fall of the Būyid and the Rise of the Saljūq	13
iv. Women, Power and Politics under the Abbasid	15
1.2 Literature Review:	17
1.3 The Methodology of the Research	37
1.4 The Theoretical Framework	39
1.5 The Structure of the Research.....	45
2.The Political Role of Women in the Abbasid caliphate: Women, Influence, Authority and Power	48
2.1 Political Alliances and the Pursuit of Power	50
2.1.1 Political Alliances during the Būyid Period in Iraq (334-447/945-1055)	52
i. Mu‘izz al-Dawla (reg.334-356/945-967)	53
ii. ‘Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār (reg.356-367/967-978)	56
iii. ‘Adud al-Dawla (reg.367-372/978-983)	58
2.1.2 Political alliances during the Saljūq Period in Iraq (447-552/1055-1157)	60
i. Ṭughril Beg (reg.431-455/1040-1063)	66
ii. Sulṭān Malikshāh(reg.465-485/1072-1092)	66
iii. Mas’ūd b. Muhamed b.Mālikshāh (reg.528-547/1134-1152)	67
2.1.3 The Significance of Political Alliances (Būyid and Saljūq): An Analysis	71
2.2 Power behind Closed Doors: The Role of <i>al-ḥarā’ir</i> in Politics	74
2.2.1 The Role of <i>al-ḥarā’ir</i> during the Būyid Era:	74
2.2.2 The Role of <i>al-ḥarā’ir</i> during the Saljūq Era	86
2.3 The Life at the Court of <i>Ḥarīm</i>	112
2.3.1 <i>al-Jawārī</i> and Abbasid Politics	112
2.3.2 The <i>Qahramānas</i> and Abbasid Politics	135
2.3.3 Women and the Politics of Titles	151
i. General Titles	152
ii. Special Titles	155

3.The Roles of Abbasid Women in Religious Education,Literature and Culture (334/447– 950/1055)	164
3.1 Women and Religious Education	165
3.1.1 Women and Traditional Sciences	168
i. The Study of the Holy Quran	176
ii. The Study and Narration of Hadith	178
3.1.2. Women and Intellectual Sciences	184
i. <i>Ribāṭ & al-wa'z</i>	185
3.2 Women and Language	195
3.3 Women and Poetry	197
3.3.1 <i>Sufī</i> Poetry	198
3.3.2 <i>Ghazal</i> Poetry	201
3.3.3 <i>al-Rithā'</i> poetry	203
3.3.4 <i>Madḥ</i> poetry	204
3.3.5 <i>al-Hijā</i> Poetry.....	207
3.4 Abbasid Women and Singing	210
4.Reconstructing Society: Abbasid Women -Economy, Finance and Property	219
4.1 Women's Legal Competence	221
4.2 Women's Occupations and Crafts	230
4.3 Women and Construction	240
4.3.1 <i>al-Maḥallāt</i>	240
4.3.2 <i>Jawāmīr</i>	242
4.3.3 <i>Madāris</i>	246
4.3.4 <i>Ribāṭ</i>	249
4.3.5 Houses	254
4.3.6 Bridges and the Repair of River Courses	258
4.3.7 Women and the Reconstruction Works on Ḥajj Road	260
5.CONCLUSION	264
Bibliography	276

List of figures and tables

Figure 1: The theoretical framework for studying the role of women during the Būyid and Saljūq periods.

Table 1: List of the Būyid al-ḥarā'ir, the wives of the Caliphs and Princes.

Table 2: List of the Saljūq al-ḥarā'ir, the wives of the Caliphs and Sultans.

Table 3: List of Jawāri who were later elevated to 'ummahāt awlād during the Būyid and Saljūq periods

Glossary

Abna': soldiers of Khurāsānī origin settled in Baghdad.

Al-Barā'ah: acquittal note. It is a process, more or less similar to the registration of official documents nowadays and was used to precisely determine the period of waiting (*al-'iddah*) during which a woman may not remarry after being widowed or divorced.

Bayt al-Ḥikmah: House of Wisdom.

Bīmāristānāt: hospitals.

D. Died

Al-Dalālāt: whose work dealt mainly with matchmaking and facilitating the demands of men who wished to select a bride.

Dīwān: list of those entitled to government salaries

Fatwā: is a formal legal opinion on a point of law, the term "law" applying, in Islam, to all civil or religious matters, the act of giving a *fatwā* is a *futyā* or *iftā*, so it is a formal legal opinion given by a *muftī*.

Al-ḥarā'ir: Relates to a class of freeborn noble women in the caliphate court.

Ḥarīm: the space where the cross-generational or extended family, including women and children lived and where any indoor family tasks took place.

Al-ḥisbah: *Fiqh* wise, means commanding with appropriate courtesy and interdicting acts of abomination.

Jawāmī' : Mosques.

Jawārī: the female slaves who were, 'defined as women who had been taken as war booty, or were born of parents who were both slaves, or bought'.

Al-Kāghad: is a type of smooth and tender paper.

Kātib al-sayyidah: clerks (office workers or registrars).

Khātūn: title of ladies of high rank in Turkish, It was employed by the Saljūqs.

Madāris: Schools.

Al-Maḥallāt Neighbourhoods

Al-Muḥtasib: monitored the conduct of men and women in the streets and markets as indicated in *al-ḥisbah* books.

Q. The Holy Qur'an.

Al-Qabbālah: midwife.

Qahramāna: This was the *Ḥarīm* stewardess, chief of the administrative hierarchy.

Al-ṭurarat : rogues or scoundrels.

‘Umm walad: when a woman slave gives birth to a child by a free man she acquires the status of *‘umm walad*, mother of child.

Reg. Reign

Ribāṭ: is the spiritual place to practice Religion rituals

umma‘: The whole community of Muslims bound together by ties of religion.

Al-Wirāaq: all activities related to the papermaking and stationery business, such as the copying, binding, selling and purchasing of related items.

Zawāj: Marriage

1 Introduction

The Abbasid period is one of the most richly documented eras in medieval Islamic history; and the significant amount of information to be found in books, art, archaeology and other sources testifies to its importance. These sources focus on the various aspects of the history of the Abbasid dynasty pertaining to politics, society, economy and culture. The literature of the Abbasid era, of which much was written during that period, constitutes this thesis' primary sources and will make up the core material used to answer the following questions: What roles did women play during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods of the Abbasid caliphate? Were women properly historicized during these periods? Does the lack of historical records of individual women indicate a severely limited political and social role for females in this period?

As is the case with the great majority of medieval Islamic sources, particularly primary ones, there is a very limited range of material concerning women in the Abbasid era in the form of books which consider them as subjects of study. In fact, women who were mentioned in these primary sources were involved in relationships with powerful men of that period, whether as the wives of the caliphs or as queens, or as *jawāri* the female slaves who were defined as women who had been taken as war booty, or were born of parents who were both slaves. Furthermore, most of these sources were written or put together by men. As such, the limitations of the sources covering women in the Abbasid period are undeniable.

Scholars'¹ interest in studying women of the Abbasid period started in the middle of the twentieth century when debates on women's rights were particularly prominent,

¹ These include scholars such as, N.Abbot, *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd*, (London: al Saqi Books, 1986) & M. Jawad, *Sayyidāt al-balāṭ al-'Abbāsī*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1970), ect.

and a consequence of their classification under human rights. Interest in the status of Muslim women became one of the biggest issues debated in the light of questions regarding the portrayal of women in Islam, their rights and the alleged oppression they suffer in a society governed by religion and mostly known for paternal dominance, or what scholars term, 'masculine society'. What can modern feminist historians deduce from the little we do know of women of the period under discussion; and what kind of influence, behind the scenes, did their female contemporaries exert on the men of power?

1.1 Historical Background

This section will not focus on specific, detailed information about the Abbasids, but will instead provide an historical background of their politics, system of authority, and religion, through which one can investigate further the life of women and their roles during the period. In order to better and more fully comprehend the magnitude of women's roles during the Abbasid era, this section will establish the chronological parameters of the study by providing a brief background to each of the periods discussed: the Būyid and Saljūq eras.

Before doing so however, it is important to note why this era, and particularly the aforementioned periods, was chosen to chronologically frame this study. At the heart of this thesis is an argument regarding the need to make a clear distinction between what is/was religious and what is/was cultural when one refers to a "Muslim Society". Both the religious and cultural differences between the Būyid and Saljūq periods offer one a backdrop against which various aspects of life during these periods may be compared. From a religious standpoint the Būyids followed the *Shī'ah* teachings whereas the Saljūqs adhered to the *Sunnī* one. Culturally, both were influenced by Persian and Turkish civilisations, respectively. Each of these elements influenced the Abbasid Caliphate in different ways: religiously, culturally and ultimately, politically, as will be discussed throughout this research.

The Abbasids assumed power and became rulers of the Muslims in 132/749, and consequently changed the empire's political systems with a new regime. The early

Abbasid caliphate set the foundation for the centralization of its administration. This era of the Abbasids' history introduced a new, Islamic statecraft, and with it, new blood that had the effect of rejuvenating and reviving the Muslim empire. The Abbasids had a powerful hold on Muslims, generated by the adoption of titles affiliated with certain qualities attributed to the divine.

Although, the Abbasids had given themselves the legitimacy to become leaders or imams of the Muslims based on the *Shīrah* movement's ideals, they themselves were not adherents to these beliefs. Soon after they came to power, the Abbasids changed their stance, their religious ideology and consequently, their policies. The move away from *Shīrah* and towards *Sunnah* was reflected in the various aspects of religious life during the Abbasid period, especially within al-Ma'mūn's regime. This was evident in the increased use of the term *ahl al-Sunnah*. They saw themselves as standing aloof from individuals or groups whom they considered as holding innovative doctrines *ahl al-bida* (the people of the innovations).² There were also other groups, such as *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, who recognized the al-Rāshidūn caliphs but did not accept 'Ali as the fourth legitimate caliph. However, this is not to say that there was consensus since there were individuals, such as Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d.241/855)³, who believed that, 'Ali was one of the al-Rāshidūn Caliphs.⁴

i. The transition of Power and the Consequent Policy Changes

Abū al-Abbās al-Saffāh (reg.132-136/749-754) was the first of the Abbasid caliphs. During his reign, the dynasty faced growing crises, the most significant of which were the numerous opposition movements made up of people who refused to accept the new regime such as the Qaysīs in Syria. In addition there was the war with Yazīd Ibn Umar ibn Habayrh.⁵ There were also other opposition movements that later manifested into revolutions and attempts to unseat the Abbasids. Nonetheless, all these attempts were overcome.

² See *Ibid.* p.49.

³ *Ibid.* p.51.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp.170 – 171.

⁵ M.al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol.4, p.1525.

In his book, *Armies of the Caliphs*, Kennedy points out that there were many more soldiers appointed between the regimes of al-Saffāh, al-Manṣūr and al-Hadī which illustrates that the caliphs actively sought to improve and strengthen the Caliphate's military.⁶ The Abbasid soldiers consisted of Persians and Turks who came to power during the Būyid (334-447/950-1055) and the Saljūq (447-547/1055-1152) periods, respectively, as will be discussed later in this research.

ii. The Emergence of the Būyids (reg. 339-447/950-1055)

The Būyids were a *Shī'ah*⁷ group from *Daylam* in Persia.⁸ Ahmad Mu'izz al-Dawla (reg.339-447/950-1055)⁹ ruled with his two brothers 'Imād al-Dawla (reg.356-367/967-978) and Rukn al-Dawla (reg.367-372/978-983).¹⁰ The brothers were 'usually grouped together under the name of al-Daylamīs'. They were the founding members of the most famous ruling family of the period, otherwise known as 'The Būyids'.¹¹ Since they ruled by force, the Būyids exercised real authority during this part of the Abbasid period. They first entered the empire as mercenaries but quickly gained power within the caliphate when the caliph's influence decreased for various reasons, some of which will be discussed later in this research. Here, it is worth mentioning that prior to the emergence of the Būyids (320-454/932-1062), power was under the *wazīr's* (minister) control. Upon assuming power, the Būyids' leaders gave themselves a *Kunya* (title): *Amīr al-Umarā'*¹²(supreme commander). Rule was transferred from the *wazīr* to the *Amīr*, who gained his legitimacy from the caliph, "with Mu'izz al-Dawla, the caliph did not even have a *wazīr*, only a secretary to administer his estate. The *wazīr* was appointed as the administrator for Mu'izz al-Dawla".¹³

⁶ H. Kennedy, *The armies of the caliphs: military and society in the early Islamic state*. (New York: Routledge: 2001), p.79.

⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, (d.630/1232-33) says 'that the *Daylam* were *Shī'ah* and they very strongly believed in *Shī'ah* thought: they thought that the 'Abbasid were taking over the caliphate from the real imama, the al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh ed.6, vol.8, (Buiret, Dar Ṣādir, 1965-1967) p.77.

⁸ Ibid. p.11.

⁹ Ibid. p.15.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.230.

¹¹ H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the age of the Caliphates*, (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004), p. 210.

¹² O Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*, p.230.

¹³ A. Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232-33), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* ed.6, vol 8 (Buiret: Dar Ṣādir, 1965-1967) p.315. also M. Zubaydī, *al-'Irāq fī al-'aṣr al-Buwayhī : al-tanzīmāt al-siyāsīyah wa'l-idāriyah wa'l-iqtisādīyah, 334 h-447 h/950 m-1058 m.* (al-Qāhirah, Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1969), p 34.

The Būyids' authority allowed them to make changes in the political, social and cultural life in the court of the Abbasids, and consequently, the way of life and simultaneously, diminished the Caliph's power. Some of the caliphs, for example, al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075), had limited power in the empire. Abbasid Caliphs during this time could not control any of the *wazīrs* or make political or administrative decisions. A powerful example of this was that Mu'izz al-Dawla overthrew the Caliph al-Muktafī (reg.289-295/902-908) and set up al-Muqtadir (reg.295-296/908-909) as caliph. Ibn al-Athīr described these changes saying "the caliphate suffered increased adversity; all administrative functions were taken from the hands of the Caliphs. They may have retained some power, had their orders been carried out, and the title remained out of respect for them".¹⁴ Essentially, it is safe to say that any decision made in the dynasty was operated by the Būyids and not by the caliphs during this time in Abbasid history.

Indeed, it is remarkable the Būyids reached the height of their power during the Abbasid era and established a new structure within it. They established their emirate and created many changes within the political, religious and cultural aspects of life. Due to reasons that shall be explained later in the thesis, the Būyids eventually lost their power to the Saljūqs. A full enquiry into the fall of the Būyids is worth, at the very least, an entire chapter. However, this is not within the scope of this thesis and suffice to say that their power and authority diminished as a result of a combination of the composition of the Būyid army, the weak relationship between the *Amīr* and his army, the Arab society in Iraq and their rejection of government by the Būyids.¹⁵

iii. The Fall of the Būyid and the Rise of the Saljūq

The fall of the Būyid created a power vacuum in the political scene of the Caliphate. As a result, the Abbasids' vulnerability became increasingly evident and gave way to the emergence of a new power: the Saljūq (447-457/ 1075-1194),

¹⁴ A.Ibn al-Athīr(d.630/1232-33) *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh* , pp 99-244.

¹⁵ For more information about Būyids see O.Faruq,*al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*.p.229-233. Also M.Zubaydī,*al-'Irāq fī al-'aṣr al-Buwayhī* ,pp. 32-44.

which started towards the end of Caliph al-Qā'im's era (reg. 422-467/1031-1075).¹⁶ The Saljūq belonged to the group of Turkish tribes, known also as the *Ghuzzi*.¹⁷ Their home was to the north of the Caspian and Arabian Seas, and ¹⁸ “they had innumerable possessions, complete provisions, and well-organized regiments and retinue”.¹⁹ The Saljūqs were powerful soldiers who dominated Khurāsān while slowly taking over Persia, followed by Iraq.²⁰

One of the Saljūqs, Ṭughril Beg Muhammad b. Mīkā'il b. Saljūq,²¹ entered Baghdad in 447/1055²². The Caliphate was at the time under the leadership of al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075), and it was with his approval and allegiance that Ṭughril Beg proclaimed himself Sultan. ²³ To a certain extent, it can be said that with the Caliph's allegiance, Ṭughril Beg became the acting leader of the Caliphate; and he took the *Kunya* of the great Sultan *Rukn al-Dunyā wa 'l-Dīn*.²⁴

There were many different factors that contributed to the demise of the Caliphate's power and facilitated the Saljūq's control of Iraq. First and foremost, was the betrayal of al-Bsāsairī the ruler under Caliph al-Mūstansīr (reg.386-411/996-1021)²⁵. Second, was the Abbasids' strongest rival, the Fatimid caliphate (341-555/953-1171) ²⁶, which ruled Egypt at the time²⁷. Last, but certainly not least was the Turkish riots in Baghdad which led the caliph to support the idea of a new leader, preferably Turkish, that is, Ṭughril Beg, to control and put an end to the conflict.²⁸

¹⁶ O.Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*, p.137.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.75.

¹⁹ K.Luther, *The History of the Saljūq Turks from the Jāmi' al-Rawārikh*. 1st ed (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), p.29.

²⁰ O.Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*. p. 77.

²¹ *Ibid.* p.76.

²² C.Bosworth, *The new dynasties*.p.187 & O Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*²² *Ibid.*p.63.
ah .p 78.

²³ C.Bosworth, *The new dynasties*, p.6.

²⁴ O.Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*.p76. *Rukn al-Dunyā wa 'l-Dīn*: means the pillar of religion see A. Bakhit, *History of Humanity*,(London, Routledge, 2000) p 327.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.63.

²⁶ C.Bosworth, *The new dynasties*.p.63.

²⁷ D.Richard. *The Annals of the Saljuq Truks*,1 ed (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002). p.98.

²⁸ O.Faruq, *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah* .pp 76-78.

The Saljūqs gained strength when Ṭughril Beg secured a high position in the Abbasid caliphate and commanded more authority; hence they had administrative and political control. Directly proportional to the expansion of Saljūqī control over the Abbasid caliphate were the changes within the Caliphate that allowed the Saljūqs way of life to dominate. The Abbasid caliphs expanded their conquests at the beginning of their reign to include, as Faruq argues, “east Khuwārizm and what is now western Afghanistan, which was taken from Ghazzniyīn’s”.²⁹ The Sultanate evolved and took over the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. Nevertheless, the disputes between the members of the Saljūq family led to the fragmentation and weakening of their sultanate, particularly after the death of Sultan Mālikshāh (reg.465-485/1073-1092).³⁰ The weakness of the Saljūq house allowed the Abbasid caliphs to re-emerge and try to retrieve the Abbasid legacy that had started with Caliph al-Mustarshid (reg.512-529/1118-1135).³¹ The struggle between the Abbasid caliphs and the Saljūq persisted until the reign of Caliph al-Nāṣr (reg.575-622/1180-1225).³²

The Saljūqs’ loss of power created yet another power vacuum³³ within the Abbasid dynasty, this time allowing the Mongols to enter the scene in (602-733/1206-1370). Unlike the Būyid and the Saljūq, the Mongols effectively ended all political authority of the Abbasid Caliphate.³⁴ Lapidus describes this shift in the balance of power saying that, “the fall of the Abbasid caliphate came at once on all levels: political, social and an economic”.³⁵ The political changes that occurred led to the weakening of the caliphs who came to be at the mercy of external elements such as the Būyid and the Saljūq.

i.v Women, Power and Politics under the Abbasid

As previously mentioned, much changed under al-Mahdī’s leadership, and the

²⁹ Ibid.p.187.

³⁰ Ibid.p.185.

³¹ C.Bosworth, *The new dynasties*. p.6. and A .Najy and A.Naimy, *al-dawlah al-‘Arabīyah al-Islāmīyah fī al-‘aṣr al-‘Abbāsī*, p.422.

³² Ibid.p.6.

³³ H, Kennedy, *The Prophet and the age of the Caliphates*. p 210.

³⁴ M. Ira, *The history of Islamic societies*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002),p.126.

³⁵ Ibid.p.111.

most noteworthy changes were those relating to the status of women. It was under his rule that an improvement in women's status was witnessed. Muslim women were seen to assume high positions both politically and socially; the caliph's wife, al-Khaizurān, became one of the most influential figures in the Abbasid palace. Al-Ṭabarī asserted that she was a very powerful woman during her husband's reign and continued to have a strong influence during the governments of her two sons, al-Hadī (reg.169-170/785-789) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (reg.170-193/786-8-9).³⁶

Hārūn al-Rashīd was one of the greatest caliphs of the Abbasids' period. Under his leadership, the empire was developed in a variety of aspects as it reached its full strength. Kennedy argues that Hārūn al-Rashīd's rule could be divided into three phases: the first was dominated by the Barmakids; the second witnessed the fall of the Barmakids and the rise of the powerful military leader Fadl b.al-Rabi', and finally, the third phase saw the rise of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's authority, since he played a huge part in the political life of the Abbasid during his regime.³⁷

Furthermore, during his reign, Hārūn al-Rashīd paid attention to other fields, not just the political arena. As Kennedy mentions, "he was an extravagant spender, on poets, on women and on building, but still contrived to leave an enormous surplus in the treasury when he died".³⁸ Despite the achievements during his regime however, there was always conflict between his two sons, Muhammad al-Amīn (reg.193-198/809-813) and 'Abdullāh al-Ma'mūn (reg.198-218/813-833), who had different mothers. Al-Amīn was of Abbasid descent from both sides. His mother was Zubaydah (reg.145-216/762-831) the daughter of Ja'far al-Manṣūr, and al-Ma'mūn was the son of one of his father's *Jawārī*, Marajil the daughter of one of the Khaizurānī rebels.³⁹ This thesis dedicates an entire chapter (Chapter Two) to examining the political role of women during this period, and their role in securing power will be at the heart of the research.

³⁶ M.al-Ṭabarī,(d.310/923), *Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol 5. ,p.1639.

³⁷ H.Kennedy, *The early Abbasid Caliphate: a political history* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986) p.115.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.116.

³⁹ N.Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad* (London: al-Saqi, 1986), p.181 - see H. Kennedy, *The early Abbasid Caliphate*, p.123 - 124

Each of al-Rashīd's sons had his supporters, al-Amīn was supported by *Abna'*⁴⁰ and Baghdadis and al-Ma'mūn by Barmakids. This competition gave rise to the clash between the two brothers attempting to gain the throne. Therefore, Hārūn al-Rashīd went to the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) in 186/802 and obliged his two sons to sign a document, which stipulated the division of his empire between his two heirs to the throne. Iraq and *Wāsīt* were to be inherited by al-Amīn and the eastern region of the Caliphate was to be inherited by al-Ma'mūn.⁴¹

Despite the document, civil war broke out between the two brothers after their father's death in 193/809. al-Amīn,⁴² who had supporters in Iraq, especially amongst the Arab tribes, fought against his brother al-Ma'mūn,⁴³ who took over the governorship of Khurāsān with the assistance of some Khurāsānins. The civil war continued for five years, 193-201/809-817⁴⁴ and divided the empire into two parts, one in Iraq and the other in Persia and created the first schism within the Abbasid dynasty and its supporters. Zubaydah, the wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd and mother of al-Amīn played a major political role to secure the caliphate to her son. Despite her significant political acumen, which she started nurturing during her husband's reign, she failed. The civil war resulted in the killing of al-Amīn in 198/813, after which the political stability of the empire re-emerged. The disappearance of the caliph who ruled Iraq after al-Amīn for three years, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (reg.201-203/817-819)⁴⁵ helped al-Ma'mūn come to power and rule the entire empire, not just Khurāsān. According to Bennison, the death of al-Amīn left his brother al-Ma'mūn as the undisputed caliph.⁴⁶

1.2 Literature Review

The primary aim of this research is to bring to light the references on women in the Abbasid era and to re-write the roles they played in the social history of the time, in turn illustrating the role and rights of Muslim women in Muslim society in general

⁴⁰ *Abna'* : soldiers of Khurāsānī origin settled in Baghdad. See H. Kennedy *The early Abbasid*, p.10

⁴¹ N. Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p.182. Also see Kennedy, H., *The early Abbasid Caliphate*, p.124. Also, M.al-Ṭabarī, (d.310/923), *Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, ed. Nawaf al-Jrah, vol 5, p.1844.

⁴² C. Bosworth, *The new dynasties a chronological and genealogical manual* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p.6.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.6.

⁴⁴ M.al-Ṭabarī, (d.310/923), *Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol 5, pp.1846-1849.

⁴⁵ C. Bosworth, *The new dynasties*, p.6. & M. al-Ṭabarī, (d.310/923), *Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, vol 5 .p.1845.

⁴⁶ A. Bennison *The Great Caliphs*. p.32.

and the Abbasid society in particular. As already mentioned, the state of research and the existence of primary and secondary sources on women in the Abbasid period are very limited. Hence, this study uses a variety of narratives of different authors of the time to investigate women and their roles. Recognising that people write for different reasons and with various agendas, for a more comprehensive understanding the thesis will not limit itself to one category of writers: it will consult biographies, books and articles of travellers, historians *qāṣṣyīn* (storytellers) as well as religious and political figures of the time.

One of the scarce sources in the era is Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (224-311/839-923) *Tarīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*.⁴⁷ The author, one of the greatest scholars of the Abbasid dynasty documented many of the events of the period. His book discussed many aspects pertaining to the Abbasid Empire, particularly in the last volumes. Al-Ṭabarī focused on events and their origins rather than on chronology. The book narrates the history of humanity crossing over state boundaries, and his sources for the book were narrators. Thus, some of what he had written in some of his chapters may without doubt appear sketchy and their authenticity questionable, especially if the parts entailed the caliph's regime.

Al-Ṭabarī may have narrated events of the era explaining the various aspects of the social and, at times, parts of the political life of the Abbasids. However, he is also one of those who were limited in discussing the women of the era. For example, at one point, he presented an analysis of al-Khaizurān's⁴⁸ involvement in the murder of her son al-Hadī (d.170/786). He emphasized the strength of women during that era and the power they enjoyed during Caliph al-Mahdī's (Khaizurān's husband) reign. Accordingly, al-Ṭabarī was not only a recorder of history but also an analyst of some of the events of the era. However, at times, he would not comment on events, preferring to quote the poetry of others who lived during the period, especially with regard to political events.

⁴⁷ M.al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, v. II, ed. C. Bosworth, trans. de Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1879) .

⁴⁸ Al-Khaizurān :wife of al-Mahdī caliph (158-170/775-78)5 and mother of al-Hadī(169-170/785-786) and Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809).

Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Bahr al-Jāhiz al-Basrī, (160/777- 255/869)⁴⁹, was another famous Arab writer living during the Abbasid era. He was a professional grammarian who wrote many books on *adab* (literature), the Arabic language as well as the culture of his time. He remarked on how language changed as a result of social transformations in the lives of the people and the influence of the Bedouins. This was particularly highlighted in his book *al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn*⁵⁰. The Life of al-Jāhiz's in Baghdad and Basra provided him with an opportunity to have access to excellent information pertaining to the various aspects of life in the Abbasid dynasty. Al-Jāhiz presented some of his most important insights into the Abbasid community, traditions and culture in his book, *Kitāb al-Hayawān*⁵¹, which is a vital source for this research as it documented the Abbasid period and is considered to be al-Jāhiz's main and most important publication. It combined sociology and theology, while basing its content on the lives of animals. The author took the animals as models or examples through which one can recognize the different animals that existed in that period and at the same time provided, through his narration, a great deal of material on contemporary sports, food and life. At times, however, one must read between the lines to go beyond the stories and focus on the aim of the publication, that is, to understand the social and political life of the Abbasid community. Al-Jāhiz's remarks on animal psychology to some extent portray the psychology of the Abbasids and explore their rules and traditions throughout the stories of animals examined in *al-Hayawān*.

A-Jāhiz' also documented the Abbasids' social life in his book *al-Bukhalā'*⁵². In it, al-Jāhiz pays attention to, and provides analysis of humorous anecdotes especially highlighting issues related to greed and materialism in an attempt to describe the different types of people as well as different aspects of society. He also portrayed the lives of some of the women of the era who were known for the aspects covered by the book, which was useful for this research.

⁴⁹ Pellat, www.brillonline.nl/lib/exeter.ac.uk/subscriber/entry_entry_islam_SIM-Heinrichs. Brill, Available: http://www.brillonline.nl/lib/exeter.ac.uk/subscriber/entry_entry_islam_SIM-Heinrichs. Last accessed 16th March, 2010.

⁵⁰ A. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Mahāsīn wa'l-aqdād*, (Leiden: Brill, 1898).

⁵¹ A. Al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Hayawān*, (Cairo: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lil-Baḥth wa-al-Nashr, 1968).

⁵² A. al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Bukhalā'*, (Cairo: al-Markaz al-'Arabī lil-Baḥth, 1980).

Another important publication by al-Jāḥiẓ is *Risālat al-qiyān*⁵³, looks at a group of singing girls and their position in the Abbasid society. Al-Jāḥiẓ argued that the relationship between men and these singing girls during the Abbasid era was bound by love, and sexuality. The author's remarks offered important information about the singing girls during this period, as well as providing insights into the literary work of women, who sang or were *qiyān* (concubines). As is known, al-Jāḥiẓ, uses a satirical approach in most of his work. The abundance of information found in this book, which deals in part with the lives of some of the *qiyān*, will be of vital significance for this study. Indeed, al-Jāḥiẓ mentions them as the women who changed, and made a difference to the Abbasid era and who shared in the culture through their poetry and their songs.

Another important author to examine is Abu Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn Muslim ibn Qutayba al-Dinawārī (d.276/881), who was born in Kufa and is originally from *Dīnawar* in Iran. In his book, *Uyūn al-akhbār*⁵⁴, he examined the important rules, rituals, and speeches of different caliphs during Islamic history in general and those of the Abbasid caliphs in particular. He dedicated certain parts of the last chapter of the book to women's lives, and mentioned some of their achievements during the Abbasid period.

Abū Hanīfah Ahmad Ibn Dāwūd Dinawārī (d.282-895) was another Iranian writer from *Dīnawar*. He lived in Iraq, and was schooled in Basra and Kufa.⁵⁵ Dinawārī was one of the important Arabic philologists whose work was known for being humanistic and universal as well as for its simple writing style. He reported on the daily life of Abbasids in many of his books. One of his famous books that is an invaluable source for this research, is *Kitāb Al-Akḥbār al-tiwāl*⁵⁶, which contains a great collection of work on *adab*, culture, and the social life of the Abbasids in

⁵³ A. al-Jāḥiẓ, *Risālat al-qiyān*, (England: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1980).

⁵⁴ A. Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn al-akḥbār*. (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-'āmmah lil-ta'līf wa'l-tarjamah wa'l-Nashr, 1964).

⁵⁵ B. Lewin, [www.http://0-www.brillonline.nl.lib.exeter.ac.uk/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-1868](http://0-www.brillonline.nl.lib.exeter.ac.uk/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-1868)>. Brill, Available: <http://> Last accessed 7th March, 2010.

⁵⁶ A. Dīnawārī, *al-Akḥbār al-tiwāl*. (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa'l-Irshād al-Qawmī, al-Iqlīm al-Janūbī, 1960).

general. He drew attention to examples of the daily life of the Abbasid women who were part of some of the important events of the era.

Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī written by Aḥmad ibn Abī Ya'qūb al-Ya'qūbī⁵⁷, an Arab historian and geographer, who was born in Bagdad and died in Egypt in 297/910, is divided into two volumes. In the first part, the author discussed the beginning of life starting with Adam and the beginning of creation, which is followed by the transformation of the world and the rise of civilizations: Babylonian, Greek, Egyptian, Yemeni and others. The second volume, addressed the life of the prophet Muhammad and Islamic history, highlighting the most important caliphs who ruled Islamic society following the death of the prophet (d.11-632), particularly those of Al-Rāshidūn, Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. Al-Ya'qūbī offered much historical information on the daily life of the Abbasids in the form of interesting stories, which provided rich details of some of the women who lived during this time, their culture, daily life and the important events they lived through.⁵⁸

Another important source is *Kitāb al-'iqd al-farīd* by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusī (246/860-328/940), a writer and poet.⁵⁹ The book is a classical work covering religion, literature and history. 'Abd Rabbih wrote about events that had been debated by other writers such as al-Jāḥiz and Ibn Qutayba. He tried to collect events in history, literature and religion of contemporary Abbasid society and criticized them while providing more information on the era. His style is close to that of al-Jāḥiz, and known for its wittiness and sarcasm. Moreover, 'Abd Rabbih went further in his writings to provide an analysis of the events and text, which others did not provide and were content with simply presenting information to the readers without any criticism. The author divided his book into twenty-five volumes. However, there is one important problem with *Kitāb al-'iqd al-farīd*, which is the weak *asnād* (referencing) in some cases. 'Abd Rabbih dedicates Chapter Seven of his book to cover women's lives under the name, *Kitāb Li-'l-Murjānh al-Thānyyah*. He described women in their daily roles, marriages, and divorces.

⁵⁷ A.Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī*. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1900).

⁵⁸ Al-Khaizurān, Shojāa mother of al-Mutwwakil.

⁵⁹ A.Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-'iqd al-farīd*, (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa'l-Tarjamah wa'l-Nashr, 1940).

The work of al-Baghdadī author al-Mas'ūdī⁶⁰ *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar* describes the author's experience in the countries he visited. Al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346/957), who was born in Baghdad and presented a critical account of historical events in the various countries he visited, focuses on the city of *al-Mānsūra* and daily life there since it was the capital city for the Muslims. From this we can assume that it touches on the daily life of women during this period, which gives him a certain status among Abbasid historians. His work falls under historiography and geography. A comparison between the work of al-Mas'ūdī and al-Ṭabarī shows that al-Ṭabarī, his book *Tar'ikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, is based on the narrator's input, while in the case of al-Mas'ūdī, he uses his experience to describe the events of history. This comparison brings to the surface the issue of the author's motivations in writing, particularly when considering the affiliations of each of the above. That is to say, while al-Mas'ūdī's writing portrays a degree of creative freedom giving way to some elements of fiction in his primary sources, al-Ṭabarī, affiliated to, and serving Rukn al-Dawla's regime can be said to, at best, have been influenced by the government and its stance towards women. As such, one might construe that the latter's writings were more cautious and arguably strategic to cater for the regime, in this case Rukn al-Dawla's reign. Understanding the motivations of authors at the time of writing, or indeed *not* writing about women greatly contributes to the understanding of women's invisibility in history. Hence one must consider all information relating to the authors such as their background, time of writing, and affiliations, as much as the information presented by them.

Another author to consider regarding the documentation of women in the Abbasid period is Ibrāhīm Ibyārī Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī(284/897-360/971), who contributed several studies on women during the era. In his book *Kitāb al-Aghani*, he presented a collection of songs, poems, dances and stories of many female singers in many volumes of Arabic literature. Furthermore, *al-Aghani*, documented human history pertaining to the caliphs and the daily life of the Abbasids. Through his work, the author presented different information based on books, written

⁶⁰ A.al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, ed. Muhammad Muhyi al-Din, (Cairo, C. Pella, 1958).

narratives and the *al-ruwāh* (narrators). *Kitāb al-Aghanī* is divided into 21 volumes. Part of his material relies on literature, Arabic music, songs and poems. Arguably, one of the aspects most worthy of note is how the work dissects the various roles played by the women the author names and discusses, and the influence they had on the Abbasid culture. Considering that the time when al-Iṣfahānī wrote his narrative was rich in social and literary aspects as was the lifestyle during Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's regime, it may be construed that he had plenty of material and first hand exposure to women's roles as will be seen in Chapter Three.

This, along with al-Iṣfahānī's depiction of the magnitude of the impact made by the introduction of concubines will be seen to lay a solid foundation on which to answer the questions regarding the role of women in the Abbasid society, which are central to this thesis. al-Iṣfahānī's book highlighted some of the Caliphs' obsession with acquiring concubines by paying, sometimes unreal prices, at the expense of the State's budget. That is, while they indulged in *al-Majālis* of pleasure, entertainment, dancing and all other sensual enjoyments they left matters of governance and politics in the hands of the *Amīrs* (princes), *wazīrs* and those guided by personal interests. The research will argue that this in turn shifted the balance of power in society in favour of women, as will be analysed throughout this study.

Al-Iṣfahānī wrote two similar books, *al-Qiyān* and *al-Imā' al-shawā'ir*, which portrayed the lives of the *jawārī* and the Abbasid court concubines. In these books, he focused on the most important concubines of the time, their roles, as well as their lives, especially in the court of *ḥarīm* (the space where the cross-generational or extended family, including women and children lived and where any indoor family tasks took place). However, these books cannot be claimed to be comprehensive as they lack some of the information he had included in his earlier book *al-Aghanī*, without which the full extent of these women's roles cannot be fully absorbed. To a large extent, one of the objectives of this thesis is: to compile a comprehensive study of all the substantial writings on Muslim women and their roles during the Abbasid dynasty.

Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b al-Shāfi‘ī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392/1002 -463/107) was another Abbasid historian who offered rich literature on the different aspects of Abbasid society. Al-Baghdādī wrote extensively on the science of *Hadith*. In his important book *Tārīkh Baghdād*,⁶¹ he provided deep critical analysis of the Abbasids’ way of life. Furthermore, he focused on the women of the period and one chapter is devoted to the most famous of these.

Muḥammad b. Hassān b. Muḥammad b. Alī Ibn Ḥamdūn, a member of the Banū Ḥamdūn family, worked as *wazīr* with the Abbasid caliphate. Ibn Ḥamdūn (495/1102-562/1167)⁶² was one of the contemporary historians in the period under research. In his book *al-Tadhkirah al-Ḥamdūnīyah*⁶³, he presented the cultural wealth of the era through stories, literature, rhetoric, religious teaching, poems, art, and the social and political life of the Abbasids. However, although he seemed slow to acknowledge the verity of his narrator’s stories, he was in fact more comprehensive in his writings than any of the other historian who dealt with the Abbasid era. Most important to this thesis, is his narrations on many Abbasid women and their lives within the era. With this in mind, one must question why he chose to dedicate parts of his writings to Abbasid women, particularly (considering what this thesis argues) there was an active omission of women by some authors of the time. Indeed, the motivations of authors is crucial to the issue at hand: the (in)visibility of women in Islamic history. As already mentioned, the backgrounds, ideologies and affiliations of an author contribute to what they choose to write about or ignore; praise or criticise; and by all means analyse or take for face value. Though not extensively applied throughout this study due to literature limitations, one must constantly question how and why the stories on women presented in thesis were told. This thesis contends that while some of those authors did not necessarily have messages to deliver and simply relayed information according to what they saw, others were influenced by political aspirations, personal gains and in some cases losses. Ibn Ḥamdūn, for example, falls within the first category: he told stories by offering the literary of people’s daily life. In so doing, he opened the

⁶¹ K. al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa’l-‘Ilām, Dār al-Shu’ūn al-Thaqāfiyah al-‘Āmmah, 1986).

⁶² B. Ibn Ḥamdūn, *al-Tadhkirah al-Ḥamdūnīyah*. (Beirut: Ma’had al-‘Inmā’ al-‘Arabī, 1983).

⁶³ Ibid.

door to medieval social reality.

Of equal importance to al-Baghdādī's work is Abu 'Ali Ahmad b. Muhammad Ibn Miskawayh (d.421/1030), Ibn Miskawayh was a member of the chancery officials of the Būyid *Amīrs*.⁶⁴In his book *Tajārib al-umam*,⁶⁵ he presented Abbasid society. One of the important sections of his book provides a wealth of information about women, their lives and their roles. He particularly mentioned some of the women of the Būyid era. Therefore, this book is an excellent resource for this research since the author offers an abundance of facts about women's lives during Būyid period, which he gained from historical narrations, especially those of contemporaries such as al-Dainwrī and Ibn Saad(d.230/844)⁶⁶ and his book *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. In better understanding the motivations of those writers taking into account the representations of women in the Būyid and the Saljūq periods and why those women were invisible and how those authors described their world. Ibn Miskawayh wrote widely on all aspects of the Būyid period, one might argue that to some extent he became involved in the Būyid propaganda. However, despite his being a political figure (arguably with an agenda to cater for the leadership), his writing as *adīb (literary intellectual)* was analytical, as opposed to other authors like Ibn Saad, who was an *akhbārīs (reporters)* relaying and recording living memory as news.

Another historian who provided invaluable information on women during the Abbasid period was Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzī (d.579/1183). In his book, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārikh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, which is divided into eighteen volumes, he wrote on the personas of many Muslims around the world. The most important sections of his book discussed the Abbasid period, in which he provided copious information about both the Būyid and the Saljūq periods and also about women and their different roles in the Islamic world. The

⁶⁴ K. Al-Ṣafadī (d.764/1362), *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, Vol.8, (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1931- 2004)P.109.see Also A.Al-Tha'ālibī (d.429/1037), *Yaṭīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsīn ahl al-'aṣr*, vol. 2, (Cairo: al-Maktabah al- Ḥusayniyah, 1934),pp.115-116.

⁶⁵ A. Ibn Miskawayh, A. (d.421/1030), *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.1, 2, (Baghdad: Maktabat al- Muthanná, 1965)

⁶⁶ Ibn Sa'd M. (d.230/844), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed.'Umar ibn Muḥammad, vol. 8, (Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1968)

author shed much light on a range of primary sources in his compilation of research, such as *Akhbār al-hamqā wa'l-mughaffalīn* and *al-nisā fīmā yata bihinn :Aḥkām al-nisā*.⁶⁷ Ibn Al-Jawzī was *qāṣṣ* (storyteller), his business was *qāṣāṣ* that is, relaying narratives (*akhbār*). He was a storyteller with political affiliations, which, as mentioned above, influences his views and writings⁶⁸. Šibt Ibn al-Jawzī (d.654/1256) was his grandson, and was known for his works such as, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*.⁶⁹ His book highlighted the history of the Abbasid period, especially the Būyid and the Saljūq eras and he mentioned many important historical events, which is helpful in the investigation of the role of women during the periods in question. He gave excellent examples of Abbasid women's lives, which will be referenced throughout this study in an attempt to prove, as this research aims to establish, that women had various active and influential roles in the Abbasid Caliphate.

It is further worth noting that the significant historical records which can be taken as first degree sources of that period were written by contemporaneous historians such as those of Abī Ashāq al-Šābi (384/994), Hilāl ibn al-Muḥassin Šābī⁷⁰(d.384/994) whose writings offer only a small fragment covering the events of the period between 389 through 392. These historians among others had close relations with and rendered their services to the courts of the Būyid *Amīrs*, but their writings and records are still missing which affects the meticulous study of the events of the period. Despite successive historians having quoted a great deal from these missing writings, they still only hold abridged versions. Naturally, this lack in the historical material about the Būyid history in Iraq will by necessity, have its negative impact on the preciseness of the studies that generally deal with that aspect of history in Iraq. For example, the only source available referring to 'Aduḍ al-Dawlah's wife and the mother of Šamšām al-Dawla is the book of *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam* by the *wazīr* Abū Shujā'⁷¹ which states that it is quoting from the

⁶⁷ A.Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200), *al-nisā' fīmā yata bihinn :Aḥkām al-nisā*, (Cairo: al-Halabī Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ J.Bray, *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, (NewYork:Routledge,2006),p.23.

⁶⁹ S.Ibn al-Jawzī (d.654/1256), *M ir'āt al-zamān fī tārikh al-a'yān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1985).

⁷⁰ Ibn Šābī, H. (448/1056), *Tuḥfat al-umarā' fī tārikh al-wuzarā'*, ed, Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad, (Cairo: Dār lhyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, 1958

⁷¹ Abū Shujā, M. (d.448/1095), *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*, (Baghdad: Maktabat al- Muthannā, 1960)

book of Abī Aṣḥāq al-Ṣābi entitled *al-Tājī fī akhbār al-dawla al-Dulaymyah* of which we only have scattered fragments.

Another prominent writer on women was Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah (d. 597-1201). In *Akhbār al-nisā'*,⁷² which many consider to be a groundbreaking study of the lives of contemporary Muslim women, he delved into the daily life of ordinary Abbasids during the era; but he particularly focused on women's acts of love, their poems, beauty, marriage and divorce. It is worth noting the number of works of *adab* provided in this book, which offer rich information on the social history of women in the period under discussion.

ʿImād al-Dīn Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr's (700-1301-767-1366). His book *al-Bidāya wa 'l-Nihāya*⁷³ is one of his greatest works, in which he provided vast amounts of Islamic historical information based on primary sources such as al-Tabarī, Ibn ʿAsākir, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Taymīyah among others. To some extent, this work might be considered to be a collection of various narrations, which facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Applying a chronological approach, *Kitāb al-Bidāya wa 'l-Nihāya* first focused on *al-Jāhiliyah (Ignorance)*, then moved on to the rise of Islam. This is followed by the history of the caliphates. Ibn Kathīr's detailing of the prominent events during the Abbasid era and his unique critical analysis of the Abbasids' society puts him on a par with many of the great Abbasid historians. In fact, his book could be considered to be one of the most important sources of the Islamic civilization.

Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān of Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Abū al-ʿAbbās (d.681/1282) an Arab biographer offered further information in an historical compendium that proves to be a rich source of the biographical literature of the Abbasid community and facilitates an understanding of Abbasid life. Ibn Khallikān gathered his information before publishing this book and others whilst travelling throughout the caliphate. All of these works have been

⁷² I. al-Jawzīyah, *Akhbār al-nisā'*. (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1960).

⁷³ I. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-nihāyah*, (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1966).

consulted and in some cases will be referenced throughout this study, for the general historical background of the period under discussion.

As previously asserted thus far, when relying on authors' narratives for any research, particularly one as interdisciplinary as this, it is crucial to assess all aspects that potentially influenced their writings. In his defense of the medieval Muslim storywriter's attitude, Professor Justav Gronbaum⁷⁴ said: "The Arab Artist then was so passionate about the authenticity of imitation not the nobility of invention" "Some of them were influenced by some elements such as culture, religion and literary, as Grunbaum defined them. However, it is curious that such popular convictions and beliefs find their way to be adopted by the intellectuals and scholars. An example of this is 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa (d.142/759), who translated the famous Indian Book *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, in his advice addressed to the men of his time to prevent women from leaving their houses: "shade their eyes by keeping them in seclusion as this is more appropriate for you than living seized by doubts; however, their going out is far less serious than admitting to them someone whom you do not trust and hence; if you can avoid them, do that".⁷⁵ In another passage of his book, Ibn al-Muqaffa says, dismissive, as usual, of women's judgment "women with women are almost like food with food; hence, it is very surprising that a man who is mentally sound to behold things according to a woman's judgment".⁷⁶

Ibn al-Muqaffa's significant contempt for women was shared by Abu Abū Bakr al-Khuwārizmī (d.380/990) another renowned scholar who served in the Būyid Court and who was very radical in his attitude towards women. For example, he considered the death of a woman as one of the divine blessings since from his viewpoint it was a veiling of a flaw or an imperfection. In a letter addressed to the famous historian Abī Ali Ibn Miskawayh, al-Khuwārizmī he considered that the death of women was an occasion that deserved felicitations rather than

⁷⁴Grunebaum, G. *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām*, trans 'Abd al-'Azīz Jāwed, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1997),p.374

⁷⁵ A.Ibn al-Muqaffa (142/759), *Rasā'il Ibn al-Muqaffa*, (Cairo :Būlāq,1986) p.77.

⁷⁶ A.Ibn al-Muqaffa, *Kitāb al-adab al-kabīr*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1998),p.117.

condolences. In this connection, he said “for them the grave is a generous son-in-law and death is the most veiling of veils”.⁷⁷ In another letter conveying his congratulations to one of his friends on the death of his daughter, al-Khuwārizmī said, “should destiny fall upon females, it is more perfect than falling upon males. So God be praised for He who has replaced ordeal with conferment; blended grief with joy; veiled a flaw from where He has withheld friendly atmosphere; saved you the inconvenience from where He has brought about calamity; spared a father with courtesy where from He has bereaved a mother of her child”.⁷⁸ Regardless of the origins or reasons of an author’s views or ideologies, it is imperative to consider these views when analysing the writings of any author. The authors used in this study, are no exception.

In view of the above cultural streams that contributed to the decline of women's status within their community, there were also several factors that added to the degradation of women's situation as well. The most important of these was the intense accent on the luxuries of life, which became a characteristic of the second Abbasid era. Another factor was the prosperity of the white slavery trade that introduced the *jawārit* to the Iraqi community from all directions. Hence, the *majālis* (sitting rooms) that housed the *jawārit*, for men’s pleasure spread over all the districts of Iraq; and consequently, it was thought that they had taken an active part in the decline of the moral values within the community. Therefore, those who were prejudiced against women accused them of being the cause of the moral decline.⁷⁹

The negative effect of the previous factors can be traced back to the general outlook on women in the literature of the era. One might argue that literature is the ‘Mirror of Nations’, as it reflects the culture, life style and the principles of faith

⁷⁷ B. al-Khuwārizmī (d.380/990), *Rasā'il Abī Bakr al-Khuwārizmī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā'ah al-Miṣrīyah1942),p. 173.

⁷⁸ Ibid.p.60.

⁷⁹ P.Hitti burdened the *Jawārit* with the responsibility of the declined social and moral values in the Iraqi Community during the Abbasid Era; he attacked the concubine system and its related impudence and moral dissolution. Hitti said: “Concubine and its associated *ḥarīm* and eunuch systems along with the acquisition of *Jawārit* and male slaves had its effect in undermining the spirit of the nation, degrading the dignity of women, corrupting and depriving men of the ideals of manhood”. P.Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970) p. 562. For more modern source about *Jawārit* see F.Caswell , *The slave girls of Baghdad : the Qiyān in the early Abbasid era*, (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011).

pertaining to such nations. It is also considered to be an indispensable source for investigating social life in any given time.

The most important book of these sources is entitled, *One Thousand and One Nights*. It could be argued that this book is more important than any other source regarding the decline of the women's situation in their community. Since the starting point for these stories was Baghdad from the fourth to the sixth *Hijrī* century, they directly relate to the era under investigation, and as such, they represent a valuable social source. Moreover, as most of the tales in the book were not authored by any particular person, one might say it represented a general negative opinion of women; that is to say, the tales were written by several unknown people of intermediate education and culture who belonged to the middle and lower classes of the community and therefore, they represented the great majority of Iraqi society. As such, the opinions of the authors as included in the *Al-Baghdādīyah* version of 'One Thousand and One Nights' could be representative of the general viewpoint of the entire society.

The study of the social conditions contained in the stories in 'One Thousand and One Nights' is deemed by different scholars to be most difficult due to its complex nature or for the "multi-cultural context of the book".⁸⁰ The book was not written at any one single time which is why historians⁸¹ ascribe its central point to the already translated original Indo-Persian version known as the '*Hizār Ifsānah*' (One Thousand Nights). A version of this work, translated into Arabic, appeared for the first time in Baghdad during the second half of the third *Hijrī* century, which was clearly⁸² stated by al-Mas'ūdī (d.346/957).

However, researchers⁸³ agree that this part of, 'One Thousand and one Nights' was the *al-Baghdādīyah* storywriters used the tales of Arabian-origin in their elemental form and proper sequence during the period from the fourth to the sixth

⁸⁰ See W.Ouyang and G.gelder, *New Perspectives on Arabian Nights*,(USA:Routledge,2005).p.7.

⁸¹ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*,p.364.

⁸² Al-Mas'ūdī (d.346/957), *Murūj al-dhahab*,vol. 2, p. 367.Antoine Galland(1646-1715) was the first person who translated the nights into French. Also D.Davies translated into English as "Arabian Nights and Days". See N.Mahfouz,*Layali Alf Layla*,Trans. D.Davies(New York: Dobleday,1995).

⁸³ See A.Shaḥḥādh, *Baghdād fī Alf laylah wa-laylah* (Baghdad:Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyah al-Āmmah,1992).

Hijrī century/the tenth to the twelfth Gregorian century that is, during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. Researchers designated this version of 'One Thousand and One Nights' as *al-Baghdādīyah* version. The book took its final form in Egypt where the Egyptian tales were written and added.⁸⁴

However, the poorly-educated storywriters of the *al-Baghdādīyah* version of the 'One Thousand and One Nights', who mostly belonged to the middle and lower classes of the Iraqī community, had been influenced by the prevailing negative outlook on women within the community; and by examining their literary works, it is easy to detect how far the dignity of women in their community had declined. In the *al-Baghdādīyah* version women were shown to be very passive since the stories mainly pivoted on the infidelity of women and as such, must be treated as untrustworthy. The centre of these stories is based on the fable of King Shahriyār who decided to go hunting with his brother who suddenly remembered that he had left something at home. When he reached his palace, he found that the king's wife was cheating on him with a black slave, so he killed him and advised Shahriyār to be careful of women, as they cannot be trusted. Shahriyār decided to surprise his wife, and again he found his wife cheating on him with another slave.⁸⁵ In retaliation, Shahriyār killed his wife and seeking revenge, decided to marry a virgin girl daily and kill her the next day.⁸⁶

Al-Baghdādīyah storywriters, who wrote *al-Baghdādīyah* Class of unique tales, starting from the fourth century to the sixth *Hijrī* century also based the core of their tales on the faithlessness and treachery of women, in much the same manner as did their Indo-Persian peers.⁸⁷ Therefore, the women in the Arabian version of the book were also shown to be passive, disloyal and treacherous females who

⁸⁴ S.Qalamāwī, *Alf laylah wa-laylah*, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb,1997),pp. 302-324. For more modern sources see Uirich Marzolph, *The Arabian Nights Reader*, (Michigan: Wayne University Press,2006) and W.Ouyang and G.gelder, *New Perspectives on Arabian Nights*.

⁸⁵ See the symbolic expression, in the course of events of the tale that speaks about the meanness of women as voiced by the storywriter. Though the two disgraced women were Queens they were not proud enough to disdain or reject committing infidelity with their slaves.

⁸⁶Qalamāwī,*Alf laylah wa-laylah*, vol. p.311. Also see M. Woodside, *Arabian Nights*,(China: Sterlings publishing, 2008),p.20.

⁸⁷ In his defence of the Arab storywriter's attitude, Professor J.Gronbaum said: "The Arab Artist then was so passionate about the authenticity of imitation not the nobility of invention. Grunebaum, G. *Ḥaḍārat al-Islām*, trans 'Abd al-'Azīz Jāwed, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1997),p.374.

betrayed the protagonists of the narratives either by causing them to fall into critical situations or eventually to lose their lives as a result of trusting them. However, many of the early tales of *al-Baghdādīyah* version revolved around a phobia relating to strange, untrustworthy women since many of the stories were based on women's treachery and deception.⁸⁸ Moreover, *al-Baghdādīyah* storywriters was very keen to prove that many of the proverbs and verses of poetry that caution people from relying on women and their promises, were true and authentic. Furthermore, in many of their tales they tended to liken women to snakes⁸⁹ in a way that reflected the people of Baghdad's convictions concerning the stance of women on a social level. An important book on the *Thousand and one nights* is a work by Mia Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A literary study of the Thousand and One Nights*.⁹⁰ Gerhardt offers a new view of the stories, since she evaluates the translation and establishes a new shape to them. Moreover, she divides the stories into themes, for example, travel, and love, and attempts to analyze the tales by focusing on the character of each of the caliphs.

In addition to the primary sources, there are various important secondary sources that can be relied on in relation to Muslim women's studies in the world of Islam and women during the Abbasid period in particular, as well as other sources on the most richly documented period within Islamic history and the Abbasid era. In the early 1940s Nabia Abbot⁹¹ published her book, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, which was the first work to discuss the life of the most famous women who lived in the Abbasids' empire. Abbot's book examines the political influence of two women: the mother and the wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd, caliph during the Abbasid era. Her work gives a new interpretation of the old historical material by presenting an analytical description of both the political and social life of women during this period based on the most important references used in this field from al-Tābarī's, al-Jāhīz, al-

⁸⁸ Qalamāwī, *Alf laylah wa-laylah*, vol. p.308.

⁸⁹ It is curious that such popular convictions and beliefs have been adopted by the Intellectuals and Scholars. For example 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Shīrāzī (d.589/1193) in his *ḥisbah* Message on women's education and their Teachers, said: "The *Mu'addib* (i.e. the educator) shall not teach a woman or a *Jāriyah* how to write, as that will add to their evil. However, it is said that a woman taught to write is just like a snake made to drink poison". See al-Shayzarī (d.589/1193), *Kitāb nihāyat 'al-rutbah fī ṭalab 'al-ḥisbah*, (Cairo: Lajnat 'al-Ta'līf wa-'al-Tarjamah wa-'al-Nashr, 1946), p.104.

⁹⁰ M.Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A literary study of the Thousand and One Nights*, (Leiden: Brill, 1963).

⁹¹ Abbot, *Two Queens of Baghdad*.

Mas'ūdī and others. Abbot's book was on women's history. *Al-tārīkh al-Islāmī al-sāsīy wa al-thaqāfī wa al-ijtimā'ī* by Hasan Ibrahim Hasan⁹², one of the greatest scholars of Islamic history, provides an excellent political, social and cultural history of the Abbasid dynasty. Hasan's book discusses life during several reigns under Abbasids governors, their marriages, celebrations, poems, and sciences. Women were part of society and participated in all corners of the Abbasid life. Even though his information was not about these women per se, his references can be used in order to understand women's lives during this period.

Similarly, Mustafa Jawad⁹³ wrote another helpful book about the life of Abbasids women *Sayyidāt al-balāt al-'Abbāsī*. Jawad, who was the most famous author in Abbasid studies, focused this book on the women who lived in the court of the caliphs and their palaces. He concentrated on these particular women because different sources on women who had lived in the Abbasid palaces attracted more attention by writers, as mentioned before, because they were concerned with their dealings with the famous men of the Abbasid Empire. Jawad categorized his work by the names of the women who were the mothers and wives of the Abbasids caliphs and he focused on their lives. Additionally, he edited another important book, *Nisā' al-khulafā': al-musammá Jihāt al-a'imma al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa'l-imā'*⁹⁴, which was written by 'Alī ibn Anjab Ibn al-Sā'ī al-Baghdādī. Jawad focused on women and their influence: on Abbasid caliphs' wives, slaves, and free women. He discussed their life and societal roles as well as issues pertaining to love, marriage, divorce, culture and their relationships with the Abbasid caliphs.

Muhammad Ahsan⁹⁵, author of *Social Life Under the Abbasid*, provided a general background on the social life of the people of the Abbasid dynasty. This book touched on cuisine during the dynasty; the author gives an explanation of how other cultures influenced and changed the way food was prepared for the

⁹² M. Hasan, *Al-tārīkh al-Islāmī al-siyāsī wa al-thaqāfī wa al-ijtimā'ī*, (Cairo: Maktabatal-nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah., 1965).

⁹³ Jawad, *Sayyidāt al-balāt al-'Abbāsī*, p.70.

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Sā'ī, & M. Jawād, *Nisā' al-khulafā': Al-musammá Jihāt al-a'imma al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa'l-imā'*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1968).

⁹⁵ M. Ahsan, *Social Life Under the Abbasid*, (New York, Longman Group Ltd, 1979).

Abbasids. Ahasan also discussed the games that Abbasids played, dedicating a section on Abbasid women's games. At the end of the book, he presented the festivals celebrated during the era; some were celebrated by everyone and others by Muslims only. This book focused on the social life of the Abbasids, which for the purposes of this present study is very helpful in understanding their daily life.

'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālah⁹⁶ in *Al'ām al-nisā' fī 'ālamay al-'Arab wa'l-Islām* focused on women in the world of Islam. He discussed their roles, rights and life. He provided an illustration of the lives of several Muslim women focusing on some of the Abbasid women and their roles. In his book, Kahhalah he tried to show that women in the Islamic world enjoyed life and practiced its various aspects without any obstacles or hindrance.

Wafa Ali⁹⁷ in *al-zāwāj alsiyāsī fī al-ahād al-Dawla al-abbāsīh* examined the most important aspects of marriage and relationships between Abbasids, particularly in what he called, political marriage. In this book, Ali aimed to analyse the reasons for these kinds of marriages and their purpose. He tried to show the changing of the various regimes during the Abbasid dynasty and how these changes were influenced by such marriages.

Fatima Mernissi⁹⁸ is another scholar who studies women in Islam. In her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* she analysed the life of some of the queens, their roles and their influence on their societies. Her textual criticism leads to an understanding of the status of these queens, including those who were ruled under different states of the Islamic empire and those who were rulers in their own right. Mernissi identified these women and illustrated that they had gained power from their struggle with their societies and in some cases, how certain forms of democracy helped them to grow politically and achieve power. Overall, Mernissi discussed how many queens throughout Islamic history have overcome oppression through their beauty and intelligence. This work demonstrates a link between the

⁹⁶ U.Kaḥḥālah, *A'ām al-nisā' fī 'ālamay al-'Arab wa'l-Islām*. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah,1977).

⁹⁷ W.Ali, *Al-zāwāj alsiyāsī fī al-ahād al-abbāsīh*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fīkr al-'Arābī, 1988).

⁹⁸ F. Mernissi, *The Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland, (Oxford: Blackwell,1991).

past and the present state of politics in the Islamic world. When she discussed the role of women in Islam Mernissi, tried to look at the difference between theory and practice.

Just as Abbot focused on the political role of two important women during the Abbasid period, another author presented a useful picture of the literature of Abbasid women during the Abbasid dynasty. In *almar'ah wa lbdā' al-nathr al-fannī fī al'aṣr al-'Abbes* by Arafah Halmī Abbas⁹⁹, the author started by defining the meaning of *adab*, which is simply a portrayal of society. Abbas focused on Abbasid women and their role in literature by paying attention to the women who were producing literature during the different events of the Abbasid period. This literature is an expression of their feelings or their conditions and gives a description of the situation during their time whether it was political, social or cultural. Simultaneously, Abbas tried to show that the Abbasid women throughout their literature had certain high status in the Abbasid community, which was developed in different aspects, especially in the third century AH known as the Golden Age of Islam. Abbas' book is the most important historical literature that focuses on all women in Abbasid period, and not just the queens or the *jawāri* since it pays attention to the Abbasid women in general and their achievements in literature.

In *al-Durr al-manthūr fī ṭabaqāt rabbāt al-Khudūr* by Zaynab Fawwāz¹⁰⁰, the author provided a number of important materials on women in Islamic history. Fawwāz wrote in a witty style about the historical life of women in Islam in general and allocated around twenty sections of her book on the life of some of the Abbasid women focusing on their roles in politics, economy and society within the Abbasid community. Her ideas and style are almost on a par with those of Kaḥḥālah's popular book *Al'ām al-nisā' fī 'ālamay al-'Arab wa'l-Islām*. Both writers have collected information on the most famous women in the world of Islam and have written about their lives and their successes in history. Fawwāz's book is a feminist work that specializes in Muslim women's history.

⁹⁹ A.Abbas, *almar'ah wa lbdā' al-nathr al-fannī fī al'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ Z.Fawwāz, *Mu'jam a'lām al-nisā', al-musammā al-Durr al-manthūr fī ṭabaqāt rabbāt al-Khudūr*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutubal-'ilmīyah, 1965).

After the women's movement in the West began and women started to call for their rights and freedom of choice (which were the main issues for the movement) in the twentieth century, a similar thing happened, although to a lesser extent, in the Muslim world. Muslim scholars, authors and Islamic feminists, particularly from the upper class, struggled to write of these issues. One of those writers is Haifaa A. Jawad. In her book, *The Rights of Women in Islam: An Authentic Approach*¹⁰¹, she discussed the rights of women within Muslim society and drew attention to women's rights as outlined in the Quran. She provided different teachings of Islam using the Quran and Hadith and offered examples of women and their behaviour in the light of Islamic history during the life of the Prophet Muhammad, then moved to the time of the caliphs who followed.

In her book *Women and Gender in Islam* Leila Ahmad constructed a new framework for the analysis of women's history and issues of gender by discovering, 'the way in which gender was articulated socially, institutionally and verbally in the societies'.¹⁰² Ahmad argued the issue of Muslim women by examining the principal of the terms of the core religion of Islam, which actually improved the condition of women. Ahmad argues that in other groups of society that she has examined the male tended to dominate the female. However, according to Ahmad, "in Abbasid society women were conspicuous for their absence from all arenas of the community's central affairs"¹⁰³, and she considers that Abbasid women were excluded, were slaves and concubines. That is, the choicest of women, free or slave, were imprisoned behind heavy curtains and locked doors, the strings and keys of which were entrusted into the hands of the pitiable creature the eunuch'.¹⁰⁴ Ahmad and other advocates of this concept of women and their position during the Abbasid period do not seem to have studied women's lives within the Abbasid period in depth and do not focus on the study of the change in Abbasid society which affected the position of women's roles in a variety of aspects. Ahmad tried to illustrate a dissenting meaning of gender by giving as examples, parts of Islamic

¹⁰¹ M. Jawad, *The Rights of Women in Islam: An Authentic Approach*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

¹⁰² L. Ahmad, *Women and gender in Islam*, (London; Yale University Press, 1992), p. 2.

¹⁰³ Ahmad, *Women and gender in Islam*, p.3

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 80.

society such as the Abbasid period and when she studied Abbasid women's positions she used for discourse the concept of men creating the texts of the Abbasid era arguing that there were assumptions about gender and women, and most importantly, issues involving the structure of power in the society which governs the relation between sexes.

1.3 The Methodology of the Research

The literature provided in this research discussed the rich history of the Muslim community showing the rise of the Abbasid dynasty and the significant aspects of its years of reign. Different books as well as many other sources, which provide historical facts about the era, are readily available and can be used to gain more insight into the subject of the study. Most of these sources have been collected in different ways that are of popular use in the historical method such as the card system, except for bibliographical data, libraries and electronic resources.

Every study provides an opportunity to check the authenticity of information, analyse the background of the history and growth of a chosen field of study or profession. This practice offers insights into the possibilities of future organizational cultures of women's studies. The historical method used in this research applies to different fields of study pertaining to the roles of women during the Abbasid era, because it covers their origins, growth, theories, personalities, crises, and examines their lives and work. These findings can be used in the collection of historical sources under this methodology. The historical method, according to Garraghan is:

Regarded as an application, in one particular direction, of epistemology a science that deals with the nature of human thought and the circumstances, which condition its truth or validity. Just as epistemology establishes the mind's general capacity for knowing the truth and the conditions under which it must work in order to attain it, so historical method or technique demonstrates the correct procedure to be followed in attaining to a specific kind of truth, namely, truth in history.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ G. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method*. ed. Delanglez (New York: Fordham University Press, 1946), p.18.

The history of Muslim women, scarce as it may be, especially in terms of their roles and achievements, and their absence in many fields of history is regarded by some western writers who are interested in the feminist movement, as an indication of oppression and exclusion from society. Therefore, by highlighting the roles of the women of the Abbasid period, the research is giving a clear reminder of what women during Muslim history had achieved and offered. One of the main research questions of this thesis concerns whether the lack of historical records of individual women indicates a severely limited political and social role for females in this period. To answer this, an analysis of the various aspects and roles of Muslim women and their lives during the period under research, will draw a distinction between Muslim societies in a religious context vis-à-vis cultural ones.

Sociologists have generally considered women to be a vital element of any society: consequently, this research aims to study the history of Muslim women especially those who had played important roles in the shaping of the period in question. This thesis will provide a framework for the study of feminism in history, with the particular goal of enabling an understanding of the roles and rights of Muslim women during medieval Islamic history. Although the focus of this study is the Abbasid era, the framework applied can certainly be replicated in the study of other epochs. Through textual and contextual analysis, this research's primary aim is to shed some light on women during the Abbasid period and their roles in history, which will be argued, has largely been unnoticed in the academic fields and beyond. This will be achieved by applying an historical methodology that links the actual lives women lived, the rights they exercised and roles they played. It will focus on women who lived in the greatest period of Islam, and left their mark in culture, politics, education, literature and society.

1.4 The Theoretical Framework

As its title indicates, this research is concerned with the relationship between the roles of women during the Abbasid period, and the changes in the Abbasid regime under rules during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. By seeking to throw light on the role

of women in the period, this section of the chapter will examine the different theoretical perspectives that constitute the theoretical framework for this study.

To facilitate understanding the problem regarding women's visibility in Islamic history, this research will examine the issues outlined in this chapter through social Anthropology, using the theories proposed by Gaye Tuchman¹⁰⁶. She argued that in the media women were omitted, trivialized and condemned which resulted in the absence of representation or under-representation of women. The idea is divided into three vital interlinked concepts: omission, trivialization and condemnation.¹⁰⁷ Although Tuchman's focus on the media, this research will address these concepts as an organising principle for the material presented. That is to say, they will be examined within the context of women's omission, trivialization and condemnation within medieval historiography and modern research as opposed to media. A classification of the important points that will be discussed in this research in relation to how women's role during this period will be covered, is as follows:

1. Omission could be said to have existed with regard to the political activities and biographical information of women during the Abbasid period. The absence of women in political life that has not yet been evaluated, through different events of this period: how women practiced their political roles especially those who were in higher ranks, will be examined through the role of *al-ḥarā'ir* (elite women) during the period under discussion. Furthermore, the omission of biographical information of women in general, particularly *jawāri* will be seen to further exacerbate the issue of women's invisibility in Islamic history.
2. The concept of the trivialization of women will be examined by focusing on the role of women and the fact that there was no emphasis on the impact of women in the social context of their lives throughout Abbasid history, since some authors viewed them as slaves and subject to a man's rule. For example, there will be a focus on the trivialization of the important role that

¹⁰⁶ Gaye Tuchman, *Hearth and Home :the Symbolic Annihilation of women*, (New York :Oxford University Press ,1978), pp.8-9.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

jawāri played during this period, in politics and in different aspects of social life, such as poetry and art. Furthermore, little or no credit was made by some historians about women's impact on education and other social events, such as charities. This, among other things will be discussed throughout this research.

Fatima Mernissi's¹⁰⁸ article on '*The Women in Muslim History: Traditional Perspectives and New Strategies*' offers a complementary framework to Kleinberg.¹⁰⁹ Mernissi argues that the authors of Muslim histories, "did *not*, [emphasis added by author] as might be expected, talk about them only as the mothers and daughters of powerful men".¹¹⁰ In fact, she adds that writers recognized women as active and fully involved in historical events in general which history books, genealogies and chronicles identified, as well as religious texts themselves, such as Hadith repertoires and Qur'an *Tafsīr*.¹¹¹

Mernissi¹¹² focuses on how medieval Muslim historians grant women their due in the volumes of traditional mainstream treatises and also devoted a specific genre of work to women, which helped to identify them in *Akhbar al-Nisa* (Women's News). These are biographies of famous individuals such as Ibn Sa'd (d.230/852)¹¹³ in his book *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubr*, which discussed the events of the prophet's life; and his volume 8 was devoted to women who were living during prophet's time. Ibn al-Athīr (d.631/1253) in his book *Usd al-ghābah fī ma'rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, identified women and classified 200 pages under the title of *Kitāb al-nisā*. Similarly, al-Ṭabarī (d.310/932) in *tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, amply covered women's lives and focused on the importance of their activities in different historical events in Islamic history.

¹⁰⁸ F. Mernissi, 'Women in Muslim History: Traditional Perspectives and New Strategies' in S. Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perception of the Role of women in Political and Society*, (Oxford : Berg, 1988) p.338.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.p.337.

¹¹⁰ S..Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women's Histories*, p.339.

¹¹¹ Mernissi, 'Women in Muslim History,p.339.

¹¹²Ibid,p.338.

¹¹³ Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women's Histories*, p. 344.

However, in this article Mernissi¹¹⁴ argues that the lowly image attributed to Muslim women in their own society today is not due to an absence from traditional memory or in written history, but because their image is significantly dependent on the media, which can either disseminate such research or restrict its dissemination. She asserts that “Historical material goes through highly complicated processes, often tightly controlled and censored by those in power, before it is presented to citizens for selectively orientated consumption”.¹¹⁵

Mernissi creates a new strategy for enhancing the image of Muslim women: producing historical research on the level provided for the various media. She believes that Muslim women were not absent from history, and that their absence from modern research highlights a need to improve women’s image in order to adequately evaluate their role during different events of Islamic history. Essentially, this study should be viewed as a re-evaluation of Muslim women during the Abbasid period, which is one of the most important periods of Islamic history. To that end, this thesis will reinforce Mernissi’s theory in proving that medieval Muslim historians have indeed recorded various women’s accounts and achievements of the time. As such, it now remains up to the modern researchers to further unveil women’s roles throughout history from readily available narrations, which is in fact the case as can be seen in this field of research garnering more attention within the academic context.

In his book entitled *Retrieving Women’s History*, Kleinberg¹¹⁶ asserts that there is no definable methodology relating to women’s history, that is to say, history using an interpretive framework in order to examine different themes of women’s history such as political, social, culture, economic and religion. Kleinberg argues that by examining these themes relating to women’s life in history, one could address this lack since historians tend to ask why and how women were invisible in history. He further offers the concept of retrieving women’s history, which not only leads to

¹¹⁴ Mernissi *Women in Muslim History*, p.338.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ S. Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women’s History: Changing Perception of the Role of women in Political and Society*, (Oxford : Berg, 1988). p.19.

more understanding of history itself, and in turn, enables one to evaluate the status of women in any society. In one way or another, according to Kleinberg, the study of women's history "can lead to rethinking of institutions, of modes of production, of ideological, religious, political, and social system".¹¹⁷

By taking these factors into account, this thesis argues that during the Abbasid period women played a specific role and Kleinberg's study offers a strategy to adequately address the topic this. By re-evaluating the historical events and institutions during said period, Kleinberg's theory outlines the solution of the three dimensional problem suggested by Tuchman and contextualised by Mernissi in relation to women's absence from Islamic history: omission, trivialisation and condemnation.

Both Fatima Mernissi's 'Women in Muslim History: Traditional perspectives and New Strategies' and the 'Symbolic Annihilation' (of women) proposed by Gaye Tuchman will be used to explain the problem of studying women's role in Islamic history. On the other hand, Kleinberg's *Retrieving women's history* will be used as a solution to the problem and applied in this thesis. That is to say, the research will employ Kleinberg's theory of re-evaluating women's roles in history to better understand women and history itself to the subject at hand: the role of Muslim women during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

The diagram below explains this. [Fig.1]

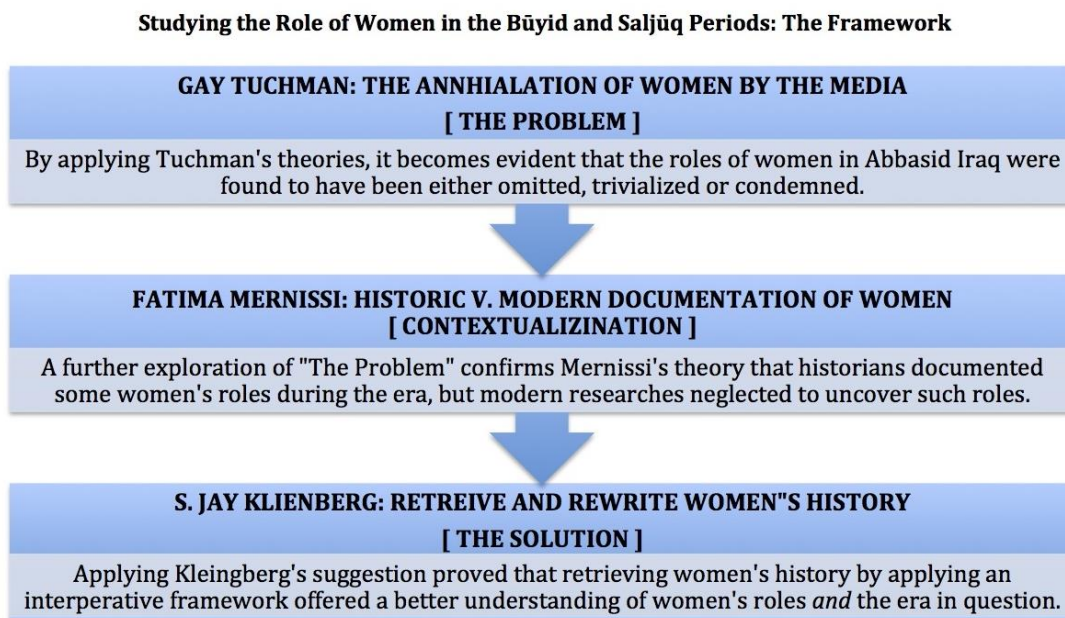


Fig.1

As such, this study will emphasize a new interpretation of a political and social Abbasid regime. The events examined in this research will demonstrate that there were gaps in some historical accounts and seeks to show how women were actors in various ideological, political and different aspects of social life. As Kleinberg argues, the study of women's history and the writing on the history of women broadens the entire field of historical research. Hence, this thesis, through the examination of the roles of Muslim women during the Abbasid dynasty, aims to explore and reinforce this theory.

The thesis will also use Leila Ahmad's analysis of women's lives in the Abbasid period in her book *Women and Gender in Islam*, as an example of how modern historians sometimes actively avoid, or as Tuchman would say, 'omit' the importance of an understanding of women's roles and conditions during the period under discussion. Indeed it would appear that she was more interested in calculating how many slaves and concubines existed in this society. Furthermore,

Ahmad mentioned that it was more secure for women to be part of the *ḥarīm*, both emotionally and psychologically, and also it was better for those women, who were *jawārī* to be slaves. Maher argues that there is a contradiction here because it is widely believed that the women in different ages of Islam were establishing their power within the *ḥarīm*. She demonstrates that through female-to-female relations women exchanged information, supported other women and sometimes gained power by becoming in charge of some aspects.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Chapter Two discusses the influence of *al-ḥarā'ir*, the *qahramānas* (stewardesses of the Palace, and particularly, of the Caliph) and some of the *jawārī* within the *ḥarīm*, and their role in politics, hence, proving Ahmad's theory misleading, at best.

In her book, *The creation of Patriarchy*, the socialist Gerda Lerner suggests that patriarchy '[d]epended on their installing family members in important subordinate positions of power. Such family members were quite often women, wives, concubines or daughters. Thus emerged the role of wife as deputy'.¹¹⁹ She argues that potentially this is a high position and independent women were establishing their authority through "patrimonial bureaucracy"¹²⁰ which protected their power. This will be investigated in Chapter Two, which focuses on *al-ḥarā'ir* and their roles during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods; and examined through the study of the concept of political alliances during these two regimes in Abbasid history. In her book *Woman, Culture, and Society*, Michelle Rosaldo agrees, "there are societies where women have achieved considerable social recognition and power and authority surpassing that of men".¹²¹ An exploration of this line of thought focusing on one of the most important societies in Islamic history, (the Abbasid, period and the history of women), will help to clarify women's roles. Consistent with feminist theory that suggests that the state of women's roles, rapid social change, changing and increasing the roles of women in any society, one hypothesis of this research is that both the Būyid and Saljūq periods affected Abbasid society in many different aspects. This in turn affected the roles of women and their activities in society, and provided excellent roles in culture and different dimensions of social life.

¹¹⁸ V.Maher, women and property in Morocco,(Cambridge: University of Cambridge,1974),pp.40-41.

¹¹⁹ G.Lerner, *The creation of Patriarch* , (London: Oxford University Press, 1986),p.75

¹²⁰ Ibid,pp 74 -75.

¹²¹ M.Rosaldo, *Woman, Culture, and Society*, (California: Stanford University Press,1974) p.3.

Gender writers tend to use this concept in order to acknowledge the absence of women in the historical arena due to their apparent weakness and the oppression levied by their societies, and furthermore, sometimes historians neglect the roles of women in their societies. Ira Lapidus succinctly summarized this by arguing that, in history there is, “no reference to women or the construction of gender prior to the nineteenth century and devotes only a small number of pages to women after 1800”.¹²² This observation also reflects the paucity of work on women in Islam and their history.

This research will use textual analysis and criticism of the different readings of historical records, as well as of the critical use of some modern materials that study the role of women in medieval Islamic history. The use of critical analysis means that this research will deal with the principal source and sources in relation to the Abbasid women and their roles during medieval Islamic history. Some of these sources can support one another and when presented in the research, can be used as references, especially in the case of the original sources.

1.5 The Structure of the Research

Given the broad scope of the study of Muslim women, in general or in a periodic context, this research will examine a number of aspects centred in a thematic approach. By focusing primarily on answering the research questions mentioned earlier this study will examine: the roles Muslim women played during both Būyid and Saljūq periods; the extent to which they played a prominent role in determining events within this era; and what modern researches can learn about the way women of the Abbasid period were historicised. As such, the central themes of the following chapters will be: politics, culture, religion, education, and finance, as well as other socio-anthropological aspect. Hence, this will enable a more solid analysis and criticism of the issue at hand. The research is divided into seven chapters each of which will cover the above-mentioned themes.

¹²² I.Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 26.

The beginning of this study will introduce a literature review, while the methodology is presented in an historical context and the historical background of the Abbasid caliphate. This will be followed by Chapter Two, which examines the political role of women in the Abbasid era, the Būyid and the Saljūq periods that will form the case study periods of this thesis. It will investigate significant themes in the context of political marriage alliances and the rise of the empowerment of women. As a whole, this chapter will address the research question pertaining to the emergence of new powers within the caliphate and their effects on women's roles. The first section will examine the role of Noble women during the Būyid and Saljūq periods by questioning what kind of influence contemporary women exerted behind the scenes, on powerful men. This will be followed by an investigation of the life at court and the *ḥarīm*, covering the lives of the *jawārī* and the *qahramānas* and their political roles during the Abbasid period. The third and final section of this chapter will address women's titles within society; and this section will emphasise the female empowerment that generated concern amongst the Caliphs, who finally decided to withhold power from women.

Chapter Three discusses women's cultural and educational roles during the Abbasid period, and will cover different aspects of women's social life. In addition, we shall examine the Religious and Intellectual life as well as Poetry and Singing during this era. This will be explored by posing questions concerning the nature of women's cultural and educational roles during this period and whether these roles demonstrate women's achievements in historical events.

Chapter Four focuses on the financial roles, which empowered women during the Abbasid period and challenged their Legal Competence, their Occupations, Crafts and Construction. It will be seen that women's social gatherings were breeding grounds for political debate; yet one might question why it is that in most research women's political activities have been as neglected as their financial ones.

The last chapter will conclude the analysis of the roles of women during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. Since the information regarding the era is contained in the historical sources they provide a firm structure for the investigation into women's history. Ultimately, the conclusion will reiterate the answers to the main research

questions discussed at the beginning of this section. More importantly, it will focus on the question of whether the lack of historical resources of individual women indicates a severely limited political and social role for females in these periods. Additionally, It will encourage modern feminist historians to re-read the history and deduce from the little information available, what kind of influence, behind the scenes, Muslim women exerted on the men of power at the tim

2

The Political Role of Women in the Abbasid Caliphate: Women, Influence, Authority and Power

Marriage alliances constituted one of the most important aspects of political life during the Būyid and Saljūq periods in Iraq. This chapter argues that these alliances reflected some of the circumstances and political aspirations relative to such unions; and as such, it contends that one cannot investigate the development of political life in Iraq during the period without examining the extent to which political marriages affected the various shifts in the balance of power in the Caliphate, which was discussed in Chapter One.

The relationship between political alliances and the development of politics during the Abbasid period was directly linked to the political role of women during the eras this thesis examines. In order to better understand this relation, this chapter will first discuss the primary issue that led to their empowerment, that is, political marriage alliances. In an attempt to answer the research's main question concerning the roles women played during these periods, this chapter will then explore ways in which women were able to take advantage of the porous nature of political life during the Abbasid period. The women will be divided into three categories: *al-ḥarā'ir*, *jawāri* and *qahramānas*.

With a particular focus on the Būyids and the Saljūqs, this chapter investigates the relation between political marriages, the struggle for power (particularly through succession) and the effect of each on the roles of the women in society. It questions the kind of influence, behind the scenes, that women exercised on the men of power. Lastly, it examines the consequences of empowerment for women particularly in the latter part of the era, in terms of the Caliphs' fear of losing their grip on the Caliphate.

Questions relating to the political role of women in general during this period will be examined in the light of some of the arguments posited by contemporary researchers mentioned in the introductory chapter.

This chapter will explore how Abbasid women played a specific role in changing and developing the politics of both periods while also examining the motivations of some of the primary source authors in their representations of these women. To a large extent, it will be argued that the strategies employed by women had a vital impact on the Caliphate's political scene. More specifically, this section of the study will illustrate how women were far more than merely "mothers and daughters of powerful men".¹²³ Indeed, it analyses how they used their affiliations to powerful men to manipulate power; strengthen their respective families and tribes, and ultimately serve their agendas. This line of thought will be seen to strongly complement Lerner's theory on women's use of the 'patrimonial bureaucracy'¹²⁴ to further empower themselves by establishing and asserting their authority.

To this end, the chapter examines the alleged 'absence' of women, particularly through their omission from the narratives outlining the Abbasid political scene, by analysing various historical events. It will be shown that, contrary to common belief; some women, especially *al-ḥarā'ir*, did in fact have a highly active political role. The concept of the omissions¹²⁵ of women is examined in this chapter by focusing on women's roles and the fact that since some authors viewed them as slaves that were subject to men's rule, there has been no emphasis on the impact made by women in the social or political context throughout Abbasid history. This will be seen to be particularly true in sections 2.3 and 2.4, which will discuss the roles of the *jawārī* and *qahramānas* respectively. The extent of trivialization (and arguably omission as well) will be clearly seen in the absence of a large number of these women's names in biographies in historical records and research materials.

Although it was not in the contemporary sense of leading a government, Muslim women's aspirations were evident in their unwavering pursuit of power and their manipulation of situations in order to favour their sons or tribal affiliations. This will be evident in this chapter's assessment of the marriage alliances that enabled the Būyids and Saljūqs to achieve the Caliphate's dominance and its decision-making

¹²³ Ibid.p.338.

¹²⁴ G.Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp.74 – 75. Also see L. Ahmad p.15.

¹²⁵ Tuchman, *Hearth and Home*,pp.8-9.

processes. Moreover, an examination of the struggle between *al-ḥarā'ir* and *jawāri* to secure the Caliphate for their sons will be presented. Here, the extent to which contemporary writers, particularly those with a political background, were influenced by *al-ḥarā'ir* will be investigated in order to further demonstrate women's political roles and aspirations in Abbasid Iraq.

2.1 Political Alliances and the Pursuit of Power

Throughout Abbasid history (132/750), some caliphs were exceedingly powerful in comparison to others. This chapter argues that behind such power was, to a large extent, a marriage alliance of one kind or another. Therefore, it will be argued that the presence of women significantly influenced the political spheres of the Caliphate, as they will be seen to have used every opportunity strategically, to assert their husbands', sons' or tribal affiliations' claims to power. This will be discussed in section 2.2. Before exploring the roles of women, however, it is first necessary to examine the circumstances in which women gained empowerment. Although there were other factors, the primary facilitator to a woman's empowerment was a marriage alliance, which both the Būyids and Saljūqs pursued in an attempt to secure the ultimate dominance of the Caliphate. Hence, this section of the chapter, examines the significance of marriage alliances in the Abbasid Caliphate, and establishes the foundation and framework on which the study of the political role of women will be based.

Abbasid caliphs were generally cautious and sceptical about others' plans or ambitions to marry into their families. Yet, in some cases, these marriages were viewed as a necessity in order to control uprisings or unrests. Nevertheless, the caliphs would treat such marriages as nominal, honorary and ceremonial as opposed to real (consummated) ones. This cautionary stance was adopted because they feared that such marriages might allow the possibility of the loss of the Abbasid Caliphate to the wife's family, especially during the Būyids period, as will be discussed.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Y. al-Ḥamawī (d.622/1225), says: "When 'Aḍud al-Dawla's daughter was wed to the Calip al-Tā'i', he did not cohabit with her, fearing that she might conceive and the Daylam would tighten their grip on the caliphate. This

It is worth noting that this was the case before the emergence of the Būyids and their quest for tightening their grip on the Caliphate. The first Abbasid caliph to meet this situation was the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd whose *wazīr*, Barmakid, was related to Yahyā's son, Ja'far al-Barmakid and the story of Hārūn's sister, Abbasāh.¹²⁷ It was no coincidence that marriage to an Arab royal would strengthen Ja'far's position at court. In an attempt to legalise their encounters, according to *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law), the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd arranged a private marriage ceremony on the condition that the marriage would never be consummated, which is contrary to the *Sharī'ah*.¹²⁸ It was forbidden for a royal woman to marry a non-Arab. In the light of the events that followed, it could be argued that the Caliph al-Rashīd was trying to prevent the couple having a child. However, the condition was broken and Abbasāh duly gave birth to a son.¹²⁹ The Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd was so enraged that he killed his sister, Ja'far and the child, and deposed all the Barmakids.¹³⁰

The story of Yahyā b. Ja'far Barmakid and his marriage to the Caliph Hārūn's sister is often mentioned by historians in the context of the fall of the Barmakid family in 187/803, although they do not claim it was the reason for their demise.¹³¹ Hibri¹³² argues that the Barmakids' fall from power is a question that has fascinated historians, and that the reasons they provided were various. In his narrations, Mas'ūdī¹³³ argues that the main cause of the downfall of the Barmakids was due to their tight control over the finances of the Caliphate as well as their having the

matter instigated the anger of 'Aḍud al-Dawla and made him repeatedly send a judge al-Tanūkhī to the Caliph al-Ṭā'ī, demanding him not to make his daughter sad by not cohabiting with her". See Y.al-Ḥamawī (d.622/1225), *Mu'jam al-udabā' :Irshād al-arīb ilá ma'rifat al-adīb*, ed D. Margoliouth, vol14 (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), pp.114-115. Also, J.Mann in his book *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under The Fatimid Caliphs*, mentions one of the important documents about the marriage between the caliph al-Ṭā'ī and one of the Egyptian leaders during the Fatimid period in Egypt, which was one of the political alliances. See Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under The Fatimid Caliphs*, Vol.IV (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1920) p.521.

¹²⁷ W.Alī, *al-Zawāj al-siyāsī fī 'ahd al-dawla al-Abbāsīyah*, (Cairo:Dār al-Fikr al-'Arab,1988), p.10.

¹²⁸ See a selection of verses in the Quran about Marriage Q.4:1& Q.30:21 and Q.13:189.

¹²⁹ U.Marzolph and R. Leeuwen & H.Wassouf, *The Arabian nights encyclopaedia*, (California: Santa Barbara, 2004) p.236.

¹³⁰ N.Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, (London: Al Saqi, 1986), p. 96 See also Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.22, p.137.

¹³¹ H.Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: a political History*, (Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1981), p.81.

¹³² T.Hibri. *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography:Hārūn al-Rashīd an the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate*, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,1999), p 45-49.

¹³³ A.Mas'ūdī (d.346), *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, vol.3, (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyah, 1973) p.374.

actual power, which naturally threatened the caliph. He also suggests that their fall was their being Alid sympathizers.¹³⁴ Like Mas'ūdī, Hibri also attributes the Barmakids' fall primarily to their exceeding power that had begun to prevent the caliph from making his own decisions. They sought to influence everything, especially matters concerning the Abbasid Caliphate economy.¹³⁵ As such, it can be said that although historians did mention the story of Abbasāh and Yahyā's Barmakid, they did not consider that the union was fully responsible for the family's loss of authority.

By analysing the relationship between political alliances and the pursuit of power in the period under discussion through an historical methodology, the following subsections will highlight how women were instrumental in securing power for their families and affiliations. Although it may be argued that this was exploitation of women, or that they were used as bargaining chips to some extent, the chapter asserts that this is arguably the least significant dimension in the topic of political affinities. This will be juxtaposed with the political scenes within the Caliphate in order to compare how the Būyids and Saljūqs were affected by such alliances. In doing so, this part of the chapter claims that the scarcity of information on women's roles and achievements is an indication of their oppression or exclusion from society is, at best, questionable.

2.1.1 Political Alliances during the Būyid Period in Iraq (334-447/945-1055)

From the early stages of Būyid history, there was an evolution of political alliances especially during the regime of Mu'izz al-Dawla (reg.334-356/945-967). There were many political marriages that associated him with a number of his army commanders that in turn consolidated and expanded his power. Such alliances reflected the situation of the political panorama of the Būyids era in Iraq, which at the time was defined as shaky and unstable. This section will look at the daylami's

¹³⁴ For more information see A.Mas'ūdī , *Murūj al-dhahab* , vol.3,p.374.

¹³⁵Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*,p.45-49.

reign; the transition of power from one to another as well as the political alliances that influenced each of these transitions and leaders.

i. Mu'izz al-Dawla (reg.334-356/945-967)

As mentioned in Chapter One, *Amīr* (prince) Mu'izz al-Dawla's rise to power ensured the Būyids' control of the Caliphate. However, this was not without challenges for the Daylamis and on the foreign front, the Hamdānis (293-394/906-1004). Mu'izz al-Dawla's ambition to seize Mosul, was clear and evident but because Mosul was viewed as the natural way into Iraq, the Būyids (334-447/945-1055) obviously considered that its capture would be followed by the establishment of their power in Iraq. In addition to the Hamdānis' own reasons for annexing Iraq to Mosul,¹³⁶ Nāṣir al-Dawla was well aware that if the Būyids were able to establish power in Iraq, such a move would constitute a clear threat to the security of the Hamdānids. Thus, it was Nāṣir al-Dawla al-Hamdāni's wish (reg.379-403/989-1012) to invade Iraq and demolish the Būyids' sovereignty.

On the domestic front, however, the danger Mu'izz al-Dawla faced culminated in the ambitions of some *Amīrs* and leaders in the Būyid army to overthrow and replace him as chief of state. Here, marriage alliances were pursued as quick responses and reactions to the overwhelming circumstances surrounding the Caliphate and as a means of safeguarding the regime. The union of Mu'izz al-Dawla and Rukn al-Dawla (reg.367-372/978-983) in which the former's elder daughter was joined in marriage to 'Aḍud al-Dawla (reg.372-376/983-987), the latter's son was the first marriage of its kind, and was intended to strengthen the family ties between the two brothers.

The marriage was construed as a symbol, that is, a way of reinforcing the policy of the Būyids that aimed to consolidate the bonds of kinship between the Būyids and underpin unity in order to avoid the risk of internal struggle and disputes. In fact this policy, which was first exercised by the pioneer generations of the Būyids,

¹³⁶A.Ibn Miskawayh (d.421/1030), *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.1 (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthanná, 1965), p.405.

contributed in great measure to maintaining their unity. It enabled them to stand against the dangers and challenges inflicted upon their regime in both Iraq and Persia.¹³⁷

The second marriage alliance Mu'izz al-Dawla shaped was the marriage of his son and crown prince, *Amīr* 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār (reg.356-367/967–978), to the daughter of the chieftain of the Daylam in the Būyid army, Rūzbihān b.Khūrshīd al-Daylamī. There were pressing issues that motivated Mu'izz al-Dawla to arrange this marriage. The Būyid army comprised two main divisions: The Daylam division (the backbone of the Būyid army) and the Turkish division. The size of the latter was rapidly accelerating especially after the assassination of Mardāvīj b. Ziyār,¹³⁸

in 323 by some of his Turkish guard. The joining of Mardāvīj b. Ziyār's Turkish forces to Mu'izz al-Dawla's army presented a risk of a shift in the balance of loyalty and power within the army. The Turks had become an undeniable force within the Būyid army, which drastically increased the internal struggle for power and influence between Khūrshīd of the Daylam and Sabuktakīn (d.387/997) chieftain of the Turks.¹³⁹

It was obvious that the ambitions of Khūrshīd were not only limited to displacing Sabuktakīn and assuming command of the army, but also to planning the overthrow of Mu'izz al-Dawla and gaining autocratic power.¹⁴⁰

The danger Khūrshīd posed to Mu'izz al-Dawla intensified soon after the Būyids set foot on Iraqi soil in the year 334/945. Khūrshīd initiated talks with the Caliph al-Mustakfī (reg.333-334/944-946) with the help of his *ḥarīm* stewardess 'Alam *qahramāna* (d.334/946).¹⁴¹ Khūrshīd wanted to gauge whether the caliph would

¹³⁷Anonymous: *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, vol 4, (Damascus: al-Ma'had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyah,1973), p. 490.

¹³⁸ Mardāvīj b.Ziyār: the founder of the Ziyārid dynasty (reg.319-483/931-1090). See C.Bowsworth *The New Islamic Dynasties*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp.158-166.

¹³⁹ M.al-Hamadhānī (d.521/1127), *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif,1982), p.341.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*,vol 2 p.165.

¹⁴¹ This was the *ḥarīm* stewardess, chief of the administrative hierarch "*Qahramāna*". As Harold Bowen acknowledged, there is difficulty in translating the term *qahramāna*, "Stewardess". He says that the term is too nautical, "housekeeper" too humble. Perhaps, "pay-mistress" most nearly expresses the meaning. He also suggests, "lady in waiting." Louis Massignon suggested "housekeeper"; "grand-mistress *qahramāna* (masculine) was used for a man and can be translated as steward. See H.Bowen, *The Life and Times of Ali ibn 'īsd* (Cambridge, 1928), 100, note 2. L.La Mansour (Paris, 1921),vol.1, p.400.

sanction his attempt to overthrow Mu'izz al-Dawla. Under the continuous pressure applied by his *qahramāna*, the caliph eventually succumbed, and granted his approval of the elimination of Mu'izz al-Dawla who was to be succeeded by Khūrshīd. Both parties agreed to dispose of Mu'izz al-Dawla during a feast arranged by the caliph in his honour.

Unfortunately for Khūrshīd, Mu'izz al-Dawla was vigilant enough to uncover the plot; and he managed to hold the caliph and his *qahramāna* in captivity.¹⁴² Mu'izz al-Dawla feared that because of the caliph's wide popularity among the Daylam soldiers, any action against the caliph would instigate some sort of a rebellion or mutiny. Despite the severe punishment inflicted upon the responsible parties of the conspiracy by Mu'izz al-Dawla,¹⁴³ it was noted that he did not dare to harm Khūrshīd. One might argue that this was due to the news of Nāṣir al-Dawla's military preparations for invading Iraq reaching Mu'izz al-Dawla. He had already been working hard to maintain the solidarity and tenacity of his army (at least until the danger posed by the Hamdānids was over), that to start another feud with Khūrshīd would have been counterproductive.¹⁴⁴

How then was Mu'izz al-Dawla to respond to the tension? Strategically, he arranged to cement his relationship with Khūrshīd¹⁴⁵ by marrying his son, Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār to Khūrshīd's daughter in the year 334/945. This political marriage was one key factor in delaying the outbreak of conflict between Mu'izz al-Dawla and Khūrshīd until a later stage. Due to this marriage, Khūrshīd became the second man in the state's hierarchy. His influence on the army was undisputed and his position was enhanced because of the marriage alliances with the Būyid *Amīr*.

However, Khūrshīd was not content with the outcome of this marriage, and waited for the opportunity to rebel against Mu'izz al-Dawla. His patience was rewarded

¹⁴² Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, p.86. Also see, Anonymous, vol.4, p.452.

¹⁴³ Mu'izz al-Dawla deposed the caliph, imprisoned him and had his eyes torn out. As for the *qahramāna*, he chopped out her tongue and confiscated her properties.

¹⁴⁴ The struggle between Mu'izz al-Dawla and Nāṣir al-Dawla ended by concluding a peace agreement in 344/946; but Nāṣir al-Dawla breached it in 345/947, making use of Khūrshīd's rebellion. Anonymous, vol 4, p.453. Also see, R. Levy; *A Baghdad Chronicle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p.154.

¹⁴⁵ The Sources did not reveal the name of Khūrshīd's daughter. See Anonymous, vol 4 ,p.495.

when Nāṣir al-Dawla launched his attack on Baghdad in 345/956. Thereafter Khūrshīd revealed his intentions and marched with his Daylam soldiers to *Madīnat Wāsiṭ* (the city of Wasit) where they acknowledged him as sovereign of the emirate.¹⁴⁶

In view of this precarious political situation, Mu'izz al-Dawla was again inclined to initiate more marriage alliances in order to achieve his political aspirations. Having lost his Daylam soldiers following the revolt of Khūrshīd al-Daylamī, Mu'izz al-Dawla had no choice but to seek help from the Turks to crush the revolution. Mu'izz al-Dawla ordered his son 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār to divorce Khūrshīd's daughter and asked the Turkish commander, Sabuktakīn for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Al-Hamadhānī says that in his eagerness to conciliate Sabuktakīn, Mu'izz al-Dawla, decided that the contract of marriage had to be in the presence of Caliph al-Muṭī. As for Khūrshīd, due to his lack of money, most of his Daylam troops defected and joined Mu'izz al-Dawla who eventually captured and killed Khūrshīd.¹⁴⁷

ii. 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār (reg.356-367/967-978)

Political alliances again played a vital role in the struggle for the sovereignty of Iraq that took place between 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār and his cousin 'Aḍud al-Dawla. The ambitious 'Aḍud al-Dawla, considered the possibility of securing Iraq with the aid of the Daylam in Persia and therefore he proposed to, and married, the daughter of Abū- al-Fawāris King of the Daylam.¹⁴⁸ In this way, 'Aḍud al-Dawla was certain of the loyalty of the Daylam troops, or at least he was able to ensure their neutrality in any conflict arising between him and Bakhtiyār.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 477.

¹⁴⁷ See, al-Hamadhānī, *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, vol.4, and p.283. Also see, Anonymous, p.47. And Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.114. For more details about the stance of the Būyids' princes in respect of the disputes arising between the Turks and Daylam, see, Ḥ.Mahmūd and A.Sharīf, *al-Ālam al-Islāmī fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī,1973), p.560.

¹⁴⁸M.Abū Shujā' (d.448/1095), *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*. (Baghdad:Maktabat al-Muthannā,1960), p.79. Also, S.ibn al-Jawzī (d.654/1256), *M ir'āt al-zamān fī tārīkh al-a'yān*, vol. 12 (Biuret : Dār al-Shurūq, 1985), p. 36B.

Bakhtiyār realized the impact of the political marriage alliances on his rule and ratified an alliance with the Hamdānids in Mosul by giving his daughter Bi-alkundar¹⁴⁹ in marriage to Abū Taghalb al-Hamdānī in 360/970. This marriage resulted in fruitful outcomes for both Bakhtiyār and Abū Taghalb. In Bakhtiyār's case, he succeeded in finding a powerful ally by his side to confront the alliance of 'Aḍud al-Dawla and the Daylam. Whereas Abū Taghalb's political standing was enhanced by his marriage and subsequently Caliph al-Muṭī (reg.334-363/946-974) granted him the authority to rule the Arabian Peninsula as well as Mosul. Furthermore, Abū Taghalb was also awarded the title of *'Uddat al-Dīn* by the caliph.¹⁵⁰ As will be discussed later in this chapter, titles were considered an honour. In this particular case, the title was coupled with authority, which re-emphasizes the legitimacy of both the title and the increased authority.

Given such complex developments, 'Aḍud al-Dawla found it imperative to neutralise the Hamdānids in the Iraqī conflict with Bakhtiyār. Therefore, he approached Abū Taghalb requesting marriage to his sister Jamīlah b. Nāṣir al-Dawla, the *Amīr* of Mosul. Contrary to his expectations, the Hamdānī *Amīr*'s refused to marry him. This angered and infuriated 'Aḍud al-Dawla.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, Bakhtiyār again reinforced his position by ratifying another political marriage to ensure the caliph's support and expose 'Aḍud al-Dawla as a backslider. He asked Caliph al-Ṭā'ī (reg.363-381/974-991) for the hand of his daughter, *Shāh Zanān*, in marriage. Given the current escalating power of the Būyids within the Caliphate, one might claim that the caliph was forced into approving the marriage, which took place in the middle of the year 364/974.¹⁵² The above emphasizes the extent to which political alliances had a tangible role in strengthening the political situation, prior to, and indeed without, actual military confrontations.

¹⁴⁹ S. Ibn al-Jawzī confirmed her name as written, Bi-alkundar see also S. al-Jawzī, *M ir'āt al-zamān* ,p.43B.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol, p.283.

¹⁵¹ A. Ibn Taghrībirdī (d.874/1469), *al-Nujūm al-zāhiraḥ fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhiraḥ*, vol. 4, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1939), p.126 also see, Y. al-Mawṣilī, (d.600/1203), *al-Rawḍah al-Fayḥā' fī tawārīkh al-nisā'*, (Baghdad: Dār al-Jumhūrīyah, 1966), p.231.

¹⁵² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol .7, p.76. See also, S. Ibn Khallikān (d.681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. I. 'Abbās, vol .1, (Biuret: Dar Sādir, 1994), p.267. And A. al-Nuwayrī (d.733), *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.23, (Cairo: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1963), p.203.

iii.'Aḍud al-Dawla (reg.367-372/978-983)

To a large extent, the period during which, 'Aḍud al-Dawla was in command, represented the stable phase of the Būyid state. 'Aḍud al-Dawla assumed power after Bakhtiyār's death in 367/978. The political relationship between the pioneer generations of the Būyids *Amīrs* was characterized by the strength of kinship. When 'Aḍud al-Dawla took over Iraq for the first time in 365/975 and was able to expel Bakhtiyār, Rukn al-Dawla he gave his son 'Aḍud al-Dawla an ultimatum: to either leave his cousin's estates and return all his properties or face his own father who would pursue and fight him. In view of his father's threats, 'Aḍud al-Dawla was forced to leave Iraq and return property to Bakhtiyār. He could not invade Iraq again until Rukn al-Dawla died in 372/983.¹⁵³ Arguably, this focus on kinship contributed to the stability of the Būyid state.

As previously mentioned, the Būyid *Amīrs* endeavoured to ally themselves with Abbasid caliphs via marriage alliances in order to achieve two main objectives. The first was to dissolve and marginalize the sectarian differences between the Shī'īs Būyid *Amīrs* and the Sunni Abbasid caliphs. Undoubtedly, the alliances with the Abbasid caliphate allowed for enough political support by way of presenting the Būyids as sons or brothers-in-law of the caliphs. This angle avoided much of the hostility shown by the Iraqi Sunni and other Sunni schools elsewhere in the Muslim world. The above was demonstrated by the material included in the matrimonial sermon of Caliph al-Ṭā'ī to the daughter of 'Aḍud al-Dawla which was drafted and cited by Judge al-Tanūkhī who said:

our Commander of the Faithful 'Abdullāh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Ṭā'ī, may God prolong his survival and preserve his high standing, when he knew of the position of 'Aḍud al-Dawla and *Tāj al-millah* [see the political and religious indications of the title *Tāj al-millah* (Crown of the Faith) his patron 'Aḍud al-Dawla, may God preserve his glory and grace for defending the religion, protecting the Muslims, casting himself for the cause of Islam and for his struggle in supporting the Caliphate to be victorious.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ See, A. Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592), *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*,vol. 7, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1960), p.83.

¹⁵⁴ See H.al-Ṣābī (d.384/994), *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah: The rules and regulations of the 'Abbāsīd court*, ed. M.'Awwād, (Baghdad: Maṭba'atal-ma'āni, 1964), p.138.

The second objective was to eventually claim the Caliphate by inheritance in the case of a Būyid daughter giving birth to a male heir that had been sired by a caliph. The combination of the Emirate and the Caliphate would, of course, enhance and advance the rule of the Būyids. As such, the Būyid *Amīrs* would be able to tinge the Caliphate with Shī'īs ideology without instigating the hostility of the Sunni powers in the Islamic world. This may be viewed as a Būyid attempt at “a bloodless coup”. To that end, Ibn Miskawayh says that ‘Aḍud al-Dawla planned a marriage alliance which was to be initiated between him and Caliph al-Ṭā'ī'. He did this by giving him his elder daughter in marriage. The contract of marriage was concluded in the presence of Caliph al-Ṭā'ī', in the hope that she would give birth to a male child who would eventually ascend the throne of the Caliphate, and in turn lead to a transfer of power being to the Būyid dynasty.¹⁵⁵

‘Aḍud al-Dawla was succeeded by two other *Amīrs* before Bahā' al-Dawla assumed power: Ṣamṣām al-Dawla (reg.372-376/983-987) and Sharaf al-Dawla (reg.376-379/987-989). However, they will not be discussed in this section, as political alliances did not contribute to their assumption of power or to their transition to, or from, power.

iv. Bahā' al-Dawla (reg.379-403/989-1012)

During Caliph al-Qādir's era (reg.381-422/991-1031) the Būyid *Amīr* Bahā' al-Dawla repeated ‘Aḍud al-Dawla's strategy, by asking the caliph for his daughter Sakīnah's hand in marriage in 384/994. Again, due to increased Būyid power, the caliph could not exercise his power of refusal and the marriage contract was executed. To the relief of the caliph, however the bride Sakīnah died a few days before her wedding night.¹⁵⁶

After Bahā' al-Dawla, there was a series of Būyid *Amīrs* who were unable to secure any political affinities between them and the Abbasid caliphs: Sultan al-Dawla

¹⁵⁵ See Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol 2, p.414.

¹⁵⁶ Abū Shujā', *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*, p.254. Also, M. Dhahabī (d.748/1344), *Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb Arna'ūt, Vol.15, (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996), p.130.

(reg.403-412/1012-1021); Musharrif al-Dalwa (reg.412-416/1021-1025); Jalāl al-Dawla (reg.416-435/1025-1044); Imād al Dīn (reg.435-440/1044-1048) and finally Imād al-Dīn Abū Naṣr Al-Malik al-Raḥīm (reg.440-447/1048-1055). Under their reign, the Būyid regime's power within the Caliphate significantly diminished. This can be attributed in part to the inability of Būyids to establish new marriage alliances. It could be said that the primary reason for their demise was the power struggles and in some cases civil wars within the Būyids themselves. These struggles significantly weakened their power and exhausted their military capabilities and in turn, made it easier for Saljūqs to emerge effectively and end the Būyid reign in 447/1055.¹⁵⁷

2.1.2 Political alliances during the Saljūq Period in Iraq (447-552/1055-1157)

As in the Būyid period, political alliances during the Saljūq period played an important and effective role in the political arena of the time. In fact it could be argued that the Saljūqs's rise to power facilitated, or was even the direct outcome of such an alliance. This section discusses the transition of power from Būyid to Saljūq, and from one Saljūq leader to his successor, focusing primarily on the roles of political marriages throughout this period.

i. Ṭughril Beg (reg.431-455/1040-1063)

The state of deterioration and imminent collapse of the Būyid dynasty, especially in the era of al-Malik al-Raḥīm, the last *Amīr* of the Būyid, was to the Saljūq leader, Sultan Ṭughril Beg's (reg.431-455/1040-1063) advantage. Strategically, he planned to distract the Būyids from the imminent danger against their domain posed by the Saljūqs. The Saljūq Sultan postponed his Iraqi undertaking which had been postponed until he had settled his conflict with the Ghaznavids as well as the sporadic unrests instigated by his half brother, Ibrahim 'Ināl.¹⁵⁸ Naturally, Tughril Beg did his best to bar the initiation of any alliance between the Ghaznavids and the Būyids against him. He turned to what was at the time an uncontested solution

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq*, vol4, p.453

¹⁵⁸ C.Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical manual* (Edinburgh:Edinburgh university press,2004),p.186.

and endeavoured to enter into an alliance with the Būyids. He agreed that his niece, Khadījah *Khātūn* (*Khātūn* in Turkish means the 'highly esteemed lady'), daughter of his brother Dāwūd Jgerī Bak, would marry al-Malik al-Raḥīm.¹⁵⁹ However, the marriage was not meant to materialize because Ṭughril Beg was able, in 447/1055, to conquer Baghdad and capture al-Malik al-Raḥīm. Consequently, Ṭughril Beg gave his Friday sermon and minted the coin in his own name.¹⁶⁰

Hence, one might argue that a political alliance in this case was used as a bait to distract and eliminate the last Būyid *Amīrs*, resulting in the end of the Būyid reign within the Caliphate. Indeed, the proposal of the alliances alone led al-Malik al-Raḥīm to let his guard down. This was a skilful political manoeuvre masterminded by the Saljūq Sultans since it took the Būyids by surprise and cost them their authority.

Following his defeat of the Būyids, Ṭughril Beg found it reasonable and practical to utilize the strategy that sought to seize the Caliphate and then have it transferred to the Saljūqs' dynasty. Knowing that a marriage alliance with the caliph could enhance and further legitimise his political stance, Ṭughril Beg proposed the marriage of his niece Khadījah *Khātūn*, who was previously engaged to al-Malik al-Raḥīm, to the *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhākhīrat al-Dīn, the only son and crown prince of the caliph.¹⁶¹ Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075) did not object to this marriage, but the sudden death of *Amīr* Muḥammad in the summer of 447/1055, forced Ṭughril Beg to look for other ways to officially link the Saljūqs to the caliph. This time he proposed that his niece marry the caliph himself.¹⁶² Initially, the caliph hesitated due to the difference in their ages; he was an old, feeble, bridegroom. Furthermore, the bride had previously been engaged to his diseased son.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, in the reports filed by Ibn al-'Amrānī he revealed that after extensive

¹⁵⁹ 'A. Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, ed A. al-Fidā', vol.9, (Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1995), p.303.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.162. Also, S. Poole, *The Mohammedan Dynasties*, vol.VIII, (Leiden: E.L. Press, 1995) p. 491.

¹⁶¹ M. ibn 'Imrānī (d.580/1184), *Al-Inbā' fī ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*, ed Q. al-Samarrai, (Leiden : Brill, 1973) p190.

¹⁶² Ibid. p.190.

¹⁶³ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funū*, vol.23, p.221.

communications the caliph agreed to marry Khadījah *Khātūn* and subsequently, the wedding was held in the month of Muḥarram of 448/1056.¹⁶⁴

It may, however, be argued that Caliph al-Qā'im's hesitation was partly due to his awareness of Ṭughril Beg's intentions: the consolidation of power and eventually linking the Sultanate and the Caliphate under Saljūq dominance. This is arguably why he had recourse to the same policy that Caliph al-Tā'ī employed with the Būyids. He dealt with the marriage as nominal and honorary and not, by definition, a real marriage. That is to say, he did not wish the marriage to be consummated and risk the chance of Khadījah *Khātūn* giving birth to a male child, who would then be used as a bridge for the Saljūqs to assume total control.

The caliph's intentions soon became increasingly evident. Angered by Caliph al-Qā'im's neglect of his marital obligations to her emotional and physical needs (and indeed rights) as a wife, Khadījah *Khātūn* raised complaints to her uncle Ṭughril Beg. This resulted in the rise of tension between the two men.

In response to his niece's anger Ṭughril Beg addressed a furious letter to the caliph and ordered his *wazīr* to deliver it and not to leave the caliph's court without a response. The message was:

The sultan of the World is telling you that we did not honour you with our daughter as an object of desire, for your clothes or your food, but we honoured you with our daughter so as to deal with her the way a man deals with his wife, otherwise you part with her.¹⁶⁵

The caliph, however, diplomatically outmanoeuvred this feud by making the case that he had become senile and had no desire for women; after all, he was over seventy years of age. Ṭughril Beg was resilient in his endeavour to join the Sultanate and the Caliphate by a familial link, so he requested marriage to Fatima,¹⁶⁶ the daughter of al-Qā'im.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ See Ṣ. al-Ṣafadī (d.674/1275), *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, vol.14, (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1931-2004), p.298.

¹⁶⁶ This is how her name was cited by al-Yazdī, which was the only source that recorded her name. Also it is the only source that reported Fatima as the caliph's sister, not his daughter, contrary to the other Historical sources such as al-Safadi that distinctly reported that the girl was the caliph's daughter.

Arranging such a marriage was not an easy task. Although in theory he had no authority, in reality, Ṭughril Beg was one of the Caliph's Mamlūks (white slaves) therefore, his Turkish origin coupled with his lack of ancestral line posed further obstacles to his plans. Furthermore, such a marriage was unprecedented in the history of the Abbasids; hence, Ṭughril Beg realized that his struggle with the caliph would not be an easy one. Ironically, the death of his wife in 453/1061 presented Ṭughril Beg with an opportunity as it was her dying wish and will that he married the caliph's other daughter, Sayyida b. al-Qā'im.¹⁶⁷ He took this opportunity and proposed, on the pretext of fulfilling his wife's wish.

Once again, the caliph diplomatically denied Ṭughril Beg's request by imposing many conditions in an attempt to discourage him from pursuing the marriage further. Caliph al-Qā'im stipulated that Ṭughril Beg was not to claim his bride until four years had elapsed from the date of the marriage. Also he was to surrender the city of Wasit into the caliph's hands along with the inheritance of his wife, Altin *Khātūn* and an advanced payment of a *Mahr* (dowry) in the sum of 300,000 dinars. Moreover, Ṭughril Beg was to reside in Baghdad, close to the caliph.¹⁶⁸ Ṭughril Beg realized that the caliph's conditions were attempts at deferring the issue in the hope that the sultan would refuse the marriage. However, the caliph's action backfired because the caliph's indirectness in refusing the marriage link had an adverse effect. The caliph's approval of the marriage subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions by the Sultan made Ṭughril Beg more aggressive and led him to exert more pressure.¹⁶⁹

The caliph's last resort was to request a formal legal opinion of the *fuqahā'* (juristic) and the *'ulamā'* (theologians) to pass a verdict to determine the validity of the

However, we cannot feel assured of what Yazdī, had said because aside from being a late Persian source it is also devoid of any citation of his resources in his book. See I. al-Yazdī (d.743/1342), *al-'Urāḍah fī al-ḥikāyah al-Sajjūqīyah*, (Baghdad: Maṭba'at Jāmi'at Badhdād, 1979), p.43.

¹⁶⁷ A.Ibn al-Jawzī (d.592), *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa-al-uma*, vol.18, (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1992), p. 3736.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid p. 218.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī says, "the matter was made ugly to the caliph from every side; and it was said that he explicitly denounced it as hideous since it was not customary for caliphs to act in that way". See, Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* .vol 8, p.220.

disputed marriage. Hoping for a verdict to support his rejection, he turned to the *Ḥanbalī* School, as opposed to the *Ḥanafī* School, which he normally followed. This was purely for convenience, as the former had already issued a ruling invalidating the marriage on religious grounds due to the lack of competence in terms of origin and ancestral line. Ṭughril Beg however, only heeded the legal opinion of the *fuqahā'* of the *Ḥanafī* School, upon whom the caliph normally relied. Unlike the *Ḥanbalī* school *fuqahā'*, and much to the caliph's dismay, the *Ḥanafī fuqahā'* delivered the judgment that there was no legal reason to hinder the marriage.¹⁷⁰

Additionally, Ṭughril Beg did not lack the means to exert pressure on the caliph. For example, he cut off the Caliphate subsistence and confiscated its feudal estates. This had a detrimental impact leaving the caliph with no choice but to succumb to the desire of the sultan and agree to the marriage albeit with preconditions. The approval was conditional on the agreement that the marriage was a nominal and honorary one, and that Ṭughril Beg was not to cohabit with his bride. Another condition was that the caliph's daughter be allowed to reside near her mother within the Caliphate's premises. Despite having had no intention of complying with these conditions, Ṭughril Beg resolved to indulge the caliph by declaring his approval of the inclusion of these terms in the marriage contract and signed it accordingly.¹⁷¹ It is noted however, that the caliph's approval was the result of the weakness and deteriorated conditions of the Abbasid Caliphate. Indeed, his approval severely shocked contemporary historians.¹⁷² Historian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī who wrote his history six centuries after these events, commented on the approval of the Caliph al-Qā'im of the marriage of his daughter to Ṭughril Beg as saying "*Inaā Li-llāh wa Inaā ilāyhi rāji'un*"¹⁷³, in reference to the Quran's instructions to Muslims in the event of disaster.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. vol 8, p.220. On the obduracy of the Saljūq Turks in their clinging to the *Ḥanafī* School (orthodox rite of *fuqahā'*) and their viewpoint of the remaining Sunni sects as sheer heretics. See previous source p.15: It is noted however, that the obduracy of the Saljūq Turks to the *Ḥanafī* School was inherited by the grandsons of the Othman Turks where the legislations of the personal statutes and the religious courts in Egypt and all satellite states of the Othman Empire were affected by this *Ḥanafī* School imposed on them by the Ottomans.

¹⁷¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* vol 8, p.221 See also M. al-Rāwandī (d.599/1202), *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr wa āyat al-surūr dar tārikh-i Āl Saljūq*, trans. I. al-Shawāribī (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1960) p. 241.

¹⁷² Ibn al-'Umrānī, M. (d.580/1184), *al-Inbā' fī tārikh al-khulafā'*, (Leiden: Brill, 1973), p.199. See also Ibn al-Jawzī *A'mār al-A'yān*, ed. M.Ṭanāhī, vol. 9, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1994), p.48.

¹⁷³ See J.al-Suyūfī (d.911/1505), *Tārikh al-khulafā'*, ed. Q.al-Rifā'ī, (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1986), p.447 & Q.2: 157.

A few days later, Ṭuḡhril Beg asked the caliph to grant him permission to accompany his wife to *al-Rayy* city but Sayyida al-Qā'im declined. The caliph tried, in vain, to remind Ṭuḡhril Beg of the stipulations contained in the marriage contract, but the latter stood by his conviction that the girl was his legal wife and the caliph, having no option, yielded again. Ibn al-Jawzī says: "Amīd al-Malik, who was Ṭuḡhril Beg's *wazīr*, came to the Caliphate house where he expressed his master's desire to relocate the caliph's daughter to the Kingdom house".¹⁷⁴ Amīd al-Malik was very persistent in his demands and stayed overnight in the caliph's house. In response, the caliph said: "oh, Maṣṣūr b. Muḥammad, you remember that the objective of that marriage was to honour you, and we said that we did not mind as long as the bride was not claimed and she was not surrendered to you, to the agony and sadness of her mother"¹⁷⁵. To the agony and sadness of her mother, however, the sultan eventually took the caliph's daughter to his Kingdom.¹⁷⁶

George Makdisi argues in his article, *The Marriage of Ṭuḡhril Beg*¹⁷⁷ the reason behind much of Ṭuḡhril Beg's behaviour was that he wanted to marry a member of the Abbasid family and the Caliph al-Qā'im had refused his request, "since the chroniclers devoted so much space to the marriage, the reason must have been that there were political consequences, and that these were of great importance."¹⁷⁸ Makdisi summarized his argument relating to Ṭuḡhril Beg's marriage to the Caliph al-Qā'im's daughter by suggesting that the marriage was a relationship between two leaders and the force of attraction between power and authority. Ṭuḡhril Beg persistently sought this marriage because it legitimised his position as Sultan.

Despite his persistence, his marriage along with his plan to capture the Caliphate, was short lived: Ṭuḡhril Beg died in Ramadan of 454/1063, less than a few months after his marriage to the caliph's daughter.¹⁷⁹ He was succeeded by his nephew

¹⁷⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa-al-umam*, vol .8, p.230.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ G.Makdisi, 'The Marriage of Tughril Beg', *International of Middle East Studies*, vol. 1 ,No.3,1970, p.259–275.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.p.259.

¹⁷⁹ Ibn 'Imrānī, p.199. See also, Ibn al-Jawzī (d.592), *A'mār al-A'yān*, ed. Maḥmūd Ṭanāḥī, (Cario: Maktabat al-Khanjī,1994), p.48. See Levy, p.192.

Sultan Alp Arslān, as a gesture of good will, and in an attempt to reconcile the Sultanate and the Caliphate, Arslān sent the caliph's daughter back to Baghdad with a letter of apology to the caliph citing his regret for how matters unfolded with regards to the marriage. The caliph reciprocated with a letter of thanks to the sultan and ordered that the Friday sermon and the mintage be performed under the latter's name. Furthermore, the caliph granted him the title of 'Aḍud al-Dīn.¹⁸⁰

ii. Sultān Malikshāh(reg.465-485/1072-1092)

Caliph Al-Qā'im's approval of his daughter's marriage to the Saljūq Sultan constituted a serious precedent in the Caliphate's history. In many ways, it paved the way for many other alliances to come between the caliphate and the Saljūqs sultans. Under Sultan Malikshāh's reign, the Saljūq state was at its prime. In the Abbasid caliphs' quest to gain the privileges attached to expanding their scope of authority and attaining more feudal estates, they ignored their ancestors' caution about such political alliances and the risk that they would lead to the loss of the Caliphate from Abbasid hands. This quest along with the growth, prosperity and lavish lifestyle attained under the leadership of Mālikshāh, made the Saljūq's Sultans very arrogant and dismissive in their dealings with the Abbasid caliphs.

Perhaps an illustration of this attitude was when Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075) expressed his desire to marry Māh Malik *Khātūn*, daughter of Mālikshāh¹⁸¹ and Turkān *Khātūn*.¹⁸² The latter humiliated Caliph al-Muqtadī's envoy to Isfahan when she compared the caliph with the King of *Ghaznah*¹⁸³, who also sought her daughter's hand in marriage.¹⁸⁴ Turkān *Khātūn* enquired of the caliph's envoy how much money was being offered for her daughter's *Mahr*. Sultan

¹⁸⁰ See Ibn al-Jawzī (d.592), *A'mār al-A'yān* p. 227. See also, K.Ibn al-'Adīm(d.588/1192), *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī tāriḫ Ḥalab*,ed.S.Dahhān, vol 5, (Damascus: S. Zakkār, 1988), p. 2496.

¹⁸¹ Al-Rāwandī(d.599/1202) was the only historian to mention that Māh Malik Khātūn was the sister of the Sultān Malikshāh not his daughter. See *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr va āyat al-surūr*, p. 216.

¹⁸² This lady, who had been married to the Sultān Malikshāh, was the daughter of King Abū al-Muẓaffar 'Imād al-Dawla Ṭagmāj khān, one of the kings of the al-khānīn from (*Mā Warā' al-Nahr*) Transoxiana country. See al-Rāwandī,*Rāḥat al-ṣudūr va āyat al-surūr*, p.307.

¹⁸³ Ibn al-Jawzī , *A'mār al-A'yān*,vol 9, p.2.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī ,*al-Muntaẓam fī tāriḫ*,vol 9, p.38. And Ibn al-Athīr, vol 10, p.120 also see Á.Vámbéry., *Tāriḫ Bukhārā mundhu aqdam al-uṣūr ḥattā al-aṣr al-ḥādir* ,ed Ahmad Sādātī, (Cairo: al-Mu'assasal-Miṣrīyah al-'Ammah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah, 1965), p.12

Mālikshāh, however, had been haunted by his dream of merging the Caliphate and the Sultanate, and accepted the caliph's offer.

The marriage saw the birth of the first infant to join the two kinsmen: the Abbasids and the Saljūqs. The *Amīr* was named Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far whose birth unsurprisingly sparked a spate of intrigues and disturbances between the caliph and the sultan on the issue of succession to the Caliphate. While the caliph desired that he be succeeded by his elder son, Abū al-'Abbās Ahmad, later known as Caliph al-Mustazhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) sired from one of his maids, the Saljūq Sultan was in favour of declaring *Amīr* Abū al-Faḍl Jafar as the Crown *Amīr* and legitimate successor to the Caliphate.¹⁸⁵

When the dispute between the Caliph and the Sultan was at its climax, the latter dethroned the Caliph, expelled him from Baghdad and prepared to pledge allegiance to his grandson as the new caliph. In the summer of 485/1092, a few days prior to the inauguration of his grandson, Mālikshāh suddenly died. As a result, Abū al-'Abbās Ahmad assumed power naming himself Caliph al-Mustazhīr. As such, it can be said that with the Sultan's death, came the death of his dream of a Saljūq capture of the Caliphate. Indeed, that dream would have proven catastrophic for the Caliphate, but the Abbasids' survived it and managed to maintain the Caliphate's identity. Despite almost losing the Caliphate to the Saljūqs, Caliph al-Mustazhīr still followed in his father's steps and asked the new sultan, Barkiyāruq for the hand of his sister Iṣmat *Khātūn*.¹⁸⁶

iii. Mas'ūd b. Muhamed b.Mālikshāh (reg.528-547/1134-1152)

Arguably, the request for Sultan Barkiyāruq's sister's hand in marriage was an attempt by Caliph al-Mustazhīr to re-establish amicable relations with the Sultanate. This was a strategic move to mend fences considering the

¹⁸⁵ S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*,vol.8, p.173.

¹⁸⁶ This is how Ibn al-Sā'ī reported her name 'Iṣmat *Khātūn*' While Ibn Khallikān reported it as 'Khātūn al-'iṣmah'. See *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol.5, p.289 but most probably it is a phonetically corrupted version of what Ibn al-Sa'īe had reported. See T.Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā':al-musammā Jihāt al-a'immah al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*, ed, Muṣṭafā Jawād(Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1993), p.108.

Sultan's awareness of his father's objection to Caliph al-Mustazhīr assuming power. The political tension between the Abbasids and the Saljūqs became increasingly evident resulting in the assassination of Caliph al-Mustazhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) at the hands of Sultan Mas'ūd following the caliph's daughter's flight from Baghdad. The assassinated caliph's son and successor, al-Muqtafī was then inaugurated as the new caliph.

In an attempt to ease the tension and stabilise the relationship between the Caliphate's strongest political powers, Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160) followed the same tactic as his father and grandfather.¹⁸⁷ Fuelled by his desire to link himself in kinship with Sultan Mas'ūd he secured a double marriage alliance: he married Mas'ūd's niece Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad b. Mālikshāh, and in return offered his daughter Zubaydah¹⁸⁸ to Mas'ūd in marriage. Considering the precarious circumstances leading to Caliph al-Muqtafī assumption of power, it might be asked why he would want to secure kinship with the Saljūqs, particularly Mas'ūd because, after all he did kill his father. Indeed, it could be considered a testament to the growing power of the Saljūqs, and even more, to the significance of marriage alliances during this era.

The last of the greatest sultans of the Saljūq dynasty, Sultan Sanjar (d. 552/1157), the influence of the Iraqi Saljūqs state was subsequently restricted only to the Persian Iraqi region.¹⁸⁹ It was then that the Abbasid caliphate was finally able to release itself from the Iraqi Saljūqs' domain. The emerging changes in the power struggles and consequent diminishing of the Saljūq power acumen, brought to an end the political marriages between the two powers within the Caliphate. A strong argument can be made that the political alliances discussed above were first and foremost based on mutually beneficial outcomes, particularly with regards to political gains.¹⁹⁰ All marriage alliances between those of power in the Abbasid

¹⁸⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, vol 11, p.77.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid & Ḥ. Ibn al-Qalānisi (d.555/1111) ,*Dhayl tārikh Dimashq*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus: Dār Ḥassān, 1983), p.176. See also, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *M ir'āt al-zamān* ,vol. 8, p.173.

¹⁸⁹ Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynastie*, p.188.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

caliphate were relationships between centres of authority and power. George Makdisi argues:

In the golden age of the Caliphate, the caliph possessed both authority and power. When power slipped from the caliph's hands, the struggle began between him and the holder of power. But the Sultan was at a disadvantage because of his need to be legitimised; hence his struggle to achieve stability through a reintegration of power and authority to his own advantage.¹⁹¹

Hence, amid such challenges, contemporary caliphs searched for new allies to support them. Before long, the Abbasid Caliphate took steps to align itself in kinship with another power that was becoming one of the most influential Islamic powers in the Orient *Saljūqat al-Rūm*.¹⁹² Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allah (reg.575-622/1180-1225) proposed marriage to Saljūqī *Khātūn* (daughter of Sultan Qulj Arslān the Second), who was previously married to the *Amīr* Nūr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. Qar Arslān, master of *Kūfah* stronghold, in 582/1186¹⁹³. Through this kinship, Caliph al-Nāṣir was able to forge an alliance with one of the largest Islamic powers against the threats posed by the Iraqī Saljūqs and the Khuwārizmīn, whose ambitions to expand at the expense of the Saljūqs and the Caliphate estates, were increasingly obvious. Although the kinship had a negative impact on the relationship between the Caliphate and the Ayyūbīds in Egypt, the Caliphate had no option but to proceed and to encourage it, for the sole purpose of reinforcing its stance and ensuring its political and military independence.

¹⁹¹ Makdisi, 'The Marriage of Tughril Beg', p.261.

¹⁹² The *Saljūqat al-Rūmī* was one of the largest states that came into being after the downfall of the Ghuzz Saljūq dynasty the merit of its foundation is due to Qutalmīsh ibn Isrā'īl, a cousin of Tughril Beg, who defected during the last days of Tughril Beg's regime along with his Turkmen soldiers to the area south of the Caspian Sea. His son, Sulaymān ibn Qutalmīsh ibn Isrā'īl (reg.473-478/1081-1086) who was establishing a local Saljūq sultanate in Anatolia, continued to expand into Asia Minor at the expense of the Byzantines and was able to annex Anatolia and Bithynia. Again, the sons of Sulaymān ibn Qutalmīsh, Alp Arslān (478-485/1086-1092) continued their expansion quest and succeeded in forming a vast empire. The prosperity of this sovereignty was the reason for the migration of several Turkish tribes to Anatolia thus blemishing it with the Turkish touch. However, this sovereignty was destined to be the seed for another great Turkish Empire that developed and became known later as the Othman state. See Bosworth, pp .213-214.

¹⁹³ Seljūqī *Khātūn*, who was always complaining about her husband, al-Malik Nūr al-Dīn, because of his bad treatment and abuse of her. See S.ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol 8, p.360. And al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol.5.p.296 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol.12 p. 42.

According to the historian Ibn al-‘Ibrī, that kinship was engulfed by many rumours. It was said that the caliph discreetly agreed with Sultan Qulj Arslān on the marriage whilst his daughter was still under her husband, Nūr al-Dīn’s, authority. Furthermore, Ibn al-‘Ibrī accused Saljūqī *Khātūn* of murdering her husband King Nūr al-Dīn, in order to marry Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allah.¹⁹⁴ Ibn al-‘Ibrī narrated the story as follows:

Khātūn, daughter of the sultan Qulj Arslān, travelled to Baghdad on her way to perform *al-ḥajj*. The caliph, who had been told of her extreme beauty, proposed to her. She declined on the pretext that she already had a husband and left to continue her journey to Mecca. The caliph sent a brigade of soldiers to accompany her on the pretence that they wanted to perform *al-ḥajj* as well. On her way back from Mecca, the soldiers seized her against her will and took her to Baghdad. Upon her arrival, the news of her husband’s death was conveyed to her. Nobody knew how her husband died and the caliph eventually married the *Khātūn*.¹⁹⁵

Muḥammad Ibn Jubayr, an eyewitness who was performing *ḥajj* in the same year as the *Khātūn* had a different version of the story. He narrated that, “The *Khātūn*, daughter of the sultan Qulj Arslān, came amidst her dense military escort accompanied by the pilgrims of Syria and Mosul along with the *Khātūn*, mother of ‘Izz al-Dīn the Atābak of Mosul, whose parade was also characterized by its dense military and heavy soldiers provided for her service”.¹⁹⁶ After the completion of the *ḥajj* season, Ibn Jubayr left with her parade accompanied by the pilgrims of Khurasan under the protection of her soldiers travelling to Baghdad where she stayed for fifteen days under the hospitality of the mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir. Later, she left for her country taking the road to Mosul.¹⁹⁷

This alliance aroused Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī’s resentment against Caliph al-Nāṣir because the former believed that the main purpose of this kinship was the formation of an alliance between the Caliphate and the Saljūqat al-Rūm against him. This is especially true as Saljūqat al-Rūm did not conceal their ambition to seize the Ayyūbid estates in Northern Syria. Therefore, political relations between

¹⁹⁴ Ibn al-‘Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Iṣḥāq Armalah (Beirut :Dār al-Mashriq,1986),p.296.

¹⁹⁵ See *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, p. 296.

¹⁹⁶ See M.Ibn Jubayr(614/1217), *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr* (Beirut : Dār Ṣādir,1964), p. 206.

¹⁹⁷ See, Ibn Jubayr p.212. It is known however, that eighteen months had lapsed from the time of her husband’s death in 581/1185, until such time she was engaged by the caliph al-Nāṣir. See, al-Sā‘ī, p.112.

the Caliphate and the Ayyūbī state in Egypt were in turmoil, and did not return to normal until the death of Saljūqī *Khātūn* in 584/1188.¹⁹⁸

The sudden death of Saljūqī *Khātūn* was a shock to Caliph al-Nāṣir who relied to a great extent, on his alliance with the Romain Saljūq to intimidate his adversaries from attacking Iraq. However, Caliph al-Nāṣir decided to improve his relationship with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in Egypt. Moreover, he approached Jalāl al-Dīn Khuwārizm Shāh who was persuaded by al-Nāṣir of the necessity to destroy and eliminate what was left of the Iraḡi Saljūqs estates in Persia and Persian Iraq. The scheme resulted in the demolition of the influence of the Iraḡi Saljūqs in Iraq.¹⁹⁹

2.1.3 The Significance of Political Alliances (Būyid and Saljūq): An Analysis

The above undoubtedly reveals that political alliances were one of the many ways used to exploit women in order to achieve some interests and political gains. They were also regarded as one of the most distinct aspects of political life in Iraq during the Būyids and Saljūqs eras. Also, the function of these marriage links, from the social point of view, was to display and maintain the aristocratic style of the ruling dynasty and to keep power exclusively within the hands of their descendants through the marriage of the rulers' daughters to the sons of their counterparts, including *Amīrs* and governors.

It can be argued that initially these alliances were meant to dissolve and marginalize the sectarian differences between the Shī'īs Būyid *Amīrs* and the Sunni Abbasid caliphs. However, as discussed in this chapter, it was a policy that was employed later by the Saljūqs as well. For example, just as 'Aḡud al-Dawla planned the marriage of his elder daughter to Caliph al-Ṭā'ī, Ṭughril Beg also took

¹⁹⁸ For example, but not restricted to, the dissensions between the Ayyūbids and the caliphate during the Hajj season of 583/1187, where a fierce battle took place, on the Mountain of Arafat, between the Egyptian pilgrims and the Iraḡi Pilgrims as a result of the desire of the sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (reg. 564-589/1169-1193) to raise his flag and insignia on the *Minbar* instead of the flag and insignia of the caliph as was the custom. The Emir of the Egyptian pilgrims was killed in the battle and so the caliph sent his apologies to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn who declined to accept them and addressed the messenger of the caliph by saying: 'Had it not been for my engagement in the Jihad, I would have had another concern with the caliph'. See, Ibn Taghrībirdī, vol 6, p.5.

¹⁹⁹ A. Ibn Taghrībirdī (d.874/1469), *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, vol.6, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1939),p.5.

recourse to the strategy by asking Caliph al-Qā'im to marry his niece Khadījah *Khātūn*. The contracts of these marriages were concluded in the hope that these women would give birth to a male child who would eventually ascend the throne of the Caliphate, which would then be transferred to the dynasty of Būyids or later the Saljūqs, combining both powers under the control of the respective dynasties. Here, it is important to remember that the Abbasids stringently opposed this practice during the Būyids state until their demise at the hands of the Saljūq Turks. Indeed, the overwhelming strength of the latter inclined the caliphs to seek alliances as a means to secure power and loyalty within the Caliphate. Worthy of note is the Caliphs' change in attitude and submission to the Saljūq sultans. This process eventually led to the emergence of new *Amīrs* of hybrid blood which escalated disputes on the issue of the succession to the Caliphate between the Abbasids and the Saljūq sultans, as seen in the case of Caliph al-Muqtadī, and which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The above illustrates the magnitude of the impact of political alliances on the course of the relationships between the Abbasid caliphs and the Būyid *Amīrs*, and the Saljūqs at a later stage. Therefore, it is obvious how much the political alliances were affected and influenced by the course of events and the prevailing political circumstances at the time. In effect, there was a direct link between the political acumen of the dynasties, and their eventual decline, and the practices of political alliances. In particular it was the change of attitude towards the practice after the decline of the Saljūqs, and the immediate move by the caliphs of the late Abbasid era that reasserted and protected their independence against the re-emergence of the Saljūqs.

This thesis, and particulay this chapter, will examine the extent political marriages tended to distort the image of women and expose them to exploitation at times, especially in terms of the strategic and kinship alliances. Nevertheless, it will be argued in the following sections that some women clearly played a strong political role during the Būyid and Saljūq eras and sometimes succeeded in asserting their political existence. They succeeded by broadening the criteria for determining whether one had power in the Abbasid regime. To better understand this, one has

to incorporate such variables in the influence that one person had over another, as well as the attraction of those in power to those who sought it. By taking these ideas into account it becomes clear that the extended Abbasid household (caliphs, immediate family members, concubines, retainers, etc), took a central role in the area that formed an integral part of the region's political and social system. Women's role in politics will be investigated in the next sections of this chapter.

The study of marriage alliances as a means for some women to gain influence within the Abbasid court facilitates the examination of various powers within these alliances; and this can be done by studying personal and regional conflicts. That is, by analysing these marriage alliances and investigating women's power in these marriages one must ask why there was an absence of Abbasid women's voices during the Būyid and Saljūq periods. Is it a perceived absence because women had no role in politics, or is the absence of source material widely responsible for the inability to adequately evaluate much of women's lives, as Mernissi argues?

This chapter thus far has discussed the role of women in the political scene in the context of securing power or increasing political acumen within the Caliphate through marriage alliances. This alone could negate their perceived absence from vital events in Islamic history. That is to say, the mention of women in the context of political alliances, superficial as it may be, remains a form of record of women's roles in these events. Although not yet in sufficient detail, it can be seen that they were not entirely omitted from historical narratives. By the same token, it should be noted that historians did not trivialise their existence to their respective affiliations to caliphs, *Amīrs* or sultans. Indeed, some narratives were seen to explore how women demanded their rights and attempted to manipulate situations in their pursuit of power. The following section offers a more in depth analysis of the political role of women during the Būyids and Saljūqs eras in the context of political alliances and development of politics during the periods under discussion.

2.2 Power behind Closed Doors: The Role of *al-ḥarā'ir* in Politics

The chapter has so far only ascertained the importance of marriage alliances to the strengthening of political positions. What is yet to be examined is what these political alliances meant to the women involved. Were women subsumed in these marriages or did they, too, use their new positions to gain power? Focusing particularly on *al-ḥarā'ir* in Abbasid society, this section of the chapter questions how they were able to take advantage of the porous nature of the political field. It shall examine how marriage alliances had a significant effect, not only on the affairs of the caliphate but also on women's power and influence in politics. This will be done by examining cases of some of the most influential women under the Būyids and Saljūqs regimes, including those who contributed to steering the empire in one direction or the other to serve their agenda.

The definition, *al-ḥarā'ir*, relates to a class of freeborn elite women in the caliphate court. These women were very insistent on using this title because they wished to differentiate themselves from the sub-class of *al-imā'* or *jawāri*. Most of *al-ḥarā'ir* were the legal wives of the caliphs, *Amīrs* or Sultans, and in most cases they were members of families of aristocratic descent. However, their presence in the state court was the direct result of political affinities formed in the period.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no doubt that *al-ḥarā'ir* played a significant role in the political arena, to the extent that some assumed command of the army and engaged in military combat against their adversaries. *Al-ḥarā'ir* were also key players in the struggle for power between the different sects; and each one tried her utmost to win the succession of the caliphate for her own son, as will be discussed below.

2.2.1 The Role of *al-ḥarā'ir* during the Būyid Era:

The material given in the sources documenting the activities of *al-ḥarā'ir* in the Būyid era, is very sparse and at best, fragmentary. References mainly focus on *al-ḥarā'ir* of the court who were instrumental in directing and influencing the course of events in addition to their effective functions in disputes concerning the

succession within Būyid court. Accordingly, the material is devoid of any substantial information about the ladies of the Abbasid court, especially relating to the two wives of Caliph al-Ṭā'ī' (reg.363-381/976991): the daughter of Bakhtiyār (Shāh Zanān) and the daughter of 'Aḍud al-Dawla. As previously mentioned, caliphs (and Caliph al-Ṭā'ī's were no exception), feared that their wives would become powerful should they succeed in giving birth to a new breed of children that might enable the Daylam, or later the Saljuqs to seize the Caliphate in the future. The following table comprises a list of the Būyid *al-ḥarā'ir* wives of the Caliphs, *Amīrs*:

Caliph	Wife	Amīrs	Wife
al-Mustakfī(reg.333-334/944-946)	-----	Mu'izz al-Dawla	Mother of 'Izz al-Dawla
Al-Muṭṭī'(reg334-363/946-974)	-----	Izz al-Dawla	Daughter of Khūrshīd al- Daylamī
al-Ṭā'ī'(reg.363-381/974-991)	Shāh Zanān	Bakhtiyār	Daughter of Sabuktakīn
al-Ṭā'ī'(reg.363-381/974-991)	Daughter of 'Aḍud al-Dawla	'Aḍud al-Dawla	Daughter of King Munādhir b.Jstān al-Marzubān al- Dalaymī
	Sakīnah Daughter	'Aḍud al-	Mother of Şamşām

al-Qādir(reg.381-422/991-1031)	of Bahā al-Dawla	Dawla al-Dawla	al-Dawla Daughter of Mu'izz
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Table 1

It is clear from an analysis of the above table that Būyid *Amīrs* were related through marriage to the Abbasid caliphs in three instances: firstly and secondly by the marriage of Caliph al-Ṭā'ī to the daughters of Bakhtiyār and 'Aḍud al-Dawla respectively, and thirdly by the marriage of Sakīnah, daughter of Bahā al-Dawla, to Caliph al-Qādir. Furthermore, the source cites a group of women in the Būyid court. The most important and influential of these women were a few female characters that were, in order of succession: the mother of 'Izz al-Dawla and the wife of *Amīr* Mu'izz al-Dawla; the daughter of King Munādhir al-Marzubān al-Dalaymī and the wife of *Amīr* 'Aḍud al-Dawla and lastly the mother of *Amīr* Ṣamṣām al-Dawla whose origin was omitted from the source material. Below is a review of the important features of the political roles exercised by *al-ḥarā'ir* at that time.

The first woman to assume a noteworthy role in politics during the early Būyid era was the wife of Mu'izz al-Dawla and mother of his son crown *Amīr* Bakhtiyār. The influence of this lady (who was known as al-Sitt) began to increase during the era of Mu'izz al-Dawla himself. Al-Hamadhānī for example mentions her because nothing of importance is documented in the sources about this lady before her marriage to Mu'izz al-Dawla. However, we wish to include her amongst the *al-ḥarā'ir* category because we know that Mu'izz al-Dawla detested concubines; over and above, the sources described her as the wife of Mu'izz al-Dawla and not as his *jāriyah*(his slave woman)²⁰⁰

Al-Sitt's influence and roles first emerged on the political scene when Mu'izz al-Dawla confiscated the Caliph's right to appoint *wazīrs* and restricted the right to himself in an attempt to find a *wazīr* to help him to tackle the administrative²⁰¹ aspect of the state. Many notable figures presented themselves as potential

²⁰⁰ al-Hamadhānī, *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 408.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p.7.

candidates for this distinguished position. The importance of choosing a trustworthy *wazīr* presented the opportunity for al-Sitt to enter the political scene by offering her advice to her husband. Some might argue that her suggestions were more than mere advice, but rather influential recommendations. Indeed, her influence was so powerful that one of the candidates, Abū Alī al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, approached her to intervene with Mu‘izz al-Dawla in order to secure the position for him. She agreed to apply pressure in his favour and to name him as a *wazīr*, for a sum of, 200,000 *dirhams*. If the matter went as planned, al-Ṭabarī had to pay a sum of 180,000 *dirhams* in advance, and the rest was to be deferred for payment until such time that al-Ṭabarī was awarded his ministerial position.²⁰²

However, Yāqūt is the only historian to say that the lady was the mother of Mu‘izz al-Dawla and not his wife. It is obvious that Yāqūt was quoting from the al-Tanūkhī but he altered the phrase, ‘Izz al-Dawla mother’, which is the title of her son Bakhtiyār to the phrase, ‘Mu‘izz al-Dawla’.²⁰³ One might argue that this affiliation affected his views and writings as it would be in his interest to cater to the leadership and their stance towards women, particularly considering that a woman played a role in securing his position.

It seems however, that when he was informed of the details of the agreement with his wife, Mu‘izz al-Dawla aimed to acquire al-Ṭabarī’s fortune. Consequently, he denied al-Ṭabarī the ministry and instead nominated Alī Abū al-Ḥasan Muhallabī for the position in 352/963. Al-Ṭabarī’s fortune, a sum of 50,000 *dirhams*,²⁰⁴ was then confiscated by Mu‘izz al-Dawla.

The sources do not give a precise explanation of the reason why Mu‘izz al-Dawla went against his wife’s wishes. It may be attributed to his fear of being seen as one who succumbs to his wife. Alternatively, it may have been generated by his wish to seize Al-Ṭabarī’s fortune. Regardless of the reason, his refusal should not belittle his wife or her influence, as it certainly did not discourage her from having a say in

²⁰²Al-Tanūkhī(d.384/994), *Nishwār al-muḥāḍarah wa-akhbār al-mudhākarah*, ed.‘Abbūd Shālī, vol 2, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1971) p.252.

²⁰³ See al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-udabā’*, vol.9, p.121.

²⁰⁴ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.197 also see al-Hamadhānī, *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 370.

matters of state, especially during her son, 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār's era. One of the most famous incidents demonstrating al-Sitt's influence during her son's era was when riots were instigated between Bakhtiyār²⁰⁵ and his father-in-law Sabuktakīn *al-Ḥājib* (the chamberlain, chieftain of the Turks), whose increasing influence was noticeable after the elimination of Khūrshīd, (leader of the Daylam in the Būyids army) by Mu'izz al-Dawla.

Sabuktakīn had started to strengthen his military flank by using the Turks in the Būyids army and entrusting the higher commands of the army to them. These tactics were detrimental to the influence of the Daylam flank of the Būyids army, upon which Bakhtiyār was largely dependent for support. Moreover, Sabuktakīn was very popular and managed to establish himself as a man of high standing especially after the death of Mu'izz al-Dawla by becoming Bakhtiyār's father in law and hence the second high ranking official in the state hierarchy. Bakhtiyār felt the threat posed by Sabuktakīn immediately after his father's demise when the army commanders objected to his succession as commander-in-chief and chose to acknowledge Sabuktakīn instead. However, Sabuktakīn was not in favour of the idea, fearing the intervention of Rukn al-Dawla and his son 'Aḍud al-Dawla of Persia. As a result, he ordered his troops to pledge allegiance to his son-in-law, Bakhtiyār.²⁰⁶

Bakhtiyār's mother played a significant role in the attempt to eliminate Sabuktakīn the chamberlain late in 363/972. Secretly, she made an agreement with her son that he should take advantage of his absence from Baghdad in the Ahwaz, and feign death there. He was to wait until the arrival of Sabuktakīn to offer his condolences, and then issue the order for his arrest. Bakhtiyār's mother executed this plan and declared mourning on the death of her son and awaited the court's condolences. The plan was almost flawless, even Caliph al-Ṭā'ī' came to pay his respects. However, Sabuktakīn, a cautious man by nature, preferred to wait until Bakhtiyār's death was confirmed. Soon the device was exposed. Ibn Miskawayh²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Ibid.vol.2, p.24.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.vol 2, p.197

²⁰⁷ Ibid.vol.2,p.326

mentions that the idea of Bakhtiyār's death was incompatible and worthy of perusal. Sabuktakīn corresponded with them asking about the validity of the news but he did not ride to see Bukhtiar's mother until such time as his messengers ascertained the truth of the whole account.²⁰⁸

After discovering the plot against him, Sabuktakīn decided to dispose of Bakhtiyār and his mother. He first called upon his Turkish troops and declared the expulsion of Bakhtiyār from the emirate. Then Sabuktakīn sent the latter to Bakhtiyār's mother for her approval of the measure as well as the declaration of the inauguration of his brother Abū Ishāq b. Mu'izz al-Dawla as his successor.²⁰⁹ Bakhtiyār's mother realized that Sabuktakīn was planning to conciliate the Daylam troops by this arrangement, to ensure the nominal retention of authority in the Mu'izz al-Dawla dynasty. She also realized that her approval would eventually lead to the devaluation of her influence and that Sabuktakīn would soon be the *de facto* power in Baghdad. She immediately called upon her Daylamī followers with the intention of inflicting a sudden onslaught against Sabuktakīn, knowing that he would not expect such a strike in the absence of her son from Baghdad and also because Sabuktakīn was aware that the Turks had more troops and better equipment than Daylam.²¹⁰

On Friday morning, the eighteenth *Dhū al-Qa'dah* 363/973 Bakhtiyār's mother ordered her Daylam troops to attack the Turkish army of Sabuktakīn.²¹¹ The Daylam garrison, which Bakhtiyār had left in Baghdad under the command of his mother, engaged in combat with Sabuktakīn Turks, who were astonished by the sudden attack. Sabuktakīn, though taken by surprise, used his political talents to prevent Bakhtiyār's mother from gaining a remarkable political and military victory over him. He disseminated his propagandists amongst the *Sunni* people of Baghdad, turning them against the *Shī'ah* Daylam. By this manoeuvre, he succeeded in changing the course of the battle in his favour as a result of the huge

²⁰⁸ Ibn Miskaway, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol 2, p.326.

²⁰⁹ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol 3, p.203.

²¹⁰ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.326. & Ibn al-Jawzī, Vol .7, p.68. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.26, p.200.

²¹¹ See Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.327.

number of *Sunnah* that joined his side. Sabuktakīn then besieged Bakhtiyār's mother's house and asked her to surrender with all her sons, otherwise he would set fire to the house. Eventually, she succumbed.²¹² Ibn Miskawayh says that Bakhtiyār's mother intended to continue resisting until her son's reinforcements reached her. However, because one side of her house was set ablaze by Sabuktakīn, she surrendered. The fight was so ferocious that Caliph al-Ṭā'ī' (reg.363-381/974-991) was preparing to flee Baghdad, but Sabuktakīn sent him a messenger to reassure him and tell him to abandon the idea. The Sunnis burned down the *al-Karkh* neighbourhood, which was the Shiite stronghold in Baghdad. Through this power struggle, Sabuktakīn was able to transform the fight from a mere conflict of power to a sectarian war²¹³

Bakhtiyār's mother's defeat had serious political consequences. Sabuktakīn al-Ḥāji, the chamberlain, became the *de facto* governor of Baghdad and by virtue of this he approached Bakhtiyār suggesting the division of the emirate between them. Sabuktakīn sent a message to Bakhtiyār saying: "You [Bakhtiyār] have inflicted a major catastrophe upon yourself. So leave *Wāsīt*, so that *Wāsīt* and Baghdad would come into my control whereas Basra and Ahwaz would become yours".²¹⁴ As a gesture of good will, in response to her son's request²¹⁵, Bakhtiyār's mother was set free and handed over to him.

Sabuktakīn's victory and subsequent increase in power were short-lived. His sudden death on the eve of the year 364/973, proved to be a lifeline to Bakhtiyār and his mother.²¹⁶ They returned to and entered Baghdad without facing any resistance from the Turks who were apparently shocked and crushed by the event. Despite this lifeline, Bakhtiyār appeared not to have learned from his mistakes. Indeed, one might rightly argue that he was not a statesman in the true sense of the word. He quickly relapsed into his habit of leaving Baghdad for prolonged periods and indulging in pleasure rather than dealing with affairs of the state. The burden of running state matters was therefore assumed by his mother and his

²¹² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, Vol.7, p.68.

²¹³ See Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.327.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* vol 2, p.334.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.334.

²¹⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol .7, p.76.

wazīr Muḥammad b. Baqīyat. This was amid many threats by other leaders in the area, most important of which was that posed by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla. In an attempt to abate these threats, Bakhtiyār’s mother was able to persuade her son to enter into an alliance with the Hamdānids in Mosul.²¹⁷

After the battle of *Qaşr al-jīṣṣ* (The *al-jīṣṣ* Palace) in the year 367/977, during which Bakhtiyār was defeated and killed, his mother having been captured by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla was able to escape. To retaliate, she tried again to organize the remnants of her vanquished troops for a second confrontation with ‘Aḍud al-Dawla. However, she was defeated and fled to Damascus as a refugee in the Fatimids court. She was never heard of again.²¹⁸

Another famous female character of this period was the daughter of King Munādhir b. Jstān al-Marzubān al-Dalymī.²¹⁹ She was also ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s wife and mother of his son Abū al-Ḥusayn Ahmad. The reasons and motives behind ‘Aḍud al-Dawla forging this marriage alliance with the King of the Daylam have already discussed in this chapter. Due to the lack of information about this woman, her name cannot be recorded in this research. In fact, except for the historian Abī Shujā‘²²⁰ who provides some short and concise details she is hardly mentioned in historical narratives. Apparently, this was because her husband ‘Aḍud al-Dawla only reigned for five years.

Nevertheless, this woman played a significant role in maintaining the rights of her son in his father’s kingdom. That is, when he was on his deathbed she exerted as much pressure as possible on ‘Aḍud al-Dawla to entrust the emirate of Persia to their son Abū al-Ḥusayn Ahmad and further, since he was a minor, to appoint her as his legal guardian. Equally, ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s elder son, Abū Keljār al-Marzubān, who was born of one of his other wives and who later became known as Ṣamṣām al-Dawla (reg.380-388/990-998), would be apportioned the emirate of

²¹⁷ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol 2. p.381.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.384.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.24.

²²⁰ The only source regarding this lady: *Wazīr* Abū Shujā‘ *wazīr* of the caliph al-Muqtadī (reg 467-467/1075-) See Abū Shujā‘, *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*, p.122.

Iraq.²²¹ 'Aḍud al-Dawla agreed to his wife's wish, knowing that her influence was mainly because of the loyalty of the troops in the Daylam garrison of his army, who were at the same time, Mamlūks of her father, King Munādhir. Before his death, 'Aḍud al-Dawla sent copies of that pledge to all his states and was keen to commit the army commanders to pledge allegiance to his two sons.²²² Following 'Aḍud al-Dawla's death, however, a state of confusion evolved that ignited Şamşām al-Dawla's ambition to combine the states of Persia and Iraq, which was contrary to his deceased father's will. Accordingly, he apprehended his brother Abū al-Ḥusayn Ahmad and confined him to house arrest in Baghdad.²²³

The Daylam King's daughter was surprised by Şamşām al-Dawla's action and she in turn decided to seek the assistance of her Daylam followers in order to release her son and arrest Şamşām al-Dawla.²²⁴ Gripped by the fear that she might besiege his house and have him arrested, Şamşām al-Dawla offered his apologies and sought reconciliation with a view to reaching a compromise. The Daylam King's daughter accepted his proposal, provided that Şamşām al-Dawla would set his brother free and honour his deceased father's wishes by reassigning the state of Persia to her son. Şamşām al-Dawla had no option but to yield to her demands. It should be noted here, that this was only possible thanks to her loyal Daylam troops who valued her as a majestic woman with a high resolve.²²⁵ Nevertheless, she and her son left Baghdad after she had succeeded in maintaining her son's estates. Sharaf al-Dawla b.'Aḍud al-Dawla (reg.372-380/983-990) took advantage of her sudden death in 375/985, by attacking and capturing Persia.²²⁶

As the history books report, the lady was solely responsible for the upkeep of her son's kingdom throughout her life. Şamşām al-Dawla feared and honoured her due to the control she had over the Daylam troops. Her death paved the way for Sharaf al-Dawla to advance into Ahwaz and seize it from his brother.²²⁷ In the light of the

²²¹ Ibid.p76.

²²² Ibid.p79.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.p 121.

²²⁵ Abū Shujā',*Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*,p.121.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

description of the lady given by Abī Shujā', it was obvious how much influence she had and how strong she was in managing her son's affairs. The fact that Sharaf al-Dawla waited for her death before he captured his brother's estate is in itself a testament to her power and influence.

Similarly, Şamşām al-Dawla's mother whose name the sources have over-looked, also had considerable influence in her son's court. She had been seen as Şamşām al-Dawla's partner in disposing of matters concerning the state; and her son would not conclude any issue prior to consulting her. She was one of 'Aḍud al-Dawla's wives, nevertheless, contemporary sources offer no information that would help identify her origin. Şamşām al-Dawla, who had been entrusted with the state of Iraq, always succumbed to his mother's influence after the death of his father. In 375/985, his mother asked him to appoint her clerk, Abū al-Ḥusayn b. Bermwīh to be a *wazīr* beside his other *wazīr*, Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-'Azīz Ibn Yūsuf. This step created a state of confusion in the government because of the conflict of orders issued by the two *wazīrs* who, eventually, engaged in a dispute as to who had the right to issue governmental orders. To resolve this matter, Şamşām al-Dawla's mother ordered that the name and seal of Ibn Yūsuf would precede the name and seal of her clerk Bermwīh.²²⁸

It can be asserted that her intervention had an adverse effect on the flow of the government's work. Though she ruled in favour of Ibn Yūsuf, confirming him as the first *wazīr*, she was not decisive in determining Bermwīh's authority and areas of jurisdiction. Again, the dispute between the two *wazīrs* reached a climax and Ibn Yūsuf was discontented with her constant interference in state affairs. In view of the situation, Ibn Yūsuf became an accessory to a major conspiracy that aimed to overthrow Şamşām al-Dawla and appoint his younger brother in his place, thereby eliminating both Şamşām al-Dawla and his mother from the political scene, a conspiracy Şamşām al-Dawla was unable to subdue.²²⁹

²²⁸ Ibid.p.104.

²²⁹ Abū Shujā', *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*,p.104

As such, one might construe that to a large extent the woman contributed to the downfall of her son in 376/986, when his brother Sharaf al-Dawla advanced his bid to takeover Baghdad. Thereafter, Şamşām al-Dawla underwent a very critical situation as his troops defected and joined his brother's camp. His mother advised him to surrender and ask his brother for pardon. Şamşām al-Dawla's aides did their best to prevent him from doing so but he insisted on acting on the advice of his mother. So he gave himself up to his brother who arrested him and ordered that his eyes and ears be torn out;²³⁰ and subsequently Iraq became an easy prey for his brother, who was left with no opposition.²³¹

Worthy of mention here is that Abū Shujā', perhaps rightly, held this woman accountable for all the disasters that descended on her son Şamşām al-Dawla. Abū Shujā' fiercely attacked and criticized her; and attacked the intervention of women in general in political and governance matters. When commenting on the impact of the role of this lady in enabling Sharaf al-Dawla to overthrow his brother Şamşām al-Dawla, Abī Shujā' says:

The state if it becomes sponsored by women, its affairs will become depraved and its means will become weak and soon it will become disordered and its prosperity will fade away. Power, if possessed by women, would become reduced in force and its constitution would collapse and its consequences would not become commendable. Opinion, if shared by women would become less relevant and would become err and immature.²³²

Abū Shujā' was a politician who lived through several historical epochs and was a statesman in the true sense of the word. His gradual rise in the different disciplines of the court qualified him to ascend from the grand ministerial post to Caliph al-Muqtadī and maintain it for a long period.²³³ Therefore, coupled with his disapproval of the mother of Şamşām al-Dawla and the intervention of women in politics and matters of governance in general, his opinion cannot be neglected.

Abū Shujā's prejudice, together with a distinct lack of information relating to the names of some of the women whose lives were examined in the last section, appears to fall within certain elements of Tuchman's omission theory. For example,

²³⁰ Ibid.p.131.

²³¹ Ibid.p104.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

although Mu'izz al-Dawla's wife obviously enjoyed some influence, (as seen in al-Ṭabarī' seeking her assistance in recommending him for the position of a *wazīr*) her name has not been recorded in the sources. Similarly, although, according to Abu Shujā, 'the lady' was accountable for all the disasters that descended on her son Ṣamṣām al-Dawla, it must be noted that the sources have also over-looked her name.

To contextualise the above while considering the history and significance of political marriages outlined in this chapter, what can be deduced about women's achievements during this period? And more importantly what can be said about how they were recorded? Some women obviously managed to seize a great deal of power through their achievements, yet resources hardly reveal any meaningful information about them. Clearly, some of the women discussed above have not been 'absent' in the history of their era in terms of reports of the influence they had on the politics of their time. Could the omission theory be applied in this case? Or could there be another explanation through assessing the motivations of historians of the time? Perhaps it would be more correct to argue that they have been to a certain extent trivialized by the omission of their names in the records. That is to say, although the lack of information may be attributed to contemporary historians and their narrations it may be more plausible to consider the background and affiliations of said authors when assessing the presence of women -or lack there of- in historical narratives. One might further argue that, the objectivity of modern research is worth questioning. For example, if contemporary historians mention some of these women's roles (as discussed thus far), why is the general perception of Muslim women one of "absence" from, and "oppression" by society? This discrepancy in the narratives, Mernissi, and indeed this thesis argues, is certainly worth further investigation.

Despite Abu Shujā's evident prejudice against women (as seen in the above quote), he nevertheless commended the role of the daughter of King Munathir al-Daylmī in securing the emirate for her son. Even the king's brothers did not dare to attack his state until after her death. As his opinion about the intervention of the

Daylam King's daughter was so positive there is the suggestion of a contradiction concerning Abu Shuja's opinions about the political activities of women.

A case may be made that Abū Shujā's aggression towards women is attributed to the political circumstances, which surrounded him while writing his book *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-uma*. This was after he retired from politics during the era of Caliph al-Muqtadī who was experiencing a challenging period due to the constant meddling of Turkān *Khātūn*, (wife of Sultan Malikshāh), which will be discussed later, in detail. Hence, it may be that Abū Shujā's aggression was meant to discreetly, expose Turkān *Khātūn* and her intervention in the affairs of politics and government. Indeed, this discreet style of exposure has been adopted by many scholars and historians who lived through the ferocious struggle between al-Muqtadī and Turkān *Khātūn*, such as Nizām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī, the Saljūq *wazīr* of the Sultan Malikshāh and others. This will be investigated in the following section of this chapter, which addressed the role of *al-ḥarā'ir* during the Saljūq era.

2.2.2 The Role of al-ḥarā'ir during the Saljūq Era

In comparison to those of the Būyids era, historical records relating to the Saljūqs dynasty are dense. This research finds that source material regarding the Saljūqs is richer and more abundant than that of the Būyids. This might be attributed to the fact that Iraq was under Saljūqs supremacy for a much longer period (nearly one and a half centuries compared to one century of Būyids era). This section of the study aims to uncover the various roles of *al-ḥarā'ir* in both the Abbasid and the Saljūqs courts. It will be argued that there were women who were destined to play an outstanding role in the political life of their time, and that it is not an exaggeration to suggest that their roles were extremely impressive. In fact, one might argue that it is impossible for a researcher to fully study the development of politics in Iraq during the Saljūq era without noting the major and pivotal role played by women of the time.

The following table lists the names of *al-ḥarā'ir* of the Saljūq court which shows four marriage links that took place during the Saljūq era in chronological order: the marriage of Khadījah *Khātūn* to Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075); followed by Māh Malik *Khātūn* who was married to Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075); and Işmat *Khātūn* who was coupled with Caliph al-Mustazḥīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) and finally the marriage between Fāṭimah *Khātūn* and Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160). Furthermore, there were two more note-worthy marriages that were made in the Saljūq era: those between Caliph al-Mustanjid (reg.555-566/1160-1170) and his first cousin Zubaidah as well as the marriage of Caliph al-Nāşir (reg.575-622/1180-1225) to Saljūqī *Khātūn*, daughter of Qulj Arslān, the Sultan of the Saljūqat al-Rūm.

Caliph	Wife	Sultans	Wife
al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075)	Khadījah <i>Khātūn</i>	Ṭughril Beg	Altin <i>Khātūn</i> Sayyida bt. al- Qā'im
al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075)	Māh Malik <i>Khātūn</i>		Fatimah bint caliph al-Qā'im
al-Mustazḥīr (reg.487-512/1094- 1118)	Işmat <i>Khātūn</i>	Malikshāh	, Turkān <i>Khātūn</i> Şafariyya <i>Khātūn</i> Zubayda <i>Khātūn</i>

al-Mustarshid (reg.512-529/1118-1135)	-----	Sultan Mas'ūd	
al-Rāshid (reg.529-530/1135-1136)	-----	Sultan Mas'ūd	
al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160)	Fatima <i>Khātūn</i>	Sultan Mas'ūd	Zubayd bt. al-Muqtafī
al-Mustanjid (reg.555-566/1160-1170)	Zubaidah		
al-Mustaḍī (reg. 566-576/1170- 1180)	-----		
al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allah (reg.575-622/1180- 1225)	Seljūqī <i>Khātūn</i>		

Table 2

Based on the above table, this section will investigate the most important women to play a major role in politics during the Saljūq period. These are: Altin *Khātūn*²³⁴, wife of Sultan Ṭughril Beg (reg.431-455/1040-1063) and Khadijah *Khātūn*, daughter of Chaghri Beg Dāwūd (reg.431-455/1040-1063) who was ruler in Khurāsān, the brother of the sultan Ṭughril Beg. She was also the wife of Caliph al-

²³⁴S.al-Jawzī, vol 12, p.9A. Ibn Taghrībirdī, the name reported by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's . The name was quoted as Altunjān. See also, Ibn al-Athir's *al-Kāmil fi'l-ta'rikh*, covering the Saljuq era: D. S. Richards, translator and annotator, *The Annal of the Saljuqs Turks: Selections from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh of 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir*, ed. C. Hillenbrand (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002). The altered name became common amongst researchers. The correct version of the name is that which Ibn al-Jawzī's grandson reported. However, we will discuss this point in a wider sense when we cover the section that deals with the 'titles of the women of the court'.

Qā'im and sister of the Sultan Alp Arslān (reg.455-465/1063-1073). Then there was the marriage of Turkān *Khātūn* and Niẓām al-Malik, the *wazīr* of Sultan Malikshāh. Finally, Iṣmat *Khātūn*, daughter of Malikshāh and sister of Sultan Sanjar, who became prominent in politics especially after she married Caliph al-Mustazhir.

Altin *Khātūn*, wife of Ṭughril Beg, played an active political role during the period of her husband Ṭughril Beg's reign; she belonged to the *Ghaznah* tribe, which made her of Saljūqs descent. Her influence was so effective that some historians such as Ibn Taghrībirdī (d.874/1469) Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200), Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī (d.652/1256) and al-Maqrīzī (d.845/1442)²³⁵, considered her to be equal in power to Ṭughril Beg since they describe her as having a sharp and apposite mind. The historian Ibn Taghrībirdī narrates that Altin *Khātūn* was a woman of level headedness, organization and determination; as such Ṭughril Beg listened to her, obeyed her and brought all matters pertaining to government to her for her consideration.²³⁶ Ṭughril Beg would not only consult her, he would not attempt to accomplish anything of importance without her approval.

It is worth noting that Altin *Khātūn* had been married to a Turkish man before Ṭughril Beg, and she had one son called Ānūshirwān; however, sources document that he was known as the foster son of Ṭughril Beg.²³⁷ Ṭughril Beg raised the boy, which indicates that the marriage took place even before the rise of the Saljūqs state.

It seems that Altin *Khātūn* exercised her role in aiding Ṭughril Beg and sharing the burdens of governance with him at the highest level. Her influence was exercised to the limit during an intrigue concerning the Turkish commander, Abū al-Ḥārith Arslan al-Bsāsayirī, who was one of the highest commanders in the army of Caliph al-Qā'im before the invasion of Baghdad by Ṭughril Beg. The menace posed

²³⁵ Ibn Taghrībirdī (d.874/1469), *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.5, p.234, Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fi ta'riḫ al-mulūk wa-al umam*, vol. 8, (Cairo:Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963-71), p.145 also S.al-Jawzī (d.654/1256); *Mir'at al-zamān fi tāriḫ al-a'yān*, vol.12. al-Maqrīzī(d.854/1442), *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā bi-akhbār al-a'immaḥ al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-khulafā*, vol.2, ed Muḥammad Ḥilmī Aḥmad, (Cairo: Manshūrāt al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah·2001), p.223.

²³⁶ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol 5, p.67.

²³⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 8, p.202.

by al-Bsāsayirī increased, especially after he embraced the *Shī'ism* and pledged obedience to the Fatimids' Caliph al-Mustanşir (reg.427-487/1036-1094) in Egypt.²³⁸ Following the invasion of Baghdad by Ṭughril Beg in 447/1055, al-Bsāsayirī fled, which is why Ṭughril Beg thought that the threat had ceased, at least for a while. Ṭughril Beg then led half of his army garrisoned in Baghdad to invade the Hamdanids, and left the other half under the command of his wife Altin *Khātūn* and her son Ānūshirwān together with his *wazīr* 'Amīd al-Malik al-Kundari.²³⁹ The existing sources²⁴⁰ seem to conflict with one another with regard to the uncertain and blurred information relating to Ṭughril Beg's egress from Baghdad and his leaving the Saljūq garrison under the command of his wife.

Nevertheless, there exist two significantly important detailed accounts among the many narrations that record the above events. The first account was narrated by Ibn al-Jawzī, before the end of the sixth A.H /twelfth A.D century. However, he was probably quoting the history as given by Ghars al-Nī'mah b. Hilāl al-Şābī which he based on the history cited by his father Ibn Hilāl al-Şābī (d.488/1056). Unfortunately, neither narrative is available. The second account reported by al-Maqrīzī, close to the middle of the ninth A.H /fifteenth A.D, comprised a quotation from one of the Fatimid sources, but this account has also been lost. Over and above, al-Maqrīzī did not specify the source from which he quoted the account.

Ibn al-Jawzī narrates that al-Bsāsayirī communicated with Ibrahim Ināl, the half-brother of Ṭughril Beg, encouraging him and offering him his assistance in taking over the reins of power in Iraq following the overthrowing of Ṭughril Beg. Ibrahim Ināl took advantage of the war between Ṭughril Beg and the Hamdānids in 450/1058, and unexpectedly launched an attack from the rear.²⁴¹

Ibn al-Jawzī's narration records that Altin *Khātūn*, (who was leading what was the remains of the Saljūqs garrison camped near Baghdad), ordered her son Ānūshirwān and the *wazīr* al-Kundari, to accompany her in order to give support to

²³⁸ Ibid.p.190.

²³⁹ Ibid. p.191 & Ibn al-'Adīm (d.660/1262),*Bughyat al-ṭalab fī tārikh Ḥalab*,vol3,ed Suhayl Zakkār, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988),p.351. See also Kabir, *The Buwayhid dynasty of Baghdad, 334/946-447/1055*, (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1964) p.113.

²⁴⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī and ibn Hilāl al-Şābī also al-Maqrīzī.

²⁴¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*,vol 8, p.191.

Ṭughril Beg. Both men declined on the pretext that such a plan would render Baghdad a sitting target for al-Bsāsaiyirī to take over without facing any resistance. In fact, both accounts suggest that the attack delivered by Ibrahim Ināl on Ṭughril Beg was only a decoy to conceal al-Bsāsaiyirī's main plan of taking over Baghdad on the eighth of Dhū al-'Iqdah 450/1058.²⁴² Altin *Khātūn* decided to discharge them of their commands in the army and ordered her soldiers to arrest them, but they were able to escape from Baghdad. Altin *Khātūn* then withdrew the whole of her garrison from Baghdad and marched towards Hamdānid in order to rescue her husband. Baghdad was left exposed and defenceless. If al-Bsāsaiyirī had tried to capture it, he would have met little resistance.²⁴³

The Fatimid version of that account, which al-Maqrīzī seems keen to report, reveals that al-Bsāsaiyirī was acting on behalf of the Fatimids and in accordance with the directions he received from the Fatimid court in Cairo. Al-Bsāsaiyirī conducted his negotiations with the Saljūqs in the name of Caliph al-Mustaṣir and his *wazīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Yārūzī who customarily sent plans to al-Bsāsaiyirī in Baghdad for implementation. Al-Maqrīzī's account asserts that al-Yārūzī started to corrupt the nobles with excessive praise, promises and gifts. In the forefront of these nobles was Altin *Khātūn*, the wife of Ṭughril Beg²⁴⁴ with whom al-Yārūzī continued to communicate even during the absence of her husband who was garrisoned at the outskirts of Hamdānid. According to sources²⁴⁵, al-Yārūzī overwhelmed her with promises that he would assist her to enable her son, Ānūshirwān, to take over the reins of power in the sultanate after the elimination of Ṭughril Beg and his brother Ināl.

In exchange for that service, Altin *Khātūn* was to help al-Bsāsaiyirī to enter Baghdad, destroy the Abbasid caliphate and spread propaganda in Iraq in favour of Caliph al-Mustaṣir. Al-Maqrīzī further argues that Altin *Khātūn* subsequently fabricated the famous conflict between her son and her husband's *wazīr* after which she marched with her garrison on the pretext of rescuing her besieged

²⁴² Ibid.p.192.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Al-Maqrīzī (d.845/1441), *Itti'āz al-ḥunafā bi-akhbār al-a'imma al-Fāṭimīyīn al-khulafā*, vol.2, ed M.Aḥmad, (Cairo: Manshūrāt al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah ·2001),p.227.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

husband at Hamdānid. As such, in accordance with the agreement she made with al-Yārūzī, she left Baghdad an easy prey for al-Bsāsayirī.²⁴⁶

Upon examining the above versions, one finds that the first account sympathizes with Altin *Khātūn* by suggesting that her evacuation from Baghdad was actually to rescue her besieged husband at Hamdānid. In contrast, al-Maqrīzī's account accuses her of conspiring with the Fatimids against her husband Ṭuḡhril Beg in exchange for inaugurating her son as ruler of Iraq and Persia by delegation from Caliph al-Mustanṣir in Egypt. By comparing the two accounts, al-Maqrīzī's version can be ruled out for several reasons, the most important being that after tying up his affairs Ṭuḡhril Beg did not take any vindictive measures against his wife, her son or his *wazīr*. It is also highly unlikely that Altin *Khātūn* led her army all the way to Hamdānid to fight both her husband and his brother. Additionally, it is hard to believe that Altin *Khātūn* was naïve enough to trust al-Bsāsayirī's promises, since he was resilient in his efforts to take over the emirates of Iraq and Persia on behalf of the Fatimids in Egypt. Such action would contradict her own ambitions to install her son as ruler in those regions. It is even difficult to accept that she would rely on al-Yārūzī's promise to assist her in the inauguration of her son Ānūshirwān's rule over Iraq and Persia. Moreover, the writer al-Iṣfahānī indicates that Ṭuḡhril Beg, under great pressure, had written to his wife, summoning her to bring her troops in order to rescue him.²⁴⁷ This version further contradicts the view that Altin *Khātūn* conspired against Ṭuḡhril Beg in favour of the Fatimids.

In all scenarios, it is fair to assert that Altin *Khātūn* played a significant role in devising the plans for the Saljūqs in their quest to take over the Caliphate. It was she who proposed that Ṭuḡhril Beg approach the Caliph al-Qā'im to ask for his daughter Sayyida bint Caliph al-Qā'im in marriage.²⁴⁸ Altin *Khātūn* also offered to give all her properties and estates as *Mahr*, to tempt the caliph to approve of the

²⁴⁶ Ibid. vol 2, p.237.

²⁴⁷ Al-Iṣfahānī (d.587/1191), *Tārīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq*, (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah,1980), pp.14-15. See also, I.al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Saljuq Truks: Selections from al-Kāmil fī' L Tārīkh of 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr*, Trans. D. Richards, (London: Rutledge Curzon: 2002) p.120.

²⁴⁸ S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, ed. J. Jewett, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907), p.6.

marriage.²⁴⁹ Soon after this, to the grief and sorrow of Ṭughril Beg she died in late 452/1060.²⁵⁰ She was very powerful, and “the Sultan listened to her obediently: affairs were often linked to her intellect and opinion. When she was dying she said to the Sultan: make every effort to marry the daughter of the caliph so that you obtain honour in this world and the next”.²⁵¹ Indeed, Ibn al-Jawzī reports, that Ṭughril Beg’s insistence that the marriage be arranged despite the hardships that would be incurred for the Caliphate was solely due to his desire to honour the will of his wife Altin *Khātūn*.²⁵²

Another woman who asserted her presence and influence on the political sphere of the Saljūq regime was Khadījah *Khātūn*. She was the daughter of Dāwūd Jgerī Beg, (brother of Ṭughril Beg) and she was married to Caliph al-Qā’im in 448/1056.²⁵³ As previously mentioned, there were deep tensions in Khadijah’s relationship with her husband Caliph al-Qā’im due to his neglect and lack of attention to her needs. Her actions in the events of the year 448/1056, could be claimed to have been a manifestation or reflection of matrimonial tensions. It was then that the Caliph al-Qā’im wished to force the non-Muslim *Ahl al-Dhimma* to abide by the terms of *al-shurūṭ al-‘Umarīyah* (The ‘Umar’ terms).²⁵⁴

But Khadījah *Khātūn* gave orders to dissuade them from the commitment because her clerk, Abū Alī Ibn Faḍlān, was a Jew. Niẓām al-Mulk al-Ṭūsī, *wazīr* of Sultan Alp Arslān and later his son Malikshāh, drew the caliph’s attention to the possibility of her actions being out of spite and risked causing problems within the Caliphate. To highlight Khadījah *Khātūn*’s lack of wisdom he reported to the caliph that even the founders and leaders of the Saljūqs, namely Ṭughril Beg

²⁴⁹Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 8, p.216. See also, A.al-Fāriqī (d.580/1185), *Tārīkh al-Fāriqī*, ed, B. al-Latīf, (Beirut:Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī ,1974), p.153.

²⁵⁰ Ibn Taghrībirdī, vol.5, p.67.

²⁵¹ Sibṭ b.al-Jawzī, *Mir’at al-zamān* p.75

²⁵² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p. 218.

²⁵³ Ibid. p. 29.

²⁵⁴ *Al-shurūṭ al-‘Umarīyah* : The ‘Umar’ terms, or Omar commitment is a large group of terms and protocols attributed to the Rightly-guided caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (13-23/634-644) that determine the relationship of Muslims with *Ahl al-Dhimma* (non Muslims) who, by definition of these terms, were considered as contracted individuals residing in the land of Islam. The belief now amongst researchers is that the obligations attributed to the caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, were true and correct originally but were liable to change and alteration all through the period of the Rightly-guided caliphs until almost the end of the second Hijrī century/the eighth Gregorian century. The last change entered into these terms was that administered by the Umayyad caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. See Imāmah, *al-Tajdīd fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2002), pp.514-515.

and Alp Arslān never hired in their respective *dīwān* (list of those entitled to government salaries) any person from *Ahl al-Dhimmah* during their time: “No one of the Magi or the Christians during the days of Mahmūd al Ghaznawī, Mas‘ūd, Ṭughril Beg and Alp Arslān.”²⁵⁵ All this was in vain as she continued to side with her clerk, gave orders that superseded the decree of the caliph, and prevented *al-Muḥtasib* (monitored the conduct of men and women in the streets and markets) from enforcing the caliph’s orders.²⁵⁶

Once again, a group of *Ḥanbalī* fanatics, known as the ‘Abd al-Ṣamad group²⁵⁷, wanted to intervene by urging the caliph to reconsider the forcing of non-Muslims to adhere to the *al-shurūṭ al-‘Umarīyah* terms. Again, the caliph agreed to the matter in the mid 450/1058 committing non-Muslims *Ahl al-Dhimmah* to wear special garments and preventing their staff from entering the government *dīwān*. The *Ahl al-Dhimmah* subjects authorized Ibn Faḍlān on their behalf to petition the *Khātūn* to release them from such restrictions. Sure enough, Khadījah *Khātūn* demanded that the caliph discharge them from conforming to these restrictions. Her intervention seemed to bear fruit as Ibn al-Jawzī reports the return of non-Muslims to the government *dīwān*.²⁵⁸ The *Khātūn*’s actions challenge the perceptions of women’s ‘absence’ or ‘oppression’; afterall these are hardly the actions of an oppressed woman. Indeed, she knew what she wanted and would not be easily swayed even if it meant challenging the caliph himself.

Khadījah *Khātūn* fell into deep trouble when al-Bsāsayirī marched into Baghdad in 450/1058. Her husband, Caliph al-Qā’im, managed to escape but al-Bsāsayirī was able to capture her because she took too long to leave due to her greed and desire to save many of her possessions. It seems also that she was not on good terms with Altin *Khātūn*, her uncle’s wife. This was demonstrated when Altin *Khātūn* marched to rescue her husband Ṭughril Beg; she neglected to take Khadījah *Khātūn* along with her and did not show any concern for her fate should she fall

²⁵⁵ See N. al-Ṭūsi(d.485/1092), *Siyāsat-nāma*, Trans. Mahmud al-‘Azzāwī, (Beirut: Dār al-Rā’id al-‘Arabī, 1971), p.201.

²⁵⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 8, p.171.

²⁵⁷ ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-wā’iz (d.397/1006). See al-Baghdādī (d.463): *Ta’rīkh Baghdād:aw madīnat al-Salām*, ed: Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī, vol 11, (Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1966).

²⁵⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 8, p.190.

captive to al-Bsāsayirī. This is surprising as she was Ṭughril Beg's niece and wife of the Abbasid caliph and both men were considered to be fierce enemies of al-Bsāsayirī. Al-Bsāsayirī confiscated Khadijah *Khātūn*'s possessions and estates with the cooperation of Abū al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm, the same *wazīr* to Caliph al-Qā'im.²⁵⁹ After her capture by al-Bsāsayirī, she was treated well and eventually handed over to Ṭughril Beg, late in 452/1060.²⁶⁰

After the end of al-Bsāsayirī's riot, Khadījah *Khātūn* took advantage of the caliph's absence from Baghdad, and tried to dispose of the crown prince and grandson of the caliph, *Amīr* Abū al-Qāsim 'Abdullāh, who was the son of *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn son of the Caliph al-Qā'im, by one of his *jawāri*. *Amīr* 'Abdullāh was still an infant when his mother, an Armenian *jāriyah*²⁶¹ was able to flee Baghdad. However, Khadījah *Khātūn* tried to reconcile with the caliph by sending him a sizeable sum of gifts via her uncle Ṭughril Beg, who solicited the caliph to pardon her. Ibn al-Jawzī narrates:

Khadījah *Khātūn* sent to the Caliph forty different types of garments and ten dozen tailored dresses in addition to five thousand dinars from the *Khātūn*, wife of Caliph al-Qā'im. Ṭughril Beg, the red rope of the Būyids and gave it to the Caliph saying that Khadījah *Khātūn* at your service. She requests that you use this rosary to praise and glorify God. She sent it especially with me.²⁶²

The caliph complied with his request. However, shortly after the caliph was made aware that the mother of his grandson (and crown prince) had fled from Baghdad with her infant son out of fear, and that Khadījah *Khātūn* had attempted to dispose of them, his relationship with the latter deteriorated to its former state, and he treated her only as a nominal wife.²⁶³

Khadījah *Khātūn* played a significant role in the deterioration of the relationship between Ṭughril Beg and her husband al-Qā'im subsequent to the latter's refusal to marry his daughter to Ṭughril Beg. Khadījah *Khātūn* provided the larger portion of

²⁵⁹ Ibid.p.160.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.p.201.

²⁶¹ She will be discussed in more details in section 3.3

²⁶² See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol 8, p.207.

²⁶³ See marriage alliance section 3.1

the *Mahr* and presents to the bride, a matter the caliph considered to be provocation on Khadījah *Khātūn*'s part. Angered by her meddling, Caliph al-Qā'im prevented Khadījah *Khātūn*'s from going outside his palace. As a form of protest, she asked her uncle to dispatch someone to take her back to his court. Khadījah *Khātūn* tied her return to the Caliphate house to the caliph's agreement to marry his daughter to Ṭughril Beg.²⁶⁴

Although they have become notorious, and sometimes vilified, it is clear that Altin *Khātūn* (Turghril Beg's wife) and Khadījah *Khātūn* (Caliph al-Qa'im's wife) were powerful and influential women whose lives have been recorded in respected historical sources. Hence one might argue that although the marriage alliances may have seemed to exploit women, this particular case can be taken as an example of how some women managed to take advantage of the new positions of power they found themselves in to further serve their agendas. Furthermore, the chapter has thus far contradicted the alleged 'absence' of women in political life. By examining different events during the period, it can be concluded that some women, especially *al-hara'ir*, have indeed managed to play a political role. As far as this thesis is concerned, the revaluation of both Būyid and Saljūq women during the Abbasid era, does in fact shed new light and offer thought provoking dimensions to studying the relation between women, power and history in Islam. In the case of the two women mentioned, the research also draws a link between the affiliations of the authors and the extent to which these women have impacted their lives, views and ultimately their writings and representations of women.

It is worth noting, that after Khadījah *Khātūn*'s brother Alp Arslan (reg.455 465/1063 1073) took over the reins of power in the Saljūqs state, Khadījah *Khātūn*'s influence increased as did her intervention in the matter of governance, albeit dependant on her brother, the Sultan, and his authority. This situation exacerbated the level of tension in the relationship between Caliph al-Qā'im and his wife, which was manifested in the crisis that took place between them when the caliph wanted to dismiss his *wazīr* Fakhr al-Dawla Ibn Jahīr and replace himThe

²⁶⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 8, p.221.

wazīr was counting on Khadījah *Khātūn*'s influence to keep his position. This infuriated the caliph especially when Khadījah *Khātūn* demanded that he bestow the title of *The Sublime Minister* on the *wazīrs*²⁶⁵ instead of his original title *The Sublime Chief*. Subsequently, the caliph issued a decree that dismissed Ibn Jahīr from his position, despite Khadījah *Khātūn*'s objections. Again the caliph counter-responded to her meddling by issuing a further decree expelling Ibn Jahīr from Baghdad.²⁶⁶

To further provoke Khadījah *Khātūn*'s anger, the caliph declared his intention to appoint Abū al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm as his *wazīr*. 'Abd al-Raḥīm was the same person who had confiscated her properties during the al-Bsāsayirī riot.²⁶⁷ Khadījah *Khātūn* flew into a rage because she could not tolerate the notion. She reminded the caliph of 'Abd al-Raḥīm's dealings with her²⁶⁸ and at the same time insisted on the reinstatement of Ibn Jahīr. She sent to her brother, Alp Arslān to intercede and persuade the caliph to reinstate Ibn Jahīr.

Responding to the Sultan's demands, the caliph approved the return of Ibn Jahīr to his office against the payment of fifteen thousand dinars to be made by Ibn Jahīr. Caliph al-Qā'im also exempted him from the payment of that amount of money particularly after Ibn Jahīr became the son-in-law of Niẓām al-Mulk, *wazīr* of Sultan Alp Arslān, by marrying his daughter in 462/1069. The sources were muddled in determining the name of Niẓām al-Mulk's daughter as to whether it was Şafīyah or Zubaydah. She eventually died as a result of Puerperal Fever (Childbed Fever) in 470/1077.²⁶⁹ 'Imād al-Işfahānī narrated that Ibn Jahīr married Şafīyah, daughter of Niẓām al-Mulk and when she died, he married her sister.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Ibid.p.244.

²⁶⁶ To express her anger, Khadījah *Khātūn* ordered her manservant Fīrūz al-Kimānī to escort the exiled minister outside Baghdad. See Sibṭ b.al-Jawzī, vol1.2, p .49A.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.p.49.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p.49A.

²⁶⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.252. See Ibn al-'Umrānī,p.202. Also see al-Fāriqī,p.207 and Şafadī, vol.14, p.179. See also Ibn Khallikān, vol.5, p.132.

²⁷⁰ See 'I. al-Işfahānī (d.587/1191), *Kharīdat al-qaşr wa-jarīdat al-'aşr*, ed.M.Atharī, vol.4, (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1973.), p.92.

Khadijah *Khātūn*'s condition worsened especially after the death of her brother, the Sultan Alp Arslān in 465/1073, and then the demise of Caliph al-Qā'im in 467/1075. These events added to her feelings of isolation particularly after Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-487/1075-1094) was installed as the new caliph. She preferred to leave Baghdad and left for the court of her nephew, the son of Sultan Malikshāh, in Isfahan in the same year. The *Amīr* of Isfahan, Ala`a al-Dawla Ibn Faramārz, known as *Kakawāyh*, asked for her hand in marriage which she accepted, and the wedding took place during the same year.²⁷¹ This marriage aroused the disapproval of the historians since al-Iṣfahānī, commented on it, saying: 'She substituted al-Qurashī (referring to the caliph who came from Quraish tribe) by al-Daylamī and preferred the ignorant over the Imam.'²⁷²

Turkān *Khātūn*, wife of Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Malikshāh emerges in the records as one of the most famous female characters in Islamic history. She is most famous for the bloody conflict which took place between her and the *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk, on one hand, and between her and Caliph al-Muqtadī, on the other, arising from matters relating to the succession to the Caliphate. Turkān *Khātūn* married her daughter Māh Malik *Khātūn* to Caliph al-Muqtadī in the year 480/1087, soon after which she gave birth to his son Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far.²⁷³ Turkān *Khātūn* then began to exert much pressure on the caliph in a bid to declare her grandson as the crown prince to the Caliphate.²⁷⁴

This created tension as the caliph was in favour of naming as his crown prince his elder son Abī al-'Abbās Ahmad, whom he sired from one of his *jawārī*. As discussed briefly earlier in the chapter, this was attributed to his fear that by naming Abū al-Faḍl as his successor the Caliphate would somehow be transferred to the Saljūqs. When Turkān *Khātūn* realized how insistent the caliph was about this matter, she took steps to increase the number of her loyal Turkish soldiers on the pretext of protecting her daughter. However, that manoeuvre was construed as

²⁷¹ 'Arūzī (d.552/1157), *Kitāb-i Chahār maqālah*, ed. 'I. Salīm (Cario: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1984) p.134.

²⁷² See al-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq* p. 49.

²⁷³ Ibn Kāzarūnī (d. 697/1298), *Mukhtaṣar al-tārīkh*, ed. M. Jawād, (Baghdad: Wizārat al-'Ilām, 1970.) p.215.

²⁷⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.9, p.44.

an effort to intimidate the caliph in order to prevent him from naming one of his other sons as crown prince.²⁷⁵ Worried by the existence of a large number of soldiers around the Caliphate's premises, and encouraged by his *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk, the caliph immediately ordered them out of Baghdad due to the disturbance their presence caused.²⁷⁶ This added to the already escalating controversy that existed between the caliph and his wife Māh Malik *Khātūn*.

The struggle between Turkān *Khātūn* and the caliph, fuelled by his *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk, escalated to unprecedented levels when Turkān *Khātūn* gave birth to her son Maḥmūd in the year 481/1088. Her ambitions expanded to include the combination of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, for both her son and her grandson.

Therefore, Turkān *Khātūn* pressed her husband to the limit to force him to declare her grandson Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far as his successor to the Caliphate and at the same time demanded Malikshāh to depose his elder son Barkiyāruq and to acknowledge her own son as his successor. The *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk, who was known for his fierce opposition to Turkān *Khātūn*, had long argued against this arrangement on the grounds that Barkiyāruq was the elder son of the Sultan and the legitimate successor to Malikshāh, whereas Maḥmūd was still an infant in his cradle. Turkān *Khātūn* defied the caliph to the extent that she called Abū al-Faḍl, in the presence of his father Caliph al-Muqtadī, by the title reserved only for the Caliph: *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful).²⁷⁷

In 482/1089 Caliph al-Muqtadī, encouraged by Niẓām al-Mulk, decided to free himself from the pressure put on him by the Sultan and his wife and declared his son Abī al-'Abbās Ahmad as his successor. This was a distinctive and bold move, and one that was not taken lightly by the Saljūqs: it angered Malikshāh and his wife Turkān *Khātūn*, who then called on their daughter and her son to move out of Baghdad and join them in Isfahan. Stricken with smallpox, Māh Malik *Khātūn*, died

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.23, p.250.

²⁷⁷ See al-Rāwandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr va āyat al-surūr*, p.208. See also Khwāndamīr (d.942/1535), *Dastūr al-wuzarā'*, tran; Amīn Sulaymān and others (Cairo: *al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb*, 1980) p.256.

on her way to Isfahan in *Şafar* in 482/1089.²⁷⁸

Subsequent to her daughter's death, Turkān *Khātūn* decided to dispose of Niẓām al-Mulk whom she considered to be a stumbling block in the way of her goals. She tried hard to defame him by exposing him as a tyrannical autocrat. To do so, she took advantage of 'Uthmān, son of Niẓām al-Mulk, governor of *Merv*'s, which ignited the Sultan's hostility. The Sultan sent one of his men to apprehend 'Uthmān b. Niẓām al-Mulk and hold him captive thus challenging the order of the Sultan who depended on his father's influence. The sultan sent an angry hand-carried message by some of his followers to Niẓām al-Mulk and addressed them, saying:

Go to Khawājah²⁷⁹ Hassan and tell him that if he is my partner in authority then that has some status; and if he is one of my followers then he has to observe his limits. Tell him your sons have captured the world and nothing will make them content unless they go beyond sacredness.²⁸⁰ Niẓām al-Mulk replied to the sultan saying:

Tell your sultan this: doesn't he know that I am his partner in authority? And that what he had attained, was it not because of my planning? Doesn't he remember when his father was killed and it was I who made the people decide unanimously upon him? It was I who led the soldiers and crossed the rivers and vanquished the big cities and the kingship became, because of my planning, a place for those who hope for mercy and those who are apprehensive of fear against him.²⁸¹

Dismayed by the response, the sultan granted his approval for Turkān *Khātūn* to order her clerk, Tāj al-Mulūk al-Abī Ghanā'im, to arrange for and execute the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk. Abī Ghanā'im used the Ismā'īlī Assassins²⁸² for the execution of the plot in order to mask any doubts or suspicion that might surround the Sultan and his wife. In 485/1091, Niẓām al-Mulk was killed by one the

²⁷⁸Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 9, p.46. Also see Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar* p.109-110.

²⁷⁹ *Khawājah* in Persian means the revered master.

²⁸⁰ See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 9, p.67

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.p.67.

members of the Ismā'īlī while on his way to Baghdad.²⁸³ The Sultan did not stop at that because since the caliph still insisted on declaring his son Abī al-'Abbās Ahmad as his successor, Malikshāh decreed his expulsion from Baghdad, giving him a ten-day period to leave for any place of his choice.²⁸⁴ It was not difficult to see what Malikshāh was planning after the departure of Caliph al-Muqtadī. It was anticipated that he would pledge the Caliphate to his grandson Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far, but destiny intervened yet again, saving the Abbasid Caliphate from going to the Saljūqs: Malikshāh died in obscure circumstances before the termination of the notice period specified for Caliph al-Muqtadī.²⁸⁵

The Sultan Malikshāh's sudden death, in 485/1091 is shrouded in historians' wild theories. For example, it is alleged by some such as al-Ḥusaynī²⁸⁶ that Turkān *Khātūn* poisoned her husband. She was thought to have done so in collaboration with her writer Tāj al-Mulūk because of an alleged illegitimate affair between them. However, Shīrīn Hasanayn refuted that allegation by citing some issues regarding Tāj al-Mulūk's age at the time these events occurred: he was almost eighty years old while Turkān *Khātūn* was still a young woman.²⁸⁷

Indeed, there are no grounds for these accusations, as Turkān *Khātūn* gained no immediate benefit. Furthermore, what justification could there be for the murder of the Sultan who was at the time preparing to declare her grandson Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far as the successor to the Caliphate? Moreover, Malikshāh had not, until then, announced her son Maḥmūd as his successor, which would leave his son Barkiyāruq, the legitimate successor to the throne of his father. These circumstances cast doubt on the possibility that Turkān *Khātūn* was responsible for the death of the Sultan.

²⁸³ Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, p.120.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.p.120.

²⁸⁵ For reasons for the death of Malikshāh see Ibn al-Jawzī, vol 9, p.74.

²⁸⁶ See A.al-Ḥusaynī (d.622/1225), *Zubdat al-tawārīkh :akhbār al-umarā' wa-al-mulūk al-Saljūqiyah*, ed M. al-Dīn, (Beirut:Dār Iqra,1985), p.113.

²⁸⁷ See Hasanayn *Nisā' shahīrāt fī al-siyāsah wa-al-adab:fī al-'Aṣr al-Suljūqī*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjū al-Miṣrīyah,1989) p.18.

In any case, Turkān *Khātūn*'s demeanour, in the early hours of the event, showcases her political insight since at first she concealed the news of the Sultan's death. Meanwhile, she began to reconcile with the *Amīrs* and the army commanders by giving them estates and robes of honour to ensure their loyalty to her son Maḥmūd, who at the time was only five years of age.²⁸⁸

The next step for Turkān *Khātūn* was to acquire the pledge of succession to the sultanate for her son from the caliph. She continued to place pressure on him, knowing he was initially reluctant to fulfil her wish. Simultaneously, Turkān *Khātūn* gave orders to build the Caliphate premises in Isfahan as proof that she was capable of dethroning the caliph, pledging loyalty to her grandson Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far, and then transferring the Caliphate premises from Baghdad to Isfahan.²⁸⁹

Her political insights and strategic manoeuvres served her well as the caliph succumbed to Turkān *Khātūn*'s pressure and threats and eventually declared her son Maḥmūd as the successor to his father. The negotiations that were conducted between the caliph and Turkān *Khātūn* specified that Turkān *Khātūn* be nominated as guardian over her son since he was still a child. The caliph strongly opposed the notion and insisted that the pledge should be in the name of Sultan Maḥmūd, (who was only five years old), provided that the disposal of the sultanate affairs and the guardianship over Maḥmūd should rest in the hands of Malikshāh's *wazīr* Tāj al-Mulūk al-Qummī.

In addition to that, the caliph stipulated that Turkān *Khātūn*'s name would not be cited in the pledge. In spite of this, Turkān *Khātūn* accepted these terms and acknowledged them albeit with her disapproval, particularly after the *Fatwā* (formal legal opinion on a point of law)²⁹⁰ announced by the Imam Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī (450-505/1058-111)²⁹¹ contradicted her demands. Nevertheless, the basic

²⁸⁸ Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol.10, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1995) p. 211. Also see al-Ḥusaynī, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, p.155 and al-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq*, p.76.

²⁸⁹ Al-Rāwandī, *Rāḥat al-ṣudūr va āyat al-surūr*, p.216.

²⁹⁰ *Fatwā* : is a formal legal opinion on a point of law, the term "law" applying, in Islam, to all civil or religious matters. The act of giving a *fatwā* is a *futyā* or *iftā*, so its formal legal opinion given by a *mufīf*. see Tyan, E.; Walsh, J.R. "Fatwā." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Edited by: P. Bearman; , Th. Bianquis; , C.E. Bosworth; , E. van Donzel; and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2012. [Brill Online](http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0219). University of Exeter. 12 January 2012 <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0219>.

²⁹¹ Abū Hāmid al-Ghazzālī born in 450/1058 and died in 505/1111. See I. Netton 1996, *Seek knowledge thought and travel in the house of Islam* (Richmond: Curzon Press,1996) p.71. He was one of the famous Muslim philosophers and theologians, the thinkers who created a new sort of mysticism combining both tradition and Sufism. See D.Macdonald, *the life of al-Ghazzālī, with Especial Reference to his Religious*

condition set by the caliph to declare his approval of the pledge, was the retrieval of his son, Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far from Turkān *Khātūn* who had used him as a tool in her struggle with the Caliph. Reluctantly, she eventually agreed to handover his son to the caliph, which at last enabled him to free himself from the grip of the powerful lady.²⁹²

Despite her outstanding political manoeuvres and strategic thinking, Turkān *Khātūn* made a very serious mistake when she decided to imprison Barkiyāruq, instead of disposing of him while he was in her custody. *Al-niḡāmīyah*, a group of Niḡām al-Mulk supporters who were trying to avenge him, broke into the prison, freed Barkiyāruq and pledged him the Sultanate. Turkān *Khātūn*, made another mistake when she marched, with her son, out of Baghdad heading for Isfahan. She considered it an advantage to be near the caliph in Baghdad with her son because she saw that she could exercise control over the caliph on the one hand, and expose Barkiyāruq on the other.²⁹³ Much to her dismay however, al-Muqtadī felt free of Turkān *Khātūn*'s grip and he approached Barkiyāruq to compensate him with the Sultanate of his diseased father after he dethroned the child Maḥmūd.²⁹⁴ These measures proved to have a very important bearing on Turkān *Khātūn*'s political standing.

Turkān *Khātūn* embarked on another venture by engaging in combat against Barkiyāruq near Isfahan in 487/1094, which she lost. Following this the victorious Barkiyāruq entered Isfahan. Turkān *Khātūn* just managed to escape but she later gather her scattered troops and tried to enter into an alliance with Tāj al-Dawla Tutush brother of Sultan Malikshāh²⁹⁵, who was claiming his rights to the

experience and opinion, Journal of the American Oriental Society vol 20, 1989, p.71-132. University of Exeter, 12 January 2012<<http://0-www.Jstor.org.lib.exeter.ac.uk/stable/592319>>.

²⁹² See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol 10, p.214. and Ibn Khaldūn (d.681/1282), *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn: Kitāb al-'ibar, wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-al-khabar*, vol 3, (Beiurt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1992) p.52.

²⁹³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaḡam*, vol 9, p.62 also M.Idrīs, *al-Sulṡān Sanjar al-Saljūqī* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1988) p.92.

²⁹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaḡam*, vol 9, p.62

²⁹⁵ Malikshāh's brother, had made a semi-successful bid for the Sultanate see Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol 10, p.240. Ibn al-Qalānisī is the only historian to report that some correspondence was underway between Turkān *Khātūn* and Tutush that would result, eventually, in their marriage. See Ibn al-Qalānisī, p.123.

Sultanate. However, she died suddenly in the summer of 487/1094 before meeting with him.²⁹⁶

The life of this controversial lady came to its end after she had left behind a history of trouble, intrigues and wars resulting from her wild and unwavering ambition to integrate the Caliphate and the Sultanate in the hands of her descendants, her son Maḥmūd and Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far, her grandson. Turkān *Khātūn*'s story emphasizes the extent to which marriage alliances constituted one of the most important aspects of political life during the Saljūq period. Without understanding the significance of such alliances, one cannot investigate and entirely comprehend the development of political life in Iraq at that time. Although her struggle for power led to turbulence in her time, Turkān *Khātūn*'s power and influence earned a distinct place in history for herself and for the era in which she lived. Her quest for power led to many wars and disputes because her ambition was great and her involvement in state politics had devastating consequences. Indeed, Turkān *Khātūn* involvement in the murder of Niẓām al-Mulk led to the demise of a *wazīr* who was considered among historians to be the greatest of the Saljūqs' statesmen and indeed one of the greatest in Islamic history.

In fact, one could argue that the events outlined in Turkān *Khātūn*'s history contributed to the division of the great Saljūqs state into scattered sub states. This completely deterred the Saljūqs from confronting the crusader invasion in 491/1097²⁹⁷ only six years after the death of Niẓām al-Mulk. Hence, many historians, including Sa'īd 'Āshūr, suggest that the untimely death of Niẓām al-Mulk, in the manner that it came about, was one of the factors that paved the way in favour of the first crusader campaign. The campaign's success would not have been achieved had it not been for the enormous gap left behind by the *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk.²⁹⁸ Accordingly, one might construe that however detrimental the

²⁹⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.9, p.84.

²⁹⁷ E.Boqle, *Islam: origin and belief* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p.62.

²⁹⁸ Sa'īd 'Āshūr reported that the assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk, at this time, brought about a huge void and triggered a violent shock in the constitution of the Seljuq's state. See S. 'Āshūr, *al-Ḥarakah al-ṣalībīyah : ṣafḥah mushriqah fī ta'rīkh al-jihād al-'arabī fī al-'uṣūr al-wuṣṭā*, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Anjū-al-Miṣrīyah, 1971) ,p.87.

consequences of her actions, Turkān *Khātūn* was a woman with a strong character and her political role was, certainly, undeniable.

Another woman worthy of note is Iṣmat *Khātūn*. She played an important political role during Caliph al-Mustarshid's era (reg.512-529/1118-1135) followed by that of his son, al-Rāshid (reg. 529-530/1135-1136). Iṣmat *Khātūn* was the daughter of Sultan Malikshāh and sister of Sultan Muḥammad ībn Malikshāh. She was married to Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) in 504/1110 and was known amongst the people of Baghdad as *Khātūn*, the second daughter of Malikshāh.²⁹⁹ In the second year of her marriage, Iṣmat *Khātūn* gave birth to a son, Abū Iṣḥāq Ibrāhīm, who died of smallpox in 508/1114.³⁰⁰ Her husband died shortly after in 512/1118.

Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr, was succeeded by his son Abū Maṣṣūr al-Faḍl, known as Caliph al-Mustarshid, during whose time the idea of an independent Abbasid caliphate stemming from the Saljūq domain, was established. Therefore, the political relationship between Caliph al-Mustarshid, and the Sultan Sanjar with his brother Mas'ūd began to deteriorate due to the caliph's desire to separate Iraq into an independent state. This matter had a negative impact on Caliph al-Mustarshid's relationship with his stepmother Iṣmat *Khātūn*, as she was the sister of both Sanjar and Mas'ūd.

The first of such disputes took place in 521/1127 when Sultan Mas'ūd gave an order to a troop of soldiers to break into the Caliphate's premises. Caliph al-Mustarshid tried to sow the seeds of discord between Sultan Sanjar and his nephew and crown prince Maḥmūd from one side and Mas'ūd from the other side. Therefore, Mas'ūd decided to apprehend the caliph and loot his home.³⁰¹ The historian Ibn al-Jawzī, who was a witness to the event and recorded the scene at al-Mustarshid's *Ḥarīm* and the *jawāri* pleading for *Khātūn* to help them and save them from her brother's soldiers. He reported that during one incident a group of

²⁹⁹ To distinguish her from her sister Māh Malik Khātūn, wife of the caliph al-Muqtadī, was known as the first daughter of Malikshāh. See Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, pp.110-111.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.p.108.

³⁰¹ See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.9.p.90.

Sultan Mas'ūd's soldiers came to enter the Caliphate premises via al-ghurbah's³⁰² door but were stopped by the *Khātūn*. However, they came again through the Nubian door and looted the Caliphate house. He recounts: "When I was a lad, I saw the *jawārī*, coming out of the house bareheaded and slapping their faces and entering into the *Khātūn*'s house. The people were crying and screaming as if there was an earthquake".³⁰³

Caliph al-Mustarshid was able to flee while the Saljūq soldiers were looting the house, but his dependants, especially women and children, did not find any refuge other than the house of Işmat *Khātūn* who agreed to give them sanctuary. Nevertheless, Caliph al-Mustarshid held Işmat *Khātūn* responsible for these unfortunate events due to her failure to order her brother's soldiers away from Baghdad.³⁰⁴ The relationship between Işmat *Khātūn* and the caliph continued to deteriorate and in 526/1131 the relationship finally came to an end. The caliph accused his stepmother of committing adultery with one of the servants called Ibn al-Mahtar,³⁰⁵ and then he summoned one of the *Khātūn*'s servants named Nāziḥ to be beaten and punished. *Khātūn*'s properties were dissolved and confiscated after which she was kept under house arrest.³⁰⁶

One cannot however, determine the authenticity of the accusation made by caliph al-Mustarshid against his father's wife. The politics behind the situation, that is, the caliph's wish to humiliate both Sanjar and Mas'ūd, should cast doubt on the accusation. Eventually, Işmat *Khātūn* communicated her situation to her brother Sanjar who, in response, told her of his intention to eliminate al-Mustarshid.³⁰⁷ By

³⁰² *Al-ghurbah*'s door is one of the nine doors of the caliphate premises.

³⁰³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.2.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* vol.10, p.3.

³⁰⁵ His name was reported as *ibn al-Muhayr* by Ibn al- Jawzī. See *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 10. p.27

The correct version of that name was given by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (657/1256), as *ibn al-Mahtar*. See Sibṭ, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol 8, p.141. *al-Mahtar* is a word of Persian origin used to designate the chief of each class of the palace servants like the *Mahtar* of the drinks and the *Mahtar* of the riding animals. See al-Qalqashandī (d.821/1418), *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'at al-inshā*, vol 5, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1983), p.470. See also M. Baqlī; *al-Ta'rīf bi-muṣṭalahāt Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1983) p.333. And A.Scher; *Kitāb al-alfāz al-Fārisīyah al-mu'arrabah*, (Cairo: Dār al-'Arab, 1988) p.147.

³⁰⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī reported that the caliph disseminated the news of his escape from Baghdad. However, the general public whispered that the caliph had murdered Ibn *al-Mahtar* and then divulged the news of his escape. See Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1200), *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 10 p.27. Also S. Ibn al-Jawzī, vol 8, p 140.

³⁰⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 10 p.10.

the year 529/1134 Sanjar ordered his brother Mas'ūd to march into battle in order to kill Caliph al-Mustarshid.³⁰⁸

Following the death of Caliph al-Mustarshid at Mas'ūd's hands, a violent riot took place in the neighbourhood of Baghdad. The crowd broke into the mosques destroying the *manābir* (rostrums of the mosques) and preventing people from performing their prayers. A crowd of rebels chased the owner of the Saljūq *Shuḥnat*, the Sultan's deputy and his garrison in Baghdad. The deputy could not find any refuge except the house of the *Khātūn* where he found sanctuary. In spite of the fact that they attacked everything relating to the Saljūqs, the rebels did not break into her house.³⁰⁹ This ascertains her vast popularity. Ibn al-Jawzī reported that some people of Baghdad went into the streets and broke the *Minbar* (pulpit) and the window, then marched into the market kneeling on the ground, crying and then engaged in fighting with the masters of the *Shuḥnat*. The *Shuḥnat* resolved to pass through the markets but the public gathered to stone him alive. He fought back and killing one hundred and fifty of them managed to escape to the house of the *Khātūn*.³¹⁰

The whole Caliphate was in chaos. According to the words of Ibn al-Jawzī, who was the contemporary historian and the sole eyewitness, "Baghdad lived many days under arms. This situation generated a state of fear among the public and made the people of Baghdad, especially the merchants, transport their goods and precious items to the house of the *Khātūn* which they called the Sanctuary of Baghdad".³¹¹

During the following year, 530/1135, Caliph al-Rāshid (reg.529-530/1135-1136) again had to escape from Baghdad, taking refuge in the court of 'Imād al-Dīn Zankī, the *Atābak* (guardian-tutors of young Turkish princes)³¹² of Mosul. A state of

³⁰⁸ 'Arūzī ,p.30. Also Ibn al-Jawzī,vol.10, p.41.

³⁰⁹ Despite the fact that the Master of the *Shuḥnat* had killed over one hundred and fifty rebels. See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol .11, p.17)

³¹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī,*al-Muntaẓam*, vol 10, p.46.

³¹¹ Ibid.vol. p 55

³¹² *Atābak*: is a compound of two Turkish words: *ata*, 'father,' and '*beg*', which is a courtesy title. The term *atabeg* first appears in Muslim history during the Saljūq period (fifth/eleventh to sixth/twelfth century), when it was used as an honour given to guardian-tutors of young Turkish princes. It was first conferred upon Nizām al-

chaos and turmoil engulfed Baghdad as a consequence of the caliph's escape together with the threat incurred by the approaching army of Mas'ūd. This was the high point of Iṣmat *Khātūn*'s life, as she took it upon herself to secure Baghdad. She ordered her slaves and servants to keep the peace inside Baghdad in shifts, by beating drums and bearing fire sticks, out of fear that thieves and burglars might take advantage of the lack of security, and loot the city.³¹³ Iṣmat *Khātūn* continued to discharge governmental affairs in Baghdad until her brother Mas'ūd entered the city in the fifth of *Dhū al-Qa'dah* 530/1135. Soon after, Mas'ūd deposed Caliph al-Rāshid and replaced him with his uncle Abū Muḥammad ṭbn Caliph al-Mustaẓḥīr, later known as Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160). It is worth mentioning that had her son (sired by Caliph al-Mustaẓḥīr) been alive, Iṣmat *Khātūn* would have easily installed him as caliph.

Following the above-mentioned events, Sultan Mas'ūd took some punitive measures against the Caliphate to ensure such a mutiny would not recur. For example, he dissolved the army organized by Caliph al-Mustarshid and confiscated all feudal estates of the Caliphate, as well as banning the procurement and breeding of horses. Over and above, the caliph was prohibited from travelling outside Baghdad.³¹⁴

Caliph al-Muqtafī then returned to Iṣmat *Khātūn* to intercede with her brother in his favour requesting that the measures imposed upon the Caliphate by the Saljūqī Sultan be lifted. Honouring his sister's appeal, he decreed that these measures be null and void. Ibn al-Jawzī reported this as seen with his own eyes, saying:

Caliph al-Muqtafī was acknowledged as caliph provided that he should not have horses or means of transport or feudal estates or property. The *Khātūn* went to the Sultan to implore him and passed through the markets accompanied by the readers and the Turkish servants. However, she returned

Mulk (d. 485/1092), the Persian *wazīr* who was the éminence grise behind the very young Saljūq sultan Malikshāh (r. 465–85/1073–92). After the latter's death, *atabegs* usually came from the ranks of Turkish military chiefs. See Levanoni, Amalia. "Atābak (Atabeg)." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*. ed by: Gudrun Krāmer; Denis Matringe; John Nawas; Everett Rowson. Brill, 2012. [Brill Online](http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=ei3_COM-23689). University of Exeter. 13 January 2012 <http://brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=ei3_COM-23689>

³¹³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol.10, p.55.

³¹⁴ *Ibid* vol,10 p 61.

after she succeeded in freeing all lands that were previously under the control of the caliph.³¹⁵

In 533/1138, the King of Kerman asked Sultan Mas'ūd for the hand of his sister in marriage. Işmat *Khātūn* agreed to the marriage and left for Kerman, where she died in 536/1141.³¹⁶

On a different note, Malikshāh had three other sons by two different wives: Mas'ūd and Sanjar, whose mother was Şafariyya *Khātūn* and Barkiyāruq, whose mother was, Zubayda *Khātūn*. Sources do not document sufficient information about Şafariyya *Khātūn*'s life and her role in the politics of the time, but the little provided, shows that in one way or another she took part in some of the political events that involved her sons.³¹⁷ Conversely, more information can be found about Zubayda *Khātūn*.

In his article entitled, *Women, Power, And The Eleventh And Twelfth Century Abbasid Court*,³¹⁸ Eric Hanne suggests that due to her power and strong character, Zubayda *Khātūn* took an active role in her son, Barkiyāruq's political life. As the widow of Sultan Malikshāh, she took advantage of her position to advise her son in various political events, including Barkiyāruq's part in the murder of Mu'ayyad al-Maluk, who had been his *wazīr* and whom he replaced with his brother, Fakhr al-Mulk. According to the sources³¹⁹ Zubayda *Khātūn* had orchestrated all of these events.

As discussed thus far, women played a very substantial role in politics during both the Būyid and the Saljūq eras. Indeed, some female researchers such as Ahmad

³¹⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, same source, vol 10, p.11

³¹⁶ Ibid, vol 10 p.100.

³¹⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi l-tarīkh*, Vols.9. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1998) p.27

Also A. Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592), *al-Muntazam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa-al-uma*.(Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1992), p.53

³¹⁸ See E. Hanne "Women, Power, And The Eleventh And Twelfth Century Abbasid Court" Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, 2005, Brill online. University of Exeter 2 January 2012 http://billonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry_islam_com-0218>.

³¹⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi l-tarīkh*. Vols.9, p.22 Also, A. Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592), *al-Muntazam fī ta'rīkh*, p. 3722 and al-Bundārī, al-Fat`b. 'Alī. *Kitāb Zubdat al-nuṣra wa nukhbat al-uṣra*. In M. Th. Houtsma, ed. *Recueil de textes relatifs à l'histoire des Seldjucides*. Vol. 2. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1889), p.88.

³²⁰ argued against the traditional stance that women retired into seclusion and abstained from exercising any influence especially in the political arena. Ahmad, however, was not one of them. She claims that despite some women being rich:³²¹

The absence of women from all basic aspects of community activities, during the second Abbasid period, was so obvious, as the historical sources of that period are completely devoid of any recollections of women. Hence the women of high ranking and bourgeois classes used to spend their lives in isolation under the protection of menservants.³²²

So far, this study has argued otherwise. Based on the information analysed in the above sections, Ahmad's conclusions seem to have been based on appraisal and intuition rather than on profound study and comprehensive examination. Despite the scarcity of information available concerning the political activity of women during the Būyids era, through the information provided, one may conclude that women were keen to participate in every aspect of matters or areas pertaining to authority and the politics of the era. This role was particularly true of *Al-ḥarā'ir* who played a remarkable role during the Būyid and Saljūq eras.

For example, the daughter of King Munādhir b. Justin al-Marzubān al-Dalaymī, wife of 'Aḍud al-Dawla exploited, to a great extent, the loyalty of her Daylam soldiers in the Būyids army to succeed in compelling her husband, *Amīr* 'Aḍud al-Dawla to entrust the emirate of Persia to her son Abū al-Ḥusayn Ahmad. She also managed to stand up against the ambitions of Ṣamṣām al-Dawla who was trying to annex her son's emirate to his authority. She was so powerful that both Ṣamṣām al-Dawla and Sharaf al-Dawla were unable to seize her son's properties until her death in 375/985. Similarly, Turkān *Khātūn* was a mother who fought for her son to assume power. She was considered to be the most famous lady of the epoch. Throughout the course of her quest to integrate the Sultanate and the Caliphate through her own descendants, Turkān *Khātūn* caused a serious split in the internal Saljūqs

³²⁰ See L.Ahmed, *Women and gender in Islam: historical roots of a modern debate*, (New Haven; London: Yale U.P., 1992.) p.85 and Nabia Abbot p.9.

³²¹ Ahmed, *Women and Gender In Islam*, p.85

³²² Ibid.

front. She managed to subject her husband Malikshāh to her will but soon her ambitions collided with his *wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk's strong character since he opposed her and bid to secure the throne for her son Maḥmūd. She did, initially however manage to succeed by forcing the caliph to delegate her son to the throne, by her political talents and shrewdness. This was later undone when the new caliph reversed his decision and dethroned the young Sultan. Indeed, both periods witnessed significant political activity by *al-ḥarā'ir* in a way that the politics of the era cannot be discussed without exploring active female roles: This overview acknowledges the ways that women profoundly affected politics during the Abbasid era as well the common dynamic in which women changed the political arena in the Abbasid Caliphate especially during the Būyid and Saljūq periods.

This study found that in general, the absence of source material is widely responsible for the inability to evaluate much of these women's lives, and that not enough attention has been paid to debates about women in specific historical events. As for Abbasid women's role in politics, and their lives, material is generally presented in a manner too simple to effectively facilitate researchers or writers attempts to explore issues. Furthermore, these materials do not provide answers for those who question the role of Muslim women during the Islamic periods and their effective participation in historical events.

This section explored and re-evaluated Būyid and Saljūq women's political roles within the Caliphate by re-examining their history, taking into account the essential factors that explain how and why women were perceived to be invisible during these periods. However this study argued that women were often seen to have been key to the development of a strong political relationship between Būyid and Saljūq leaders and the Caliphate through marriage alliances. These alliances as has been mentioned, facilitated the debut of *al-ḥarā'ir* into the political scene of the eras. Following an analysis of this phase it may be construed that one or two of the political scenarios and the roles of *al-ḥarā'ir* in them during the Būyids and Saljūq era might have been neglected by the medieval chroniclers of important events during the period. For example, chroniclers omit the importance of the role

played by marriage alliances and the events behind the marriages, as well as how women reached roles of authority through these alliances. Nevertheless, the little that is known offers a solid continuation of the principle focus of this research: while the role of women in this particular element of society has indeed proven to be evident, the question of its absence in the books of history remains.

2.3 The Life at the Court of *harīm*

One might say that the extent to which the transition of power between leaderships within the Caliphate and dynasties is more wholly understood by fully comprehending the role women played to influence them. Although the above section of the chapter discussed the political role of *al-ḥarā'ir* during the Būyid and Saljūq regime, these women, were by no means the only ones of political influence in the Caliphate. Equally worthy of study and note are the women who lived under the roof of the palace, namely the *jawārits* and *qahramānas*. Their roles and influences on Abbasid politics will be discussed in this section.

2.3.1 *Jawāri* and Abbasid Politics

By definition, the word *jawāri* refers to the women who were captured and taken into slavery by Muslims after a war, or were abducted from their families at a young age by slave gangs to be sold at the slave markets as *jawāri* or *al-Imā'*.³²³ In his book, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, Fuad Caswell explains that “*jawāri* were the female slaves who were, ‘defined as women who had been taken as war booty, or were born of parents who were both slaves, or bought’”.³²⁴

This section examines the role and function of *jawāri* in the caliph's household, which will in turn lead to investigating not only the political decisions that changed the regime but also the way caliphs were chosen by the Būyids and the Saljūqs during the Abbasid period. The section exposes the true role that *jawāri* played

³²³M. Ibn Manzūr (d.630/711), *Lisān al-'Arab*, ed. Amin Abd al-Wahhāb & Muḥammad al-'Ubayd, vol.2 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī & Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī) p.267 also see same source vol.1, p.234.

³²⁴F. Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era*, (New York: I.BtAURIS&CO Ltd, 2011), p.12

during the era and poses questions about the type of politics they were involved in. It also questions the *jawāri*'s roles inside the palace, especially those who carried the *umm walad* (mother of a child) status and were thus able to take advantage of their position as mothers and wives of the caliphs.

It is imperative to emphasize here; however, that Islamic Law calls for the Muslim male to behave with his *jāriyah* (singular of *jawāri*) in the same way that he practices with his legitimate wife on the basis of his right of possession. As *Surah al-Mu'minun* says they, "who guard their private parts scrupulously, except with regard to their wives and those women who are legally in their possession, for in that case they shall not be blame-worthy".³²⁵ *Jawāri*' were modest in every sense of the word, and as such concealed the parts of their bodies, which the Law forbids them to expose before others.³²⁶

Additionally, Islamic Law, contrary to the understanding that it limited a husband to four wives at one time did not actually specify the maximum limit for the number of *jawāri* owned by a person. As *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, mentions:

If you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you: two, or three, or four. If you fear that you will not be able to treat them justly, then marry (only) one, or marry from among those whom your right hands possess. This will make it more likely that you will avoid injustice.³²⁷

Here, the expression, "those whom your right hands possess"³²⁸ denotes *jawāri* that were female captives of war and who were distributed amongst individuals by the state.³²⁹ Therefore, rich notables and wealthy persons fell into the habit of obtaining as many *jawāri* as they could. Caliphs were no exception to this rule; hence it is customary to find that the caliph gathered as many *jawāri* as possible. The historian Abū Hilāl b. Ṣābī (d.488/1056) however, estimated that the number of

³²⁵ Q.23:5&6

³²⁶ J.al-Suyūṭī (d.911) and J.al-Maḥallī(d.864), *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, vol.2, (Egypt : Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1954), p.50

³²⁷ Q.4:3.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ J.al-Suyūṭī and J.al-Maḥallī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, vol.1, p.78.

the *jawārī* inside the Caliphate's premises exceeded four thousand.³³⁰ Although this might be an overestimation, it *does* indicate that the caliphs were engaged in buying and possessing *jawārī*. Thus, the *jawārī* were able to secure their agenda and in turn elevate their status within the court, as will be examined below.

As previously mentioned, *al-ḥarā'ir* were not the only women of influential political presence within the Caliphate's political scene. *Jawārī*, also played a distinct role in politics during the two eras under discussion despite the scarcity of scientific material regarding this issue, one must not jump to the conclusion that *jawārī* had no role in the politics of their time. There is evidence that all the caliphs during the Būyid and Saljūq eras, without exception, were in fact sons of *jawārī* mothers. Caliph al-Qā'im's (reg.422-467/1031-1075), for example was the son of *jāriyah* Qaṭr al-nadā, an Armenian slave. Similarly, Caliph al-Muqtadī's (reg.467-467/1075-1075) mother was Arjwān (as discussed below).

That is to say, none of the *al-ḥarā'ir* wives of the caliphs ever succeeded in securing the Caliphate for their sons, whereas as will be argued in this section, the caliphs' sons born of *jawārī* were destined to rule over the Caliphate. In spite of the fact that their sons were routinely made the caliphs' heirs apparent, it is worth noting that their success was not entirely due to their having *jawārī* mothers. As argued above, caliphs feared that if they married the daughters of the Būyids and Saljūqs and their wives gave birth to sons, there was a risk that the Abbasid dynasty would be transferred to them and their respective tribes. This was a risk none of the caliphs were willing to take as it would ultimately mean their loss of control over the Caliphate.³³¹

Therefore, it can be argued that the caliphs preferred to bestow the succession to the Caliphate on their sons from the *jawārī*. However, this is not to say that the *jawārī* did not play a significant role in preserving the succession to the Caliphate for their sons. In her endeavour to assert her son's rights every *jāriyah* mother put

³³⁰H.Ṣābī(d.488/1056), *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah: The rules and regulations of the 'Abbāsīd court*, ed.M.'Awwād,(Baghdad: Maṭba'atal-ma'āni, 1964), p.8.

³³¹ See page 67-68 of this Chapter.

up a fierce fight against *al-ḥarā'ir* and her own peers to achieve her goal. This will be analysed in depth below.

Firstly it is important to acknowledge that historical sources were very keen to distinguish between the different categories of *jawārī*. The newly bought *jāriyah* that the caliph added to his *ḥarīm* was known as a '*Surriyah*' or, 'concubine' and she remained at that level until she gave birth to a male child. After that, her status was elevated to, '*umm walad*' at which time she was considered to be the legal wife of her owner.³³² Fuad Caswell argues that, "A child born by a woman slave to a free man is a free person"³³³, hence the child was a rightful heir and potential successor to his father.

Jawārī were part of the *Ḥarīm*, which Ahmad defines as, "a system that permits male sexual access to more than one female".³³⁴ This definition generated an interest in reading about *jawārī*. To limit the scope of research on *jawārī* to the sexual aspect, would not be fair however, as there is much more to their roles and functions, as discussed below. Although this is to a large extent what Ahmad does in her research, there is certainly more to the functions of the *ḥarīm* than is suggested in her arguments. Indeed, as argued by Lewis, the *ḥarīm* was the space where the cross-generational or extended family, including women and children lived and where any indoor family tasks took place.³³⁵ Furthermore, Abu Lughod argues that sexual separation creates a space for better independence of action in everyday life.³³⁶

Since *jawārī* at the Abbasid court generally played a highly influential role, it is necessary to bear in mind that they were not only the caliphs' concubines but also important, politically, especially in the role of the mothers of the caliphs, the '*umm walad*'. Nadia al-Chiekh mentions that, "the Caliphate court allowed the caliph's

³³² About the situation of the *jawārī* in the community in terms of the legal and social levels will discuss in next section of this chapter.

³³³ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.14.

³³⁴ L.Ahmad, *Western Ethnocentrism and perceptions of the Harem*, (Autumn: Feminist Studies, Inc, 1982), p.521.

³³⁵ Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: women, travel and the Ottoman Harem*, (London : I.B.Tauris,2004),p.79.

³³⁶ L. Lughod, *Anthropology's Orient: The Boundaries of Theory on the Arab World*, in *Theory, Politics and the Arab World*, ed.Hisham Sharbi,(New York :Routledge, 1990),p.131

mother, along with a number of other *ḥarīm* women to exercise political power and influence”.³³⁷ Also, the *jawārī* whose status changed to *‘umm walad* played their role behind closed doors, as Graham-Brown argues, “the power of the *ḥarīm* image lay in the nation of a forbidden world of women, of sexuality caged and inaccessible”.³³⁸

By examining the lives of the *jawārī* in the historical moment, with this theory in mind, this section finds that most scholars deny that they had a political role. The examination of available sources, leads to identifying several *jawārī* and ‘mothers of sons’, especially those who were the mothers of caliphs. However, although the sources provide unequivocal details about the *jawārī*, they often exclude their names and/or ethnic origin. As such, we know nothing more about them than their names, in some cases. The following is a table of *jawārī* who were later elevated to *‘ummahāt awlād’* and whose roles were influential in the Caliphate’s political spheres, during the Būyid and Saljūq eras.

Caliph	<i>‘umm walad</i>	Ethnic origin	Documenting Reference
al-Mustakfī (reg.333-334/944-946)	Ta‘ab	Nubian	Unknown ; <i>Kitāb al-‘Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā’iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā’iq</i> , ed ‘Umar Sa‘īdī ,vol 4(Dimashq : al-Ma‘had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabīyah,1973),p.204
al-Muṭī‘(reg.334-363/946-974)	‘Atab	Unknown	M. al-‘Imrān, <i>al-Inbā’ fī tārikh al-khukafā’</i> (Laydīn : Brill,1973),p.179.
al-Ṭā’i’(reg.363-	-----	-----	-----

³³⁷ N El-Cheikh, *Revisiting The Abbasid Harems*,(Bloomington : Indiana University press,2005) Available at <http://www.jstore.org/stable/40326869> Accessed 13/01/2011 16:00 ,p.2

³³⁸ *Ibid.*p.5.

381/974-991)			
al-Qādir(reg.381-422/991-1031)	Qaṭr al-nadā	Armenian	al-Suyūṭī, <i>Tārīkh al-khulafāʾ</i> , ed, Qāsim al-Rifāʾī, (Beirut:Dār al-Qalam,1986),p276.
Al-Qāʾim(reg.422-467/1031-1075)	al-Jīha al-Qāʾmya	Armenian	A. Kāzarūnī, <i>Mukhtaṣar al-taʾrīkh : min awwal al-zamān ilā muntahā dawlat Banī al-ʿAbbās</i> , ed M.Jawad (Baghdad : Wizārat al-lʾlām, 1970p.206.
Muḥammad Dhakhīra al-Dīn (d.448/1056)	Arjwān	Armenian	Ibn al-Jawzī, <i>al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa-al-umam</i> . Vol.9, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1960), p.200
al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075)	Jalbʾhār	Turkish	ʿA. Kāzarūnī, <i>Mukhtaṣar al-taʾrīkh : min awwal al-zamān ilā muntahā dawlat Banī al-ʿAbbās</i> , ed Mustafa Jawad (Baghdad : Wizārat al-lʾlām, 1970),p.215
Al-Mustazhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118)	Nzhh	Ethiopian	Ibn al-Jawzī <i>al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa-al-umam</i> . Vol.9,(Beirut : Dār Ṣādir, 1960),p.231.

	Aqblān	Turkish	A. Kāzarūnī, <i>Mukhtaṣar al-ta'riḫ : min awwal al-zamān ilā muntahā dawlat Banī al-'Abbās</i> , ed Mustafa Jawad (Baghdad : Wizārat al-'lām, 1970), p.221.
	Razīn	Unknown	-----
al-Mustarshid (reg.512- 529/1118-1135)	Unknown	Turkish	
al-Rāshid (reg.529- 530/1135-1136)			
al-Muqtafī (reg.530- 555/1136-1160)	'umm Abū Alī	Unknown	M. al-Dhahabī, <i>Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā'</i> , ed. Shu'ayb Arna'ūt, Vol. 20(Beirut : Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996), p.412.
	Ṭawūs	Romans	al-Suyūṭī, <i>Tārīkh al-khulafā'</i> , (Cairo : al-Maktabah al-Tārīkhīyah al-Bakrī, 1964) , p.293
al-Mustanjid (reg.555-	Binfashā	Romans	Ibn al-Sā'ī, <i>al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar fī 'unwān al-</i>

566/1160-1170)			<i>tawārīkh wa-‘uyūn al-siyar</i> (Dimashq ; Dār Kannān,2011), p136. & M. Ibn al-Furāt, <i>Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt</i> ,ed.Ḥasan Muḥammad Shammā‘, vol.4,(Baghdad :Manshūrāt Jāmi‘at Baghdad,1967),p.116.
	Ghaḍḍah	Armenian	Ibn al-Jawzī, <i>al-Muntaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa-al-umam</i> . Vol.10,(Beirut : Dār Şādir,1960),p.233.
al- Mustaḍī(reg.566- 576/1170-1180)	Sharaf <i>Khātūn</i>	Turkish	Ibn al-Sā‘ī, <i>al-Jāmi‘ al-mukhtaṣar fī ‘unwān al-tawārīkh wa-‘uyūn al-siyar</i> (Dimashq: Dār Kannān,2011), p115.
	Zumurrud <i>Khātūn</i>	Turkish	
	Ākhṭīkh	Turkish	Ibn al-Sā‘ī , <i>al-Jāmi‘ al-mukhtaṣar fī ‘unwān al-tawārīkh wa-‘uyūn al-siyar</i> (Dimashq :Dār Kannān,2011), p163.
	al-'Abbāsah	Turkish	Ibn al-Sā‘ī, <i>al-Jāmi‘ al-mukhtaṣar fī ‘unwān al-tawārīkh wa-‘uyūn al-siyar</i>

			(Dimashq: Dār Kannān,2011), p135.
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Table 3

Despite the scarcity of material relating to the *jawārī* and their activities in the political field it might be appropriate to analyse the information that is set out in the above table, as a group of statistics, designed by the researcher, and based on the available source data. However, it is advisable to view the results of such statistics with some caution as they are predominantly founded on the material contained in the sources. Therefore, while the figures do not truly reflect the reality of the situation they do provide a representation of the situation of the *jawārī* within the premises of the Caliphate, albeit lacking, *ipso facto*, the precise data.

With reference to Table 3, by comparing the numbers of both *ḥarā'ir* and *jawārī* cited in the sources during the Būyid and Saljūq eras, the ratio is 1:2.1 in favour of the *jawārī*. The statistics also show that the overall number of *jawārī*, as can be seen in the above table, is Nineteen *jāriyah* whose ethnic affiliations are as follows: 30% of the *jawārī* of Turkish origin; 20% of Armenian origin; 10% of Roman origin; 10% Ethiopian, 5% Nubians and 25% were of *jawārī* origin and belonged to that category of which the sources neglected to cite a specific origin. The statistics also reveal that the Turkish race dominated by more than 30% over the races of the other *jawārī* inside the Caliphate premises. This is mainly attributable to the social and cultural changes that accompanied the Saljūq invasion of Iraq because of the spread of the Turkish language and the customs of the era.

Moreover, the statistics show that all thirteen caliphs, who ruled the Caliphate during the Būyid and the Saljūq eras were sons of the *jawārī* who were categorized as '*ummaḥāt awlād*'. This figure is very interesting in the light of the challenges the Caliphate encountered with respect to the bitter struggles between the Caliphate, the Būyid *Amīrs* and the Saljūq Sultans. It shows the '*ummaḥāt awlād*' *jawārī*'s success over *al-ḥarā'ir* in their struggle to gain the succession of the Caliphate to their sons.

Again, the statistics reveal that four of the caliphs had more than one 'umm walad' jāriyah each. Caliph al-Mustaḍī had four-'umahāt awlād' jawārī, followed by Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr who had three, which is consistent with the material available. Two more caliphs, Caliph al-Muqtafī and his son Caliph al-Mustanjid, each had two 'umm walad jawārī. However, there were six caliphs who were not known to have married and were content with having jawārī as concubines namely: Caliph al-Mustakfī, Caliph al-Muṭī', Caliph al-Qādir, Caliph al-Mustarshid, Caliph al-Rāshid and Caliph al-Mustaḍī. In other words, almost 50% of the caliphs were not interested in marriage and were content to use concubines. This percentage explains the excessive number of jawārī in comparison to that of al-ḥarā'ir. Furthermore, if one examines the other half of the caliphs (who were willing to marry), it is obvious that many of their marriages were conducted for political considerations only. Therefore, one can conclude that the caliphs preferred to take their jawārī as concubines rather than marriage unless an urgent interest arose that compelled them to act otherwise. In the light of this conclusion, a further examination of the information gathered in the research so far is necessary in order to answer the question as to why, during the Būyid and Saljūq periods, Abbasid caliphs preferred to take jawārī as concubines rather than marrying.

One of the reasons for this, as discussed in the political alliance section above, can be attributed to the caliphs' fear that such marriages would lead them to lose power over the Caliphate, especially if they married women who had connections with large tribes such as the Būyids and Saljūqs. For example, when the Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075) wished to marry Malikshah's daughter, Mah Malik Khātūn, it was noted that the growth, prosperity and high lifestyle attained by the state of the Saljūq Turks during the era of Mālikshāh, made the Saljūq sultans very arrogant and dismissive in their dealings with the Abbasid caliphs.³³⁹ Whereas, it is clear that marriages amongst the caliphs and the rulers' daughters or daughters or sisters of other Abbasids would keep power within the hands of their descendants. Additionally, the union with jawārī who were either abducted or had no powerful families or tribes, would not be a danger to the Caliphate. It is

³³⁹ See the marriage alliances section in this Chapter page 69.

possible therefore that this is the reason why the caliphs preferred to take *jawārit* as concubines rather than getting married.

As mentioned earlier, sources are unable to provide many details about the *jawārit*. What is learned from the information gathered regarding these women was the names of the *jāriyah* and those of the '*ummahāt awlād*' but there were no further details of any substance. This might explain why it is hard to believe that the *Jawārit* had any significant role in politics during the Būyid era, and that this was because of the Būyid *Amīrs*' dominance over the caliphs on a political level.³⁴⁰ Therefore, the suggestion that the *jawārit* did not play a significant role in the politics of the Būyid era is correct only when juxtaposing them with their Saljūqi counterparts. In effect, despite the lack of sources regarding any role that could have been taken up by the *jawārit* on a political level, it may be that the *jawārit* had no political role especially when it came to a dispute over the succession to the throne.

One might contest the *jawārit*'s influences during the Būyid era, particularly considering the *Amīrs*' direct interference in the appointment of four out of five caliphs who came into power during their reign. For example, Mu'izz al-Dawla deposed Caliph al-Mustakfī (reg.333-334/944-946) and substituted him with Caliph al-Muṭī' (reg.334-363/946-974) who resigned the Caliphate in favour of al-Ṭā'ī (reg.363-381/974-991) at the chamberlain Sabuktakīn's demand. Bahā al-Dawla also expelled Caliph al-Ṭā'ī and put Caliph al-Qādir (reg.381-422/991-1031) in his place, after which his elder son Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1031-1075) took over the Caliphate as his successor. Caliph al-Qā'im was the caliph who witnessed the demise of this state at the hands of the Saljūq. Given the above, one can argue that during the better part of the Būyid period, the caliph did not identify his own successor in order to transfer the Caliphate during his life and that a successor was appointed after the death of his father, which was the case during the first Abbasid era. Still, despite Būyid meddling, the *Amīrs* were not able to reach their ultimate goal of having a hybrid crown prince ascend the throne, as the Caliphate was always passed to one of the *jawārit*'s sons.

³⁴⁰ See page 61 in this Chapter about Būyid authority.

In contrast, during the Saljūq period, the *jawāri*'s political roles were much more evident, particularly in relation to disputes over the succession to the throne.

Perhaps, one of the most famous *jawāri* of the Saljūq era is Arjwān, the *jāriyah* of *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn, son of the Caliph al-Qā'im. Historians consider her³⁴¹ to have played a pivotal role in rescuing the Abbasid Caliphate from the clutches of both the Fatimid and the Saljūq through her desperate struggle for the rights of her son, Abū al-Qāsim 'Abdullāh, later known as Caliph al-Muqtadī. He ruled over the Caliphate during a time when the Caliphate faced a ferocious struggle against the ambitious powers of the Fatimid and the Saljūq.

Similarly worthy of note are the Armenian *jawāri*, whose influence inside the Abbasid Caliphate premises accelerated, particularly during the Caliph al-Qādir's and the Caliph al-Qā'im's time, when Caliph al-Qādir's *jāriyah* was *'umm walad*. Qaṭr al-nadā, who gave birth to his son Caliph al-Qā'im, was of Armenian origin.³⁴² Caliph al-Qā'im's *jāriyah* was also of Armenian origin; she was *'umm walad*', and she gave birth to his only son the crown prince Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn. However, the sources neglected to cite her name and called her al-Jihah al-Qā'imyah.³⁴³ Arjwān³⁴⁴ was also the *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn's concubine.

Nothing of significance was known about Arjwān before she was sold in the slave markets and came into the crown prince Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn's possession. She was taken as his most favoured *jāriyah*, and then his grand *concubine*. The sudden death of *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn in 448/1056 was a complete disaster for Caliph al-Qā'im as his death meant the possibility of the transfer of the Caliphate outside the circle of his descendents. To his relief, Arjwān declared that she was pregnant by the late *Amīr* and later gave birth to a male child whom his grandfather called 'Abdullāh al-Muqtadī; and assigned him the succession to the Caliphate immediately after his birth.³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Historians such as, Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592)& Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275) and Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286).

³⁴² A. Kāzarūnī(d.697/1298), *Mukhtaṣar al-ta'rikh : min awwal al-zamān ilā muntahā dawlat Banī al-'Abbās*,ed M.Jawad (Baghdad: Wizārat al-'Ilām, 1970), p.202.

³⁴³ Ibid. p.206.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. p.210. It was already known that the Armenian *Jawāri* were not sold in Baghdad until, specifically, in the year 325/936. See M.Ibn Ḥawqal(d.367/977), *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*,(Beirut : Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1964),p.294.

³⁴⁵ A. Kāzarūnī, *Mukhtaṣar al-ta'rikh*,p.206.

Caliph al-Qā'im also declared that the name of his grandson was to be cited beside his name in both the *khuṭbah lil-jum'ah* (Muslim Friday sermon) and on the mint.³⁴⁶ These developments did not please the caliph's newly wedded wife Khadījah *Khātūn* who aspired to bear the caliph's male heir, in order to depose Caliph 'Abdullāh al-Muqtadī, and dispose of his mother. Hence, a conflict of interests divided the women of the palace led by the Caliph al-Qā'im's *jāriyah* and Arjwān on one side and Khadījah *Khātūn* on the other. Each side endeavoured to maintain her status and dominate the palace.

Following al-Bsāsairī's invasion of Baghdad in 450/1058 and the caliph's flight along with his dependants, Khadījah *Khātūn* was captured by al-Bsāsairī. Qaṭr al-nadā, the caliph's mother managed to escape from Baghdad but she soon surrendered. Alone, Qaṭr al-nadā, hid in one of the houses in Baghdad but being an old lady of more than ninety years old she became distressed by hunger and poverty, and therefore, she sent a note to al-Bsāsairī describing her suffering. Feeling compassion for her plight, al-Bsāsairī ordered that a house be made available to her and a daily ration of meat and bread to be given to her.³⁴⁷ As for Arjwān, she remained in hiding with her son and succeeded in escaping from al-Bsāsairī since she realized that as a captive her son, the crown prince, was in danger and that his death would enable al-Bsāsairī to succeed in inflicting a mortal blow to the Abbasid caliphate.³⁴⁸

Amīr 'Abdullāh, the crown prince, was only four years old when his mother escaped from the palace accompanied by al-Qā'im, *jāriyah* and his daughter. Evidently Arjwān was popular among the people of Baghdad because they were anxious to dispose of al-Bsāsairī and to reinstate the Abbasid Caliphate. As such, she and her son aroused the Baghdad people's sympathy because she was the mother of the legitimate crown prince; and because of this, they carefully hid her from al-

³⁴⁶Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam fī ta'riḫ al-mulūk wa-al-umam*. Vol.8,(Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1960),p.210 also'A. Ibn Ḥazm(d.423/1031), *Jamharat ansāb al-'Arab*, (Beirut : Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,1983), p.31.

³⁴⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam*, p.201.

³⁴⁸Ibid.p.201 also see Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tāriḫ al-Zamān*, ed. Iṣḥāq Armalah (Beirut :Dār al-Mashriq,1986) ,p.104. & I.al-'Umarī (d.749), *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār : al-Sifr al-thāmin "Ṭawā'if al-fuqarā', al-Ṣūfiyah,bū Zaby* ,vol.26,(Egypt: al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 2001). p.262.

See also Z.al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī(d.749/1348), *Tāriḫ Ibn al-Wardī*, vol.1,(al-Najaf : al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīyah,1969), p.506.

Bsāsayirī 's scouts by moving her from one mosque to another. This made it difficult for al-Bsāsayirī to apprehend her. Eventually, her clerk succeeded in arranging her relocation to the house of a prominent figure in Baghdad named Abū al-ghanā'im b Mḥlbān. Ibn al-Jawzī records that:

Muḥammad al-Wakīl came to Abū al-ghanā'im b Mḥlbān and said: 'I have found out that Ibn al-dhakhīrah ['Abdullāh al-Muqtadī]; his mother [Arjwān]; the Caliph's [al-Qā'im] daughter and her mother have been sleeping in mosques, moving from one mosque to another and do not have enough bread [to eat] and are suffering in the cold. They [Arjwān and company] sent me to bring to your attention their hardship and seek your assistance, [as] al-Bsāsayirī intensified the scout's search to find them [with the goal of killing al-Muqtadī]. Mḥlbān then said to Muḥammad al-Wakīl: have them wait at a certain mosque, until I send my wife to walk among them until they enter her house [safely].³⁴⁹

Arjwān remained in hiding there until such time that Ṭughril Beg was able to eliminate al-Bsāsayirī in 452/1060; and he entered Baghdad accompanied by his niece and the caliph's wife, Khadījah *Khātūn*, who had intended to dispose of both Arjwān and her son, the crown prince. Arjwān, however, anticipated this and proved her wisdom by leaving Baghdad. She feared that her son would be harmed, particularly in the light of Ṭughril Beg's order that the search for her and her son be renewed.³⁵⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī confirms this in his narration:

When they [Arjwān and company] knew about the arrival of the Sultan [Ṭughril Beg], they felt upset and disturbed and said: 'Our fear of that one [the Sultan] is like our fear of al-Bsāsayirī ' because the *Khātūn* [Khadījah *Khātūn*] is the [Caliph's] wife [in a plural marriage and may be considered a step]... grandmother of that boy [al-Muqtadī] whom she hates to be safe and secure.³⁵¹

Arjwān asked Abū al-ghanā'im b Mḥlbān to help her leave Baghdad until the caliph returned to protect them. He heeded her request and was able to relocate her in one of the trader caravans heading for *Miyafarkin* (Silvan city in Turkey) where its

³⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.215.

³⁵⁰ Ibid. vol.8, p.201.

³⁵¹ Ibid. vol.8, p.216.

Amīr, Nāṣir al-Dawla, received her.³⁵² She and her son remained in *Miyafarkin* until, upon his return to Baghdad, Caliph al-Qā'im, asked Nāṣir al-Dawla to return his wife and crown prince.³⁵³ The people of Baghdad received Arjwān's convoy with a joy that demonstrated their appreciation and compassion for her and her son.³⁵⁴

Events that occurred later were in Arjwān's and her son's favour. These events included the death of Ṭughril Beg in 454/1063 and the inability of Khadījah *Khātūn* to give birth to a child by the Caliph al-Qā'im (particularly due to his treating her as a nominal after learning of her attempts to dispose of his grandson the crown prince). Therefore, after Caliph al-Qā'im's death in 467/1072, there was no living male descendant except for Caliph al-Muqtadī, who had no difficulty in taking over the Caliphate. By her escape, and even more after the death of the caliph, Arjwān played a remarkable role in maintaining the Caliphate within the Abbasid dynasty. In his narrative about her son, al-Azdī al-Muqtadī says, "God has kept in him the progeny of the Abbasids".³⁵⁵ It is clear however, that al-Azdī actually refers to his mother's efforts to ensure that he would take over the reins of the Caliphate while he was still only fifteen years of age.

It is unfortunate that a great deal of the important details pertaining to the life of Arjwān during the Caliphate of her son and her two grandsons, are lost; particularly the work of the historian Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275) who allocated a complete chapter to her in his book *Akḥbār min adrakt khilafat wāldha*. This book is still missing to date. It is also regrettable that the abridged version of that book, which is called (*Nisā' al-khulafā':al-musammá Jihāt al-a'immaḥ al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*) is devoid of any biography of Arjwān. This is particularly true considering Arjwān's story highlights the role played by '*umm walād*' in the politics of the Saljuq period. In the absence of sources on the *jawārī* who were '*ummāht awalad*' one cannot investigate the development of politics in Iraq at the time. Nevertheless, although her struggle to ensure her son's claim to the throne led to instability,

³⁵²A.al-Fāriqī(d.580/1185), *Tārīkh al-Fāriqī*, ed.Badawī 'Abd al-Laṭīf, (Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī ,1974),p.153.

³⁵³Ibn al-Jwazī, *al-Muntaẓam*,vol. 8, p.215

³⁵⁴Ibid, vol.8, p.215

³⁵⁵Unknown, '*Akḥbār 'al-dawla 'al-'Abbāsīyah*, ed.'A.al-Dūrī &'A.al-Muṭṭalibī,(Beirut : Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, 1971), p.277.

Arjwān's power and influence earned her a distinguished place in history not only for herself but also for her son. Unfortunately, much of Arjwān's political role in the history of her time has been omitted from the sources. Indeed, most references to her are made independent of the political achievements she attempted and, eventually, achieved.

It should also be noted that the role of '*umm walad*' was gradually enhanced and integrated into the Caliphate's politics, particularly after the recession of the Saljūq influence in Iraq starting with the era of Caliph al-Muqtafī. The *jawārī* seemed to have gained confidence, which was characterized by an unprecedented audacity; and this was especially true of *Amīr* Abū Alī's mother, who was one of the most important of the '*umm walad*', since she was involved in a conspiracy to transfer the course of the Caliphate to her own son. The sources neglected to cite her name, but it is known that she was one of the '*umm walad*' belonging to Caliph al-Muqtafī and that she was only known in association with her son Abū Alī.³⁵⁶ She tried hard to obtain the succession to the throne for her son Abū Alī, but Caliph al-Muqtafī had already declared his son, Abū Modaffir Yūsuf, later known as Caliph al-Mustanjid, as his crown prince in 547/1152.³⁵⁷ However, Ibn al-Jawzī, the sole historian living at the time of these events, did not record that al-Muqtafī identified his successor during that year.³⁵⁸ 'Umm Abū Alī almost succeeded in raising her son to the position of crown prince when she took advantage of the involvement of *Amīr* Abū Modaffir Yūsuf in killing someone in the crowd and managed to persuade the Caliph al-Muqtafī in 553/1160 to respond to her demands. Nevertheless, the intervention by the *wazīrs* Yaḥyá b. Hubayrah ruined her efforts, particularly when the caliph accepted his judgement in favour of *Amīr* Abū Modaffir Yūsuf.³⁵⁹

In any case, the *jāriyah* took advantage of the fact that the caliph was on his deathbed in 555/1160 by communicating with the senior *Amīrs* and the army commanders asking for their pledge of allegiance to her son Abū Alī as the next

³⁵⁶ Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. I.Armalah (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), p.174.

³⁵⁷ M. Damīrī (d.808/1405), *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Istiqāmah: 1963), p.141.

³⁵⁸ *Al-Muntazam*, vol.10, p.146.

³⁵⁹ I. al-Dam (d.642), *al-Tārīkh al-Muḥaffarī* (Cairo : Dār al-Thaqāfah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī, 1985) p.197.

caliph.³⁶⁰ The conspirators agreed that 'Umm Abū Alī would dispose of *Amīr* Abū Miẓaffar Yūsuf, while Abū al-Ma'ālī al-kyā al-Hrāsy³⁶¹, who demanded that 'Umm Abū Alī erect him as a *wazīr* to her son, would eliminate the *wazīr* Ibn Hubayrah and then acknowledge Abū Alī³⁶² as the next caliph. 'Umm Abū Alī decided to execute her plot without the servants or the entourage knowing about it. Moreover she decided to dispose of Abū Miẓaffar Yūsuf by herself and to do this she armed her *jawārī* with knives while she sent for *Amīr* Yūsuf saying that his father was dying and wanted to see him.³⁶³ Due to a rumour, *Amīr* Yūsuf heard of the plot; one of the stories relates, "Yūsuf used to send one of the boy servants to check on his father from time to time. On his usual errand to check on the Caliph, the servant was astonished by the scene of the *jawārī* while they were carrying their arms and swords; so he immediately returned and informed his master".³⁶⁴ Ibn al-'Ibrī reported that one of the *jawārīs* in the conspiracy was afraid so she crept out and told the *Amīr* of the plan.³⁶⁵ *Amīr* Yūsuf knew of her intentions, so he went into his father's room, accompanied by some of his guards, where the *jawārī* immediately surrendered to him.³⁶⁶ *Amīr* Yūsuf then ordered that his brother and his mother 'Umm Abū Alī along with al-Hrāsy be put in prison. Both she and her son were not heard of again.³⁶⁷

Ibn al-Jawzī mentioned this incident but did not give a decisive opinion about it except to say, "they ['Umm Abū Alī and her son] wished him [*Amīr* Yūsuf] evil in

³⁶⁰ M.al-Dhahabī(d.748/1344) , *Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb Arna'ūt, vol. 20, (Beirut:Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996), p.412.

³⁶¹ We have found a rare biography of this man within a biography furnished by Ibn al-Najjār al-Baghdādī about his father Abdul 'Abd al-Malik ibn -Tabarī, known as al-Kayā al-Harrāsī, one of the al-Shāfi'īyah patriarchs in Baghdad. From the biography, this man was identified as Abū al-Ma'ālī ibn al-Kayā al-Harrāsī, Ibn al-Najjār says "That man did not take after his father and was not concerned about learning, but got associated with the *dīwān* personnel and was assigned as a chamberlain. Eventually, he was given the task of reviewing the grievances in the year 555. See I.al-Baghdādī (d.643/1245), *Dhayl tārikh Baghdād* ,vol.1, (Beirut : Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,1978), p.120.

³⁶² Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārikh*, vol.11, p.256.

³⁶³ Ibn Khaldūn(d.808/1405), *Tārikh Ibn Khaldūn*:Kitāb al-'ibar, *wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-al-khabar*, vol.3, (Beirut : Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,1992),p.363. & Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārikh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. A. Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut : al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlikīyah lil-Ābā' al-Yasū'īyīn,1890),p.211. Also see Al-Nuwayrī(d.733/1332), *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, vol.23, (Cairo : al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr,1963),p.295.

³⁶⁴ See al-Dhahabī(d.748/1344) , *Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol.20, p.412.

³⁶⁵ Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārikh al-Zamān*, p174.

³⁶⁶ Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārikh*, vol.11, p257 also see al-Nuwayrī(d.733/1332), *Nihāyat al-arab*, vol.23, p.295.

³⁶⁷ The *jawārī* who conspired with 'Umm Abū Alī against the prince were sentenced to death either by the sword or by drowning in the River Tigris. See Ibn al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārikh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, p.211 See B.Tudela(d.569/1173), *Riḥlat Binyāmīn*, ed. E.Haddad, (Beirut : Dār Ibn Zaydūn, 1996), p.33.

order to appoint someone else".³⁶⁸ However, according to Richard Coke the fact that the conspiracy occurred after Caliph al-Muqtafi's burial and that it took place at a venue where Yūsuf used to walk is also incorrect. It is unclear where Coke found this information particularly as he did not specify his sources.³⁶⁹ However, it is questionable whether Abū Alī and his mother were not set free by al-Mustanjid until his death in 566/1171. This is according to the information given by Benjamin the Explorer, who visited Baghdad, around 565/1170, that is, before the death of Caliph al-Mustanjid. Benjamin reported that Caliph al-Mustanjid used to detain the *Amīrs* of his kinship and confine them in chains. While this is rather odd behaviour it is most probable that Benjamin only meant, the caliph's stepbrother, Abū Alī, and the latter's mother. Perhaps some of the *Amīrs* who were accessories to the conspiracy were included as well.³⁷⁰

Another *jāriyah* who played an important role in helping Caliph al-Mustaḍī to take the Caliphate and transfer it to the Caliph al-Nāṣir was the Roman³⁷¹ *Jāriyah* known as Binfashā (violet in Persian). She was originally the Caliph al-Mustanjid's slave; however a close and intimate relationship had developed between her and one of her master's many sons *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan (later known as Caliph al-Mustaḍī). The sources say that Binfashā planned to transfer the Caliphate to Caliph al-Mustaḍī after the murder of Caliph al-Mustanjid.³⁷² Though the sources fail to give precise details of these events, the timing determined by Binfashā to dispose of the caliph, during his terminal illness, was extremely strategic.

Amīr Abū Muḥammad was Caliph al-Mustanjid's eldest son, and according to Abbasid tradition, unless otherwise officially announced, the eldest assumed the throne upon the father's death. It is important to note that Zubaydah bint Abū Naṣr Caliph al-Mustaẓḥīr³⁷³, being the legitimate wife, was known to be very influential in the caliphate court, and she did not hide the animosity she harboured towards

³⁶⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.132.

³⁶⁹ R. Coke, *Baghdād madīnat al-salām*, ed. M. Jawād & F. Jamīl, vol.1, (Baghdad : Maṭba'at Shafīq, 1967), p.171.

³⁷⁰ B. Tudela, *Riḥlat Binyāmīn*, p.133.

³⁷¹ I. Kutubī (d.764/1362), *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. I. Abbās, vol.4 (Beirut : Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1973), p.59.

³⁷² Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, p.186.

³⁷³ Ibn al-Jawzī (d.592), *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.221.

Binfashā and *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad. To the contrary, according to Ibn al-Furāt's account, Zubaydah tried to get rid of Binfashā and *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan, at one stroke when she told the dying caliph about the sinful relationship between his concubine and his son.³⁷⁴ Within the context of succession then, it is no surprise that Zubaydah, was against *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan assuming power. Although the sources do not say she supported her own son or one of the other sons of Caliph al-Mustanjid by one of his *jawārī*, it was clear that she did not support his eldest son. Aware of her stance against *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan and her great influence, Binfashā, could not afford to wait for Zubaydah to outmanoeuvre her. Time was of the essence and she could not wait for the illness to take its course, because she was aware of Caliph al-Mustanjid's intention (influenced by his wife and cousin) to appoint another son.

To execute her plan, Binfashā sought help from one of the Turkish Mamlūks known as Qaymāz to murder Caliph al-Mustanjid in 566/1171³⁷⁵; and as a result *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan was able to ascend the throne of the Caliphate and was surnamed Caliph al-Mustaḍī. Eventually, Binfashā enjoyed huge influence in the court of al-Mustaḍī, which later qualified her to play an outstanding role in installing Caliph al-Nāṣir as the successor to his father Caliph al-Mustaḍī. Caliph al-Mustaḍī had two sons, Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad and Abū Mansour Hāshim. Both of their mothers were Turkish '*umm walad*' *jāriyah* Zumurrud *Khātūn*, and Sharaf *Khātūn*, respectively.³⁷⁶ While Binfashā was in favour of Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad and his mother Zumurrud *Khātūn*, it is clear that Caliph al-Mustaḍī and his *wazīr* Majd al-Dīn b. al-'Aṭṭār were inclined to grant the succession to the throne to *Amīr* Abū Mansour Hāshim. It was also obvious that the caliph did not wish to declare the succession to the throne to his son Abū Mansour Hāshim fearing that the matter would upset Binfashā. Therefore, the issue of the succession to the throne remained suspended until the caliph fell sick with a terminal illness in 574/1178;³⁷⁷

³⁷⁴M. Ibn al-Furāt (d.807/1404), *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, ed.Ḥ. Shammā', vol.4 (Baghdad :Manshūrāt Jāmi'at al-Baṣrah,1967),p.116 also see Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh al-Zamān*, p.186.

³⁷⁵ Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, vol.4,p.116 also see Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh al-Zamān*,p.186.

³⁷⁶ Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275), *Nisā' al-khulafā':al-musammā Jihāt al-a'imma al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*, ed.M. Jawād, (Cairo : Dār al-Ma'ārif,1993), p.66.

³⁷⁷A.al-Maḥdī(d.665/1257), *bi-Dayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn*, ed M. Kawtharī, (Cairo : Dār al-Nashr al-Thaqāfah al-Islāmiyah ,1947), p.29.

at which time Binfashā played yet another distinctive role in persuading the caliph, eight days before his demise, to install Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad as his crown prince.³⁷⁸

It seems that Binfashā wanted to conceal any announcement regarding the death of the caliph fearing that Sharaf *Khātūn* and the *wazīr* would deter her plan to secure the Caliphate for *Amīr* Abū al-‘Abbās.³⁷⁹ Therefore, she ordered the apprehension and elimination of the *wazīr*; but it is not known, for certain, of any measures taken by Binfashā against Sharaf *Khātūn* and her son Abū Mansour Hāshim. It seems that Caliph al-Nāṣir and Binfashā never harmed Sharaf *Khātūn* as Ibn al-Sā‘ī (d.674/1275) clearly stated that her death occurred in 608/1221.³⁸⁰ However, al-Irbilī (d.717/1317) reported the death of Abu Maṣṣūr Hāshim when he was detained in one of Caliph al-Nāṣir’s prisons, although he did not specify the year of his death.³⁸¹ In recognition of her gratitude, Caliph al-Nāṣir asked Binfashā to abandon her palace and reside at his mother, Zumurrud *Khātūn*’s premises.³⁸²

It can be argued that there are certain similarities between Binfashā’s influence within the Caliphate and that of al-Khayzurān, who was the most powerful *Jāriyah* of the early Abbasid era. Al-Khayzurān, was Caliph Abu Ja’far al-Mansur’s *Jāriyah*. She was brought from Yemen to Mecca, and Caliph al-Mansūr sent her to his son Caliph al-Mahdī “advising him that the girl was suitable to be a concubine.”³⁸³ However, other sources³⁸⁴ claim that Caliph al-Mahdī saw her first in the slave market and bought her. After she gave birth to two sons, Caliph al-Hādī and Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, she played a significant role during her husband’s regime and both of her sons’ eras. In that sense, both she and Binfashā enjoyed exceptional influences within the Caliphate for successive leaderships. Neither of them seemed

³⁷⁸ M.al-Dubaythī(d.637-1239) ,*al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayh min tārikh Abī ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Sa’id ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Dubaythī* ,(Beirut :Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah,1985), p.102.

Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī says “Bnfshā kept reiterating within hearing distance of Caliph al-Mustaḍī, while he was dying, “ do take care of ibn al-‘Abbas” see S.ibn al-Jawzī (d.654/1256), *Mir’āt al-zamān fī tārikh al-a’yān*, vol. Q2 (Beirut : Dār al-Shurūq, 1985),p.511. Also see Abū Šāmat, *bi-Dayl ‘alā al-rawḍatayn*, p.29.

³⁷⁹ I.Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1372), *al-Bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah*, vol.12, (Beirut:Dār al-Ma’rifah,1996), p.831.

³⁸⁰Ibn al-Sā‘ī ,*Nisā’ al-khulafā*,p.98.

³⁸¹ Al-Irbilī,*Khulāṣat al-Dhaha* , p.206.

³⁸² Abū Šāmat , *bi-Dayl ‘alā al-rawḍatayn*, p.29.

³⁸³ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p19.

³⁸⁴ Al-Ṭabarī(d.310/923), M,*Tārikh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, ed.N. al-Jrah,vol. 5, (Beirut :Dar Sader,2008), p.1341.

fond of the idea of being tamed or pushed aside without having a say in the state of affairs. This was seen in Binfashā's efforts in outmanoeuvring Zubaydah. Similarly for al-Khayzurān, when her son Caliph al-Hādī became the fourth Abbasid caliph after his father's death, he attempted to limit her power by asking her to stay in her house and close her door and not to get involved in politics or decisions.³⁸⁵ That made her support her other son Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and after a year, Caliph al-Hādī was killed in suspicious circumstances. She re-assumed her power within the Caliphate under her son Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's rule.

As for Zumurrud *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Nāṣir's mother, whose life is well known,³⁸⁶ despite the abundance of information, which is full of commendations and citations of her virtues, only a little is known of her involvement in politics during her son al-Nāṣir's era as Caliph. In view of the scant information contained in the sources about the lady's intervention in the political arena, it is obvious that the Caliph al-Nāṣir was highly influenced by his mother Zumurrud *Khātūn* who used to appoint her servants and those close to her in the high posts of the state. For example, she appointed her servant Khālīṣ as a *Wālī* (magistrate) for Nahr al-Malik District and its administrative areas and surnamed him, Mujāhid al-Dīn. She conveyed this desire in a letter to her son the caliph saying that "she liked him and she wanted to see him prosperous".³⁸⁷ She also played a significant role in appointing 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yūnus, who used to work as an agent for her, as a *wazīr* and asked Caliph al-Nāṣir to acknowledge this arrangement, which he did in 583/1182.³⁸⁸

As pointed out earlier, the history of Muslim women is difficult to articulate, especially in terms of their roles and achievements. When examining the role of *jawāri* during this era, one finds that what has been omitted is an account of the cultural diversity within the Būyid and Saljūq periods of rule in the Abbasid region since they appointed Persians and Turks. This diversity was reflected in the

³⁸⁵ Ibid. p.1345.

³⁸⁶ Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. 'U. Sa'īdī (Dimashq :al-Ma'had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyah, 1973), p.135.

³⁸⁷ H. Shāhinshāh (d.617/1220), *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq wa-sirr al-khalā'iq*, ed. H. Ḥabashī, (Cairo : 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1968), p.57.

³⁸⁸ 'A. Ibn Rajab (d.795/1392), *Kitāb al-dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, vol.1 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyah, 1952), p.392.

composition of the *ḥarīm*. As previously noted, there was a struggle between women who were spouses and those who were entitled '*umm walad*' when they gave birth to a caliph son. The research argues that these struggles were not given adequate coverage or analysis by contemporary historians.

This study collected the names of some of the *jawārī* and the '*ummahāt awlad* (pl. *umm walad*), but there were no further details of any importance within the sources, despite the political importance of these women. One must question why sources have, in fact, trivialized the struggles which took place in palaces where the *jawārī* or '*umm walad*' played a significant political role by making changes within the *ḥarīm* and in turn influencing the political sphere during the periods in question.

For example, 'umm Abū Alī '*umm walad* who belonged to Caliph al-Muqtafī almost succeeded in erecting her son as crown prince. However, although her name is known, nothing else of any significance has been reported. The recurring complaint of scholars regarding the accessibility of limited primary material for the study and analysis of the role of *jawārī* in particular and the role of women in general within this period of the Abbasid Caliphate did not deter this research from perusing an in depth investigation into the sources available. Findings suggest that it is possible to unearth histories of powerful women during the Abbasid period; and by highlighting their political role, especially that of the *jawārī* a clear reminder of Muslim women's achievements emerges, albeit presented at different levels.

To summarize, although *jawārī* did not altogether constitute a homogenous group in terms of ethnic or religious backgrounds; *jawārī* of Turkish origin outnumbered other *Jawārī* of different ethnic origins. This may be explained by the framework of changes administered by the Turkish-Saljūq's conquest of Iraq in terms of social and cultural aspects. It is also evident that in spite of the fragile situation of the *jawārī*, who lacked any real influential backup, in comparison to *al-ḥarā'ir*, they still managed to triumph over the *ḥarā'ir*. Indeed, none of the *ḥarā'ir*'s sons took the reins of the Caliphate during the entire duration of the Būyid and Saljūq periods.

In fact, despite attributing the *jawāris*' triumph over *al-ḥarā'ir* to the pressure they exerted on the caliphs to bestow the succession of the throne to their sons and also to their desperate struggle to achieve that end, it could be a very precipitate judgment. Their success was due to many other factors, such as: the keeping of concubines, which evolved as a replacement for marriage and persuaded half of the caliphs in the era under study to abandon marriage. The consequence of this social system was that the caliphs' successors were from *jawāri* mothers only. It was additionally noticed that when caliphs did marry, they did so primarily for political reasons.

Another factor is that the caliphs's wives were daughters of *Amīrs* and sultans who hoped that their sons would one day take over the reins of the Caliphate. Such aspirations supported the caliphs' fears that the Caliphate would slip away from the Abbasid dynasty. This was clearly demonstrated in Caliph al-Qā'im's dealings with Ṭughril Beg and Khadījah *Khātūn*, in addition to the fierce struggle between al-Muqtadī and Malikshāh and then later, Turkān *Khātūn* on the issue of the succession to the throne.

Over time, the idea that sons of the *jawāri* were the ones who have the right to ascend the throne of the Caliphate was fixed in the caliphs' minds. Moreover, the caliphs themselves were on their guard against appointing sons from the *ḥarā'ir* as successors to the throne. However, the above should not negate the efforts of some of the *jawāri* that did have an effect in this respect. For example, Arjwān succeeded in installing her son and later her two grandsons as Caliphs. It is also noticeable that the role of '*ummahāt awlād*' *jawāri* started to become an influential one in politics, particularly after the recession of the Saljūq authority in Iraq and specifically during al-Muqtafī's era and the periods that followed.

The *jawāris*' influence however, seemed to be clearly defined by their part in the fierce struggle with each other to ensure the Caliphate for their sons. To achieve this, conspiracies, murder and intrigues became easy tools for the elimination of caliphs and crown princes. As discussed above, this was the case of 'Umm Abū Alī, the '*umm walad*' *Jāriyah* of Caliph al-Muqtafī, as well as Binfashā the concubines

Caliph al-Mustanjid and her struggle with Zubaydah wife of the caliph. Here, also worth remembering is the exception role-played by Binfashā to secure the ascent of Caliph al-Nāṣir to the throne of the Caliphate.

With the limited information available, this section attempted to examine the political role of the *jawārī* by exploring the lives of the *ummhāt awalad* during the Būyid and Saljūq periods. The aim was to survey the sources for relevant references to the role of women in order to argue that it is not the case that history has obscured the role of Muslim women in politics during the period. *jawārī* were found to have played a vital role in politics and their political activity was immense. There is, in fact, textual confirmation that they were not just *jawārī* during the Abbasid period as various feminist scholars argue.³⁸⁹

The re-examination of the *jawārī* life offered a more complete picture of their role in the caliphs' palaces, and showed that they were involved in court politics and exercised a high degree of influence. Still, there was another category of women within the court, who can be said to have had more influence than *al-ḥarā'ir* and *jawārīs*'. These were the *qahramānas*, whose political roles and functions will be explored in the following section.

2.3.2 The *Qahramānas* and Abbasid Politics

The position of the *qahramāna*³⁹⁰ is considered to be one of the most important in the Abbasid court. The manner in which the position was integrated into the Caliphate as well as the authority linked to the position alludes to it having been established in the house of the rich as early as the reigns of *al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*, (Rightly-guided Caliphs). This section of the research will explore the *qahramānas* in their capacity as administrators of the *ḥarīm* and their function in its politics during the Būyid and Saljūq periods. The *qahramānas*' political roles will be re-

³⁸⁹ Ahmad, *Women and gender in Islam*, p.2

³⁹⁰ The word *qahramāna* is not an Arabic term as there is no Arabic word that one can attribute the etymology to it. The word *qahramāna* is (Persian) the word which means "the housekeeper", as al-Jawālīqī says that the origin of the word is Persian and it is derived from the word *Qaramān*. See M.al-Jawālīqī(d.540/1145), *al-Mu'arrab min al-kalām al-a'jamī 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'jam*, ed.A. Shākir, (Cairo : Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1969), p.56.

examined in terms of their functions and roles. This is a particularly rich area for such an investigation and which will include the study of the power struggle between different factions of the court.

Women's history has debated the issue of the lowly image afforded to Muslim women in their own society, in general. Following an in depth analysis, this section will deduce that the image is not due to a lack of traditional memory or written history. Although Muslim women were not altogether absent from these narratives, their roles, political dealings and principle functions were found to have been omitted. This is argued to have greatly contributed to feminist scholars' misunderstanding of the nature and role of Muslim women in Islamic history. L. Pierce challenges the idea that gender separation did not allow women to play anything more than a minor role within the household, by pointing out that further study of the imperial *ḥarīm* demonstrates that it was a place where both men and women had political power.³⁹¹ This section examines the functions of the *qahramāna* during the Būyid and Saljūq era in order to confirm the finding that women played a tangible and indeed substantial political role during these periods.

In the early stages of the Abbasid Caliphate, the *qahramāna* were confined to the role of discharging palace affairs, and fulfilling the demands of the *ḥarīm* as well as supervising the caliph's wardrobe and food.³⁹² However, for some reason, perhaps in the attempt to achieve a more balanced division of labour, the function of *qahramāna* was subject to change due to caliphs re-assigning some functions to the palace *jawārī*.³⁹³ It is worth noting that the *jawārī* were not expected to carry out more heavy duties than previously assigned to the *qahramāna*. By default, or perhaps by their strategic planning, *qahramānas* assumed a more supervisory role whether as a show of authority or to ensure tasks were maintained at the same standard. During Caliph al-Muqtadīr's era (reg.295-320/908-932), *qahramānas*

³⁹¹ L.Pierce, *Beyond Harem Walls: Ottoman Royal Women and the Exercise of Power: Gendered Domain Rethinking Public and private in Women's History*, eds.O. Dorothy. Helly& Susan &Reverby, (New York: Cornell University, 1992), p.349.

³⁹² Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam*,vol9,p.80. Also Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275), *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar fī 'unwān al-tawārīkh wa-'uyūn al-siyar*, ed. M. Jawad, (Baghdad: Anistās Mārī, 1934), p.41.

³⁹³ H. ibn alṢābī (d.448/1056), *Tuḥfat al-umarā' fī tārikh al-wuzarā'*, ed, A.Aḥmad, (Cairo : Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah,1958),p.22.

tasks were increased, except this time on a different range of responsibilities.³⁹⁴

The new duties included the preparation of the monthly palace expenses, for dispatch to and approval by, the *wazīr*. Moreover, the *qahramāna* was obliged to receive and deliver the monthly gifts and salaries of the ladies of the palace³⁹⁵ as well acting as messenger between the caliph and whomsoever he wished to see.³⁹⁶ Also, the *qahramāna* was expected to deliver the robes of honour and grants to those whom the caliph wished to reward, and to undertake the task of paying condolences on his behalf.³⁹⁷ The *qahramāna*'s functions were also further broadened to include the supervision and maintenance of the caliph's seal along with the scrutiny of papers dispatched by the *wazīr*, *dīwān* to the caliph for his signature.³⁹⁸ Essentially it was an all-encompassing position giving those who assumed it a seat on the decision making table of all caliph and Caliphate related matters ranging from politics to pleasure and social aspects.

By all means *qahramānas* had reached the top of the ladder of authority within the Caliphate. Nadia al-Cheikh argues that, "The Abbasid *ḥarīm* had a highly articulated structure. It included family members and the administrative/ service hierarchy".³⁹⁹ This hierarchy (approved by the caliph), as argued in this section, granted *qahramānas* great authority. Al-Cheikh elaborates on this by explaining that most of the *qahramānas* had to take a number of managerial decisions in order to ensure the smooth running of the household.⁴⁰⁰ To give an idea of the size of these households, Hilāl al-Sābi' declares that it was "generally believed that in the days of al-Muqtadir ... the residence contained 11,000 servants; 7,000 blacks and 4,000 white slaves; 4,000 free and slave girls and thousands of chamber servants".⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ H.al- Šābī , *Tuḥfat al-umarā'*, pp.85-86.

³⁹⁶ S.Ibn al-Jawzī(d.654/1256),*Mir'āt al-zamān*,vol 12. p.A12.

³⁹⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam*,vol 8, p.251.

³⁹⁸ 'A.Ibn al-Fuwaṭī(d.723/1323), *al-Hawādith al-jāmi'ah wa-al-tajārib al-nāfi'ah fī al-mi'ah al-sābi'ah* ,ed.M. Jawād,(Baghdad : al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah,1932), p.88.

³⁹⁹ N. El-Cheikh, *The Qahramāna in the Abbasid Court: Positing and Functions*, (Paris ,Maisonneuve&Larose,2003) Available at <http://www.Jstore.org/stable4150601> Accessed 17/12/2010 20:41,p.43.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ H.al-Sābi'(d.448/1056), *Rusūm dār al-Khilāfa*, Tran.Elie A.Salem(Beirut, Lebanese Commission for the Translation of Great Works , 1977) p.14.

Accordingly, the role of *qahramāna* became one of the most influential and impressive in the Abbasid court. Historian Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275) summarizes this by asserting that the *qahramāna* used to run the business of the al-'Azīz house the way the *wazīr* runs the business of the “*dīwān al-'Azīz*”.⁴⁰² The *qahramāna* was the only *jāriyah* amongst the ladies of the household that was eligible to walk outside the palace without prior permission. She was provided with a horse and a group of slaves for her protection when she ran errands in the markets.⁴⁰³ Based on the above, it can be deduced that it was natural that the *qahramānas*' influence increased proportional to their increased engagement with the caliph's *dīwān*. In fact, they were eventually more involved with the *dīwān* than they were with the affairs of the palace. In some cases we found that these *qahramānas* take the role of *wazīr* to the caliph.

Perhaps, the most illustrative example of the *qahramāna*'s influence in the Abbasid court was the case of Turkān *Khātūn*, wife of Sultan Malikshāh, who knowing the magnitude of a *qahramāna*'s influence placed a condition on agreeing to her daughter's marriage to Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075): there was to be no *qahramāna* in her daughter's house.⁴⁰⁴ This goes to show the kind of authority and manipulation the position carried. It proved to be one of the highest in the Caliphate court.

As well as intervening in the selection and appointment of *wazīrs*, as will be seen below, the *qahramānas* often discharged *wazīrs*. For example, the *qahramāna* 'Umm Mūsā played a part in the dismissal of the *wazīr* to the Caliph al-Muqtadīr, 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, in 304/916. Ibn Ṣābī says: “in Dhū al-Qi'dah, it was customary to distribute presents and gifts to the *ḥarīm* and court servants. Just before Dhū al-Qi'dah in 304, 'Umm Mūsā, the *qahramāna* was to meet the *wazīrs*, Alī ibn 'Īsā in order to carry out the custom. When Ibn 'Īsā could not be found, his valet Salamah apologised to the *qahramāna* and asked her to leave. She left, very angry”.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275), *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p.41.

⁴⁰³ A. 'Alī Tanūkhī (d.384/994), *Kitāb al-Faraj ba'da al-shiddah*, ed.'A.Shālji, vol4, (Beirut : Dār Ṣādir, 1987), p.369.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol 9, p.2.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibn Ṣābī, *Tuḥfat al-umarā'*, p.310.

When ibn 'Īsá was informed of the incident he sent a messenger to convey his apology and regret, but she neither accepted nor acknowledged his apology. Eventually, she went to al-Muqtadīr and his lady to complain about ibn 'Īsá that helped to arrest ibn 'Īsá's and dismissal from his ministerial post.⁴⁰⁶

However, the most compelling example of the strength of the *qahramāna*'s influence at that time was that the caliph would sometimes instruct them to apprehend and incarcerate *wazīrs* in their own houses.⁴⁰⁷ For example one of Caliph al-Muqtadīr's *qahramānas*, Zaydān's house was turned into a prison and her main job was as the gaoler:⁴⁰⁸

Her role as Jailer allowed Zaydān to come in contact with influential persons, individuals who had temporarily fallen out of favour but who had the potential to rise to power and influence once again. Her exclusive access to these important personalities, her ability to act as mediator between her prisoners and the Caliph provided her with important leverage and allowed her to develop a web of influence built on past favours and moral debt.⁴⁰⁹

Another instance was when Caliph al-Muqtadīr arrested the *wazīr* Ibn al-Furāt with his son and some of his allies and put them in the custody of Zaydān.⁴¹⁰ It is also recorded that writings between the *wazīr* and the *qahramāna* included three full lines of supplication after the invocation and her name was preceded by her titles.⁴¹¹ Again, it was customary for the *wazīr* to stand to attention on her entrance and to pay her the prescribed forms of respect and esteem.⁴¹²

As for payment, the *qahramāna* was considered to be amongst the cream of the entourage and hence, according to custom, she was awarded sufficient land and remuneration. In spite of their privileged position, some *qahramānas* did not hesitate to embezzle some of the palace funds, or to accept bribes on the strength of their function and sphere of influence. Therefore, the fortune of some of the *qahramānas* was vast. 'Alam, *qahramāna* of Caliph al-Mustakfī (reg.333-334/944-946) is a good example. of such a scenario. Upon her arrest by Mu'izz al-Dawla,

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.p.310.

⁴⁰⁸ N.El-Cheikh, *The Qahramāna in the Abbasid Court: Positing and Functions*, (Paris :Maisonneuve&Larose,2003), Available at <http://www.jstore.org/stable4150601> Accessed 17/12/2010 20:41. ,p.44.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.p.44.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibn Šābī , *Tuḥfat al-umarā* ,p.153.

⁴¹² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, p. vol 9, p.81.

she paid forty thousand dinars to the treasury when she had only been in service for one year as Caliph al-Mustakfī's *qahramāna*. It can therefore be deduced that she had more than one source of income, most probably bribes. As already mentioned, bribes to *qahramānas* were not unheard of. Bakhtiyār's stewardess, for instance, took a bribe of fifty thousands *dirhams*⁴¹³ from the *wazīr* Ibn baqīya for eliminating one of his competitors in the ministry. Ibn al-Jawzī also narrates that a hidden sum, which equated to nine pounds of gold was found in a house belonging to one of the *qahramānas*.⁴¹⁴

Their distinguished standing in the Caliphate court paved the way for *qahramānas* to play an active role in politics due to their position and influence. The most famous *qahramāna* in the Būyid era was 'Alam, Caliph al-Mustakfī's *qahramāna*, who, before becoming a *qahramāna* was known as Ḥusan al-Shīrāzīyah. Her role as *qahramāna* became widely known before Mu'izz al-Dawla's invasion of Baghdad. It is true to say, however, that the political chaos instigated by 'Alam directly caused the downfall of Baghdad after which it fell into Mu'izz al-Dawla's hands with little resistance. The *qahramāna* became even more famous in the political arena during the tumultuous events that occurred during Caliph al-Muttaqī's reign in 333/944. Unfortunately, there is too little information regarding her personal details except that she was of Shīrazī origin.⁴¹⁵ According to records kept by an anonymous historian, Ḥusan and her daughter, whose name has not been recorded, had a bad reputation amongst the people of Baghdad.⁴¹⁶ Ḥusan was known to have had a strong and intimate relationship with the son of Caliph al-Muktafī, *Amīr* 'Abdullāh, who with her help, later took the reins of the Caliphate, and then called himself Caliph al-Mustakfī.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ Ibid.vol 10,p.221.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*,vol.2,,p.73 & M.al-Hamadhānī(d.521/1127),*Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* ,(Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkīyah,1961),p.348.

⁴¹⁶ The anonymous author, writer of the *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq* says Ḥusan al-Shīrāzīyah and her daughter were known of their misconduct and were famous for drinking wine and committing adultery'. She used to go and spend her time with a group of Persians and return in an ugly condition see Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed 'U.Sa'īdī ,vol4,(Damascus : al-Ma'had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyah,1973), p.403.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.p.403.

Abbasid Caliph al-Muttaqī marched out of Baghdad and made his way to *al-Raqqah* where he communicated with Naṣīr al-Dawla al-Ḥamdānī in Mosul and Muḥammad ibn Ṭghaj al-Ikhshīd in an attempt to form an alliance against the *Amīr al-Umarā* Abū al-wafā' Tūzūn. This event severely shocked and disturbed Tūzūn who soon proposed a peace treaty with Caliph al-Muttaqī and returned to Baghdad.⁴¹⁸ Ḥīsan took advantage of the deterioration of the relationship between Caliph al-Muttaqī and Tūzūn. The opportunity presented itself when the latter encouraged her to eliminate the Caliph al-Muttaqī and put 'Abdullāh ibn Caliph al-Muktafī in his place. Ḥīsan approached someone close to Tūzūn, and according to ibn Miskawayh, the mediator was a Daylam called Ibrahim ibn al-Zubayd⁴¹⁹ but the unknown author of *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq* says that the mediator was named Ibn Mālik al-Daylamī.⁴²⁰ Ibn al-'Imrān, on the other hand said that Ḥīsan herself was a wife of one of Tūzūn's private possessions.⁴²¹ Tūzūn had this relationship in order to pass on the plan. Ibn Miskawayh says that, Ḥīsan sent a message to Tūzūn as follows:

Caliph al-Muttaqī is a man who has been hostile to you and is your enemy. It seems impossible that his intentions toward you would ever be benevolent. He has done his best to defeat you but he has not succeeded. His relationships are known to be unstable; for example at times he is on the Hamdanids' side and at other times he sides with the Būyid. On the other hand, here is an aristocrat, a man of understanding, prudence and religion. You should establish him ['Abdullāh ibn Caliph al-Muktafī] as your caliph and forget al-Muttaqī. This man will reward you financially and you need never fear your enemies again. You should choose this man to be your caliph since he will acknowledge your good qualities and be loyal to you.⁴²²

Ḥusan promised to pay Tūzūn the amount of six hundred thousand dinars, a large sum, should 'Abdullāh ibn al-Muktafī take over the reins of the Caliphate. The anonymous author⁴²³ says that Ḥīsan used to have a special regard for a Persian called Ibn Mālik al-Daylamī who had a similar status and rank as Tūzūn. Abu 'Abdullāh ibn Sulaymān used to be the writer for al-Daylamī, and when Ḥīsan

⁴¹⁸ Al-Hamadhānī(d.521/1127), *Takmilat Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p.342. Y. al-Anṭākī(d.1065), *al-ma'rūf bi-Ṣilat tārīkh Ūtīkhā*, ed.'Umar Tadmurī, (Beirut: Jarūs Baras,1990), p.45.

⁴¹⁹ Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol 2, p.72.

⁴²⁰ Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, vol 4, p.404.

⁴²¹ Ibn al-'Imrān, *al-Inbā' fī tārīkh al-khukafā*, p.175.

⁴²² Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.73.

⁴²³ *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, vol.4, p.405.

arrived she used to stay for prolonged periods and he confided in her in secret; so ibn Suleiman said to al-Daylamī.

I see that you persist in confiding in that woman, so tell me about it". Al-Daylamī replied, "that woman alleges that a man of Abbasid descent called 'Abdullāh ibn al-Muktafī is claiming the Caliphate and vows that he would pay Tūzūn six hundred thousands dinars if the latter would apprehend Caliph al-Muttaqī.⁴²⁴

Ḥīsan's proposal aroused Tūzūn's suspicions and so he requested a meeting with the Abbasid *Amīr* and offered him his allegiance after the *Amīr* promised to pay him the huge amount offered by Ḥīsan.⁴²⁵ In the month of Safar in 333/944, the Abbasid *Amīr* and Ḥīsan left with Tūzūn who pretended to receive Caliph al-Muttaqī and while he was near to *Anbar*, Tūzūn seized Caliph al-Muttaqī and turned him over to Ḥīsan who ordered that his eyes be torn out.⁴²⁶ Tūzūn then acknowledged 'Abdullāh ibn al-Muktafī as the new caliph who surnamed himself Caliph al-Mustakfī (reg.333-334/944-946). As for Ḥīsan, she changed her name to 'Alam *qahramāna* after al-Mustakfī had appointed her as his own *qahramāna*.⁴²⁷

Acknowledging her powers and politically inclined mind, the new caliph ignored the affairs of state and left governance in the hands of 'Alam. Meanwhile, he immersed himself in pleasure. Describing this, al-Hamadhānī (d.395/1007) wrote that "she dominated his every thought and deed".⁴²⁸ At the beginning, 'Alam faced a serious problem of how she could secure the large sum that Caliph al-Mustakfī had promised to give Tūzūn, especially after she had discovered that the sums Caliph al-Muttaqī had in his treasure house were much less than she had undertaken to pay Tūzūn. To overcome this matter, she initiated a series of taxes.⁴²⁹ The notables in the city reacted in such a way that it started a period of unrest and disturbance. Concerned about the consequences of this turmoil, Tūzūn sent a

⁴²⁴ Ibid.vol.4, p.405.

⁴²⁵ Ibn al-'Adīm(d.660/1262), *Bughyat al-ṭalab fī tārikh Ḥalab*,ch3,ed .S.Zakkār,(Beirut : Dār al-Fikr, 1988),p.858.

⁴²⁶ Ibn Miskawayh , *Tajārib al-umam*,vol.2,p.72.&Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'*,p.vol. 4, p.109. Also see I.al-'Ibrī (d.685/1286), *Tārikh mukhtaṣar al-duwal* , ed.A. Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkiyah lil-'Ābā' al-Yasū'iyyīn,1890), p.165.

⁴²⁷ Al-Hamadhānī (521/1127),*Takmilat Tārikh al-Ṭabarī* , p.349.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.p.350.

⁴²⁹ On the merchants and traders, in one of the confiscations initiated by 'Alam inside *Karkh* south Baghdad. The total amount confiscated from the merchants equated to thirty thousand dinars aside from the goods, which the anonymous author of *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq* estimated to exceed that amount several times.See *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, vol. 4, p.416.

message to Caliph al-Mustakfī asking him to put a stop to the taxes.⁴³⁰ The *Fuqahā'* of Baghdad organized a delegation to meet with Caliph al-Mustakfī and reprimand him for allowing his *qahramāna* such freedom and begged him to dispose of her. Caliph al-Mustakfī answered them by saying, "calm down, she was there during the time of hardships while you showed up in times of prosperity; and it is she who had endeavoured to provide this worldly existence for me; Should I be so niggardly not to provide her with some of it".⁴³¹

Tūzūn died in the month of *Muḥarram* in the year 334/945 leaving chaos behind him. Due to their delayed subsistence/wage the Turkish soldiers started to riot against Caliph al-Mustakfī and his *qahramāna* 'Alam, who were forced to flee the palace. 'Alam had no option but to correspond with Mu'izz al-Dawla asking him to invade Baghdad and intervene in order to save the caliph. Her request was carried out in the month of Jumādī al-Thānī of the same year.⁴³²

Given her reputation, Mu'izz al-Dawla did not trust 'Alam⁴³³, in fact he planned to get rid of her, or at least divest her of her power. To his disappointment, Caliph al-Mustakfī insisted that Mu'izz al-Dawla promise to safeguard her and install her as a *qahramāna* in the Caliphate.⁴³⁴

The rising tension eventually led 'Alam to decide to dispose of Mu'izz al-Dawla. She selected Rūzbihān b.Khūrshīd⁴³⁵ chieftain of the al-Daylam garrison in Mu'izz al-Dawla's army to execute her plot. The choice highlights her political instincts as it implies her political awareness, particularly with regards to Rūzbihān's ambition to assume the authority of the emirate, underscored by a deep hatred for Mu'izz al-Dawla.⁴³⁶ It seems that the news of the conspiracy was leaked to Mu'izz al-Dawla, which gave him a reason to apprehend both caliph, Caliph al-Mustakfī and his *qahramāna* the following day. He gave the order for Caliph al-Mustakfī's eyes to be

⁴³⁰ Ibid.vol. 4, p.418.

⁴³¹ Ibid.vol.4, p.417.

⁴³² See the Introduction about the invasion of Baghdad by Mu'izz al-Dawla.

⁴³³ M. Dhahabī (d.748/1344), *āriḵh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-al-a'lām*, ed 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), p.278.

⁴³⁴ Ibn Miskawayh(412/1030), *The Tajārib al-umam*, vol2,p.85.&⁴³⁴ al-Hamadhānī(521/1127), *Takmilat Tāriḵh al-Ṭabarī*, p.353.

⁴³⁵ For more information on Rūzbihān b.Khūrshīd, see page 55.

⁴³⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, (630/1232), *al-Kāmil fi l-tarīḵh*. Vol.8.(Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1995), p.450. & I.al-'Ibrī, *Tāriḵh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, p.166.

torn out and 'Alam's tongue to be chopped off. 'Alam was then imprisoned and fined forty thousand dinars, and the amount was taken by Mu'izz al-Dawla.⁴³⁷

Tuḥfah was another noteworthy *qahramāna*. She emerged during Bakhtiyār's era and was *Amīr* 'Izz al-Dawla b. Bakhtiyār's *qahramāna*. The only information about her is reported in his book *Tajārib al-umam*, which retold the events that took place in 363/973. Ibn Miskawayh (d.421/1030) narrates the following:

Ibn baqīyah never spared anyone's life. When Alī Ibn al-Husain al-Shīrāzī assumed the ministry of Basra was Abū al-Qāsim al-Musharraf who was not on good terms with Ibn baqīyah. The latter did his best to prevent al-Shīrāzī from seeing the Sultan. Access should have been easy due to an agreement between Bakhtiyār and Tuḥfah the *qahramāna* of Bakhtiyār who sympathised with and defended al-Shīrāzī. He left for Baghdad to meet with the *qahramāna* but Ibn baqīyah reached there first and paid fifty thousand Dirham to her to hand over al-Shīrāzī to him. Al-Shīrāzī was captive for a few days while Ibn baqīyah claimed that he had passed away during an illness.⁴³⁸

This story indicates the enormity of Tuḥfah's influence in Bakhtiyār's court. Another proof of her power and influence is that those who wished to be appointed as *wazīrs* were keen to be on friendly terms with her in order to gain her support. Some would even go further for her approval: one *wazīr* had to pay her a handsome bribe for handing over one of his competitors in the ministry.

Similarly, Caliph al-Qā'im's (reg.422-467/1031-1075) *qahramāna*, Ṣalaf, played a significant political role. She was one of the most devoted supporters of Ṭughril Beg and Khadījah *Khātūn*.⁴³⁹ Even after al-Bsāsayirī's victory he found Ṣalaf in Khadījah *Khātūn*'s company, and he arrested them both.⁴⁴⁰ Ṣalaf's influence in the Caliphate court was unquestionable. Ṭughril Beg consulted her before approaching al-Qā'im asking for his daughter's hand in marriage, and the *qahramāna*'s quest for the caliph's approval had a real impact.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Ibn Miskaway, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, p.86. Also see Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, vol.4, p.452.

⁴³⁸ Ibn Miskaway, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2, pp.322-323.

⁴³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p.200.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. vol.8, p.201.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. vol.8, p.218.

Moreover, Ṣalaf was one of those who objected to the expulsion of Ibn Jahīr from the ministry when she supported Khadījah *Khātūn* in her request for his reinstatement. Ibn al-Jawzī cites that, “Ṣalaf, the *qahramāna* who interceded spoke well of Ibn Jahīr, and proposed that he was paid a sum of fifteen thousand dinars as compensation.”⁴⁴². This account demonstrates how influential Ṣalaf was in the Caliphate.

As for Shams al-Nahār, Caliph al-Muqtadī’s *qahramāna*, she was the most renowned *qahramāna* in the history of the Abbasid state due to her link with the mysterious death of the caliph. She is famous because historians accuse her of causing the fatality. She was so powerful and influential during al-Muqtadī’s time that she managed to poison him in the year 487/1094.⁴⁴³ However, it is important to note that Barkiyāruq was in Baghdad at the time, which suggests that he encouraged the *qahramāna* to murder the caliph. As discussed earlier in the Chapter, Caliph al-Muqtadī had acknowledged Maḥmūd as the Sultan and left him to face his fate at the hands of Turkān *Khātūn*, alone.⁴⁴⁴ Barkiyāruq had never forgiven Caliph al-Muqtadī for that.⁴⁴⁵

Having considered the above it would seem that the account of these events is suspicious because Barkiyāruq was aware that Turkān *Khātūn* had forced Caliph al-Muqtadī to declare, unwillingly, her son Maḥmūd’s succession to the throne. Moreover the caliph did not have the power to refuse Turkān *Khātūn*’s request.⁴⁴⁶ Even if one took for granted that Barkiyāruq hated Caliph al-Muqtadī, the time Barkiyāruq chose (the month of *Muḥarram* 487/1094) was inappropriate to cause the death of the Caliph al-Muqtadī since Barkiyāruq’s uncle Tāj al-Dawla Tutush

⁴⁴² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.252.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. vol.9, pp.80-81. & Ibn al-Sā’ī(674/1275) , *al-Jāmi’ al-mukhtaṣar*, p.41. Also see Dhahabī (d.748/1344) , *Tārīkh al-Islām* ,p.249. A.al- Qalqashandī(821/1418),*Ma’āthir al-ināfah fī ma’ālim al-khilāfah* ,vol.2(Kuwait : Wizārat al-Irshād wa-al-Anbā,1964) , p.11.

See also al-Nuwayrī (d.733/1332),*Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*,vol.23 (Cairo :al-Mu’assasah al-Miṣrīyah al-’Ammah lil-Ta’līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Ṭibā’ah wa-al-Nashr,1963) , p.252.

⁴⁴⁴ M. Jawād, *Sayyidāt al-balāṭ al-Abbāsī* ,(Biruet: Dār al-Fikr,1970),p.181.

⁴⁴⁵ K.Brukilmān (1868-1956),*Tārīkh al-shu’ūb al-islāmīyah*, ed.N.Fāris, (Beirut : Dār al-’Ilm ,1998) , p.283. & A.A’ẓamī , *Mukhtaṣar ta’rīkh Baghdad* , (Baghdad: Maṭba’at al-Furāt,1927) , p.83. Also see M.Shandab, *al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah fī Baghdād fī al-nuṣf al-thānī min al-qarn al-khāmis al-Hijrī (476-512H)*, (Beirut : Dār al-Nafā’is,1984) , p.21.

⁴⁴⁶ B.Edward (1862-1926), *Account of a manuscript history of the Seljūqs*, (Hertford: Stephen Austin,1906), pp.35-63.

and his army were marching to Baghdad to claim his right to the throne.⁴⁴⁷ It seems likely then that Barkiyāruq's arrival in Baghdad was to pledge allegiance in order to strengthen his case before marching against his uncle Tutush.

It is also unlikely that Barkiyāruq would have wanted Caliph al-Muqtadī to die before he had acquired the caliph's pledge. By all accounts, the caliph's death did not benefit Barkiyāruq. It is possible then that the *qahramāna*'s role indicates that there had been a bitter struggle relating to the issue of succession. In support of this theory, the *qahramāna* concealed the news of the caliph's death for three full days until she was certain that Caliph al-Mustazhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) had been acknowledged as successor to the throne.⁴⁴⁸

Following a series of deaths of Saljūq sovereigns who planned to transfer the Caliphate to their control through Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far (son of Caliph al-Muqtadī and grandson of Sultan Malikshāh)⁴⁴⁹, opportunities for the sons of Caliph al-Muqtadī (from '*Umm walad*') to compete for the Caliphate presented themselves, at the same time as Māh Malik *Khātūn*, the mother of *Amīr* Abū al-Faḍl (d.482/1089). A few days later, Sultan Malikshāh passed away followed by his wife Turkān *Khātūn* in 487/1094. Also Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far died in the same year.⁴⁵⁰ Finally, *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad Hārūn competed against his brother, *Amīr* Abū al-Abbās Ahmad for the Caliphate.

Qahramāna Shams al-Nahār supported *Amīr* Abū al-Abbās Ahmad who was not yet sixteen years of age. On the other hand, his father's aunt Caliph al-Qā'im's daughter and widow of Ṭughril Beg strongly supported *Amīr* Abū Muḥammad Hārūn. To overcome this, the *qahramāna* summoned the *wazīr*, having concealed the caliph's death for three days to enable Abū al-Abbās to assert his position. Subsequently, she advised the young caliph to apprehend his aunt, who was then

⁴⁴⁷ Ibn al-'Adīm (d.588/1192), *Zubdat al-ḥalab min tārikh Ḥalab*, ed. S.al-Dahhān, vol.2, (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-Taraqqī, 1954), p.128. Also see S. ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, p.A59. Also see 'A.al-Azdī (613/1216) *Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'ah*, ed.M.al-Zahrānī, (al-Madīnah : Maktabat al-Dār, 1988), p.287.

⁴⁴⁸ S. ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, p.B59

⁴⁴⁹ See page 85 of this chapter..

⁴⁵⁰ T.al-Sā'ī (d.674/1275) *Nisā' al-khulafā': al-musammá Jihāt al-a'immah al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*, ed; M.Jawād (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960), p.110.

put under house arrest until her death in 496/1102.⁴⁵¹ As such, after the death of Caliph al-Muqtadī, which she had concealed for days until Barkiyāruq confirmed that he conceded and acknowledged Abū al-Abbās as the new caliph and surnamed himself Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr under *qahramāna*'s and the *wazīr*'s guard. The *qahramāna* dominated the Caliphate from the very beginning. Al-Azdī attributes this, as well as her control over the *wazīr*, to her cruelty and firmness.⁴⁵²

Amīr Abū Muḥammad Hārūn did not want to lose the Caliphate in that way so he conspired with one of the sultan's close friends to commend him to the sultan in the presence of the *qahramān*'s. That friend's name, according to al-İşfahānī (d.597/1210), was al-Khatibī.⁴⁵³ Understanding the plot and the danger that it would be attempted again, Şalaf had no choice but to offer a bribe to the conspirator in the sum of six thousand dinars to prevent a repetition.⁴⁵⁴

The power and influence enjoyed by such *qahramāns* as Şalaf drove caliphs to create the position *Ustādh al-Dār* or the *al-Astādār* (the master of the house)⁴⁵⁵ to curb and undermine the *qahramāns*' jurisdiction. The name of the caliph who established this position is unknown. Nevertheless, it was during Caliph al-Mustanjid's era (reg.555-566/1160-1170) that the role is first heard of. Sayyid Amīr reports that *Ustādh al-Dār* was among the titles assumed by the Būyid *Amīrs*.⁴⁵⁶ This title, however, was not found among the official titles assumed by the Būyids on the mintage, in their correspondence, or in contemporary documentations.

To sum up, the role played by *qahramānas*, each in her own sphere, was a major one in the politics of the time. One can argue however, that it was a flawed role as it highlighted events that put a stain on the state and resulted in the loss of the Caliphate's esteem and credibility. Indeed, autocracy and abuse of power backed

⁴⁵¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi l-tarīkh*. Vol.10, p.366.

⁴⁵² Al-Azdī, *Akhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'a*, p.282.

⁴⁵³ Al-İşfahānī (d.587/1191), *Tārīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq*, (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah,1980), p.87.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.p.87.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ustādh al-Dār* (or the *al-Astādār*) is a compound Persian word that means 'the master of the house'. The person who assumes that position is assigned the tasks of looking into the affairs of the caliph or the sultan house see A.al-Qalqashandī(821/1418), *Şubḥ al-a'shā fi sinā'at al-inshā'*, vol.4(Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1938), p.20.

⁴⁵⁶ S.Ali(1928-1849), *Mukhtaşar tārīkh al-'Arab*, ed.'A.al-Ba'albakī,(Beirut : Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn,1961), p.367.

by their whims, corruption and bribery became commonplace amongst the *qahramānas*. For example, ‘Alam was seen to take advantage of Tūzūn’s greed in deposing Caliph al-Muttaqī and substituting him with Caliph al-Mustakfī. Also, her inappropriate intervention in the state’s affairs led to riots and disturbances since she was the one that invited Mu‘izz al-Dawla to invade Baghdad only to later conspire against him. By the same token, the very little information known about Tuḥfah the *qahramāna* of the ‘Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār, is that she took a bribe from one *wazīr* after he knew of her intention to install his competitor by taking advantage of the *Amīr*’s weaknesses and his mother’s control over him. Similarly, as far as Ṣalaf, Caliph al-Qā’im’s *qahramāna* is concerned, her story illustrated the weakness and collapse of the dignity of the Caliphate explicitly, as she was seen to directly interfere in state affairs by advising the caliph to the discharge of one of his *wazīrs*. Ṣalaf also played an important role in the riots and intrigues that occurred between Ṭuḡhril Beg and Caliph al-Qā’im when the former asked to marry the caliph’s daughter.

Ultimately however, it was Shams al-Nahār who demonstrated the height of influence attained by the *qahramānas* when she deliberately killed the caliph in order to elevate his young son so that she could tighten her grip on the state. Perhaps it was Shams al-Nahār’s actions that drove later caliphs to curb the position’s jurisdiction and influence by introducing the position of the Master of the House (*Astādār*), a post that stripped the *qahramānas* of their authority and restricted their roles back to attending to the *ḥarīm* and *jawārī*.

Similar to the case of the *jawārī*, this thesis finds, that historians mostly omitted the roles of the *qahramānas* especially authors who were political figures. The investigation into the apparent role of the *qahramāns* together with a distinct lack of information relating to the names of some of those whose lives were examined in this section may be better understood by examining the motivations of some of the authors of the primary sources of the periods under investigation.⁴⁵⁷ This was true in the case of ‘Alam. Aside from her real name, Ḥusan al-Shīrāzīyah, there was too

⁴⁵⁷ Authors such as Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, Ibn al-Sā’ī, *al-Jāmi’ al-mukhtaṣar*, etc

little information regarding her life and roles, which will be discussed later in this section. It is worth noting, that the author who offered most details of her life, Abū al-Faḍl Ahmad b. al-Shīrāzī, worked as a writer for the *wazīr* Abū Alī Ibn Muḡlah and more importantly was also her son-in-law.⁴⁵⁸ It could be argued that the amount of information he offered was largely due to the kinship between them as they share the same title of al-Shīrāzī.

Additionally, the deterioration of the relationship between ‘Alam and Mu‘izz al-Dawla may be said to have contributed to the lack of information portraying the true magnitude of her power. For example, Abu Hilala Ibn al-Ṣābī, the main author during Mu‘izz al-Dawla’s reign, did not mention ‘Alam in his sources. This may be due to his being one of the most important political figures during Mu‘izz al-Dawla’s leadership⁴⁵⁹, and ‘Alam was essentially the driving force behind the caliph assuming power leading to the deterioration of her relationship with Mu‘izz al-Dawla mentioned above. Hence one could argue that Ibn al-Ṣābī’s affiliation with Mu‘izz al-Dawla significantly affected the omission of ‘Alam’s role during the time. Indeed, her vast scope of influence could be said to have been trivialized leading to a limited and incomplete account of her power and impact on the Caliphate.

In the same way, the only information revealed about Tuḡfah, who was ‘Izz al-Dawla Ibn Bakhtiyār’s *qahramāna* and her political role, was that she took a bribe from a *wazīr*. One could even argue it is the combination of omission, and trivialization of Tuḡfah that resulted in her under-representation, or some might argue the complete absence of her representation. Although clearly some of these *qahramānas* have not been absent in the history of their era in terms of the reports of the influence they had on the politics of their time, they have been trivialized in terms of the omission of their personal details and biographies in the records. For example as previously noticed, Shams al-Nahār, one of the most powerful and influential *qahramāna*, who killed one of the Abbasid caliphs has not been

⁴⁵⁸ See al-Tanūkhī(d.348), *Nishwār al-muḡāḍarah wa-akḡbār al-mudḡākarah*, ed.‘A. Shālījī, vol 2,(Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1971),p.26 .

⁴⁵⁹Ibn Ṣābī, H. (448/1056), *Tuḡfat al-umarā’ fī tārikḡ al-wuzarā’*, ed, Abd al-Sattār Aḡmad, (Cairo: Dār Iḡyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabīyah, 1958)

mentioned in most of the sources. Despite this evident lack of information, it may be safe to construe that, similar to the case of 'Alam, *qahramānas* with significant political power were actively omitted from narratives due to the affiliations of authors to the leadership, and the threats these women presented to those in power.

Despite this, there is a more positive view. As summarized, *qahramānas* played an undeniable role during the Būyid and Saljūq periods of the Abbasid Caliphate in that in general they held the purse of the *ḥarīm* and as such were involved in most (if not all) political events. 'Alam, Tuḥfah, Ṣalaf and Shams al-Nahār, were all examples of influential and powerful women through their positions as *qahramānas*. Unfortunately, this research found that sources have denied the legitimacy of their real power in historical events in turn denying the true female power and influence in politics that the *qahramānas* exercised in the court. Upon revisiting the roles of *qahramānas* the following becomes apparent: In addition to having proved that women's involvement in political events to a large extent influenced the political dynamics of the Caliphate, the roles of *qahramānas* bring to the table yet another power-thirsty force, arguably even more powerful than the *al-ḥarā'ir* and *jawāri* combined. That is, the direct access to a caliph and the decision making process that a *qahramāna* enjoyed does necessarily call into question many of the political decisions made by the caliphs. As discussed in this section, more often than not, the *qahramāna* had a say and so could easily sway the caliph in favour of what served her interest. Bearing in mind the findings of this chapter, one must wonder how many course-changing decisions taken by any given caliph were influenced by the women in their court.

One way of ascertaining the standard of the women within the court was through titles: titles women sought and ones bestowed upon them by the caliph as a reward was a way of honouring them. The following section will discuss this and the effect each had on the legitimacy of the other.

2.3.3 Women and the Politics of Titles

The award of a title was one of the most important political events during the Abbasid era.⁴⁶⁰ Some historians⁴⁶¹ attribute the loss of the Caliphate's esteem to the overuse of titles by caliphs to patrons and high-ranking citizens. Despite titles being sometimes bestowed as a result of a threat or external influence, the increase in the citizen's power following the award only served to aggravate the situation. This section of the research will discuss the relationship between women's role in politics and the titles they gained (and in some cases acquired), which helped, in one way or another, the development of their positions within the Caliphate. This will then lead to an investigation of the fact that most of the titles indicated the range of influence that women achieved within both the Būyid and the Saljūq periods.

The main reason for bestowing a title was to honour and dignify, but in many cases there was a political agenda behind the gesture. Through the analysis of the system and titles gained this research detects certain political circumstances and consequences that overall contribute to the better understanding of the Abbasid era.⁴⁶² For example, Caliph al-Mustakfī assumed the title of *'Imām al-Ḥaqq'* (i.e. master or leader of rightness) a discreet indication that the Fatimid Caliphs are *a'immat al-bātil* (the masters or leaders of falsehood).⁴⁶³ Women of the court aspired to be honoured by a title. Abū Hilāl al-Sābī⁴⁶⁴ suggested that it was not appropriate for any man in the court or in the audience in the caliph's *Dīwān* to utter the name of one of the caliph's women in his presence. He explained, saying that she must be called by her title.⁴⁶⁵

By focusing on the titles gained by women during the era covered by this thesis, one might better understand how women were empowered and what kind of positions they held. Unfortunately, the details of the titles earned by women in the

⁴⁶⁰ A. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d. 1244-1323), *Talkhiṣ Majma' al-ādāb fī mu'jam al-alqāb*, ed. M. Jawād, vol. 4, (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963), p.5.

⁴⁶¹ H. al-Ṣābī (d. 488/1056), *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah: The rules and regulations of the 'Abbāsīd court*, ed. M. 'Awwād, (Baghdad: Maṭba'atal-ma'āni, 1964).

⁴⁶² H. al-Ṣābī *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah*, p.95.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. pp.95-96.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. p.59.

⁴⁶⁵ H. al-Ṣābī *Rusūm dār al-khilāfah*, p.95.

Būyid and Saljūq eras were destroyed when all but a few of the documents pertaining to the era were lost. As such, the research resorts to the sources that contain scant information of the women's titles and which are often contradictory. Based on available resources, there were two kinds of titles awarded to women of the Abbasid court: general titles and special titles. Both will be discussed below.

i.General Titles

General titles refer to those that were conferred spontaneously on women of the Caliphate court. The most important was *al-Sayyidah* (the Lady) which was considered to be the main title for the palace *Sayyidāt al-balāt* (ladies in the palace) Together with this title, there were some additions that honoured and glorified the recipient, which in turn was used to denote her status. The title given to the mother of 'Izz al-Dawla Bakhtiyār in a formal letter, for example, described her as *al-Sayyidah al-kabīrah* (Grand Lady).⁴⁶⁶ It was the same for the mother of Şamşām al-Dawla (reg.380-388/990-998), who also assumed the title since she was known in her circle by the title *al-Sayyidah*.⁴⁶⁷ However, that particular title was phonetically corrupted to become *al-Sitt* which is not immediately understood as a colloquial term but as an abbreviation of the title *al-Sayyidah*, which is confirmed by the presence of the first and last letters. Furthermore, one of the many titles of Zumurrud *Khātūn*, mother of Caliph al-Nāşir (reg.575-622/1180-1225), was the title of *al-Sitt al-jalīlah* (Sublime Lady).⁴⁶⁸

The title of *al-ḥurrah*⁴⁶⁹ (*singular form of al-hara'ir*) falls within the category of general titles that al har'air of the court coveted. This title embodied the struggle, which took place between the *al-ḥara'ir* and *jawāri* of the concubines and '*Umm walad* (mother of sons) level. The study notes, however that the *jawāri* also assumed the title in view of the fact that the mother of a son (*'umm walad*) became an *ḥurrah* after she had given birth to a male. However, what is more specific is that the title honours the caliphs' mothers, all of whom were *jawāri* and mothers of sons as discussed earlier in the Chapter. During the Hajj season, in honour of the

⁴⁶⁶ Abū Shujā', *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*, p.10.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid. pp.103-118-119.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibn Kathīr (1d.301/1372), *a l-Bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah*, vol.13, (Beirut :Maktabat al-Ma'ārif,1996), p.44.

⁴⁶⁹M. Ibn Sa'd (d.230/844), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ed.'U. Muḥammad, vol.8, (Beirut: Dar Şādir,1968), p.9.

mothers of the caliphs, people made the following prayer: “May God preserve the days of *al-ḥurrah* [referring to the mother of the caliph], the perfect lady, sponsor of the believers.”⁴⁷⁰

What is interesting is the account of a marriage event that took place around 360/970 between one of Caliph al-Muqtadīr’s concubines and a man whom the crown called ‘the husband of *al-ḥurrah*’,⁴⁷¹ which indicates that the title of *al-ḥurrah* was evenly spread between the *al-ḥurrah* and the *jawārī*.⁴⁷²

The title of *al-Jihah* (direction or the district or county)⁴⁷³ was also included in the category of general titles with some additional words to honour and glorify the recipient. So the title of *al-Jihah al-karīmah* was among the titles of a ‘mother of sons’ *jārīyah* of Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) known as Razīn bint ‘Abdullāh. It appeared on a foundation text of a hospice she built in a mosque at *al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah*. The text read: “This is what was endowed and offered by *al-Jihah al-karīmah* Razīn bint ‘Abdullāh *‘umm walad* of al-Imam al-Mustaẓhīr.”⁴⁷⁴ Again, the same title, *al-Jihah al-karīmah* appears on the tombstone of the foster mother (wet nurse) of Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr called Balṭūn bint ‘Abdullāh al-Jamālīyah: “Here is the grave of *al-Jihah al-karīmah* Balṭūn bint ‘Abdullāh al-Jamālīyah, who is characterized by fostering the Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr”⁴⁷⁵.

The Caliph al-Mustaḍīr’s concubine, Binfashā, who was known for her power and influence and for her impact on the caliph was awarded many honours in addition to the title of *al-Jihah* when she assumed the title of the *al-Jihah*, i.e. *al-Jihah al-Mu‘azzamah al-sharīfah al-Raḥīmah* (Glorified eminent merciful). The same title appeared again in a foundation text of a school built by Binfashā in Baghdad, as follows: “This school is endowed by the auspicious glorified, eminent, merciful *al-*

⁴⁷⁰A.Rashīdī. *Ḥusn al-ṣafā wa-al-ibtihāj bi-dhikr min Walī ‘Imārat al-Ḥājj*, ed L. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, (Cairo:Maktabat al-Khānjī,1980), p.131.

⁴⁷¹A.al-Baghdādī (d.463-1070), *tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.2,(Beirut : Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah,1978), p.153. Also see Ṣ.al-Ṣafadī(d.647/1275), *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*,vol.2 ,(Wiesbaden : Frānz Shtāynar, 1962), p.303.

⁴⁷²Ṣ.al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*,vol.2,p.303

⁴⁷³*Al-Jihah*.. The Arabs used that word as a surname for the woman of high ranking. As well, they used the term *al-Jināb* as a surname for a man of high standing .See Ḥ.Bāshā ,*al-Alqāb al-Islāmīyah fī al-tārīkh wa al-Wathāiq wa al-Āthār*, (Cairo; Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah,1957), p.248.

⁴⁷⁴E.Combe& J.Suavaget& Gaston Wiet ,*Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*,VIII(Le Caire; Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire ,1925),pp.120-121

S. Ibn al-Jawzī(d.654/1256),*Mir'āt al-zamān fī tārīkh al-a'yān*,vol.10 (Beirut:Dār al-Shurūq, 1985),p.258.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

Jihah al-Mu'azzamah al-sharīfah al-Raḥīmah".⁴⁷⁶ The poet Sibṭ b. al-Ta'āwīdhī also used this same title in one of his poems, which was written in commendation of her.

The wording of the title was cited in the poem as follows: "*Bi rasm al-Jihah al-Mu'azzamah al-sharīfah al-Raḥīmah al-Mustaḍīah*",⁴⁷⁷ i.e. (intended for the illuminated eminent *al-Jihah*). Also the title of "*al-Jihah al-sa'īdah*" i.e. (the happy lady) was seen to appear among the other titles of *al-Sayyidah Zumurrud Khātūn*, mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir.⁴⁷⁸ It is worth noting that historians were in the habit of using the title of *al-Jihah* when it was impossible for them to find the lady's name. For example, Caliph al-Qā'im's daughter who married Ṭughril Beg was surnamed *al-Jihah*⁴⁷⁹, in the same way as Caliph al-Qā'im's '*umm walad*' *jārīyah*, who was known as *al-Jihah al-Qā'īmyah*.⁴⁸⁰

The title *Khātūn* as mentioned earlier,⁴⁸¹ came into being with the advent of the Saljūqs to Iraq where it became the formal title of the ladies of the Saljūq court. Initially, this title was restricted to the use of ladies of the court, such as Khadījah *Khātūn*, Māh Malik *Khātūn*, Turkān *Khātūn*, Iṣmat *Khātūn*, Altin *Khātūn* and Seljūqī *Khātūn*, the wife of Caliph al-Nāṣir, whose maiden name was Kawhar Naṣībī.⁴⁸² However Saljūqī *Khātūn*'s title was *Sayyidah al-Saljūqah* (the lady of the Saljūq)⁴⁸³

When the Abbasid Caliphate was freed from the grip of Saljūq influence in the second half of the sixth century, the *ummahāt awlād jawārī* started to assume the

⁴⁷⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam* ,vol.10, p.258.

⁴⁷⁷ S.al-Ta'āwīdhī(d.583/1187),*Dīwān shi'r Abī al-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh al-ma'rūf bi-Ibn al-Ta'āwīdhī*, ed. Margoliouth ,(Cairo : Maṭba'at al-Muqtaṭaf,1903), p.245.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674), *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar fī 'unwān al-tawārīkh wa-'uyūn al-siyar* (Dimashq : Dār Kannān,2011), p.133 Also see 'A.al-Mundhirī (656/1258), *al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqalah*,ed.'A. Ma'rūf,vol.2, (Baghdad :Maṭba'at al-Ādāb ,1969) p.396.

⁴⁷⁹Ibn al-Jawzī(d.592),*al-Muntaẓam*,vol.8, p.231.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.vol.9, p.25.

⁴⁸¹ Ṭ.'Unaysī ,*Tafsīr al-alfāz al-dākhilah fī al-lughah al-'Arabīyah ma' dhikr aṣliḥā bi-ḥurūfih*, (Cairo: Dār al-'Arab,1998),p.23. Also this title mention in al-Tanūkhī book, see *Kitāb al-mustaḡād min fa'alāt al-aḡwād* ,ed.M.Ali , (Beirut :Dar Ṣādir,1991),p.263.

⁴⁸²T.Rāyis , *al- Salājīqah ta'rīkhuhum wa-ḥaḍā,Tran*, Luṭfī al-Khoury&lbrāhīm Dāqūqī,(Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Irshād,1968),p.72.

⁴⁸³ 'A.Khazrajī , *al-'Asjad al-masbūk fī man waliya al-Yaman min al-mulūk*, (San'a : Wizārat al-'Ilām wa-al-Thaqāfah,1986),p.90. Also see al-Ṣafadī(d.647/1275),vol.15, p.296.

title *Khātūn* as a kind of Saljūq Ladies' tradition. It was in a way assumed by them as an attempt to elevate their standards by using the same titles *al-ḥarā'ir* once used to distinguish themselves from the *jawārī* and other commoners. Subsequently, the title became popular amongst the Caliph al-Mustaḍī's '*ummaḥāt awlād jawārī*, such as, *Sharaf Khātūn*⁴⁸⁴ and *Zumurrud Khātūn*.⁴⁸⁵

ii. Special Titles

Special titles were awarded to the ladies of the palace to show the order of their standing and to distinguish themselves from one another. In most cases, the ladies themselves designated the titles. This study contends that Būrān bint al-Hassan al-sahl, wife of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, was the first of the ladies of the Abbasid court to assume a title for herself. Her original name was Khadījah, and Būrān is a Persian title which means, 'Ṭībah al-dhikr (blessed memory).'⁴⁸⁶

The first title worthy of note was awarded to Bakhtiyār's daughter *Shāh Zanān*,⁴⁸⁷ the wife of Caliph al-Ṭā'ī' (reg.363-381/974-991). *Shāh Zanān* is a Persian title comprising two syllables: '*Shāh*' which means 'king' or 'queen'⁴⁸⁸ and *Zanān* which is the plural of *Zan*, that is, 'woman'.⁴⁸⁹ In other words, the literal meaning of the title is, The Queen of Women, and in Arabic, *Tāj al-nisā'* (Crown of Women). As for *Khātūn* (Ṭughril Beg's wife),⁴⁹⁰ it would seem that Ibn Taghrībirdī (d.874/1469) translated it incorrectly, as al-Tarnajān⁴⁹¹ The correct title cited by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzīis comprised of two syllables which are: Altin, also written as al-Ṭwun, which

⁴⁸⁴ Ibn al-Sā'ī (d.674), *Nisā' al-khulafā':al-musammā Jihāt al-a'immah al-khulafā' min al-ḥarā'ir wa-al-imā'*, ed; Muṣṭafā Jawād(Cairo :Dār al-Ma'ārif,1993), p.115.

⁴⁸⁵ Unknown, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-ḥadā'iq fī akhbār al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed.'U.Sa'īdī,(Dimashq : al-Ma'had al-Faransī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyah,1973),p.53. Also see 'A.Abū Šamat(d.665/1257) ,*Tarāḡim riḡāl al-qarnayn al-sādīs wa-al-sābi'al-ma'rūf bi-Dayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn*,ed.M.al-Kawtharī(Cairo: Dār Nashr al-thaqāfah al-Islāmīyah,1947), p.92.

⁴⁸⁶ 'A. Shābushfī (d. 998), *al-Diyārāt*, ed.K. 'Awwād ,(Baghdad :Maktabat al-Muthannā ,1966),p.159. Also see M. al-Jahshīyārī (d. 331/942) *Nuṣūṣ ḍā'i'ah min Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa-al-kuttāb*,ed. M. 'Awwād,(Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī,1964),p.54.

⁴⁸⁷ Al-Jahshīyārī,*Nuṣūṣ ḍā'i'ah min Kitāb* , p.25.

⁴⁸⁸ J.Shahīdī,(d.1879-1955) *Lughat'nāmah* ,vol.11, (Tehran :Mu'assasah-'i Intishārāt va Chāp-i Dānishgāh-i Tihārān ,993-1994),p.142.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.vol.27, p.464.

⁴⁹⁰S.Ibn al-Jawzī,*Mir'āt al-zamān*,vol.11, p.259.

⁴⁹¹'U.Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā' fī 'ālamay al-'Arab wa-al-Islām*,vol.1 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1991), p.171. Also see Fathī Abū Sayf *al-Muṣāharāt al-siyāsīyah fī al-'aṣrayn al-Ghaznawī wa-al-Saljūqī*, (Cairo :'Maktabat al-Anjilū al-Miṣrīyah, 1986),p.42 while Muṣṭafā Jawād mention this title in which Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī confirmed See M. Jawād, *Sayyidat al-balāḡ al-'Abbāsī*, (Beirut : Dār al-Fikr,1970),p.102.

is a place name, that is, 'under' or lower' in the Turkish language;⁴⁹² and *Khan* in Turkish means 'King'.⁴⁹³ The translation of this title would hence mean, "the person who is under or in a lower place than the King".⁴⁹⁴ That is, the name denotes that the person is in the second place in the kingdom's hierarchy or that the function of the person is that of deputy to the King. As such, this title is compatible with the description given by historians of the lady, 'Altin *Khātūn*' that she was a broadminded, decisive and organized woman who enjoyed Ṭughril Beg's respect and obedience and since she was intelligent, was in control of his affairs.⁴⁹⁵

Caliph al-Qā'im's wife, Khadījah *Khātūn* assumed a rather peculiar title for herself, which was, '*Arslān Khātūn* Khadījah'.⁴⁹⁶ The title is peculiar because the word *Arslān* means lion⁴⁹⁷ in Turkish and therefore the literal translation of the name in Arabic as *al-Sayyidah al-asad Khadījah*, (The Lady Lion Khadījah). It is an odd title and one, which is unusual for a lady to adopt since by nature, women avoid being described as having attributes such as strength and fortitude. However, the title cannot be interrogated without considering the lady's brother, Sultan Alp Arslān. His name was Muḥammad Dāwūd Jgerī Beg but later the title of Alp Arslān, which literally means *al-asad al-shujā'* (The Brave Lion)⁴⁹⁸ became dominant in his name.⁴⁹⁹ In the light of this, the title Khadījah *Khātūn* means, *Sayyidah al-asad*, 'The Lady of the lion' (the lion being her brother). It may be suggested that she did not assume this title until after her brother had taken over the Saljūq throne, hence explaining why the historians know of her first name, Khadījah. The lack of comment of historians on the title suggests that they knew what it represented, especially that Khadījah *Khātūn*'s influence on the Caliphate sprang from her association with her brother Alp Arslān. After her brother's death she left Baghdad knowing that her esteem would be undermined and her influence weakened. It is

⁴⁹² Al-Andalusī, *al-idrāk Lelisān al-itṛā*, p.22.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* p.49.

⁴⁹⁴ A. Ibn Taghrībī (d.874/1469), *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, vol.5, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyah, 1939), p.67.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ Al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, vol.13, p.298 & Al-Ḥusaynī (d.575/1180) *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, p.58 & also see Ibn 'Imrānī (d.1543); *Al-Inbā*, p.90 & al-Nuwayrī (d.733), *Nihāyat al-arab*, vol.23, p.221.

⁴⁹⁷ Al-Andalusī, *al-idrāk*, p.11.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p.21.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.279.

hence, perhaps logical that she claimed a title with a close association to her brother.

As far as the titles of concubines and *'ummahāt awlād jawārī* are concerned, it is worth remembering that all *jawārī* were bought in slave markets in Baghdad and some of them were of non-Islamic origin although some of them embraced Islam at a later stage.⁵⁰⁰ There is no doubt that *jawārī* depended on their beauty and femininity more than anything else to gain favour with the caliphs. Indeed, this was reflected in their names and titles. For example Caliph al-Qā'im's mother's name was 'Alam, but she assumed the title of *Qaṭr al-nadā* (Dewdrop and Arjwān), Caliph al-Muqtadī's mother took the title of *Qurrat al-'ayn* (Delight of the Eye).⁵⁰¹ Moreover Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr's mother's name was Kalbahaār⁵⁰² but she assumed the title of *Ṭayf al-khayāl* (Spectre of Imagination).⁵⁰³

Caliph al-Mustaḍī's concubine, Binfashā (viole)⁵⁰⁴ in the Persian language, was called, among her other titles *'Atīqah al- Imam al-Mustaḍī*' (The Emancipated of Caliph al-Mustaḍī)⁵⁰⁵, which is interesting because of the existence of another lady of the *ummahāt awlād jawārī*, bearing the same title, and that was Sharaf *Khātūn*.⁵⁰⁶ Therefore it may be concluded that Caliph al-Mustaḍī might have freed his *jawārī* in the last days of his life.

The real name of Zumurrud *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Nair's mother, as found in a text of one of Baghdad's holy men was Baḥr (Sea) ⁵⁰⁷, but she had it changed to Zumurrud *Khātūn*. The text also shows another title which she adopted after her son had taken the reins of the Caliphate was *Durrah Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (The Pearl of the Commander of the Faithful).⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁰ Ibn Taghrībirdī(d.874/1469), *Mawrid al-laṭāfah fī man waliya al-salṭanah wa-al-khilāfah*, ed.A.

Muḥammad, vol. 1, (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1997), p.208.

⁵⁰¹ Ibn Taghrībirdī, same source, vol.1, p.211& Al-Ṣafadī(d.647/1275), *Kitāb al-wāfi bi-al-wafāyāt*, vol.24, p.237.

⁵⁰² Kāzarūnī(697/1298), *Mukhtaṣar al-ta'rikh*, p.215.

⁵⁰³ S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol.12, p.59.

⁵⁰⁴ Shahīdī, *Lughat'nāmah*, vo.l.11, p.325.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p.18.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p.115.

⁵⁰⁷ M. Ibn Shāhanshāh, *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq wa-sirr al-khalā'iq*, ed Ḥasan Ḥabashī, (Cairo : 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1968), p.179.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

In addition to the title, a strange pattern of nicknaming the ladies of the palace was developed. It was most probably a pattern used in a limited circle within the court itself. Khṭlālī *Khātūn*, one of Caliph al-Mustaḍī's concubines was known as *Hujrat al-Sājī* (Teak wood Room)⁵⁰⁹, a kind of rare and expensive wood, whilst one of Caliph al-Mustanjid's daughters, already known as *al-fayrūzjīya*⁵¹⁰, was nicknamed *Hujrat 'Afīf* ('Afīf Room).⁵¹¹ As for Zumurrud *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Nāṣir's mother, she was nicknamed, *Hujrat 'Atīq* ('Atīq's Room).⁵¹²

Given the above it can be concluded that women of the court were keen to adopt several honourable and glorious titles. The importance of studying them lies in the fact that often they indicate the range of influence the lady had reached, such as the title of *Altin Khātūn* (the person who is under or lower than the king) or, (the person in second place in the kingdom's hierarchy). Although the titles were not of a political nature, given the ample influence of women in the court discussed throughout this chapter, it may be suggested that they did denote their political stance. In any event, the titles indicated the high status that the women achieved in the court. Also the title of, *Khadijah Khātūn*, (the lady of the lion or the lady of her brother the lion) illustrates her dependence on Alp Arslān's influence and her pride in being affiliated with him.

At the same time, the *jawārī*, *concubines* and '*mothers of sons*' tended to adopt titles that denoted their beauty and the extent of the favours bestowed on them by the caliphs. However, it was the caliphs' support that stood them in good stead in their struggle against *al-ḥarā'ir*'s influence. In many ways, these titles reveal the extent of the struggles that took place between the *jawārī* and *al-ḥarā'ir* in which they tended to seek titles that were synonymous with the freedom that came with their origin and their nobility. As mentioned before, these titles distinguished them from the '*ummahāt awlād jawārī*', such as *al-jihah al-ḥurrah* and *Khātūn*. Nonetheless, the '*ummahāt awlād*' were also eager to adopt such titles.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p.177.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.p.135. Also see al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfi*, vol.16,p.608.

⁵¹¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, same source, p.163.

⁵¹² Ibid.p.82.

2.4 Conclusion

Questions relating to the political role of women during the Būyid and Saljūq periods were posed and examined in this chapter. It was found that Kleinberg's⁵¹³ argument rings true: it is clearly not the absence of information about women, but the sense that such information was not relevant to history, that led to the invisibility of women in the formal accounts of the past.⁵¹⁴ This contradicts some gender writers' views that the absence of women in the historical arena is due to their apparent weakness and the oppression levied by their societies.

This chapter argued that women, both free and slaves, were far from weak or oppressed. In fact, they enjoyed and exercised considerable power/influence. Data on the lives of women who lived in the Abbasid era, ranging from the rights they exercised to the roles they played demonstrate excellent examples of this. It would be more correct to say that they were trivialized and omitted by the researchers, as opposed to having been oppressed by society. This chapter explored women's political role within the era of the research, and found that women during this period played a major role in politics and were in fact at the centre of most, if not all, political events. During the Abbasid era women were always portrayed as subjected, particularly by modern researchers. This chapter's findings contradict such a portrayal as they proved that women were not victims; and that in some cases they shaped their own lives politically and socially. But because literary criticism almost always studies the subjection of women, especially in the case of Muslim women, and tends to place men at the centre of all things human, it argues that women are objects in the universal picture.

Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated how the recovery of one theme in women's history, that is the political theme, made clear that women were not invisible in Abbasid history. Placing women at the centre of the picture, rather than omitting and/or trivializing them in connection with some historical events, enables one to find an explanation for earlier frameworks. As seen from the above analysis

⁵¹³ Kleinberg, *Retrieving Women's History*, pp.5-20.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

of the role that women played in the political life of Būyids and Saljūqs during the Abbasid period, it is noticeable that women who were close to the palace or lived under its roof did in fact take part in politics.

This chapter additionally contended that the extended Abbasid household (caliphs, immediate family members, *al-Qiyān*, retainers, etc), took a central role that formed an integral part of the region's political and social system. Women's roles in politics were played inside the palace within the *ḥarīm* section throughout the various classes. As seen during the Būyid and Saljūq eras, *al-ḥarā'ir* were key players in the struggle for power between the different sects. These included, the wife of Mu'izz al-Dawla, known as *al-Sitt* who was Bakhtiyār's mother and played a significant role in her son's regime. Also Altin *Khātūn* (Tughril Beg's wife) and Khadījah *Khātūn* (Caliph al-Qa'im's wife) played equally significant roles. Turkān *Khātūn*, however, was rightly considered to be the most famous lady during that epoch unlike Turkān *Khātūn*, Işmat *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Mustazhīr's wife. These were powerful and influential women whose lives have been recorded in reputable historical sources.

The research found that the political roles were not limited to elite women or the *al-ḥarā'ir*; and that there were other women attached to the Abbasid court in the *ḥarīm* section, who stood apart from the political scene during this era. There were also *jawārī*, especially those of whom were also '*ummahāt awlād*. There is, in fact, textual confirmation that they were not just slaves during the Abbasid period, indeed it was found that their political roles were massive. This was seen in the life of Arjwān, who was one of *Amīr* Muḥammad Dhakhīrah al-Dīn's concubines and her conflict with Khadījah *Khātūn* for the throne of her son. Moreover, another slave girl known as 'Umm Abū Alī during the time of al-Muqtadī almost succeeded in establishing her son as crown prince. Another *jāriyah*, who played an important role in helping al-Mustaḍī take over the reins of the Caliphate and who played another remarkable role in transferring it to Caliph al-Nāşir, was known as Binfashā. While some of these *jawārī* played the main role in the struggle to protect the throne for their sons, others fought to secure political powers to persons or groups whom they may later control or sway in favour of their agendas.

In most cases, this was manifested in internal struggles from within the palace between all of these women, the *jawārī* and *al-ḥarā'ir*, on the one hand and the *qahramānas* who were working as administrators of the *ḥarīm* on the other. The *qahramānas*' position was also proven to be one of the highest in the Caliphate court, as seen in the examples mentioned in the chapter. Tuḥfah was a good example of an influential and powerful woman through her position as *qahramānas* in the Caliphate. Other *qahramānas* who played a significant political role were Şalaf and Shams al-Nahar both of whom were generally highly influential at the court during the Saljūq period.

Further proof of these women's various powers and influences was seen in the last section, which discussed the titles they sought or acquired. For example the *jawārī*, concubines and '*Ummaht awlad*' tended to take on titles that denoted their beauty or by taking the title of *al-jihah al-ḥurrah* and *Khātūn* they showed their struggle against the *al-ḥarā'ir*'s influence. On the other hand, *al-ḥarā'ir* took the special title for themselves, which was *al-Sayyidah* or 'the lady', and even sometimes *al-Sitt*. They were considered to be the most important titles for ladies in the palace as they denoted the high status that the lady achieved in the political life of their time. And sometimes they took the title of *al-Jihah* to distinguish them from other women inside the palace.

As discussed, most of the important roles were operated from the private sphere. This might explain the perceived absence of women but it does not excuse it, because as seen in many of the sections of this chapter, research can unearth many intricate details contributing to a better understanding. Another issue that explains this invisibility was the backgrounds, affiliations and motivations of the contemporary authors that wrote about women. This was specifically true in the case of women of significant power who posed a threat to the leadership, since it gave authors of political acumen a reason to omit them from narratives as a means to appease those in power. By the same token, women who proved beneficial to

some writers by securing influential positions for them within the Caliphate were found to have been written about in greater detail and in some cases praised.

This chapter, which singles out the political role of women inside the Abbasid court during the Būyid and Saljūq era that is their role and functions in the different classes of women, confirms the hypothesis of this thesis: by examining women and their roles in history, taking Muslim women in Abbasid Iraq as a case study, it becomes clear that historically women played an integral role in the politics of the Caliphate. Analysing these roles answer this chapter's main questions, for example, Did Abbasid women carry out political activities during the Būyid and Saljūq periods? Was the political arena limited to elite women? How did the elite women, *al-ḥarā'ir*, take advantage of the porous nature of the political field? Were women of different classes invisible in the larger political narrative for this period?

The investigation of the texts revealed the multiplicity of roles that women could and did exercise, in the Būyid and Saljūq periods in the Abbasid Caliphate. The hold on the purse of the *ḥarīm* was generally so great that women exercised real political power both inside and outside the palace. Furthermore by analysing the role of women at the court, it was deduced that they were invisible and omitted and trivialized in connection to their political roles by some sources and researches alike. The scholarly tradition has denied the political role of women by not considering women as subject and this allows some feminist scholars to describe women in the Abbasid era as victims. The women described in this chapter are unique in that they not only succeeded in their political manipulations behind the scene, but also managed to occupy important functions and to hold important positions sometimes in the Abbasid court within the regimes of both Būyid and Saljūq.

The next chapter will argue that the cultural and educational roles of the women who lived inside and outside the palace, was no less important than the political role of women during the Būyid and Saljūq regimes.

The Roles of Abbasid Women in Religious Education, and Culture (334/447– 950/1055)

Cultural and intellectual progress in the Abbasid capital, Baghdad, had been expanding since the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate. Baghdad was marked as a centre of advanced human culture and thought, generated through different aspects of religious, scientific and cultural studies such as, art, music, literature and poetry. Despite the political, economical and social changes that the Abbasid State experienced, the Caliphate's cultural output remained substantially large in various aspects of human knowledge.

Indeed, this research argues that during the period in question, Muslim women contributed, in one way or another, to the advancement of the different cultural aspects of life in their time in the same way that they had, in politics. Unfortunately, however, most of the studies covering the intellectual movements described above ignored their contribution to various cultural and intellectual roles, especially during the Būyid and Saljūq reigns of the Abbasid Caliphate. This chapter aims to highlight the roles of women in the different areas of culture, science, and religion in an attempt to reappraise their history. It will focus on the roles of women during the Būyid and Saljūq eras by giving a brief depiction of the roles generally played by women at the time.

Accordingly, it is worth asking the following questions: What was the nature of women's cultural and educational roles during the eras under discussion.? Have these roles and achievements in historical events been adequately explored?; Did women display any tangible contributions to culture and education during the era? Is it possible that we can precisely demarcate women's contribution to poetry during the period in question, or, were women in fact, merely, *jawānī* and singers for the amusement of men? By answering these questions, the chapter aims to determine whether the absence of women from historical narratives was due to their lack of contribution to the different aspects of contemporary cultural life or a neglect in recording these contributions.

This chapter looks within the historical context to examine the role of women in cultural and scientific life during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. As such, it will investigate whether and why women were presented as absent from the cultural life of their time. This is in order to confirm that women and their roles in different aspects of culture were actually neglected and wilfully omitted, trivialized and condemned to the extent that they were rarely mentioned in the sources. Furthermore, this chapter questions whether the lack of historical records for individual women in this period indicates that there were no cultural and educational roles for them during the Būyid and Saljūq periods.

The overall aim of this study is to suggest that, on the contrary, women had a role in enriching their cultural and intellectual life. It aims to emphasise their contributions to religious studies during the Būyid and Saljūq eras under the domain of the Abbasid Caliphate.

3.1 Women and Religious Education

This section mainly discusses the most prominent women to excel in religious education. Prior to this, the section will present a brief scenario of religious life during the Būyid and Saljūq eras, that produced one of the most influential Islamic cultures to benefit mankind as a whole.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Caliphate witnessed long-lasting struggles and political conflicts between the Būyid *Amīrs* and the Abbasid Caliphs and later, between the Saljūq sultans and the caliphs. The research found that women had significantly intervened and contributed to the struggle for power and authority. The result was an economical crisis that affected the standard of living of the population resulting from the exorbitant price of foodstuffs. In an effort to curb this crisis, the sultan of Baghdad had no choice but to resort to the price-fixing of food. However, this backfired and prices rose to unprecedented levels to the extent that the *al-Kurr* (the bushel in Iraq)⁵¹⁵ was sold for ninety dinars.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁵ *Al-Kurr* is the name of the bushel in Iraq and usually used in connection with the measurement of grain.

In 373/983 most of the foodstuff items vanished from the markets to the detriment of Baghdad's citizens who died of hunger in their hundreds as a result of the exceedingly high cost of living⁵¹⁷ Two years later, in 375/985, people took to the streets and demonstrated, by breaking the mosque minarets and forbidding citizens from performing their Friday prayers.⁵¹⁸ This tense environment coincided with earthquakes and fires. In 329/940, the river Euphrates flooded and its waters swept through many parts of the western side of Baghdad. The city of *al-Manṣūrah* sunk under the raging waters of the Euphrates in 331/942.⁵¹⁹ Also a great fire broke out in the *al-Karkh* side of Baghdad, which set the area ablaze.⁵²⁰

Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1030-1074) took advantage of the economical and political decline and the consequent riots and put an end to the Būyid's control over the Caliphate, since, to a large extent, he held them responsible for this deterioration of affairs. He conspired with the Saljūq dynasty to ensure the termination of all Būyid authority within the Caliphate. His plan worked because the Saljūqs soon managed to take control and impose their authority over the state.

Despite the troubled political and economical circumstances that were complicated by the general state of chaos, the blossoming of the intellectual and cultural areas maintained momentum and marked Baghdad as the centre of profound thought, and a place where various cultures were both distinct and diverse. Furthermore, the immigration of scholars and *fuqahā'* into Baghdad bore fruit during the fifth and sixth Hijrī centuries.⁵²¹ During this era, Baghdad was distinguished by its inauguration of various intellectual and scientific foundations. It was therefore regarded as one of the most important intellectual and cultural centres of the

⁵¹⁶ See Z.Ibn al-Wardī (d.1273-1331), *Tārīkh ibn al-Wardī*, Vol.1, (Cairo:Dār al-Kutub w'al al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah,1939), p.493. Also see Ibn Khaldūn(d.808-1405), *Kitāb al-'ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-al-khabar*, Vol.4, p.443.

⁵¹⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.7, p.3. Ibn al-Jawzī stated that the price of foodstuffs rose sky-high, making the price of one *al-Kurr* of wheat rise to three thousand dinars and afterwards to four thousand dinars resulting in a severe famine that led to the high death toll in Baghdad. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.7, p.121.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid, vol.7, p.127. Again Ibn al-Jawzī stated that in 411/1020 the price of foodstuffs rose to levels beyond the reach of the citizens to a degree that the people were forced to eat dogs and donkeys. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.7, p.234.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid, vol.6, p.300.

⁵²⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.6, p.60.

⁵²¹ I. Ayyūb, *al-Tārīkh al-'Abbāsī :al-siyāsī wa-al-ḥaḍārī*, (Beirut: al-Sharikah al-'Ālamīyah lil-Kitāb,1989),p.268.

Islamic world not only during the period under investigation, but also during the First Abbasid Era. Indeed, it was characterized by significant progress in the fields of scientific, literary and religious studies, especially during the rule of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd⁵²² and his son Caliph al-Ma'mūn who founded the previously mentioned *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom).⁵²³ The role of women in religious and intellectual life of the era cannot be adequately investigated without proper attention to the most famous cultural and professional centres that existed in Baghdad at that time.

Baghdad was renowned for its intellectual fields of traditional and intellectual sciences, which were taught in Baghdad's cultural centres. At the time, these centres were magnificent; and property was allocated to the theologians and teachers. Baghdad earned great honours in return for the care of its schools and lunatic asylums. To signify this, Ibn Jubayr(d.1145/1217) explained the relation between the prominence of such centres and the Caliphate's parallel prestige saying: "These centres had great times and real estates, allocated for the theologians and teachers. This country, in return for its care of schools and *bīmāristānāt* (hospitals)⁵²⁴ has acquired a great honour and eternal pride".⁵²⁵

These centres covered all kinds of sectarian and religious creeds and teachings. For example, one can find the school of Imam Abū Ḥanīfah which was founded in 459/1066. This was six months prior to the establishment of the *al-Nizāmiyah* School⁵²⁶ in Baghdad, which was built by the Saljūq *Wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk, during the rule of Caliph al-Qā'im. The school was mainly meant for *Shāfi fuqahā'*⁵²⁷ and was regarded as the first school to be supervised and financed by the Caliphate as far as its supplies and tuition aids were concerned.⁵²⁸ The students who graduated from this school became *fuqahā'* of a high calibre among the Shāfi scholars, such as, Ahmad ibn Alī ibn Burhān (d.518/1124); Abū al-Faḥ al-Shāfi(d.523/1128) and

⁵²² Z. Qasem, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasid*, (New York:Leiden,1997), p.119.

⁵²³ See Chapter Tow

⁵²⁴ A Persian word *bīmār* meaning, 'patient' & *istān* which denotes a dwelling or place, and together, refers to the dwelling of a patient, which later becomes, a hospital. For more information about "*bīmāristān*" see A. 'Isā, *Tārīkh al-bīmāristānāt fī al-Islām*, (Beirut : Dār al-Rā'id al-'Arabī, 1989).

⁵²⁵ A. Ibn Jubayr(d.1145/1217) ,*Rihlat Ibn Jubayr*, (Beirut:Dār Ṣādir, 1909), p.164.

⁵²⁶ 'I. Ra'ūf, *Madāris Baghdād fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Baṣrī,1966), p.35.

⁵²⁷ Ibid. p.36.

⁵²⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.24.

Ahmad ibn Yaḥyá al-Baghdadī, known in history as Ibn Shaqrān (d.561/1165).⁵²⁹ Similarly, *al-Tājīyah* school, established by Saljūq Sultan Malikshāh's *Wazīr* Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-ghanā'im,⁵³⁰ was also one of the most prominent schools in Baghdad. Moreover, *al-Kamālīyah* School was established in 535/1140⁵³¹ in addition to the *al-Thiqīyah* School, which was founded by Thiqāht al-Dawla Alī ibn al-Dirīnī in 540/1145.⁵³² This series of educational institutes in Baghdad was finally completed by *al-shāfi'īyah* School in 580/1184.

Other important centres of education and learning in Baghdad were *al-Katātīb* the Quran Schools⁵³³ (lower or junior elementary schools). It is worth mentioning here that in addition to the above, mosques were also considered to be the oldest kindergartens (nursery schools) and cultural centres in the Arab Islamic culture where educational circles were convened inside the mosques. As such, one may assert that mosques were the starting point from which the idea of establishing cultural and educational centres was derived. Indeed, mosques gave birth to famous reciters of the Quran such as Abū Bakr Mohammad al-Baghdadī (d.468/1075)⁵³⁴ and Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Mādī (d.453/1012) who had a renowned educational Quran circle inside the al-Manṣūr mosque.⁵³⁵ Also, the magistrate al-Muẓaffar Ahmad al-Ḥanafī (d.546/1151)⁵³⁶ was one of the great narrators of the Quran and studies of the Hadith.

⁵²⁹ Ibid. vol.9, p.46. Also see A.al-Fidā(d.732/1331), *al-mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, vol.3, (Beirut:al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī,1961), p.3

⁵³⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.9, p.46.

⁵³¹ Ibid. vol.10, p.89. Among the most famous scholars who studied in this school was Ya'īsh ibn Ṣadaqah al-Shāfi'ī (d.593/1196) who was considered to be one of the most renowned scholars of the Shāfi'īyah School. See M. Ibn al-Dubaythī, *Dhayl Tarīkh madīnat al-Salām Baghdād*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, vol.1, (Baghdad:Maṭba'at Dār al-Salām, 1974), p.212.

⁵³² M.al-Dhahabī (d.637/1239), *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayh min tārikh al-ḥāfiẓ Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Dubaythī*, ed. Muṣṭafá Jawād, vol. 3, (Baghdad : Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1977), p.254.

⁵³³ The Quran Schools were founded to teach Quran, Hadith, reading and writing to children and juveniles. One of the famous instructors in such schools was Abū al-Ḥasan Alī, known in history books as the Hunchback (542/1147). See 'I.al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-aṣr: al-qism al-'Irāqī*, vol.3, (Baghdad : Maṭba'at al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1961), p.329.

⁵³⁴ A.Ibn Rajab 1336-1393 *Kitāb al-dhayl 'alá Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, ed. Muḥammad Fiqī, vol.1, (Cairo : Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1952), p.15. Several reciters of Quran were also well-reputed, like Rizq Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Tamīmī (d.488/1095), Abū Muḥannad al-Baghdādī (d.500/1106) and Abū al-Fawāris al-Baghdādī (500/1106). See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.5, p.193.

⁵³⁵ I.al-Ḥanbalī (d.1089/1678), *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, vol.3, (Beirut:Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah 1979), p.168.

⁵³⁶ al-Dhahabī(d.637/1239), *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol.3, p.193.

The Quran centres and preaching counsels, which were regarded as significant cultural and educational centres in the history of the Arab Islamic culture during the era were also established in Baghdad. They were not only worshiping facilities but also minarets largely for disseminating Islamic thought. As such, they were crucial to those in pursuit of knowledge, as they offered lessons on the Holy Quran, the Ḥadīth, Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and preaching counsels. The *Ribāṭ*⁵³⁷ was either prepared at the house of the instructor or in a place built by the state. One of the most important centres in Baghdad was that created by al-Sheikh Abū al-Wafā al-Shīrāzī(d.528/1133) who was well known among the preacher counsels of Baghdad.⁵³⁸ Similarly, Abū al-Qāsim Bakr al-Baghdadī (d.405/1014) and Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Ṣabbāgh(d.547/1152)⁵³⁹ were very famous scholars amongst the preacher counsels.

3.1.1 Women and Traditional Sciences

As has been mentioned, during the fifth and sixth centuries of Hijra, Baghdad boasted a significant number of scientists and scholars in the different disciplines of traditional and intellectual sciences. The vast number of academics and philosophers signifies the high scientific status Baghdad had attained during that era. As such, Baghdad became the focus of attention for scholars and students. However, the sources appear to concentrate on the education of boys and scholars. This section questions whether the lack of sources concerning women's roles in relation to these centres should be considered as evidence that these centres of excellence were available exclusively to males.

Islam has encouraged the acquisition of knowledge and taught Muslims to care for, and put as much effort as possible into, obtaining it. The Islamic Arab Civilization has contributed in a remarkable way to a tremendous rise in the different fields of sciences and arts. Baghdad was famous for its wealth of traditional sciences which were extensively circulated around wide areas of the Muslim World. Such sciences included knowledge of the Holy Quran, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence,

⁵³⁷ *Ribāṭ* is the spiritual place to practice Religious rituals.

⁵³⁸ Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.4, p.82. The sheikh Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Ismā'īl (d.596/1199) was the sheikh of the *Ribāṭ* in the school of eastern Baghdad. See Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, p. 473.

⁵³⁹ Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.3, p.174-188. See al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣa*, vol.3, p.185.

lexicography, language, poetry & history and geography. Indeed, this scientific resurgence attracted the focus of many contemporary researchers,⁵⁴⁰ to study the Abbasids since Scientists and Scholars of the Islamic Arab Civilizations were highly regarded and were awarded much prestige by the different classes in the community. Politicians and statesmen also showed their recognition for this sect of learned men by admitting them into their *majlis* of thought and culture. Hence, it seems that knowledge and education, were very highly regarded.

The process of education during the era consisted of two principal phases. The first phase normally started at a relatively early age when a boy was admitted to the elementary school where he memorised the Holy Quran and then learned the basics of reading and writing.⁵⁴¹ Following this phase, the junior student moved to the second higher phase of education. In it, he would begin to explore the circles of learning and teaching in mosques and schools where he joined the company of a certain Sheikh or many Sheikhs until he received his *ljāzah* (license) to major⁵⁴² in the field of the science he had chosen.

It is difficult to determine the age that separated the end of the first phase and the initiation of the second educational phase. However, it is generally said that the second phase normally started when the junior student reached the age of maturity (puberty). For example, it was conditional for those who intended to study the science of the Prophetical Hadith, which was a major science, during the second phase of his learning, or when it had been reported by the Sheikhs that he had undoubtedly reached puberty or the age of maturity. It should be noted that the references to the student being a male, is due to the lack of references and resources on female students.

⁵⁴⁰ researchers such as al-Jāhiz, al-Tabari, Mas'ūdī etc

⁵⁴¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar fī 'unwān al-tawārīkh wa-'uyūn al-siya*, ed. Muṣṭafā Jawād, (Baghdad : al-Maṭba'ah al-Siryāniyah al-Kāthūlikīyah, 1934), p.210. I. al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, (Ciro: Maktabat al-Khānj, 1971) p.204.

⁵⁴² 'License', to give permission. X permits Y to: means to allow or permit. The teacher licensed his disciple: means that he permitted him to report on his behalf; i.e. it is permission and an authorization from the Sheikh to the student to report to others what he had learned from him. See *Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah*, *Al-Mu'jam al-wajīz*, (Cairo : *Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah*, 1995) under the word "*jawāzah*", p.126. The *ljāzah* could also be a verbal one given in the presence of witnesses whereby the Sheikh permits one or many of his students to report his teachings. Likewise, the Sheikh could provide a written *ljāzah* for one of his students as a sort of confirmation of the licensee. 'A. Fayyāḍ, *al-ljāzāt al-'ilmīyah 'inda al-Muslimīn*, (Baghdad : Maṭba'at al-Irshād, 1967), p.21.

As previously said, this thesis argues that the lack of sources does not necessarily indicate that women did not play a part in the culture of this period. As far as girls' education is concerned it has been found that the general public was not keen to send their daughters to elementary schools due to the limitations of the existing social customs and traditions.⁵⁴³ People avoided co-education at the critical time when children were very young. However, this should not lead to the assumption that young girls were denied an opportunity to be educated during the early years of their lives. To the contrary, a certain type of girls' education was popular, because many scholars called for people to take an interest in the importance of girls' education.⁵⁴⁴ This research has found evidence of three types of girls' education during the early and primary phases of education.

The first type of education was home schooling, and this was common among those who cherished and took an interest in learning and knowledge. It was common for young girls to take their first lessons from one of their relatives or kinsmen especially if he was a scholar or a sheikh. This type of home education was very common among the people of Iraq during that era. The biographies of few female scholars and *fuqahā'* indicate that they had received their early lessons of education from their fathers. For example, Judge Abū 'Abdullāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Maḥāmīlī al-Shāfi'ī (d.330/941)⁵⁴⁵ undertook the responsibility of educating and teaching his daughter Stayṭiyah⁵⁴⁶, whereas Abū Ḥakīm ibn 'Abdullāh al-Khabarī did the same for his two daughters, Fatima and Rābi'ah.⁵⁴⁷ Also, Abū al-Ḥusayn Alī b. Aqra' took the responsibility of teaching both his daughters Fatima and Zaynab.⁵⁴⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī also handled the education of all his daughters himself. As Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī recorded, "My grandfather had many daughters, including my mother Rābi'ah and her sisters Sharaf al-Nisā', Zaynab, Jawharah, Sitt al-'ulamā'

⁵⁴³ A.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Aḥkām al-niṣā'*, (Cairo : Maṭba' al-Ḥalab, 1994), p. 7.

⁵⁴⁴ See for example, the reprimand delivered by Ibn al-Jawzī against those who, while they were capable, refrained from educating their daughters. See *Ibid*.

⁵⁴⁵ al-Ḥusayn al-Maḥāmīlī al-Shāfi'ī (born 235/849). Studied the Shāfi'iyah Fiqh and heard and learned the Hadith from the master Sheikhs of the Hadith in Baghdad. His Hadith *majālis* were attended by thousands and he was finally appointed the Kufa Judiciary and Administrative District. He resigned from office, and in the year (270/883) dedicated himself to confer his Hadith and Fiqh *majālis* in his own house and maintained high standards until the time he passed away. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 7, p.327.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol7, p.138. M.al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-'Abyārī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1996) vol.15, p.264.

⁵⁴⁷ A.al-Ahl: *Ṭabaqāt al-nisā' al-muḥaddithāt*, (Publisher: Cairo, 1981), p.111.

⁵⁴⁸ Y. al-Ḥamawī, *mu'jam al-udabā'*, ed. Margoliouth, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1988), vol.16, p.170.

al-kubrā and Sitt al-‘ulamā’ al-Sughrā, all of whom had learned the teachings of the Holy Quran and acquired the knowledge of the Hadith from my grandfather”.⁵⁴⁹ Of the most prominent examples of this type of home education undertaken by relatives and kinsmen is that of Shahdah bint Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. Umar al-Dīnawārī (d.574/1178). Luckily, abundant information about her early education is retrievable, which allows for a better analysis of the various levels of education in different ages. Taking her as an example of the study, the following section will examine the various educational phases available for girls of the era. This analysis will provide a unique insight into all the stages in girls' education at that time.

Shahdah al-Dīnawārīyah was born in 482/1089.⁵⁵⁰ Abū Naṣr started teaching his daughter the basics of knowledge while she was at a tender age. This can clearly be seen in her literary work the *mashyakhah* (the base or the ascription of the tradition of the science of Hadith)⁵⁵¹, which Shahdah composed and compiled. Her father's attention to her education, especially the first phase, started in her early adolescence. This confirms that Shahdah started to acquire the knowledge of Hadith from her father as early in 490/1097. Since records state she was born in 482/1089, it can be deduced that her first lessons of Hadith were when she was only eight years old, a considerably early age for a reliable and trustworthy narration of the science of Hadith.

Furthermore, it was striking that Shahdah said that one of her *Shaykhs*, Abū al-Faraj b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, “during the month of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal* of the year 487/1049, issued *Ijāzah* with a written *Ijāzah* in his own handwriting”.⁵⁵² bestowing upon her the *Ijāzah* to disseminate the Hadith on his behalf. This means that Sheikh al-Qazwīnī licensed Shahdah to disseminate the Hadith when she was only

⁵⁴⁹ S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, vol 8, p. 503.

⁵⁵⁰ Her father, Abū Naṣr Aḥmad b. Umar al-Dīnawārī (al-Dīnawārī's descendant), was a famous narrator. He was born and died in the city of Baghdad, where he was known as one of the greatest Hadith scholars see S.al-Dīnawārīyah(d.574/1178) *al-Umdah min al-fawā'id wa-al-āthār al-ṣiḥāḥ wa-al-gharā'ib : fī mashyakhah Shuhdah*, known as the *mashyakhah Shuhdah*, ed. Rif'at Fawzī, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 2000), p.155

⁵⁵¹ *al-mashyakhah* means the base or the ascription of the tradition of the science of Hadith, in ascending order to its first authority in order to corroborate its credibility. It includes all of the sheikhs that the narrator had met with to study the Hadith under them and who finally licensed him to narrate on their behalf. See I.al-‘Asqalānī(d.853/1449), *al-Mu'jam al-mu'assis lil al-Mu'jam al-mufahras*, verified by Abd al-Raḥmān Mar'ashlī, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah , 1994), p.33.

⁵⁵² Al-Dīnawārīyah, *mashyakhah Shuhdah*, pp.152-153. For the details of Shuhdah's role in the cultural life of her time, see p.240 .

five years old. This is particularly hard to believe considering the aforementioned process and milestones of education the prerequisite of which was memorising the Holy Quran and becoming proficient in reading and writing. The narration of the Hadith is regarded as a relatively advanced phase of learning as certain rules of grammar and linguistic skills are needed before the beginning of compiling the prophetic Hadith. It is imperative to clarify that the issue at hand is not the phases of the study of prophetic Hadiths and its narration, but rather the fact that a girl who had not yet completed five years of age being awarded a *ljāzah* to narrate the Hadith.

Nevertheless, one cannot accuse Shahdah of exaggeration nor can it be assumed that she had made a mistake when describing the award of a *ljāzah* by her sheikh al-Qazwīnī. Instead, to verify this information, researchers should compare the information spontaneously recorded by Shahdah about herself in her *mashyakhah* against other historical narratives. Shahdah's teacher, al-Naqīb al-Hāshimī⁵⁵³ Abū al-Fawāris Ṭarrād al-Zaynabī (d.491/1097), was reported to have read the *Kitāb al-Amwāl*⁵⁵⁴ authored by Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām (d.224/837), to her and licensed her *ljāzah* to transmit its text as an authoritative source, on the 22nd of *Dhū al-Hijjah*, 490. Therefore, Shahdah was not more than eight years of age when she had completed the study of, and was licensed to teach, a sophisticated Fiqh book such as the *Kitāb al-Amwāl*. Then, as now, this would have been considered an outstanding achievement with respect to the usual educational phases. This achievement not only demonstrates the exceptional faculties of the little girl at the time, but also indicates her father's strong will and true attention to her education. Moreover, her father, though he was her first teacher, did his utmost to have his daughter participate in the *majālis* of the senior scholars of Baghdad at a early age until such time that she had earned her first license, at five years old (according to her narrations). Despite this being an apparent exception to the above-mentioned general rule of puberty as a condition to study Hadith, it remains a striking indication of the flexible nature of the educational systems in early Islamic civilizations. If Shahdah's age at the time of *ljāzah* is true, it would demonstrate

⁵⁵³ See S.al-Dīnawarīyah, *mashyakhah Shuhdah*, for details of the Hashemite syndicate. p.113.

⁵⁵⁴ A.Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīyah, 1975).

that early Islamic educational systems did not adhere to a specific age to dictate the start or end of learning in any field of knowledge. This trend was one of the factors contributing to the flourish of scientific knowledge in the Islamic culture for many decades via the regular dynamic streamlining of early high achievers in different aspects of knowledge once they showed signs of excellence and extraordinary qualities.

In stark contradiction to the common notion shared by some Scholars⁵⁵⁵ that Muslim society, as opposed to Islam, confines women to their houses and denies them the right to actively participate in the *Ummah*: the above confirms that Muslim women have enjoyed tremendous intellectual participation especially in scientific and cultural studies in history. However, the sources that reveal these histories are usually biographies and records written by travellers. According to Julia Bray that "*rihla fi taliab al-'ilm*" (journey in pursuit of knowledge) was the one of the most important features of Islamic learning⁵⁵⁶ as it gave those travellers a level of freedom in their writing as mentioned in Chapter One. For example, the *muhadditheen* and the *akhbaris* provided *isnads* (references) for historical events, unlike authors of political backgrounds or affiliations. That is to say, the former's freedom of expression due to their lack of affiliation to any particular regime provides a more solid and impartial source of information regarding history, particularly when juxtaposed against the writings of authors involved or affected by the policy making of the time.

As already mentioned, home schooling in the Abbasid era had widely spread among the different classes of the community. Many families that avoided sending their children to the elementary schools resorted to home education for teaching the basics of the first educational phase; and women greatly contributed to this process. For example, Abū 'Abdullāh al-Sam'ānī (d.562/1166)⁵⁵⁷, the famous Hadith

⁵⁵⁵ See L.al-Fārūqī, *Women, Muslims Society and Islam*, (Plainfiled, Iad. American Trust Publications, 1988). Also see J.Badwai, *Gender Equity in Islam: Basic principles*, (Plainfiled, Iad. American Trust Publications, 1995)

⁵⁵⁶ J.Bray, *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.23.

⁵⁵⁷ He was Abd al-Karīm ibn Mohammad Abū Sa'd al-Sam'ānī. His origin traces back to Nissapur but he came to Baghdad in the year (532/1137). Ibn al-Jawzī said that, 'He listened and studied the Hadith with us at the hands of our Sheikhs and compiled the book "*Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*", a book authored by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. See *al-muntazam*, vol.10, p.224.

narrator received his first lessons from his sister ‘ummat Allah. Al-Sam‘ānī recorded that his sister “was a good, pious woman who was much preoccupied with the study of the Holy Quran and fasting. I learned my first lessons with her at a tender age, and it was she who gave me my ‘*ljāzah*’ later”.⁵⁵⁸ Similarly, Ibn al-Jawzī’s aunt took the responsibility of teaching him during the first phase of education and when he grew up she introduced him to Sheikh al-Faḍ b. Nasser⁵⁵⁹ to continue his education.

Hence, it could be construed that a large number of women who were lucky enough to have received a certain degree of education taught their children the required basics of knowledge during the period rather than sending them to elementary schools. This might explain the non-existence of state institutional organizations which would otherwise have provided education to new generations during the phase. It also explains why education at this phase depended on national schools and self-generated efforts. Moreover, junior students whether boys or girls at an early age, only needed to complete their learning of the Holy Quran and to acquire the required proficiency in reading and writing. Therefore, it is obvious that the period of home education was so wide spread that a large number of scholars were able to make use of their relatives’ efforts during the first phase of education.

The second method of elementary education was to hire *Mu’addib*.⁵⁶⁰ This practice was very popular during the period under investigation especially among the children of the rich and upper classes as it was very costly. The *Mu’addib* (tutor) was a teacher whose duty was to instruct boys and girls their first lessons. It is worth noting here, that when people wanted to engage the services of a tutor for one of their daughters, they preferred the tutor to be female. For example, Shahdah al-Dīnawarīyah was the female tutor in the house of the women of Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160).⁵⁶¹ Also, Tājinnī al-Wahhābnīyah (d.575/1179)

⁵⁵⁸ Al-Sam‘ānī, *al-ansāb*, vol 3, p. 301.

⁵⁵⁹ A.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mashyakhat Ibn al-Jawzī*, ed. Muḥammad Maḥfūz, (Beirut:Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1980),p.

53.

⁵⁶⁰ *Mu’addib* (i.e. to engage the services of) an tutor.

⁵⁶¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mashyakhat Ibn al-Jawzī*, p.202.

was engaged to teach and educate Fakhr al-Nisā', the daughter of *Wazīr* Abū Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. Ra'īs al-ru'asā's.⁵⁶² Indeed, many women acted as female tutors, *Mu'addi*, one of whom was 'umm Alī al-Rashīdīyah who taught *Mu'addib*, to girls in Basra.⁵⁶³ Furthermore, slave traders often engaged the services of these female tutors to instruct and teach the *jawārī* the various arts of knowledge and culture for the purpose of increasing their price and value.⁵⁶⁴

The third and last type of female education was that called, 'charity education'. Some women, who were lucky enough to have gained a reasonable degree of education, gathered the girls of their neighbourhood to teach and educate them free of charge in the hope of getting a reward from God for such good deeds. Ibn al-Jawzī, discussing the spread of such education among women, wrote, "we [people of the time] have seen some women in our time who learned the Quran by heart, but they never withheld or denied such unmatched virtue from other women".⁵⁶⁵

The intellectual flowering in Baghdad between the Būyid and Saljūq periods included all aspects of thought and knowledge. Creative and disciplinary thinkers became highly proficient in different aspects of knowledge. Women also became prominent in such cerebral activities. Like their male peers, they participated in the ongoing movement of intellectual activities during the era. However, sources reveal very little detail of their activities during the period under investigation.

The example of Shahdah al-Dīnawārīyah and her contribution to the Hadith and teaching, is not merely a story of a female individual's life, it strongly demonstrates how the history of women's roles in traditional sciences can be identified, if set in an historical context. As seen above, historical books clearly identified Shahdah al-Dīnawārīyah and provided detailed information of her life and her achievements in

⁵⁶² Al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, vol.10, p.379. Also see Al-Dhahabī, *Sīyar a'lām al-nubalā*, vol.20, p.55.

⁵⁶³ Al-İşfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaşr wa-jarīdat al-aşr*, vol.4, p. 685.

⁵⁶⁴ A. Affī , *al-mar'ah al-'Arabīyah fi jāhiliyatihā wa-Islāmihā* , (al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah: Maṭba'at al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah, 1932), vol. 3, p. 17. Also see J. Zaydān , *Tārīkh al-tamaddun al-Islāmī* ,(Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1971), vol.5, p.37.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī , *Aḥkām al-nisā'*, p.50.

Hadith. However, she is not the only Islamic woman mentioned in the sources for her outstanding contribution to culture during our period.

When investigating women's roles and their participation in the intellectual boom in Baghdad during the periods in question, it seems clear that in some cases, their contribution was omitted from the sources, but not always. The following part of the study discusses some of the sources that portray women's considerable contributions to the cultural activities of their time through their involvement in the various intellectual, literary and poetic concerns.

i. The Study of the Holy Quran

With regard to studying the Quran, women, like men, were required to memorize it as well as understand its meanings and principles. This focus of attention originated on the eve of the First Abbasid Era when Zubaydah, wife of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, contributed to the task of the inculcation of the Quran by establishing a circle in the *ḥarīm* section of the Caliphate palace. Her name was 'umm al-Aziz but her grandfather Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr nicknamed her Zubaydah because of her smooth and tender skin.⁵⁶⁶ Ibn Khallikān narrated that she "had one hundred *Jāriyah* who memorized the Quran. When they (the *jawārī*) started to recite, one can hear an echo, which sounded as if it came from a beehive".⁵⁶⁷

Baghdad was a major intellectual centre of teaching the Holy Quran and related sciences, to which women contributed hugely. A prominent woman recognized for her mastering of Quranic science during the period, was Sitt al-Karam Karīmah bint Abī Bakr. She was categorized as a *Shaikh* because of her outstanding memorization of Quran which is attributable to the teachings of her father, was one of the religious scholars of repute. Another woman worthy of note in that respect is Fatima bint al-Tāwūsīya al-Ḥusaynīyah, who had memorized the Holy Quran at the

⁵⁶⁶ I. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*, ed. Mohammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, vol. 2 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1970), p.75.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

age of nine. She was a writer, and the narrator of her father's work.⁵⁶⁸ Khadījah bint al-Qayyim al-Baghdādīyah, was yet another famous narrator of the Holy Quran with considerable knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence. She was also a preacher who convened preaching and guidance counsels.⁵⁶⁹

Contemporary sources further suggest that women were also involved in educating girls free of charge. Sheikhaḥ 'umm al-Kheir Fatima bint Za'bal al-Baghdādīyah (d.532/1137), was one such lady: she taught the basics of reading, writing and learning the Holy Quran by heart to the girls of her neighbourhood in the city of *Maḥallah*.⁵⁷⁰ Similarly, al-Māwardīyah al-Baṣrīyah (d.466/1037) gathered the women of the vicinity to teach and educate them.⁵⁷¹ Moreover, it was well known that the wife of Yaḥyá b. 'Isá al-Sufī (d.552/1157)⁵⁷², "who was very much preoccupied with fasting and night prayer, used to gather the girls and undertake the task of teaching them how to read the Holy Quran. It was said that she had taught quite a considerable number of these girls".⁵⁷³

As mentioned, the cultural and intellectual ideas that blossomed in the Abbasid capital reached a climax in the different disciplines of human knowledge especially in the sciences of the Holy Quran and related Islamic jurisprudence. Yet, this is not evident in modern research especially with regards to the roles women played at the time. Their roles in teaching the Holy Quran and related Islamic jurisprudence was both vital and undeniable. In fact, one might argue that had enough attention been placed into unearthing these roles, the perception of women might have been significantly different, because this aspect of Islamic education was at the heart of the educational systems at the time. Neglecting to analyse the role women played,

⁵⁶⁸ Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.4, p. 347. Also see Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā'*, vol.4, p.86

⁵⁶⁹ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā'*, vol.3, p.339.

⁵⁷⁰ A.al-Sam'ān, *al-Taḥbīr fī al-mu'jam al-kabīr*, ed, Munīrah Nājī, vol.2 (Baghdad : Maṭba'at al-Irshād,1975),p.342 p.430. M. Al-Dhahabī, *al-'Ibar fī khabar man ghabar*, ed. M. Basyūnī, vol.3, (Beirut:Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah,1985), p.325.

⁵⁷¹ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.5,p.97.

⁵⁷² Abū al-Barakāt Yaḥyá ibn Idrīs al-Anbārī a pious sheikh and one of the best Quran reciters who was engaged in the work of preaching and guidance. Ibn al-Jawzī said of him that he was one who commands with courtesy and interdicts reprehensible actions. He has many works of miraculous and pious dreams. *al-muntaẓim*,vol.10, p.180.

⁵⁷³ Ibn al-Jawzī,*al-muntaẓim*,vol.10, p.180.

undermined the more comprehensive understanding of education and its development in Islamic history.

Women such as Umm al-Kheir al-Baghdādīyah, who taught the Holy Quran and Sitt al-Karam bint Abī Bakr, who was categorized as a *Shaikh*, both played an undeniable role in education, particularly Islamic education, within the Caliphate. Along with other influential women, they have been somewhat neglected in the narration of Islamic history. Indeed their achievements and contributions to the Science of the Holy Quran are yet to be fully uncovered from historical documents.

The history of women and their achievements in the science of the Holy Quran and narration of the Hadith, which was considered to be one of the significant Traditional Sciences, was also omitted. Additionally, due to the scarcity of relevant sources coupled with the neglect of women's achievements in this field of knowledge, they were, to some extent, ignored. It is however, unjustifiable to say that women were utterly omitted, as there were certain authors who highlighted their role in the narration and inculcation of the Hadith. Given the above, it hardly needs saying that the role of women during the Būyid and Saljūq eras was far from meticulously investigated or studied. The following section explores their roles in the narration of Hadith.

ii. The Study and Narration of Hadith

Being the weightier traditional science, the science of Hadith is thought to be one of the most important Arabic and Islamic fields of knowledge. It is particularly unique because of its significance in deriving religious and worldly status. Therefore, the scholars of the Hadith played, by definition, a conspicuous role during the historical epoch of the Abbasid state under discussion.

The vital matter here is the role of women in the science of the Prophetic Hadith. The science of communicating the Hadith has its own specific rules and modes of

reception. It begins firstly, by *Samā'*⁵⁷⁴ (listening); then, *Qirā'ah*⁵⁷⁵ (reading); *Ijāzah*⁵⁷⁶ (permission); *Munāwalah*⁵⁷⁷ (presenting); *Kitābah*⁵⁷⁸ (writing down); *I'lām*⁵⁷⁹ (declaration) and finally *Wijādah*⁵⁸⁰ (narrating the Hadith). Women were famous as authorities in the science of Hadith during the period. They were dependent on *Samā'*, listening and *Ijāzah*, the permission to learn the Hadith in the first place, from their fathers, brothers or husbands as they were the next of kin.⁵⁸¹ However, in their endeavour to diligently practice this task, women used to listen to the Hadith from different *Shaykhs*⁵⁸² in order to ensure its authenticity. They depended on books of the Hadith, constituents and dictations as well as attendance in the fiqh and Hadith counsels to produce authentic texts.

Among the women of authority in the science of Hadith who had an important role during the period, was Ammah al-Wahhāb bint Abū al-Faḥ al-Baghdādī al-Ḥusaynī. She was a pioneer in her profession, who had studied extensively and conveyed the Hadith from *Shaikh* 'Abdullāh ibn Khamīs al-Sarrāj.⁵⁸³ As for Budūr bint Abū Sa'ad al-Baghdādīyah al-Azajī, who was educated in the House of Hadith, she learned the Hadith from her father who was known in the scholars' centres as Ibn Shsttān. In recognition of her proficiency in the trade, Abū al-Ma'ālī Ahmed ibn Bakr al-Nahrawān and also Budūr sister 'umm al-Ḍaḥḥāk,⁵⁸⁴ both learned the Hadith by listening to and learning from her.

Furthermore, Bishārah bint Abū al-Faraj b. Ḥāzim al-Farrā' had a reputation in the science of the Hadith and used to narrate her knowledge to Alī b. al-Hassan b. al-

⁵⁷⁴ *Samā'*: Hearing the tradition from the *Shaikh*'s. See A.al-Thani, *Introduction to Hadith*, tran. Namina Virjee, (London:ICAS press, 2011), p.21.

⁵⁷⁵ *Qirā'ah*: reading traced back to the *Shaikh* tradition. For more information see Ibid.p.22.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ijāzah*: Permission to transmit on someone's authority, whereby the person giving authority would say ' I gave him permission to transmit tradition on my authority'. See Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ *Munāwalah*: handing over the book of traditions. It ranks higher than *Ijāzah*, because it dose not need the oral permission of the reporter. See ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ *Kitābah*: writing down. For more information see Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ *I'lām*: which is a declaration that when the *Shaikh* declares to his student that a particular book or tradition is the result of what he has heard or narrated. See Ibid. p.22.

⁵⁸⁰ *Wijādah*: Finding tradition. This occurs when a reporter detects the traditions of a person in his hand writing, without actually having heard them from someone. See Ibid. p.23.

⁵⁸¹ Al-Thani, *Introduction to Hadith*, p.21.

⁵⁸² *Shaykhs*: here simply denotes teacher or students who would received traditions. See A.al-Thani, *Introduction to Hadith*, p.21.

⁵⁸³ M.al-Dhahabī 1274-1348, *al-Mushtabih fi al-rijāl, asmā'uhum wa-ansābuhum*, 'Alī Muḥammad Bajāwī, vol.2,(Cairo:Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah,1966), p.433.

⁵⁸⁴ See A.al-Mundhirī (d.656-1258), *al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqlah*, ed.Bashshār, 'Awwād Ma'rūf, vol.3 (Najaf : Maṭba'at al-Ādāb,1986), p.90.

Banna'a and Abū Maḥāsīn Omar al-Qurashī.⁵⁸⁵ 'Umm Mohammad 'Ajībah bint Abū Bakr al-Baghdādīyah(d.647/1249). She was a pious female sheikh and an authority *Musnid* (Ascribe) in the science of Hadith. She acquired her knowledge by listening to and relating from numerous narrators, such as, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Yūsufī, Ibn al-Faḍl al-Ṣaydalānī, Sirāj al-Dīn Abī Ḥafṣ al-Qazwīnī Shāfi'ī, Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr and Sirāj al-Dīn.⁵⁸⁶

There were also numerous women, like Rabi'ah bint al-Jawzī and her sisters for example, who had direct connections with the most renowned historians and Hadith narrators of their time. Rābi'ah, who had learned the science of the Hadith from her father, Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, was the mother of Sibṭ Abū al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf. She was married to the father of the Sibṭ after her first husband, Abū al-Faṭḥ b. Rashīd al-Ṭabarī, died.⁵⁸⁷ Together, she and her sister, Zaynab bint al-Jawzī, heard and transmitted the Hadith from their father.⁵⁸⁸ The sources reveal that just as in the case of Zaynab, her sister Sitt al-'ulamā' al-ṣuḡhrā bint Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, learned the Hadith from her father and other scholars.⁵⁸⁹ Their other sisters, Sharaf al-Nisā'Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī and Sitt al-'Ulamā' al-Kubra followed the same path as Rābi'ah in hearing the Hadith from their own father.⁵⁹⁰

It is interesting that Ibn al-Jawzī himself heard and transmitted the Hadith from several women, most of whom were authorities in the science of Hadith. One of these women was 'umm al-Khayr, the youngest daughter of Abū al-Ḥakīm al-khabarī (d.543/1130). Likewise, Abū al-Qāsim al-Mihrawānī who recited the Holy Quran followed in the steps of Ibn al-Jawzī in transmitting the Hadith from the pious lady. To denote 'Umm al-Khayr's prominence in the science of the Hadith, Ibn al-Jawzī transmitted a traceable (uninterrupted) Hadith from her in 520/1126.⁵⁹¹ He

⁵⁸⁵ M. Ibn Nuqṭah (629/1231), *Takmilat al-Ikmāl Jāmi'*, ed. 'Abd Rabb al-Nabī (Makkah:Umm al-Qurā University, 1997), p.245.

⁵⁸⁶ I. al-Ḥanbalī (1089/1678), *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, vol.5, (Beirut:Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah1979), p.238

⁵⁸⁷ Abū Shāmah, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn*, p.26.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid. p.27.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid. p.27.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid. p.26.

⁵⁹¹ Ibn Nuqṭah, *Takmilat*, p. 100. Also see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.1, p.288. A. Ibn al-Dumyāṭī, *Al-mustafād min ḡayl tāriḥ Baghdād*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1978), p.449. Also as 'Umm al-Khayr Fatima

also transmitted from the sayings of ‘Umm al-bahā’ Fatima who made significant contributions to the Science of Hadith. She was known in the Hadith circles as Sitt al-a‘ud al-Baghdādīyah (d.605/1258) and was buried after her death near the grave of Imam Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal.⁵⁹²

Similar to Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Baghdādī also indirectly transmitted the Hadith from ‘umm al-bahā’ Fatima bint Muḥammad al-Ṣayrafī, through Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad al-Ishbānī. Again, al-Baghdādī learned from ‘Umm al-Faraj Fatima bint Hilāl al-Karajī, a narrator who learned the science of the Hadith from Abū ‘Umar ibn al-Sammāk. al-Baghdādī presented her in his writings and communicated a traceable Hadith⁵⁹³ from her. Another woman al-Baghdādī took as his source and transcribed from her in his book *Tārīkh Baghdād*⁵⁹⁴ was ‘Umm al-Ḥusayn Jum‘ah bint Ahmad al-Maḍīyah. She originated from *Nisābūr* and went to Baghdad where she learned and narrated the Hadith from Abū ‘Umar ibn Ḥamdān and Abū Ḥāfiẓ Ahmad.

Also Ṭāhirah bint Ahmad al-Tanūkhīyah al-Baghdādīyah (d.436/1044) was a female authority in Hadith who narrated from her father the Faqīh Ahmad ibn Yūsuf al-Baghdādī learned and retold from her a traceable Hadith as both ‘umm al-Ḥusayn and Ṭāhirah heard it from Abū al-Ḥasan b. Lu‘lu’ and Abū al-Ḥasan b. al-Bawwāb.⁵⁹⁵ Likewise, ‘Arafah bint Za‘bal, was a learned female scholar who recited the Holy Quran. She was an authority in the science of the Hadith, was taught the secrets of this science by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Fārisī, and she was the last person to report from him. As al-Yāfi‘ī⁵⁹⁶ said, “She had communicated the authentic Hadith Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and therefore, Abū Sa‘ad al-Sam‘ān and Abū al-Qāsim Ibn ‘Asākir both reported her teachings”⁵⁹⁷.

recorded there were several Hadith narrators such as Abū Sa‘ad Sam‘ānī and Abū Ahmad, who was then known as Ibn Sukaynah.

⁵⁹² S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir‘āt al-zamān*, p.540. *Kaḥḥālah, A‘lām al-nisā’*, vol.4, p.134.

⁵⁹³ *Kaḥḥālah, A‘lām al-nisā’*, vol.4, p.148.

⁵⁹⁴ Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.14, p.444. *Kaḥḥālah, A‘lām al-nisā’*, vol.1, p.205.

⁵⁹⁵ Al-Baghdādī, p.445. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.120. *Kaḥḥālah, A‘lām al-nisā’*, vol. 2, p.364.

⁵⁹⁶ A.al-Yāfi‘ī(d.768/1366), *Mir‘āt al-janān wa-‘ibrat al-yaqẓān*, vol.3 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1993), p.260.

⁵⁹⁷ Al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.4, p.100. Y.al-‘Umarī (d.1232/1816), *al-Rawḍah al-fayḥā’ fi tawārīkh al-nisā’*, ed. R.al-Sāmarrā’ī, (Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabīyah lil-Mawsū‘āt, 1987), p.285.

In general, the contribution of women in the science of Hadith was limited to that retold by the above historians. According to the sources, women contributed to several Hadiths that were communicated by well-reputed narrators. As such, female narrators of Hadith had a highly reputable position and were subsequently had sought after titles bestowed upon them, such as in the case of 'Umm al-khayr Fatima bint al-Muẓaffar al-Baghdādīyah al-Nīsābūryah. Also, Rābi'ah bint Abū al-Ḥakam al-khabarī (d.512/1118) who was called 'Rābi'ah of Baghdad' was famous for memorizing and communicating the science of Hadith. She was reported by Muḥammad ibn Nāsir.⁵⁹⁸ Another woman worthy of mention is Sitt al-Nās Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ṣābūnī, who was nicknamed *al-mubārakah*, 'Blessed' because of the large number of Hadith she had reported. When she died in 588/1192 she was buried in the *al-Karkh* cemetery.⁵⁹⁹ 'umm 'Inab al-Wahbānīyah was also given the nickname of the *Musnidat* Baghdad, 'A scribe of Baghdad' due to her supreme status among the scholars of the Hadith. She reported the Hadith from several scholars such as al-Zaynabī and al-Na'ālī while Abū Assad al-Sam'ānī cited her in his book *kitāb al-Ansāb*.⁶⁰⁰ al-Tanūkhī⁶⁰¹ also wrote about her in his writings.

Similarly, Bint al-Baghdādī Abī al-Naṣr Ahmad al-Dīnawarī was nicknamed *Musnidat al Iraq* (scribe of Iraq). This was due to her extensive knowledge of Hadith as a result of learning the profession from masters of the discipline such as Abū al-Fawāris and al-Zaynabī 'Abd al-Wāhid al-Yūsufī. In recognition of her knowledge of the science, ibn 'Asākir al-Sam'ānī, ibn al-Jawzī and al-Sheikh ibn al-'Imād, knew and learned the Hadith from her. She lived to be almost one hundred years old and died in the 14th of Muharram 574.⁶⁰²

It is clear that women contributed significantly to the advancement of the science of the Prophetic Hadith by either transmitting or learning, through the reportage of certain narrators and historians such as al-Baghdādī, Ibn al-Jawzī and other highly

⁵⁹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.3, p102.

⁵⁹⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol.3, p.261.

⁶⁰⁰ A.Al-Sam'ānī(d.562/1116), *al-ansāb*, ed.1, vol.3, (Bierut : Dār al- Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1988), p.358.

⁶⁰¹ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol.3, p.259. *Kaḥḥālah, A'lām al-nisā*, vol.2, p.105.

⁶⁰² Ibid. p.267.

thought of scholars. Women also participated in what was then called the House of Hadith where the science was discussed, reported and memorized. Hence, it can be stipulated that history concerning women's contribution must be re-written after more detailed analysis of this aspect of history.

One of the most highly reputed women in the House of Hadith was Sharaf al-Nisā' Amīnah bint Ahmad al-Nāṣirī who narrated widely from her father; whereas Ibrahim al-Ḥuwayrī and al-Dimashqī reported from her. She also approved many Hadith for al-Mundhirī in Baghdad.⁶⁰³ In the same way, 'Ā'ishah bint Abī Bakr al-Baghdādīyah shared and contributed to the on going effort of the house of Hadith before her death in 628/1230.⁶⁰⁴ Other women who were renowned in the science of Hadith were 'Umm al- Faḍl Labābah bint Ahmed al-Baghdādī of whom Alī ibn Ahmad al-Makdisi,⁶⁰⁵ wrote and reported her sayings, also Sayyidah al-katabah bint al-baqā'(d.610/1213), a female sheikh in Baghdad.⁶⁰⁶

It was customary for the Sheikh or the faqīh to grant his students and novice followers a *ljāzah*, whether they were men or women, when he was assured of their thorough understanding and their ability to teach others the lessons he had taught them. Luckily, we found a single sample of such a license, granted to many women who were taught and educated by various Sheikhs and mentioned in their biographies. *ljāzah* was a collective one granted to a group of female students who were taught the science of *Fiqh* by Sheikh Alī ibn Ahmad ibn al-Ḥasan, the Tutor, (d.592/1195).⁶⁰⁷ Although some errors are noticed at the beginning, the text of the *ljāzah*, according to Ibn al-Najjār, is as follows:

and Farḥah bint Qarṭāsh al-ẓafarīyah, Tāj al-nisā' bint Faḍā'il al-Tikrītī, 'Afīfah sister of Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Mubāarak ibn Mashq and the niece [thus] of Omar ibn Muḥammad al-Yazīdī, known as al-Kalīfīyah bint Muḥammad and the sister of Ismā'īl ibn al-Mubāarak ibn Muḥammad, known as Maḥbūbah, and the wife of Omar ibn Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Muqrī',

⁶⁰³ Al-Yāfi'ī, 768/1366, *Mir'āt al-janān*, vol.4, p.59. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.6, p.273.

Kaḥḥālah, A'lām al-nisā, vol.1, p.80.

⁶⁰⁴ Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol. 3, p.293.

⁶⁰⁵ Al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.5, p.42. *Kaḥḥālah, A'lām al-nisā*, vol.2, p.45.

⁶⁰⁶ See Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol.2, p.280.

⁶⁰⁷ I.al-Baghdādī, *Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*, vol.3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,1980),p.43.

and also his wife, Raḥmah bint Maḥmūd al-Sha‘‘ār and Ṣafīyah bint ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Hibat Allāh, were all licensed, in Baghdad, by the Sheikh Alī ibn Ahmad Abū Aal-Ḥasan al-Muqrī’.⁶⁰⁸

As seen from Muslim women’s contribution to the learning and dissemination of the Quranic *Tafsīr* and Hadith discussed thus far, they were active and acknowledged in their roles. The scarcity or lack of mention in historical records pertaining to the Abbasid period, can hence be construed as neglect and, to some extent, trivialization. Indeed, the above illustrated that as far as the Traditional Sciences are concerned although women played a significant part and were mentioned in biographies at times, their roles appear to have been largely neglected in the sources and forgotten in the passage of time. However, it is worth noting here, that similar to the mention of women in political affairs, narratives and representations of women in scientific and educational fields was in some cases influenced by the author’s experiences with women in these particular fields. An example of this, is Ibn al-Jawzī ’s writings regarding Khadījah *Khātūn* and the school she built, where he was chosen by her to teach and lead the school. Also, kinship played another role in the visibility of some women, as they would be in some cases related to the authors. Here, again Ibn al-Jawzī is a good example, for he wrote about his daughters’ roles in this field in their capacity as Muhadithat.

3.1.2. Women and Intellectual Sciences

The blossoming of intellectual pursuits in Baghdad during the rule of the Būyid dynasty (339-447/950-1055) and later, the Saljūq era (447-547/1055-1152) expanded to embrace all kinds of intellectual originalities and creative abilities which encouraged thinkers and creators to excel in different aspects of religious and professional fields.

Contrary to findings in the sources, this chapter argues that in reality, women during this particular period played an important part. That is to say, that although many women became very proficient in the various aspects of thought and

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.vol.3, p.43.

intellectual activities, unfortunately, most of the sources neglected their contribution.

Women's notable role with respect to flourishing cultural expansion; their contribution to the study of the Holy Quran and the reporting of Hadith as well as their share in religious preaching, must not be overlooked. The previously mentioned second phase of education, which can be figuratively called the 'higher education phase', was institutionalized, rather than self-generated by individuals. As such, the acknowledgement of women's advancement and excellence in said phase, was not self-proclaimed but rather granted and recognised by institutionally acclaimed authorities.

In this type of education, the focus was on educational institutions for the benefit of everyone who desired to complete their education. As such, learning circles spread in mosques and schools. The government also tied up inalienable property, (*waqf*) the yield of which was devoted to catering for the cost of education since at the time both the teacher and the student were given adequate and sufficient income to enable them to fully devote themselves to learning.⁶⁰⁹

Baghdad was, hence, endowed with the cream of scholars⁶¹⁰ and thinkers in the various disciplines of sciences and thought. These scholars excelled and became very proficient in their fields of knowledge such as philosophy, medicine, pharmacy, mathematics, astronomy and astronomy.⁶¹¹ This section of the chapter addresses the roles of women in these disciplines during Būyid and Saljūq periods.

i. Ribāt & al-wa'z

When girls completed the first phase of their education, there was no reason to ban a girl from going to the mosque or the school to attend *majālis al-'ilm* and to learn

⁶⁰⁹ N.Ma'rūf, *Tārīkh 'ulamā' al-Mustanshiriyah*, vol.1,(Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b,1970), p.46.

⁶¹⁰Scholars such as, Ibn Sīnā (d.428),al-Ghazzālī (d.505) Abū Qāsim al-Baghdādī (d.435/1139) known as al-uṣṭurlāby, al-Shahrazūrī(d.555/1160).

⁶¹¹ Ibn Khallikān(d.681/1282), *Wafayāt al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān*,ed.lḥsān 'Abbās,vol.5(Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah,1977),pp.101-119.

from the sheikhs in the same way as her male peers.⁶¹² To do so, she was only required to have prior permission from her guardian. Ibn al-Jawzī recorded that, “he had heard Abū al-Wālid al-Qurashī saying: ‘my mother said to me, when I was pregnant with you, the Sheikh al-‘Abbās b. Ḥamzah was having his *majālis* convened’, so I asked permission from your father to attend the *majālis*, and he agreed”.⁶¹³

It was usual for women to attend *majālis al-‘ilm* in large numbers, and some of the female students used to attend those of some of the scholars and *fuqah’a*. The sources elaborate on a few of these women, such as, Maznah, the *Jāriyah* of Abū Sa‘īd Ṣā‘igh, who followed the *majālis* of the *Faqih* Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. Sam‘ūn⁶¹⁴ (d.387/997).⁶¹⁵ It was also said that the *majālis* of the *Faqih* Ardashīr b. Manṣūr al-‘Ibādī (d.486/1093),⁶¹⁶ a teacher in the al-Niẓāmīyah School of Baghdad, used to be attended by an audience of thirty thousand men and women.⁶¹⁷ Despite this apparent exaggeration, it provides evidence that indicates that there was a remarkable following of women who attended the *majālis al-‘ilm* (learning counsels) of scholars and *fuqahā’*. This fact is not only confirmed by contemporary sources, but also by traditional evidence as well. For example, one of *al-Wa’seti’s* (miniatures illustrates) one of the *majālis al-‘ilm* in Baghdad where a large number of women can be seen in attendance, receiving their lessons side by side with men, albeit seated in separate circles.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹² M.Ahmad, *Tārīkh al-ta‘līm ‘inda al-Muslimīn ḥattā al-qarn al-khāmis al-Hijrī*, ed. Sāmī al-Ṣaqqār, (Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-Us-Salam,1980),p.81.

⁶¹³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.6, p.396.

⁶¹⁴ Abū al-Hussin Muḥammad b. Ahmad b. Sam‘ūn born in 300/912. He was a student of Shiekh Abū Dā‘ūd al-Sijistānī, b. Sam‘ūn and lived during the Caliph al-Ṭā‘ī’s period and the era of the prince of the Caliphate ‘Aḍud al-Dawlah. See *Ibid*,vol.7.p.199.

⁶¹⁵A.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwah*, vol.2, (Ḥaydar Ābād al-Dakkan, Maṭba‘at Jam‘īyat Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmānīyah,1942), p.298.Also see A.al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍarah wa-akhbār al-mudhākarah*, ed. ‘Abbūd Shālījī, vol.7,(Beirut: Dār Ṣādir,1971) p.240.

⁶¹⁶ Ardashīr b Manṣūr al-‘Ibādī was one of the most self-denying (ascetic) scholars. His origin traces back to Marw (Merv, inTurkey) but he came to Baghdad and joined the *al-Niẓāmīya* School as a regular teacher. He had a large number of students as disciples who attended his *majālis* to learn from him and report his work. Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī, the famous scholar was one of those who regularly attended his *majālis*. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*,vol.9, p.76.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid*,vol. 9, p.75. S.Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir‘āt al-zamān*, vol.8, sect.2, p.5. See also, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol. 5, p.186.

⁶¹⁸ Sibṭī ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir‘āt al-zamān*, vol.8,p.7.

One of the famous women who had made a positive contribution to the *al-Ribāṭ* (religious institution) and preaching counsels was the preacher and self-denying (ascetic) Ammat al-Islam al-mubārakah bint Ibrahim al-ḥarīsh, who had *al-Ribāṭ*⁶¹⁹ in the *al-zafarīyah* area of Baghdad where she preached and counselled. Another woman of considerable knowledge was Sitt al-mashāyikh (d.561/1165), a preacher in Baghdad who delivered guidance in the city of Hama in the west of Syria.⁶²⁰ Moreover, Fatima, whose name was Mubārakah bint ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn al-Sammāk (d.497/1103), was equally known as one of the famous preachers in Baghdad.⁶²¹ Also, Khadījah bint Mohammad ibn ‘Abdullāh (d.1460/1067), known as al-Shihjānīyah, was one of the celebrated preachers in Baghdad during the era. She was a pious, selfless and highly spiritual woman who accompanied the preacher Sheikh Abā al-Hussein Ibn Sam’ūn. *Sam’ūn*.⁶²² She learned and recorded the third part of his book *Ibn Amālī* which, Kaḥḥālah mentined in his book *A’lām al-nisā*⁶²³ The Faqīh Abū Ghālī b. al-Hassan al-Bannā⁶²⁴ also learned, heard and narrated her sayings; whereas al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī wrote and cited her in his books.⁶²⁵ One of the most well known *Ribāṭ* in Baghdad at that time was *Ribāṭ Raḥbah* which was built in the courtyard of the palace mosque at the eastern bank of the Tigris River. It was there that Fakhr al-Nisā’ Shuhdah bint Abū Nāṣir al-Dīnawarīyah (d.574/1176) became famous and renowned as a female scholar of Hadith along with other *fuqahā’* and preachers who practiced their profession in the same venue, such as Nafīs ibn Hilāl al-ṣūfī al-Baghdādī.⁶²⁶

In the same way that women from the common people became widely known in the field of preaching and guidance, so did several *al-ḥarā’ir* and *jawārī* of the Abbasid court. They became known for their knowledge and contribution in forming preaching counsels and *Ribāṭ* work from within the Caliphate palace. Their

⁶¹⁹ A religious institution of mediaeval Islam. It is impossible to present an unequivocal definition of the term that could be translated: the institution of *al-Rabṭ* in religious information given by Sheikh.

⁶²⁰ Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol.3, pp.257-258. See also al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol. 2, p.279.

⁶²¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.128.

⁶²² M. Ibn Sam’ūn (737/000), *Amālī Ibn Sam’ūn*, (Beirut :Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmīyah, 2000).

⁶²³ Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol.1, p.343.

⁶²⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.250. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.5, p.82, where Khadījah al-Shihjānīyah died and was buried near the grave of the preacher Faqīh Ibn Sam’ūn. See al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.3, p.308.

⁶²⁵ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.14, p.448.

⁶²⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.288. al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol.3, p.264. Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol.2, p.309.

presence inside the palace did not stop them from learning, participating in and establishing their preaching counsels from inside the palace. Indeed, they even participated in the construction of the *Ribāṭ*, but this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, so as not to distract from their vital roles in preaching and teaching in this field. The ladies of the Caliphate Court were particularly anxious to attend and carefully listen to the lessons in their higher phase of education. The Caliphs were equally keen for them to learn and employed the best and most competent teachers.⁶²⁷ Moreover, the apartments at *Badr* Door, which was one of the Caliphate Palace Doors, were reserved for the Court Ladies and the Princesses so that they might listen to their various lessons without being seen by the tutor.⁶²⁸

The traveller Ibn Jubayr saw Ibn al-Jawzī while he was conducting his lessons in the compartment of *Badr* Door at the Caliphate Palace. The mother of the Caliph was present at the teaching session and Ibn al-Jawzī was reported to have respectfully referred to her by the agnomen, "the dignified veil and the merciful eminence".⁶²⁹ It is worth reasserting that women, not only attended these lessons, some significantly contributed to their establishment and continuity. For example, the Roman slave and mother of Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075), 'Umm Salīm Hānim Arjwān, whose role in the political arena was described in Chapter Two, was called *Qurrat al-'Ayn* and also the '*Badr al-dujā'* to denote her contribution to charity and benevolence. Before her death in 512/1118, she was among the people who initiated and founded a *Ribāṭ* intended to serve the Sufī School.⁶³⁰ In the same way, Binfashā (d.598/1201), the mistress of Caliph al-Mustaḍī (reg.566-576/1170-1180), whose political role during the Saljūq era has been discussed earlier had a high ranking position in the Caliphate palace in addition to her role in the field of preaching and guidance. She established a *Ribāṭ*

⁶²⁷ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar fī 'unwān al-tawārikh wa-'uyūn al-siyar*, ed. Jawād Muṣṭafā & Anastās al-Kirmil, (Baghdād : Wizārat al-'lām, 1934), p.168.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, p.199.

⁶³⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaḥam*, vol.9, p.200. al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol.3, p.257.

at *al-shāṭi'iyah* School market area which was situated in close proximity to *al-nizāmīyah* School at the eastern side of Baghdad.⁶³¹

Khātūn, wife of Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118), was another lady of the palace known for her charitable works and benevolence. She financed the building of her own *Ribāṭ* in a village in the area of *Bāb al-azaj* in the Baghdad suburbs where the famous preacher al-Hassan al-Ghaznawī used to preach. Kaḥālah, the historian, reported that she bought the village from Caliph al-Mustarshid (reg.512-529/1118-1135) in 551/1156.⁶³² Similarly Zumurrud *Khātūn*, mother of Caliph al-al-Nāṣir (reg.575-622/1180-1225) and wife of Caliph al-Mustaḍī, played a political role in maintaining and preserving the Caliphate for her son al-al-Nāṣir as previously discussed. However, her political involvement did not stop her from contributing to preaching and guidance. In fact, she was able to build and inaugurate the al-aṣḥāb *Ribāṭ* in the 560/1252, next to the religious shrine of 'Abīd al-'Alawī. However, this *Ribāṭ* was completely flooded and finally collapsed in 646/1248, after which she built and inaugurated another *Ribāṭ*, which was named *Ribāṭ al-Ma'mūnīyah* in eastern Baghdad.⁶³³

The above demonstrates women's vast achievements and contributions in the religious aspects of Abbasid society during the Būyid and Saljūq periods. However, these achievements are seldom mentioned in history and indeed this thesis as a whole, categorically refutes such arguments. By analysing the rights and roles Muslim women had during the era, it is clear that women were not victimised by Islamic code, and furthermore, they were in effect representatives of Islam via their roles in Quranic and Hadith teaching and dissemination. By rewriting these women's stories and unearthing their diverse positions in history, a new perspective emerges. This perspective must not escape scholars researching women, particularly those who define women in terms of their object status. If not

⁶³¹ Ibid. vol.1, p.270. It was said that this *Ribāṭ* was meant for Sufī women and was managed by Abu al-Bakr al-Sufī, the sheikh of *Ribāṭ al-Zawzanī*. See A.al-Athīr (630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol.12 (Beirut:Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī,1980),p.178.

⁶³² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.1, p.100. See also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah*, vol.5, p.323. Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol.1, p.11.

⁶³³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol.12, p.184. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, p.513. al-Ṣafadī(764/1362) *al-wafī bi-al-wafayāt*, ed. Helmut Ritter, vol.14 (Viśbādin:Dār al-Nashr Frānz Shtāyna,1962), p. 213. Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*,vol.2 p.39.

they risk contributing to the ever growing problem of women's misrepresentation in history. This thesis argues that the best and indeed only way to avoid such a grave misrepresentation is by studying women as a category with the purpose of re-examining their roles in history and to adequately acknowledge them and their past, as Mernissi and Kleinberg suggest.

However, some researchers now acknowledge the status of women and their religious culture as well as their ability to master language during the Abbasid era. In his book, *al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah fī al-qarn al-rābi' al-hijrī*,⁶³⁴ Adam Mez confirms that women of the period under investigation were well versed in religion and very capable of delivering preaching sessions that were well received by the public. Among such female scholars was 'Umm al-bahā' Zaynab bint Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī who was a famous preacher in Baghdad.⁶³⁵ She delivered her preaching in the Sufī House, until she died in 610/1213. There was also 'Umm al-Khayr, Hājir bint Abū Abd al-Raḥmān al-Zubaydīyah who died in Baghdad in 622/1225. She was one of the most pious and just of all female preachers. As a member of the Hadith house, she had the chance to learn at the hands of several sheikhs and historians such as Abū al-Makārim al-Ṭāhir and Abū Shujā' Ahmad who cited that she tutored many women⁶³⁶ in completing the Holy Quran. Also, 'Umm al-ḥayāt Zahrah(d.633/1235) bint Muḥammad al-Anbārī, who had her own *Ribāṭ*⁶³⁷ and was known as a celebrated, 'Ascribe of Hadith' *Musnida* in Baghdad. Also, Staytīyah bint al-Qādī al-Maḥāmilī was one of those famous scholars who memorized the Hadith and was a celebrated female preacher with an interest in the Shaf'ī School. It is cited that she shared sessions of learning with many scholars who reported much of her wisdom.⁶³⁸

The under-representation of women's roles arguably motivates female researchers to break new ground. The findings of this research thus far tend to confirm that women were not only allowed to learn, they activeley exercised their considerable

⁶³⁴ A. Mez, *al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah fī al-qarn al-rābi' al-hijrī*, aw, 'Aṣr al-nahḍah fī al-Islām, trans.M Abū Rīdah& R. Badrāwī (Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1967), vol 2, p.178.

⁶³⁵ Al-Mundhirī , *al-Takmilah*, vol.2, p.281.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, p.281.

⁶³⁷ Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.5, p.159.

⁶³⁸ Mez, *al-Ḥaḍārah al-Islāmīyah fī al-qarn al-rābi' al-hijrī*, vol.C, p.178.

knowledge and participated in religious preachings. They provided intellectual knowledge and contributions that have been largely neglected or omitted entirely, from narratives and modern researches alike. It is important to note, that while a large number of women were not recorded in terms of contributions and achievements in these fields, some were. Fakhr al-Nisā' Shuhdah who was a renowned female scholar of Hadith was recorded in the books of Hadith, and as such is a rare example of those who have not been neglected by history.

Relatively few women have been portrayed in historical books or research, which means that sometimes women have been silenced in the past, that their stories have been omitted, or perhaps even not yet fully unearthed.⁶³⁹ Hence, unveiling women's histories and their contributions during the Abbasid period, which in turn highlights their roles in society, issues a clear reminder within an historical context that Muslim women were both present and active in the period. Such findings, along with those of following chapters should encourage modern researches to continue researching various facets of women's roles in different periods of Islamic history, as there is still much to be found and understood.

During the third *Hijrī* century, the Sufī movement started to spread in the Islamic world in the form of an individual and personal attitude that practices Selflessness and extreme worship of God. This asceticism then developed further into Sufī Mysticism and Scholars began to write and record the disciplines and fundamentals of the science which established the foundation of today's Sufī Science.⁶⁴⁰ One of their most celebrated Scholars was al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d.243/857) who wrote two Sufī books entitled, '*Ādāb al-nufūs*'⁶⁴¹ and '*Kitāb al-Tawahhum*'.⁶⁴² Similarly, Abū al-Qāsi Qushayrī (d.465/1072)⁶⁴³ wrote one of the most renowned Sufī books *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf*, which embraced the fundamentals of Sufism.⁶⁴⁴ Sufī Mysticism then developed into a diversity of religious creeds such as *al-Qādirīyah*, *al-Sa'dīyah*, *al-Rifā'īyah*, *al-*

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Read more about Sufism See I. Netton: *Sufi Ritual: The Parallel Universe* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁶⁴¹ A.al-Muḥāsibī, *Ādāb al-nufūs*, (Beirut : Dār al-Jīl, 1984), p.243.

⁶⁴² A.al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Tawahhum*, (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1937), p.56

⁶⁴³ Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.3, p.25.

⁶⁴⁴ A.al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah fī 'ilm al-taṣawwuf* (Cairo, Dār al-Muqaṭṭam, 2009), p.354

Aḥmadiyah and *al-akbariyah* etc. Upon reading Sufī Books written during this period, it becomes obvious that contrary to established belief, those women were not always fond of wealth and enjoyment. Many were self-denying and pious worshippers of God. As such, the Abbasid era witnessed an active feminine Sufī movement pioneered by Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah (d.185/801).⁶⁴⁵

One of the most renowned self-denying females during the eras of the sutdy, was Maymūnah, sister of Ibrahim ibn al-Khawwāṣ, who was a deeply ascetical Sufī in Baghdad. Likewise, Jawāhir, wife of Abū 'Abdullāh al-Barā'ī was one of the most pious women in Baghdad.⁶⁴⁶ Also, renowned for their piety and religious observance, were the sisters of Bashshār ibn al-Ḥārith: Maḍīqḥ, Mujah and Zubdah.⁶⁴⁷ Furthermore, Staytīyah bint al-Qāḍī Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Bajlī was an authority in the science of Sufism as well as being an ascetic and a narrator of Hadith until she died in 447/1055.⁶⁴⁸

During the historical period covered by this thesis, the role of women in Sufism and asceticism was characterized by an interest in all aspects of knowledge and learning. However, the religious aspect attracted the most attention in this movement. By definition, Sufism is the uninterrupted devotion to God and the voluntary renunciation of the pleasures and enjoyments of life. Many of the Abbasid Court ladies preferred to take the path of Sufism such as, al-Jīha al-Qā'mya al-dhakhīra (d.447/1055), mother of the Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1030-1074). She was an extremely ascetic and pious lady who donated part of her estates for Hajj, alms and charitable gifts.⁶⁴⁹ Similarly, the daughter of Caliph al-Qā'im and wife of the Sultan Ṭughril Beg, of whom a brief citation was given in the previous chapter, was a pious self-denying woman who was very generous in alms giving.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁵ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā'*, vol.4, p.246.

⁶⁴⁶ al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah*, vol.3, p.540. See also al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.14, p.238.

⁶⁴⁷ It was cited that Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith outlived his sister Zubaidah; consequently; he was very sad and grieved her death. Out of his deep Sufī way of life, he mentioned that, 'I have read in one book that if the servant of God is negligent in performing his services to God, then He (God) will deprive him of his intimate companion and Zubaidah was my companion in this world'. See Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.14, p.437.

⁶⁴⁸ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, p.412.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol 9, p.25.

⁶⁵⁰ She passed away in 496/1102 Ibid.vol 9, p.137.

Asceticism was not limited to the higher classes of the Abbasid community, it had also spread, along with its related sciences, among the women of the general public of Iraq. For example, Rābi'ah al-Baghdādīyah(d.518/1124) who was previously mentioned as a celebrity in the science of Hadith, was also a well-known pious Sufī in Basra where she emulated Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah in her Sufī way of life.⁶⁵¹ Similarly, Fatima bint Naṣr ibn al-'Aṭṭār (d.573/1177) also came from the general public, was an ascetical and pious devotee of God and devoted herself to His service in her house. An example of her piety is that, she apparently only left her house when it was absolutely necessary, on three occasions.⁶⁵² The pleasures and enjoyments of life meant nothing to her. When she passed away, she was buried in Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal's cemetery.⁶⁵³ Another example is al-Khuldīyah bint Jafar ibn Muḥammad al-Khuldī, who was a renowned ascetical scholar and devotee of God. al-Dīnawar Maṣṣūr ibn Rabī'ah al-Zuhrī al-Khaṭīb⁶⁵⁴ reported many of her teachings.

As for the women of *Ahl al-Dhimmah* (free non-Muslims, either Christians or Jews),⁶⁵⁵ very little information is available. However, it has been noted that churches and monasteries for women⁶⁵⁶ played a significant role in female education. It was customary that one altar, in each church, be assigned especially for women so that Christian girls could receive their religious preaching and lessons.⁶⁵⁷ This was most notable under the presidency period of the *Jāthliq* 'Abd Yashū' of *al-Naṣṣūrīyah*, the Nestorian church in Baghdad (468-483/1075-1090), who initiated efforts towards special attention to female education. The *Jāthliq*

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.vol. 9, p.137.

⁶⁵² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.vol.10, p.279.

⁶⁵⁴ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.14, p.44. See also, Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol.1. p.353.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ahl al-Dhimmah*: free non-Muslims, either Christians or Jews, living in a Muslim country, the Qur'ān uses the word in its denunciation of idolaters who do not fulfil their obligations to the believers see Q 9:8.

⁶⁵⁶ Convents in Iraq (*al-adyirah*), al-'adhārā Monastery: was built on the road between Baghdad and Sāmarrā. See A.al-Shābushtī(d.388/998), *al-Diyārāt*, ed. Kūrīs 'Awwād, (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā,1966), p.107.

al-'adhārā Monastery was situated in the Christian feudal estate on the western side of Baghdad. See al-Shābushtī, *al-Diyārāt*, p.108. B.Ishāq, *Aḥwāl naṣāra Baghdād*, (Baghdad: Maṭba'at Shafīq, 1960), p.113.

al-akhawāt Monastery was situated on the western riverside of the Tigris River. al-Shābushtī, *al-Diyārāt*, p.108. A.al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Diyārāt*, ed.Jalīl al-Attiya, (London : Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, 1991), p.33.

al-'athlath Monastery: was heavily populated with reclusive nuns and it was adjacent to the *al-akhawāt* Monastery. See al-Iṣbahānī, *al-Diyārāt*, p.20. al-Shābushtī, *al-Diyārāt*, p.128.

⁶⁵⁷ Ishāq, *Aḥwāl naṣāra Baghdād*, p.79.

decreed by order that special care be taken to provide for women's altars and that efforts were made to enlarge and expand them in all the churches of the Primacy.⁶⁵⁸

As far as amenities for Jewish women were concerned, there is no information available in all the relative sources, in connection with the type or phases of education undertaken by Jewish girls. However, one can say that the Temples and Altars were generally very active as Jewish woman appeared to have received a reasonable share of education. Indeed, many of them had their individual learning counsels either for explaining or interpreting the difficult to comprehend issues of the *al-Tawrāh* and Jewish Theology. In this regard, the Jewish traveller, Rabbi Petachia, who visited Baghdad in 577/1181, saw the daughter of the chief, Rabbi Samuel, giving one of her religious lessons to her students and disciples. Petachia recorded that a large number of students made every effort to take lessons from her.⁶⁵⁹

It can hence be argued that all sects of the community were highly interested in the process of female education and that women, were also actively involved in the effort. Women played a huge part in all phases of education. But their role expanded to include their involvement in self-education through all of the educational phases in addition to the effort and responsibility they undertook to teach and educate their children and also the girls in their neighbourhoods. This is reflected in their contributions to the advancement of science, which will be discussed later in the Chapter.

This section's findings emphasised that there were many types of education prevalent in the first educational phase where efforts to advance the cause of education were self-generated due to the absence of the involvement of the State. However, female education received significant attention by the different sects of the community resulting in many types of female education such as home

⁶⁵⁸ M.Sulaymān Akhbār baṭārikat (Beruit :Dār wa-Maktabat Bibliūs, 2005),p.203.

⁶⁵⁹ P.Regensburg and W.Ainsworth, *Travels of Rabbi Petachia*,trans.A.Beiseh, (London: messrsstrubner &co.,1956), p.71.

education, the engagement of education services and charity education. The next section, will further argue against the claim that Muslim women did not, or could not, play a part in Islamic culture by exploring women's roles and achievements in language, and poetry of the period.

3.2 Women and Language

The Arabic language and its related disciplines such as literature, were the focus of interest for women during the fifth and sixth Hijrī centuries. Such sciences greatly helped women to attain a remarkable position in the cultural and educational spheres of the period. Women took a keen interest in mastering the science of grammar (syntax), which is one of the primary branches of the Arabic Language. Once again, however, the sources neglected to cite (with the exception of a few cases), the female linguists who excelled in their proficiency in this field of learning. One of the magnificent women who was remarkably adept in the school of grammar was Bint al-Kinīrī who resided in the eastern area of Baghdad. She was known for her expansive knowledge of the language and its grammar and had her own categorizations and literary works.⁶⁶⁰

Moreover, women were highly interested in Arabic calligraphy and writings. That is, many women became proficient and many of them acquired a high scientific and social status. For example, Yaqtīn Riḍā bint al Fath was a famous calligraphist in Baghdad. Ibn al-Najjār al-Baghdādī saw and copied a sample of her handwriting⁶⁶¹ from the collections of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj. Also, Um al-Faḍl Fatima bint al-Hassan al-'Aṭṭār, known as bint al-Aqra' al-Baghdādīyah (d.1087/46) was reputed to be a calligraphist, a gifted and quick witted woman of culture, and a talented hand-writer. She was chosen to write the armistice agreement addressed to the Emperor of the Romans from the Caliphate Dīwān.⁶⁶² According to Abū al-Qāsim al-

⁶⁶⁰ Y.al-Ḥamawī (626/1228), *Mu'jam al-udabā'* (Cairo: Maṭba'ah Hindīyah, 1923), vol. 6, p.212.

⁶⁶¹ I.al-Iṣbahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-aṣṣpart*, ed.Muḥammad Atharī & Jamīl Sa'īd, vol.8, (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'Irāqī,1964), p.414.

⁶⁶² al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-udabā'*, vol. 6, p.115. Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol.3, p.365 Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā'*, vol. 4, p.41. al-Dhahabī, *al-udabā'*, p.437.

Samarqandī, who was *Qāḍī al-Māristān*⁶⁶³, Abū al-Barakāt al-anmāṭī and Abū Saad al-Baghdādī Fatima wrote routine and general letters of the Caliphate Dīwān.⁶⁶⁴ This demonstrates that women were not only active in these fields for personal satisfaction, their talents and proficiency were recognized by the Caliphate's leadership and even employed in the Caliphate Dīwān. Such positions required high efficiency in exercising roles, and there appeared to be confidence in women's abilities to that end.

Fakhr al-Nisā', Shuhdah al-Dīnawarīyah (d.574/1178), was another woman known for her excellent writing and artistic calligraphy. She participated in the efforts of many educational activities such as fiqh and Hadith and taught from behind a curtain, training students in the fundamentals of reading. She was married to Thiqaḥ al-Dawla Abū al-Hassan al-Dirīnī, trustee of Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160), who founded al-Thaqīyah al-Shāfi'īyah School. Ibn al Jawzī⁶⁶⁵ reported many of her sayings. Ṣafīyah bint Abū al-Faraj al-Baghdādīyah (d.620/1223) was also a renowned writer and scholar in Baghdad who wrote many literary works.⁶⁶⁶

The role of women was very obvious in all aspects in the historical eras of the Būyid and the Saljūq during the Abbasid state. Female writers, whether Abbasid *al-ḥarā'ir*, *jawārī*, *al-Imā'* or poetesses from the general public of Baghdad, contributed largely to the Arabic language. Arabic poetry and other forms of artistic works which will be categorized, classified and presented below, are designed to provide a brief analytical overview of the poetry of the period. It is hope this will support the thesis hypothesis that women played a significant role in most, if not all, facets of Abbasid society. The sources examined in this study confirm that women, during the Abbasid Era, were able to discover new variables of a special and general nature that helped them carry their issues further into new horizons.

⁶⁶³ A Persian word which means 'hospital'.

⁶⁶⁴ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol. 4, p.41.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.1, p. 289. Also see Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p.289.

⁶⁶⁶ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, vol. 16, pp .328-329.

3.3 Women and Poetry

Poetry was a common platform for women in the Abbasid era. Their delicate feelings and acute sensitivity made them very proficient and most creative in the field of composing poems throughout history. Similar to their counterparts in other regions of the world, Muslims women contributed hugely to the transmission of Arabic poetry and verses from pre-Islamic times to the following Islamic eras. The Abbasid era was particularly famous for this as it produced many female poets from within the ranks of both *al-ḥarā'ir* and *jawāri*. Arabic Poetry is thought to be a tool that best describes and expresses the cultural life of the community. It is the access through which researchers identify various aspects of lives in a certain place and time. That is, poetry reflects the political, social, cultural and economical conditions of the community as well as other aspects through which researchers may find the necessary clues to investigate historical communities or eras covered by their research. Generally speaking, poetry, especially Arabic poetry, is defined as a literary work and a special discipline that is unique in itself. Women became interested and proficient in poetry starting from the pre-Islamic age up to and during the Islamic eras.

Although history honours many of the women distinguished in the art of poetry, however, there was incomplete coverage of the role of women in this area except for those instances where their names were somehow connected to certain prominent male figures. Women excelled in poetry, particularly during the Abbasid Era when various creative contributions were cited by some historians in their books and writings. Unfortunately, these contributions were not thoroughly investigated until recently when certain researches⁶⁶⁷ discussed the role of women in prose and poetry during the first Abbasid Era (reg.132-274/749-889). Therefore, any reference to women who were proficient and renowned in the art of oratory shall be made within this time frame because women of the Būyid and Saljūq Eras were not fortunate enough to enjoy the historical coverage since their role in culture, knowledge and artistic works was completely trivialized.

⁶⁶⁷ A. 'Uthmān, *Shi'r al-mar'ah fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī: dirāsah tārikhīyah taḥlīlīyah fannīyah*, (Cairo: Dār Gharīb, 2004). Also see S. Furayḥ, *al-Jawāri wa-al-shi'r fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī al-awwal*, (Kuwait: Sharikat al-Rabī'ān lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 1980)

As already noted, Abbasid women were able to express both their love and their anxieties through amatory poems. They could also disclose their dislikes and aversions as well as other human feelings through satiric poetry in their poems and verses, during the Būyid and the Saljūq eras in Baghdad, which was the minaret of culture and civilization at the time. Unfortunately, research is unable to establish the reason for the small number of female poets who were famous for poetry and who had a significant role in enhancing the practice of poetry during these era. One cannot exactly attribute the reasons for this. The previously mentioned limitation of resources, renders difficult any attempt to define whether it was due to the lack of primary sources or that women were not sufficiently interested in this discipline. Hence, the examination of women's roles will be based upon some of the female poets who were listed as being involved in different aspects of poetry and able to perform poetical works inspired by their instincts, and furthermore, to compete with men in this arena. The role of women was very obvious in the cultural, political, social and artistic life of the era; *jawāri* , as well as, *al-ḥarā'ir* were both renowned and creative in the field of poetry. Women's creativity in poetry was diversified into different forms of poems. This section focuses on Sufī poetry , abstract *Ghazal* (amatory poetry), *al-Rithā'* (Elegiac poem), *Madḥ* (Eulogy), *al-Hijā* (Satiric Poetry). Each section draws a discussing between women's contribution to these types of poetry in the first Abbasid era vis-à-vis the Būyid and the Saljūq eras.

3.3.1 Sufī Poetry

Sufī Poetry expresses divine love and consequently, describes the core of women's Sufī thought on self-denial in life. This poetry came into being as the result of the Sufī movement, which had spread since the dawn of the Abbasid Caliphate. Sufī Poetry was manifested as the result of the marked female spiritual Sufī movement and illustrated their divine love for God in various poetic images such as repentance, self-denial and divine love as demonstrated by Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyah in the following poem:

Oh brothers, my comfort is in being alone
 Where my love is always present
 I have not found a substitute for His love

And of all creatures, He reflects me⁶⁶⁸

While Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawīyah existed during the first Abbasid era, women continued to contribute to Sufī poetry during the Saljūq era under study. One of the famous female Sufī poets was Taqīyah bint Ghayth al-Armanāzī al-Ṣūrī (d.579/1183).⁶⁶⁹ Taqīyah, was the mother of the narrator Alī b. Ḥamdūn. She composed many Sufī poems such as the one she made after she stumbled and fell to the ground. She cut a piece of a young girl's veil that happened to be in the house, and bandaged herself:

If I had the means I would have sacrificed my garment
In lieu of that young girl's veil
How could I steady a leg that ever and forever
Follows a path that rushes headlong into danger.⁶⁷⁰

al-Ṣafadī, the historian, said that she was a woman of esteem who composed graceful poetry.⁶⁷¹ In addition she was also gifted in Sufī poetry as demonstrated in the following verses:

I moved away though my heart is not pleased
So do not be deluded by my avoiding you.
although I am infatuated by love
But whenever I remember Syria and its people
I miss them
they stab my heart with broad swords
I cried with tears of blood in sorrow for the good old days⁶⁷²
The days I remain absent from the valley of Damascus

I feel as if my heart is being cut with a pair of scissors
I spend the night watching the motionless stars while they make it difficult for my eyes to
enjoy good sleep, Could anyone see that being with a spectre is more interesting
May time inflict the nights of separation with a sharp sword or may a judge rule that this be
eliminated.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁸ A.‘Uthmān, *‘Shi‘r al-mar‘ah fī al-‘aṣr al-‘Abbāsī*, (Cairo: Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Uthmān, 2004), p.114.

“راحتي يا اخوتي في خلوتي وحببي دائما في حضرتي
”لم أجد لي عن هواه عوضا وهو في البرايا محنتي

⁶⁶⁹ Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 265.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

لو وجدت السبيل جئت بحدى عوضا عن ضمائر تلك الوليدة كيف لي أن أقبل اليوم رجلا سلكت دهرها الطريقة الهيدة”
⁶⁷¹ ‘A.‘Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā’ fī ash‘ār al-nisā’*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur‘ān, 1986), p.33.

⁶⁷² Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p.35.

⁶⁷³ In these verses, Taqīyah showed her feelings and passion for her distant love through her tears, which she symbolized as blood. She also expressed her yearning for her people in Syria and the good old days she had lived among them. She watched the stars, unable to sleep and continued to ask for time to cease the separation from her love.

Similarly, Jawharah bint al-dawāmī excelled in Sufī poetry. She was a poet and one of the scholars of Baghdad, who was known as a lady of esteem and a pious self-denying preacher.⁶⁷⁴

Another woman who produced elegant poetry was Shuhdah bint Ahmad al-Dīnawarīyah⁶⁷⁵; a pious, highly esteemed lady who excelled in cultural works and interpretations of the Holy Quran and Hadith⁶⁷⁶ as well as her proficiency in composing Sufī poetry. In recognition of her literary and religious stance she was called '*Fakhr al-Nisā*'.⁶⁷⁷

Take me to where fresh air is abundant
and take rest under the shade of Nu'mānī⁶⁷⁸
tall trees.
And if eyes launch an affectionate attack
and cast a loving look at you
So guard your heart from accidental attack
hit by a glance, since the eyes are the bane of a heart.⁶⁷⁹

It is obvious that women's poetry was distinctive by significant characteristics, especially amatory poetry, where women had a wide area of freedom in expressing their feelings and passions through the medium of amatory love poems. As for Sufī poetry, women used it to introduce new spiritual horizons and emotional energies, which emerged as a result of the new Sufī movement they adopted in an effort to attain a freer life style. As mentioned earlier, this type of Sufī poetry became famous during the Abbasid Era when women became equal to men in respect of their contribution to remarkable literary work. Women lived their Sufī life to the utmost and expressed this spiritual experience through transparent and exquisite forms of poetry that were mixed with the Platonic style in order to express their passion, love of singing and the usage of some linguistic phrases that embraced

⁶⁷⁴ Al-Iṣbahānī: *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol.1, p.200.

⁶⁷⁵ Shuhdah died in 574/1178 see Sāmarrā'ī, *al-Rawḍah al-fayḥā*, p.128

⁶⁷⁶ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, p. 2214.

⁶⁷⁷ Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p. 54.

⁶⁷⁸ *Nu'mān*: In Arabic the meaning of *Nu'mān* is blood, hemoglobin-*Nu'mān*. Here through her Sufī poetry, Shuhdah is asking to be taken to where there is an abundance of fresh air in order to make her resting place beneath the shade of the tall trees of Numan. She warned young men of the magic of eyes and advised them to cast their eyes down to avoid falling in love as eyes are the bane of the heart. See *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p.54. See also, M. Sāmarrā'ī (d.630/1232), *al-Rawḍah al-fayḥā fī tawārīkh al-nisā'* (Baghdad: Dār al-Jumhūrīyah, 1966), p.128.

⁶⁷⁹ Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p.54. & al-Iṣbahānī: *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol.1, pp.144-145.

مل بي الي مجري التسيم الوافي واجعل مقيلك دوحتي نعمان
واذا العيون شئنن غاره سعرها ورمين عن خضر المتون حوان
"فاحفظ فؤادك ان يصاب بنظرة عرضا فأفة قلبك العينان

spiritual deliberations that some of the female poet could invent and realize its meanings.⁶⁸⁰

3.3.2 Ghazal Poetry

Ghazal (Amatory Poetry) is defined as an act of paying court between lovers; and as women are naturally inclined to passion and tender feelings, they were more equipped to excel in this type of poetic arena. As Caswell suggested, *Ghazal* Poetry was a “new genre of courtship love poetry developed by such poets as Bashshār b. Burd, Muṭī b. Iyās and al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf ”.⁶⁸¹ Also, Renate Jacobi points out that, “this kind of poetry had been developed since the rise of Islam according to the economic, social and cultural changes as well as the radical literary movement in which the poets imagine”, and gives the new genre of urban *Ghazal*.⁶⁸²

During the first Abbasid era, whether from the *jawārī* or *al-ḥarā'ir* class, many women became renowned for their proficiency in this type of *Ghazal* poetry. For example, Taymā', the *Jāriyah* of Khuzayma b. Khāzim al-Nahshalī, wrote an *Ghazal* poem to Hārūn al-Rashīd's when he left her to head for Syria;

May my soul be your ransom from any ill that you are heading towards
for you are her [Tayma's soul] happiness, her ears and her eyes.
As you depart you'll leave me in sadness
besides which no pleasure remains for me to savour
Do you - still while absent - remember our time together
Just as care, grief and remembrance have emaciated me?⁶⁸³

Equally eloquent in her *Ghazal* poetry was Faḍl al-Mutwakkil,⁶⁸⁴ a *Jāriyah* who enjoyed the good graces of Caliph al-Mutwakkil as well as the Caliphate house. She attended the *majālīs* of the Caliph: and replied to a member of the Caliph's *majālīs* in verses of *Ghazal* poetry:

Yeah, by God I desire you
do you (may you be spared) reciprocate?

⁶⁸⁰ Al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdā*, vol.14,p.438.

⁶⁸¹ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p. 211.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.135

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.p.83

Of that which you placed - its likeness is in the heart
and in the eye, eye, fixed in the eye, when you are absent.
So be assured of an affection that's mirrored in what you declare,
for in me - there is a sickness of which you are the physician.⁶⁸⁵

And she wrote to Caliph al-Mutwakkil as she watched him sleep:

Your likeness has appeared
to drive away my gloom
Arise that we may fulfil the requirements
of the engagement and the kiss
before we are exposed, by the
return of the spirits of those who slumber.⁶⁸⁶

Of the *ḥarā'ir* known for her excellence in *Ghazal* love poetry during the period, was 'Alyā', daughter of the third Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī and sister of Caliph al-Hādī and Hārūn al-Rashīd. She was an eloquent poetess who authored several books and composed a variety of *Ghazal* poems. In one of her poems she said:

And a little love, neat and pure is better for you than much
that is mixed.
Do not blame me for drinking love neat
It's the mixing of loves that makes one drunk.⁶⁸⁷

Also among many *al-ḥarā'ir*, who were renowned for their proficiency in this type love poetry, were Khadījah, daughter of Caliph al-Ma'mūn⁶⁸⁸; also Zubaydah, wife of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and many others. In addition to information found in history books, many recent researchers in the area of women's poetry during the first Abbasid era have unearthed more details. This tempts one to make a comparison between the role of women in poetry in this era and that of the Būyid and Saljūq dynasties. Unfortunately, however, once again only a few names of female poets were cited in history books, posing a limitation to such an endeavour. This study hence focuses solely on available information, discussed below.

Badr al-tamām bint al-Ḥusayn al-Bārī' was a sixth century female poet, who was cited by al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥibb al-Dīn b. al-Najjār in his book *Tārīkh Baghdād*. He described her saying: "She is a writer and female poet who is distinguished by her

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.p.84.

⁶⁸⁷ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.198.

⁶⁸⁸ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol.9, p.80.

delicacy of feelings and beautiful poetry”.⁶⁸⁹ An example of her delicately worded poetry runs as follows:

My excuse is that you are the most beautiful of all
And my memory of you in the evening
Entertains me at night .⁶⁹⁰

Jāriyah al-Qaṣṣār was also known for her extensive memorization and writing of *Ghazal* poems as well as her wide knowledge of literature. Her husband was Ibn Ḥarīqā, a governor in Baghdad on behalf of al-Jawwālī. Her son was Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad who was a cultured poet, who learned the art of poetry from his mother who died in (551/1156).⁶⁹¹ He was known in history books as ‘Abdullāh b. *Jāriyah* al-Qaṣṣār. This is extremely interesting and certainly worthy of note, as it speaks volumes of her influence on her son, particularly in the field of literature. As seen and discussed thus far, both men and women were generally named or titled in affiliation to the their fathers or tribes, but in this example we see how the *Jāriyah*'s prominence prompted an uncommon change of affiliation, where a man is titled not after his father or tribe, but after his mother.

3.3.3 *al-Rithā'* Poetry

The other type of poetry in which many women were highly proficient during the Abbasid Era, was the *al-Rithā'* (Elegiac poem).⁶⁹² Zubaydah, wife of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, bewailed her son al-Amīn when he was killed in the Civil War against his half brother, ⁶⁹³al-Ma'mūn:

Thinking of his conduct in life as a bright sheet in the night
Death closed in on him and grief was ever his mate
until it gave him to drink that which carried him away
But he who died shall not be restored to us ever
until those who passed away before him shall be restored to us.
I was afflicted by his loss as much as I boasted about him
over other men.
For him I constructed a foundation for all time.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁸⁹ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol.1, p.121

⁶⁹⁰ 'Uthmān, *Shi'r al-mar'ah fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, p.110.

”جمالک بین الوري عاذري وذكرک في ليلتي سامري

⁶⁹¹ 'Imād al-Ṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-'aṣr*, vol. 2, p.250.

⁶⁹² As part of Arabian Poetry, Elegiac poetry is a tool by which a person expresses his sorrow, grief and sadness for the death of a dear person a Caliph or a ruler.

⁶⁹³ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad* ,p.102.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.p.103.

Also, Būrān, the *Jāriyah* of al-Ma'mūn, bewailed his death in one *al-Rithā'* in which she said:

Support me in weeping and
spread the news
after the Imām is no more.
I have become a qiyānah to grief.
I was mistress of time, but he died, and time becomes my master.⁶⁹⁵

However, lack of resources on women's contribution to this type of *al-Rithā'* poetry during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods, once again restricts the research. Accordingly, this section only discusses women of the first Abbasid era.

3.3.4 *Madh* Poetry

Another type of Arabian poetry in which women excelled during the first Abbasid era, was the *Madh* (eulogy or panegyric poetry). Women *Madh* their friends and relatives; and sometimes extended their praise to include men such as their chieftains and caliphs. Normally their commendation concentrates on the noble traits of character like generosity, loyalty, gallantry and noble-mindedness. *Madh* was used either to compliment or as a demand from the eulogized person. For example, 'Alyā', daughter of Caliph al-Mahdī, *Madh* her brother the fifth Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd by saying:⁶⁹⁶

May your sisters be made your ransom,
for the graces have generously awarded
that destiny is of no equal except that such
graces continue to become everlasting by living close to you
May your closeness never fade away
and continue to find no end.
Praised be the Lord for answering
my request but in comparison
I found my praise for the Lord so meagre.⁶⁹⁷

Also 'Inān, commended Ja'far al-Barmakī by saying:

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.p.105.

⁶⁹⁶ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī*, vol 9, p. 88.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid. The author translation:

تقدبك إختك قد حيون بنعمة
إلا الخلود وذاك قريك سيدي
لسنا نعد لها الزمان عديلا
لازال قريك والبقاء طويلا
فرأيت حمدي عند ذاك قليلا
"وحمدت ربي في إجابة دعوتي"

The full moon is his likeness whenever he appears
and its whiteness gleams in his face
By God I cannot tell : is that the full moon of night
In his face or is it that his face is brighter.⁶⁹⁸

On the other hand, in the Būyid and Saljūq eras the praise, or commendation was practiced by the *jawārī* to have access to the dignitaries and men of authority in an endeavour to preserve their positions inside the palaces. In some cases , they used it in self-praise in order to upgrade their positions and enhance the importance of their tribes. Also, some of *al-ḥarā'ir* calibre participated in the discipline of poetry and played a distinctive role in *Madḥ* .For instance, in his book *Sirr al- Surūr* which he compiled the annals of poets,⁶⁹⁹ al-Naysābūrī, the judge of *Ghaznah*, cited Ṣafīyah al-Baghdādīyah, a poet who he described as a knowledgeable female artist. He gave the following verses as an example of her *Madḥ* poetry:

I am the temptation of the world who captivated
Wise hearts
all of which are in love with me
Do you see my wonderful,
Beautiful, face and do you think you will be safe?⁷⁰⁰

Another well known poet, Sulamī al-Baghdādīyah, was also cited by the same historian, who referenced her poem where she *Madḥ* her own beauty and charms:

The eyes of the wild cows are but sacrifice for my eyes
And the necks of the deer are ransom for my neck
I make myself up
with necklaces or rather
I make up for necklaces with necklaces
If I were, in some country, a neighbour to Thamūd
Then Thamūd would not have been exposed to suffering.⁷⁰¹

As the historian Suyūṭī recorded, Ibn al-Ḥaṣīn Sulamī was a contemporary of Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160).⁷⁰² When the caliph heard of these

⁶⁹⁸ Al-Dumyāṭī, *Al-mustafād min dayl tāriḥ Baġdād*, p.445. The authoer transaltion:

انا فتنه الدنيا التي فتننت حجا كل القلوب فكلها في مغرم

اتري محياي البديع جماله وتظن يا هذا بانك تسلم

⁶⁹⁹ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol 2, p. 240.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.vol.2, p.332 & Iṣbahānī: *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol 2, p. 413.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid & al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, p. 2098. The authoer transaltion:

عيون مها الصريم فداء عيني وأجساد الظبا فداء جيدي

ازين بالعقود وان تحري لازين للعقود من العقود

ولو جاورت في بلد ثمود لما نزل العذاب على ثمود

verses, he said: 'Does she look as she described herself'? They said, 'even better'. The caliph asked: 'Is she a decent woman'? They answered him, 'She is the most decent and virtuous of people'. The caliph sent her a considerable amount of money to help maintain her beauty and the splendour of her culture for years to come.⁷⁰³

Also, Shamsah al-Mawsilīyah, one of the scholars of Baghdad during the Saljūq Era *Madh* her own qualities (in third person) as follows:

She swings proudly from side to side in her yellow dress
while her sweet-smelling fragrance of saffron
camphor,
Ambergris and Sandalwood embraces the place
like spice. Seedlings in meadows
or a rose facing the sun or a picture
in a frame thought her physique erect and slender
and her rounded buttocks slow her down.⁷⁰⁴

Zumurrud *Khātūn*, mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir (reg.575-622/1180-1225) and wife of Caliph al-Mustaḍī (reg.566-576/1170-1180), whose political significance was discussed and proven in Chapter Tow, also made note-worthy contributions to poetry.⁷⁰⁵ In her poems she commended and *Madh* the Caliphs and Army Commanders. In the following verses she *Madh* the personal qualities of her son Caliph al-Nāṣir :

Oh, son of Imam al-Mustaḍī
Oh, he whose generosity has towered
above the generosity of the rain clouds.⁷⁰⁶

In the same way that Zumurrud *Khātūn Madh* her son, 'Ātikah al-Makhzūmīyah commended 'Adud al-Dawla in Baghdad on the first day of *Eid al-fiṭr* of the year 367/977⁷⁰⁷, when she said:

What a difference between a disposer and one who flees away
How splendid to find one who can curb my ill-fated destiny
To make it drink of the same cup as I had.
I used to keep awake night after night

⁷⁰² N, Suyūṭī, *uzhat al-julasā*, p.52.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ The poet here is praising herself as she describes her beauty and her outstanding physique as well as her clothes and perfumes. See Suyūṭī, *uzhat al-julasā*, p.53 & al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, p. 2212.

⁷⁰⁵ Sibṭī ibn al-Jawz, *M ir'āt al-zamān*, pp.513-514.

⁷⁰⁶ Iṣbahānī: *Kharīdat al-qaṣr*, vol.2, p.410. The author's translation

نادي الندى عبق بطيب ثنائه متبسم الانوار من انوائه
يا ابن الامام المستنصى ومن سما كرما على كرم الغمام ومائه

⁷⁰⁷ Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p.65.

Until, I saw you. Oh, you are the new moon of my life.⁷⁰⁸

Al-Tanūkhī reported that ‘Ātikah along with ‘Ābidah al-Jihanīyah (another poet) attended the formal festivals of the state and delivered their poems. He further said that the two female poets used to attend and recite their poems in the *majālīs* of ‘Adud al-Dawla, during the year 376/978.⁷⁰⁹

3.3.5 Al-Hijā Poetry

Al-Jāhīz once said, “A woman can love for forty years without showing her love, but when she hates for one day, all her hatred is manifested in her face and words”.⁷¹⁰ The role of women in culture expanded to include their contribution to the advancement of *al-Hijā* (satiric or defamatory poetry). Women used this type of poetry to retaliate against those who attacked them whether by words or deeds. To that end, Caswell said:

The statements constituting the *Hijā* may be out of touch with reality, but they fulfil a purpose as invective, ascribing to the satirised or defamed person stupidity, cowardice, injustice and immorality and thereby acting as a balm to soothe the feeling of anxiety, frustration, anger, fear and of rage of those on the same side as the speaker.⁷¹¹

In the first Abbasid era for example, Umaymah, a woman who hated and despised her husband, composed the following *al-Hijā* verses against him:

I wish I had been bitten by a serpent whose poison inflicted damage on
the day I was named his wife.
Oh God, if he was sent to heaven
Please, my Lord, send Umaymah to hell.⁷¹²

As such, it can be deduced that during that time, women used their *al-Hijā* poems to express their anger and dislike. This was also the case later in the Būyid and Saljūq eras. An example of this, was ‘Ābidah Mohammad al-Jihanīyah, who

⁷⁰⁸ Kaḥḥālah, *A 'lām al-nisā*, vol. 3, p.210.

⁷⁰⁹ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.167.

⁷¹⁰ Al-Jāhīz, *al-Maḥāsīn wa-al-aḍḍād*, (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1975), p.179.

⁷¹¹ Ibid. p.107.

⁷¹² Uthmān, *Shi'r al-mar'ah fī al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, p.135. The author's translation

"ليتنى يوم قالوا أنت زوجته أصابني دونيو بسمه ضاري
يارب إن كان فى الجنات مدخله فأجعل أميمة رب الناس النار

attended the *majālīs* of ‘Adud al-Dawla as mentioned earlier. She recited her poems and was described by the historian Ibn Najjār as an eloquent, cultured female poet.⁷¹³ Furthermore, al-Tanūkhī said that he attended the *majālīs* of ‘Adud al-Dawla, during *Eid al-fiṭr* where the poets were reciting congratulatory poems for the Caliph when ‘Ābidah arrived at the venue and satirized Abū Ja‘far al-Karkhī:

al-Karkhī questioned me, at the advent to the *Nayrūz*⁷¹⁴
 With a mocking smile on his face
 He said, ‘what boons no body else possesses
 Would you confer on our Sultan?
 I replied, all the boons
 but my advice is rather poor and weak
 So I commend you to him, so when he kindles his fire
 You will become his *Duwbārakah*.^{715, 716}

During the periods under discussion, women wrote within the constraints of the patriarchal system. Therefore, as Mernissi⁷¹⁷ suggests, the reason why it is difficult to find sources that reveal women’s literary talents might be attributed to men dominating the field at the time. However, it is not difficult to see that women’s literature stems from a different viewpoint to men’s since women’s experience is different and the difference produced a new, personal line of poetry, which expressed their feelings. Furthermore, through it they were able to express their view on the issues that they experienced in society. It is clear that there were limitations to women’s writing during this period especially when focus on poetic achievements of women during the Būyid and the Saljūq eras to those of the first Abbasid period.

As seen above, women were culturally active but it is worth noting that sources on the first Abbasid period on women’s poetry were richer than those of the following eras. The connection between women as historical subject and the representation of women produced in poetry is not related to identity. Hence the research argues

⁷¹³ Suyūṭī, *Nuzhat al-julasā*, p.64. Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol.3, p.198. al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, p.2312.

⁷¹⁴ *Nayrūz*: The beginning of the Persian New solar year which always coincides with the advent of Spring.

⁷¹⁵ *Duwbārakah*: defined by al-Tannoukhi as a Persian word designating a name of a game or a puzzle for children which the people of Baghdad used to play on their roofs during the night *Nayrūz*.

⁷¹⁶ Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol.3, p.198. The author translation

شاروني الكرضي لما دنا النبروز والسن له ضاحكة
 فقال : ما تهده لسلطاننا من خير ما الكف له مالكة ؟
 فقلت له : كل الهدايا سوي مشورتني ضائعته هالكة

⁷¹⁷Mernissi, *Women in Muslim History*, pp 338 – 355

that their roles in poetry during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods, is best evaluated by examining Kristeva's⁷¹⁸ theory regarding language in *Revolution in poetic language*,⁷¹⁹ which focuses on the semiotic and the symbolic. Kristeva⁷²⁰ sees this concept as part of the dynamics of the 'signifying process' and by using her concept it can be seen that women expressed themselves through 'feminine' language. Through this one can gauge how their signifying practices structured their experiences. Kristeva⁷²¹ argues that the semiotic phase could be recovered in poetry and prose, but on the other hand she proves that the symbolic is a system of language. For example, in Shuhdah al-Dīnawarīyah's poem mentioned above⁷²², shows that Shuhda's style in this poem is in no sense gendered. Although, one might assume that the symbolism in the poem refers to the man she loves. By employing Kristeva's⁷²³ concept, what is actually deduced is that the poem has a religious dimension. Similarly, although there is no sense of the speaker's gender, when Taqīyah al-Şūrī whispered her love in the poem there is a sense of submission. According to Kristeva's⁷²⁴ theory women shape their subjectivity and experience through their signifying practices and in Taqīyah's case the speaker brings her own love energy which infuses meaning into language, which she used semiotically through language that is more emotive than logical.

Raman Selden argues, "when we read poems written out of a women's experience, we find it difficult to separate out a specifically female style of writing".⁷²⁵ Indeed, through this thesis' exploration of women's contribution to poetry of the time, it might be fair to say that the idea that their language is specifically 'feminine' is perhaps a mirage; and it is not necessary to focus on women's language as Kristeva⁷²⁶ argues. Hence it is imperative to discuss the relation between women as historical subject and women's role in representations of poetry during the Būyid and the Saljūq periods; and equally important, the extent to which women's role in

⁷¹⁸ J. Kristeva, *The Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.88

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² See pag 243 of this Chapter.

⁷²³ Kristeva, *The Revolution in Poetic Language*, p.88

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

⁷²⁵ R. Selden, *Practicing theory and reading literature*, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p.148.

⁷²⁶ Kristeva, *The Revolution in Poetic Language*, p.88

this field has been omitted from history. This is particularly significant because as this chapter has thus far illustrated, in spite of their apparent omission, women writers have often accomplished a transformation of styles in order to achieve a different role in poetry, as will be discussed in the following section, music.

3.4 Abbasid Women and Singing

Singing is thought to be one of the most significant cultural areas, as it reflects either positively or negatively on the culture and civilization of any community. Singing started to become perceptible in the Muslim Community during the first Islamic Era; but its appearance was relatively weak. As mentioned in this study's introduction, Abbasid Iraq was heavily influenced by neighbouring cultures in various aspects of society. With respect to singing, Abbasids have been influenced by the Persian and Byzantine cultures. In his famous book entitled *Risālat al-Qiyān*, al-Jāhiz said: "For the Persians, singing was an art but for the Byzantines, it was a science".⁷²⁷

Most of the singers in the Islamic Community were of the *Mawālī* (calibre). They were categorized as the non-Arab members of a new emerging class in the community. Many of the 'Qiyān' women became famous and proficient in the area of singing. They were regarded as well versed and proficient in their trade. Indeed, Caswell defined them as "real professional entertainers".⁷²⁸ Al-Iṣfahānī⁷²⁹ also said that the first known professional singer was Ṭuways, a citizen of Medina. He started his trade at the dawn of Islam, when the lute, *al-ūd* (a musical instrument introduced by the Persians to the Arab World) became well known especially in the Hijāz region where it was played for the first time.⁷³⁰

Every community and every civilization has its own music that speaks of its culture and progress. Music and singing constituted the core of the festivals, celebrations and ceremonies held during the Abbasid era. Caliph Maḥdī, was one of the first

⁷²⁷ Al-Jāhiz, *The Qiyān* ed. Jalīl 'Aṭīyah (London: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis books Ltd, 1989), p.158.

⁷²⁸ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.230.

⁷²⁹ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghanī*, vol.3 (Cairo:Dār al-Sha'b,1927), p.27

⁷³⁰ibid.

Abbasid Caliphs with an unwavering devotion and focus on singing. His palace was a locus for variety of singing styles and musical performances. His son, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, inherited his love of singing and music, particularly Persian music. Many singers from the region of Ḥijāz left their areas and moved to Baghdad which was at the time the minaret of culture and the focus of appeal for all trades especially the art of singing.

By then the lot of the professional singers had been so transformed that the princes of the Abbasid house greeted the arrival of new famous singers with all the enthusiasm of besotted fans.⁷³¹

The singer Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī became a celebrity during the time of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, and his son Iṣḥāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, also succeeded as a first class singer during the era of Caliph al-Ma`moun where it became customary for him to sing and perform in the *majālīs* of the Caliphate palaces.⁷³² According to Caswell, there were two types of *majālīs*.⁷³³ That is, there were formal and informal types. Caswell said of them: “the formal *majālīs* would commonly include boon companions *nudamā* (young males), *ghilmān* (slaves), *khuddām* (servants) and *khisyān* (eunuchs), as well as *jawārī*”.⁷³⁴ In the non-formal casual *majālīs*, all the above categories would also be included with the exception of the patrons who only attended the formal *majālīs*.⁷³⁵

Generally, all the attendees of such *majālīs* were cultured and well-educated personalities, while the *jawārī* and *Qiyān* occupied the centre of the *majālīs* and played the main roles in the show such as singing, playing of the different types of musical instruments and drums. Normally, they were distinguished by strong and pleasant voices as a result of years of training at the hands of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī.⁷³⁶ Therefore, the art of singing, as well as the role of the professional female singers and performers became a commonly accepted discipline and trade during the Abbasid Era. Caswell explained this by asserting that “There was by

⁷³¹ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.235.

⁷³² Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghanī*, vol.3 p.29

⁷³³ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.236.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid.

⁷³⁶ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghanī*, vol.6, p.231.

now a new, permissive society that regarded music and singing with less caution and suspicion".⁷³⁷

Given the above, the significant contribution of women in the art of singing and music cannot be denied since the *jawārit* and *Qiyān* were the focus of attention in the *majālīs* and had a tremendous influence in the general cultural life of the community. The *jawārit*, *Qiyān*, and *al-imā'* in particular must not be merely viewed and categorized as *jawārit* for men as suggested by some history books and articles. Leila Ahmad's argument, that women, during the Abbasid era were absent in many aspects of life and were, just controlled by men whether they were *jawārit* or free-born, must be critically examined, particularly in light of the information discussed in this thesis.

Modern researchers sharing Ahmad's views⁷³⁸ not only trivialize the contribution of women in singing, but arguably also belittle the role of singing. This can be detrimental to attempts of understanding or studying women, specially since music is considered to be one of the integral components of culture which investigators rely upon in order to grasp more details about the culture and civilization of any community. Singing, like poetry, is a path through which a social, cultural or even an economical event or condition of a certain community can be expressed, especially with respect to the historical period covered by this study.

Moreover, this section discussed the role of women in order to reveal their contribution to singing, during the Būyid and Saljūq dynasties of the Abbasid Era. It will focus especially on the case of the *jawārit*, who were highly cultured and proficient in delivering the most refined types of instrumental music. Regrettably, the role of women in singing, particularly during the Būyid and Saljūq epochs of the Abbasid Caliphate, was largely neglected by modern researchers. However, some studies relating to the first Abbasid Era, were carried out, such as *Kitāb al-Aghānī* by al-Iṣfahānī in which a considerably large number of female singers of the first Abbasid era were mentioned. Also, the book of *al-Imā' al-shawā'ir* covered a

⁷³⁷ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.238.

⁷³⁸ Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.85.

significant number of poetesses and female singers. At this point, worthy of citing is a very important subject discussed by Caswell in his book, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*. He argues that most of the female singers were originally poetesses or singers who memorized many poems and verses.⁷³⁹ However, Caswell said that the book of *al-Imā' al-shawā'ir*, by al-Ṣfahānī, presented the female singers and the poetesses only in one form without drawing any differentiation between the categories. Caswell's exact words were:

al-Imā' al-shawā'ir is a compilation of anecdotes relating to thirty three *Jāriyah* and spread over thirty one chapters. But even within that small work the demarcation between poet and singer is blurred.⁷⁴⁰

During this era, only a small number of professional singers' names in Baghdad and elsewhere were made available. This may be attributed to political reasons that were the result of the unstable atmosphere suffered by the Abbasid Caliphate during the epoch of military chaos. But the scarcity of information might have been the direct outcome of the military disturbances that took place within the Būyids' family or, at a later stage, between the Saljūqs' family members. However, in spite of the overall chaos, singing and music found a way, especially during the Būyid era after the military chaos and instability of the Abbasid Caliphate. Singing and music also managed to survive the stringent measures taken to curb them during the reign of Caliph al-Mutawakkil when the Ḥanbalī school creed was in its prime.⁷⁴¹

By the advent of the Būyid era, freedom of scientific and philosophical researches was restored to normal, giving rise to a new group of philosophers and theoretical musicians, known as '*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*' who worked diligently on the improvement of music. As such, music and singing were not only performed inside the caliph's courts but spread to mark their existence at the palaces of the Būyid *Amīrs* as well. The regime of the Būyid *Amīr* 'Adud al-Dawla was characterized by the spread of

⁷³⁹ Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad*, p.213.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.p.241.

⁷⁴¹ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghanī*, vol.6, p.231.

music since he, and many other Būyid *Amīrs* were great music and singing enthusiasts.⁷⁴²

Once the rule of the Būyids, along with the stability they had achieved for the Abbasid Caliphate was over, the Saljūq dynasty captured the scene by extending more protection and support to culture and the arts to a degree that even surpassed that of the Abbasid Caliphs themselves. For instance, while his *Wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk was building the al-Niẓāmīyah School in Baghdad and Nīsābūr, Sultan Malikshāh was overly concerned about the musicians and their show business. Similarly, Sultan Sanjar the last of the great Saljūq sultans, and many other sultans of the Saljūq dynasty, paid particular attention to music and took many of those involved in music and singing as their companions, such as Abā al-Ḥakam al-Bāhilī, ‘Umar al-Khayyām and Kamāl al-Zamān.⁷⁴³ Nevertheless, the role of women with respect to the art of singing during the Būyid and Saljūq eras, seems to have barely existed due to the lack of sources and information about the female singers of the period. This lack of sources might be the result of the military struggles that shattered the Caliphate as a consequence of the duel over power between the Būyid and the Saljūq dynasties. Alternatively, it may be attributed to the researchers and historians’ lack of interest or neglect in documenting the role of women in the area of music and singing during the era. However, in examining the sources and references for evidence of the role and contribution of women in singing during the period, this research argues that the role of women in this field has been omitted and therefore, trivialized.

For instance, Hind, a *Qiyāna* (*pl. Qiyān*) of Muḥammad b. Muslimah al-Shāṭibī, was known for her proficiency as a musical performer, a singer and an expert in playing the lute. Nuzha al-Wahhābīyah was also a distinguished singer during the Saljūq era. Famous for her singing of high quality, Ḍabyah endeavoured to advance the cause of singing, by taking on the task of training many *jawārī* to master the secrets of the trade according to al-Iṣfahānī’s book.⁷⁴⁴ Another female singer, of

⁷⁴² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.7, p.83.

⁷⁴³ Ibn Miskawayh (421/1030), *Tajārib al-umam*, ed.H F Amedroz, vol.2, (Baghdad : Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1963), p.352.

⁷⁴⁴ Kaḥḥālāh, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol 3, p.372.

the Saljūq era, was Tamrīyah al-'Umarīyah who was renowned for her melodious voice and musical performance.⁷⁴⁵

Another highly acclaimed female singer was Ka'b, a *Jāriyah* of Abī 'Ukl al-Muqīn, who was regarded as one of the most recognized female singers of the Abbasid Caliphate.⁷⁴⁶ Despite her status, not enough information about her was available for historians to determine whether she emerged at the end of the Būyid era or during the Saljūq dynasty. Nevertheless, it has been noted that she attended the most remarkable *majālīs* of singing where she became a celebrity and recognized as the best in the trade compared to her rivals during the era.⁷⁴⁷ As for Mulaḥ al-'aṭārah, she was one of the female singers of the Abbasid Era and the most entertaining of singers.⁷⁴⁸

Given the above, it is clear that the information gained about women and music was sparse during that era; a fact which tempted historians to omit the role of women in singing and musical performance. This may have provided a justifiable excuse for some writers, especially those involved in discussing women's roles and their contribution to the different aspects of life to condemn women in the Abbasid Era, perhaps even blame it on the 'Islamic Code'.

Indeed, although access to a considerable amount of literature about the role of women in singing and musical performance during the First Abbasid era is easy for researchers, the poor coverage of the issue of women contributors during the period allows researchers who defined them as simply slave girls and *jawāri* revolving around the world of men, to condemn and trivialize their efforts. Moreover, these researchers have ignored the fact that the political circumstances could have played a major part in depriving women from participating in community activities during a certain frame of time. An example of this was the sharp opposition against music and singing during the reign of Caliph al-Mutwakkil at the time when the Ḥanbalī school creed was dominant.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.p.220.

⁷⁴⁶ Kaḥḥālah, *A'lām al-nisā*, vol 2,p.244

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.p.74.

The Būyid and Saljūq eras during the fifth and sixth Hijrī centuries, introduced some stability and serenity to the political and military scenes. Singing and music flourished as a result of being influenced by, and in harmony with, the Būyid and Saljūq perceptions of these arts. However, the lack of sources covering this period is attributed to the fact that authors and historians were generally disinclined to take an interest in Iraq and Baghdad. Their intentions had (at the time) been diverted to other emerging centres of culture and music such as Andalusia (Spain) where ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ja`far, one of the greatest musicians of his time,⁷⁴⁹ became prominent and renowned. Also, Abū al-Ḥasa al-ḥāsib excelled in this discipline and became a master in the science of music as did Wallādah bint al-Mustakfī (reg. 1024-1027/1615-1617), who was one of the famous women in her generation and a well known poetess, scholar and a music enthusiast. She had her own *majālis* in Cordova⁷⁵⁰, which embraced poets and singers.⁷⁵¹ Often, she was the subject of comparison to ‘Alīyah, the sister of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. One may argue that the prominence of such great personalities of poets, singers and musicians in Andalusia, made the writers and historians of the era turn their focus towards the new emerging arena. In one way or another, all these factors contributed to the omission and trivialization of singing and musical performance in Baghdad at that time.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have found that women of all classes seized opportunities to contribute to society. Similarly, it has been argued that not only have they been very powerful in the political history of their time, they also excelled in the fields of religion, education, and art. Indeed, one cannot deny or rule out the role of women in the literary, scientific and religious life during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. It is evident that women have played a tremendous role in the various intellectual and scientific aspects that were in line with the culture of their era.

⁷⁴⁹ Kaḥḥālah, *A’lām al-nisā*, vol 2, p.304

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

In spite of their significant role and undeniable work in the fields discussed, there is an obvious trivialization by some researchers of the role and achievements of women. It was seen, that while some authors, predominantly travellers and *qāṣṣiyīn* wrote about women and their contributions to society in the context of *akhbar al-Nisa*, the magnitude of such roles was not adequately assessed or addressed. Furthermore, as the historical researcher Jarjīs al-maqāmī points out, there is no trace of the existence of books similar to those of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī,⁷⁵² since most of such books, for example, by authors such as al-Maghribī and Musibḥī in the orient and Yaḥyá Khadīj in Morocco, were lost over the course of history. This may have been the justification for many writers and researchers involved in the study of the role of Muslim women to trivialize their roles in this era instead of investigating the issue of the lack of resources on women's history. To that end, this study highlights the vitality of revisiting and examining women, particularly in history, through various lenses in order to gain a more comprehensive and complete understanding of their roles and contribution to society.

Using the investigative approach applied in the thesis so far, the following chapter will examine how women utilised the positions they managed to establish through the previously discussed roles they played. It will be argued that these positions facilitated their endeavours towards reconstructing Abbasid society. This will be explained by exploring how women employed their financial standing to develop the infrastructure of their society during the Būyid and Saljūq periods.

⁷⁵² Al-Iṣfahānī: *Kharīdat al-qaṣr wa-jarīdat al-aṣr*, vol .4, p.303.

4

Reconstructing Society: Abbasid Women - Economy, Finance and Property

The research thus far has attempted unearthing the true presence of women within the Abbasid period, particularly during the Būyid and Saljūq eras. Understanding the full scope of their influence will make a significant contribution to the low image of Muslim women, not only in the minds of others but also in their own view. As previously mentioned, some writers see the scarcity of information on their roles as an indication of the oppression of women and their exclusion from society. By highlighting the roles and status of women in the Abbasid period, this research challenges such views. The previous chapters explored and showed that women of the era established themselves and their stance within society, politically as well as religiously and socially. It has been emphasised that these positions were not limited to women of a particular class and that they were evident in the various categories of women that this thesis studies. To expand on this, Chapter Four employs the theories discussed in the theoretical framework to explore how these women used their established positions and capacities within the Caliphate towards reconstructing Abbasid society. To that end, it will examine their financial standing as well as their contributions to developing their society's infrastructure.

This chapter begins by looking at women's financial status during the Abbasid period. The findings, as will be seen, suggest that contrary to theories such as Ahmad's, Islamic law provided much freedom for women regarding the management and disposal of their personal property and capital. Indeed, contrary to common practice in some Muslim countries today, Islamic law gave women unprecedented full security of their property, that is, it was completely separate to that of the man. To that end, the chapter questions why most modern research neglected women's financial activities, much in the same way as their political activities and achievements.

Before Islam, as far as their property and capital were concerned, women had to succumb to the will of a male guardian, whether a father, husband, brother or a generally accepted guardian.⁷⁵³ Moreover, during the early history of the Islamic civilization, women were treated as legally incompetent persons.⁷⁵⁴ Certain scholars⁷⁵⁵ studying Oriental subjects agree with that understanding and insist that since the dawn of the Abbasid era, women were not deemed capable of acting independently in various aspects of their lives without consulting their guardians. These guardians, according to the scholars⁷⁵⁶, believed themselves to be the rightful⁷⁵⁷ owners of women's properties, and as such had the authority to dispose of matters without conferring with the actual owners. This thesis argues the opposite: such ideas were only true from the theoretical and legislative point of view, since some women did prove to be both competent and independent in these matters.

It is important to note that this is contrary to attitudes during the period of the Prophet Mohammad, and the *al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn* up until the decline of the Umayyad era when women enjoyed a wide range of freedom in the above-mentioned spheres. For example, Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, the first wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, was a female merchant in Mecca and a competent businesswoman.⁷⁵⁸ She practiced her trade and devoted all her energy to the development of her business, since she had outlived her male relatives. She was, and still is, an excellent example of the Muslim woman who had a role in the economy during the prophet's time. This could be attributed to the old Arab Bedouin traditions, and the early Muslims' endeavour to administer the regulations

⁷⁵³ H.Moghissi, *Women and Islam: Social Condition, Obstacles and Prospects*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.152.

⁷⁵⁴ Competence is a juristic and lawful term related to the extent a person is responsible for his actions and to the extent he/she is accountable the most important pillars of competence are: the age of maturity, discretion and sanity. Therefore, the insane and the minor (until he reaches the age of maturity) are deprived of their capacity as legally competent. I. Abū al-Dam(d.642/1244), *Kitāb adab al-qaḍā'*, vol.2, (Damascus: Majma' al-Lughah al-'Arabīyah , 1975), p. 226. Also see N. Keddīe, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present*, (New Jersey: Princeton U niversity Press, 2007), p.18.

⁷⁵⁵ See Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.79 D.Morris, *al-nuzum al-Islāmīyah*, Trans, S.al-Shammā, (Beirut: Dār al-Nashr li-al-Jāmi'iyyīn, 1961), P.174 Also see A.Hamda , *Muslim Women Speak: A Tapestry of Lives and Dreams*, (Canda: Marquis Book Printing inc, 2009), p.14

⁷⁵⁶ .Moghissi, *Women and Islam: Social Condition*, p.152

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid

⁷⁵⁸ M.Ibn Sa'd, *kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr li-Ibn Sa'd* , vol.10, p.15. Also see M.Haykal, *The Life of Muḥammad*, (United state of America: American trust press, 1975), pp.72 - 73

of Islamic law correctly. The law, as mentioned above, allowed women to gain a sound financial independence that was not controlled by men. Scholars, who hold the opinion that Muslim women were generally treated as incompetent, concluded that by the advent of the Abbasid era, women's status in the community had deteriorated markedly. They link this to the idea that women were not allowed to leave their houses, and were forced to wear the *Hijāb* (the veil). However, this chapter argues that this is not so.⁷⁵⁹

The following section analyses the alleged decline of women's status during the Abbasid era; it will attempt to examine the grounds on which Abbasid women have been branded as legally incompetent. If the thesis' findings thus far offer any indication, it is fair to hypothesize that in this regard too, women enjoyed the independence and security of property separate from men. Moreover, it found that their ability to manage their own personal properties and capital was significantly underestimated by modern researches.

4.1 Women's Legal Competence

Within the caliphate court it was obvious that women of power possessed abilities and determination to manage their own financial affairs independently in spite of the fact that it was one of the Caliphate's core tasks to manage its capital and real estates. Zubaydah, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife, was the first women to be recorded in the historical narratives as being self reliant since she managed her own capital and estates, which were set apart from the Caliphate's financial affairs.⁷⁶⁰ She established an independent *Dīwān* and appointed a number of *clerks* to run the *Dīwān's* finances under her direct supervision.⁷⁶¹ This led to the creation of a new post *Kātib al-sayyidah's* (Clerk) which was to administer, specifically, the land estates and feudal tenure of the women of the Palace. This was in addition to the collection of their revenues in accordance with the

⁷⁵⁹ See Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p.79.

⁷⁶⁰ M.al-Jahshīyārī (d.331/942), *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa al-kuttāb*, ed. Muṣṭafá Saqqā, (Cairo: Muṣṭafá al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1938), p.102.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid.

stipulations set in the warrantee system,⁷⁶² which was also controlled by *Kātib al-sayyidah*. *Kātib al-sayyidah* was directly accountable to the women of the Palace and was given the privilege of leading the *Dīwān*'s clerks who in turn, were held accountable to him.⁷⁶³

During the Būyid age the job of *Kātib al-sayyidah*, was of significant importance. In fact, the position of clerk to the 'umm al-Amīr (prince's mother) was regarded as one of the most important position in the State, and it was considered to pave the way to a *Wazīr*'s job.⁷⁶⁴ Such was the case of al-Ḥasan ibn Barmūyah, who was a successor to Alī b. Ahmad al-'Umānī (d.375/985), *Kātib al-sayyidah* to Ṣamṣām al-Dawla's mother. Barmūyah remained in office until he was promoted as *Wazīr* in 375/985 He was succeeded by Abū al-Hassan Ali b. Ṭāhir as a writer for Ṣamṣām al-Dawla's mother.⁷⁶⁵

The position as *Kātib al-sayyidah* for the Caliph's Mothers and 'ummahāt awlād was different. It was not as important as that of the mothers of the Būyid *Amīrs*. One might attribute that to Mu'izz al-Dawla's decree which confiscated all the feudal and real estates of the Caliphate and substituted them with a monthly salary in lieu of the large revenues generated by these estates.⁷⁶⁶ However, this was not the case for long. Matters changed when Caliph al-Ṭā'ī' (reg.363-381/974-991) came into possession of enormous financial privileges and proceeds as a result of his marriage to the daughter of Bakhtiyār and later the daughter of 'Aḍud al-Dawla. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Caliph al-Qādir (reg.381-422/991-1031) was in conflict with one of his sisters over the ownership of a landed estate⁷⁶⁷ from

⁷⁶² The warranty system represents the oldest version of the later Commitment System in which the feudal estates were rented by auction for the highest annual rent gave by the bidder. He who won the auction of renting the landed estate was called the Guarantor, and in turn, the city Guarantor re-rented the lands and gardens to the village Guarantor who again re-rented the same to other Guarantors and so forth. Undoubtedly, that system and the way it was adjusted had inflicted severe damage to both the Guarantors and the Tenants and it was regarded as one of the causes that led to the decline of the economical life in Iraq at the time. For more details on the warranty system, see Ibn Miskawayh, *Kitāb Tajārib al-umam*, vol.2 ,p.108. Also see Ibn al-Jawzī ,*al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.323.

⁷⁶³ Al-Jahshīyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa al-kuttāb*, p.265.

⁷⁶⁴ Abū Shujā' (d.488/1095), *Dhayl kitāb Tajārib al-umam*,p.102.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.p.104.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.7, p.147. Al-Azdī(d.613/1216) , *Akhhār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'ah*,p. 254. Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-Kāmil fī al-tārikh*, vol.9, p. 66. A.al-Arbīlī(d.717/1317), *khulāṣat al-Dhahab al-masbūk mukhtaṣar min Siyar al-mulūk*,(Beirut:Maṭba'at al-Qadīs Jāwiriyyūs lil-Rūm al-Urthūdhuk,1885), p.192.

which one may understand the feudal tenures and landed estates had once again come into the possession of the Caliphate.

As for the Saljūq era, sources provide detailed information about *Kātib al-sayyidah* as they illustrate how these clerks gained a remarkable amount of influence that mirrored the influence of their masters' (the Ladies of the Caliphate Court). For example, al-Jihah al-Qā'mya, 'umm walad of Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1030-1074), had a clerk named Muḥammad al-Wakīl⁷⁶⁸ who was one of her aides during al-Basāsiri's intrigue.⁷⁶⁹ Also, Caliph al-Muqtadī's (reg.467-467/1075-1075), mother Arjwān, had a Turkish *Mamlūk* named Qumāz as her clerk who she eventually owned and was known as Qumāz al-Arjwānī.⁷⁷⁰ In the same way, the clerk of Khadījah *Khātūn*, wife of Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1030-1074), was a Jew named Abū Ali Ibn Faḍlān.⁷⁷¹ He was detested by the people of Baghdad probably due to his tyrannical methods when collecting her feudal proceeds.

The Saljūq reign, brought yet another change to the position, as the title was changed from 'the clerk' (*Kātib al-sayyidah*) to a more dignified description, The *Wazīr of Khātūn* (Minister of the *Khātūn*). This was following the marriage of the Sultan Malikshāh's daughter to Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075).⁷⁷² The Sultan Malikshāh decreed that a completely equipped *Dīwān* be established for the management of the feudal estates of his daughter the *Khātūn*, as wife of the Caliph. He further stipulated that it be presided over by a *Wazīr* who was to be called, the *Wazīr of the Khātūn*.⁷⁷³ The first man to take over the Ministry of the Mah Malik *Khātūn*, the daughter of Sultan Malikshāh was a Christian called al-Ḥusayn ibn Hukkār who was later given the name Mu'izz al-Malik⁷⁷⁴ as decreed by the *Khātūn*. As for Iṣmat *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Mustazhīr's wife, her ministry was led by Abū Alī Ibn Ṣadaqah, who took advantage of the post to become the *Wazīr*

⁷⁶⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p. 216.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.p.72.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol.11,p. 106.

⁷⁷¹ Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 171.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

⁷⁷³ M.Sulaymān, *Akhbār faṭārikat kursī al-Mashriq*, ed. Henricus Gismondi, (Bagdad, Maktabat al-Muthanna, 1964), p.133.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.p.134.

for Caliph al-Mustarshid (reg.512-529/1118-1135).⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, Fāṭimah *Khātūn*, the wife of Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160), appointed ‘Aljah ibn Muḥammad ibn Nasir al-Iṣbahānī as head of her ministry in the year 513/1119. The latter remained in office until his death in 534/1139.⁷⁷⁶ He was succeeded by al-Murtaḍá ibn Muḥammad al-‘Alawī al-Iṣfahānī who kept his post until Fāṭimah *Khātūn*’s death in 542/1147.⁷⁷⁷

Before long the name of the post was changed again from, *Wazīr* of ‘the *Khātūn*’s’ to ‘the Agent (or trustee) of the *Khātūn*’.⁷⁷⁸ There is no doubt however, that the change in the name of this post was attributed primarily to the Abbasid Caliphs’ resentment against the Saljūq influence manifested in the upgrading of the post of *Kātib al-sayyidah*, the clerk, to a *Wazīr* position. It also illustrates the Abbasid Caliphate’s desire to eliminate the Saljūq authority over the Caliphate. However, contemporary sources lack sufficient information relating to this abrupt change and the date that it took place. An educated deduction might link this change to the period between the last days of Caliph al-Muqtafī (reg.530-555/1136-1160) to the early days of Caliph al-Mustanjid’s reign (reg.555-566/1160-1170). The last *Khātūn*’s *Wazīr*, according to resources, was mentioned by al-Murtaḍá ibn Muḥammad al-‘Alawī al-Iṣfahānī, who remained in office until Fāṭimah *Khātūn*’s death. The first time the new title, Agent (Trustee) of the *Khātūn*, emerged (in the resources) was when Bātkun the Roman was designated as the Agent of ‘Ā’ishah *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Mustanjid’s daughter, better known in history books as *al-Fayrūzjyah* (d.640/1242).⁷⁷⁹

Though it was clear that the *Kātib al-sayyidah* or *al-Fayrūzjyah* Agent had been stripped of the work and title, as a position, the *Kātib al-sayyidah* maintained its significant importance. It continued to be one of the primary means for the jobholder to rise to a *Wazīr* position. Such was the case of ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Younes. He was an Agent for Zumurrud *Khātūn*, ‘*umm walad*’ of Caliph al-

⁷⁷⁵ Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.5, p. 205.

⁷⁷⁶ Al-Ṣafadī (d.674/1275), *al-Wafī bi-al-wafayāt*, vol.5, p. 107.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (d.723/1323), *Talkhiṣ Majma’ al-ādāb*, vol.1, p.226.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibn al-Sā’ī, *al-Jāmi’ al-mukhtaṣar*, p.75

⁷⁷⁹ Ibn al-Sā’ī, *al-Jāmi’ al-mukhtaṣar*, p.75. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhiṣ Majma’ al-ādāb fi-mu’jam al-aqāb*, p.181.

Mustaḍī (reg.566-576/1170-1180) and the mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir (reg.575-622/1180-1225) during the period 575/1167 to 582/1194. He had relinquished his job as Zumurrud *Khātūn*'s agent and became a *Wazīr* for her son Caliph al-Nāṣir.⁷⁸⁰ Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Abū al-Sa'ādāt ibn al-nāqid succeeded him as the Agent for Zumurrud *Khātūn*, and remained in office until she died in 599/1202.⁷⁸¹

The appointment of Agents to manage the land estates and feudal tenures was not restricted to the women of the Palace since the rich women of the community were also involved in the practice. Al-Tanūkhī⁷⁸² told the story of a woman from Basra who tilled, sowed and supervised her own lands until her crops were stricken by a hailstorm in 335/946. However, to cover her losses a wealthy gentleman compensated her with 500 dinars.⁷⁸³

There was also a woman called Sīdah, who was the daughter of the renowned merchant Mubarak al-Anmāti (d.418/1028). She was involved in trade and commerce using the inheritance left to her by her deceased father as capital. It was said that her wealth, other than her real estates (fixed assets) exceeded the sum of three hundred thousand dinars in total.⁷⁸⁴ Likewise, Fātīma bint Muḥammad Ibn Ḥadīdah was regarded to be one of the great traders in Baghdad at the close of the sixth Hijrī century/the twelfth Gregorian century. She was involved in commercial business and the purchase of trading caravans.⁷⁸⁵

Perhaps, the soundest proof that women enjoyed full legal competence with regard to managing and controlling their capital and real estates, was manifested in the tradition whereby a widow assumed the guardianship of her children and often handled the apportioning of their deceased father's moneys among them.⁷⁸⁶ Ibn al-Sā'ī⁷⁸⁷ once said that a young boy killed his guardian mother because she refused

⁷⁸⁰ I. al-Baghdādī, *Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*, vol.2, p.169. Abū Shāmah, *Dhayl al-rawḍatayn* p.12. Ibn Rajab, *al-dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah* vol.1, p. 392.

⁷⁸¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi 'al-mukhtaṣar*, p.55. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, p. 392.

⁷⁸² A.al-Tanūkhī, *Kitāb al-Faraj ba'da al-shiddah*, Ver.'Abbūd Shālī, vol.2, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1978), p. 335.

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.8, p.37.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibn al-Dubaythī, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayhi*, p.77.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.39. *Al-Ṣafwah min Ṣifat al-ṣafwah* vol. 2, p.298 - 299.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi 'al-mukhtaṣar*, p.167.

to grant him the deed of ownership of one of the houses left by his dead father. So the boy dashed his mother's head against the ground until she died.⁷⁸⁸ As such, one might argue that since the law allowed a female widow to have the right of guardianship over the family's capital as well as the right to dispose of it on behalf of her children, it recognized legal competence.

This is further substantiated by the fact that many financial confiscations by the authorities were directed against women who were guardians of their under-age children. For example, *Wazīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī confiscated the properties of his rival, Abū Alī al-Tabarī's ⁷⁸⁹ wife who assumed guardianship over his son after his death.⁷⁹⁰ Also, Mu'izz al-Dawla did the same against Tājnī, '*umm walad*', of the *Wazīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī, after his death in the year 352/963. At the time, she had assumed guardianship of his under-age son Abū al-Ghanā'im. The money confiscated from the woman totalled the sum of thirty thousand dinars.⁷⁹¹

There is also proof in some of the terms and phrases to be found in the courts' legal documents such as:

the governor had decreed in favour of the juvenile, who is under protection, guardianship and legal competence of the said governor, a statutory portion that suffices his needs, from his capital, for each month passed to be paid with appropriate courtesy and so the governor grants approval for the juvenile guardian {his mother} to spend from the absent husband's money in order to fulfil that task.⁷⁹²

Such terminology confirms that mothers had the right of guardianship over the absent husband's money or over the capital of an orphaned child. Therefore, once again, the terms contained in such legal documents confirm that it could be argued that the claim of women's legal incompetence is incorrect.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.p.40.

⁷⁹⁰ Al-Hamadhānī, *Takmilat tārikh al-Ṭabarī*,p.398.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.p.399.

⁷⁹² Ibn Abī al-Dam, *adab al-qaḍā'*, vol.2, p.312.

The amount of freedom women enjoyed in managing their financial affairs and the disposal of their capital was manifested in the story of Malikshāh, daughter of ‘Abdullāh, the Turkish, *‘umm walad*’ and wife of Quṭb al-Dīn Qumāz, master of Caliph al-Mustanjid's house, who left a considerable fortune to his wife after his death. Malikshāh assumed guardianship of her sons Muḥammad and Mas‘ūd, but since she misused that fortune she was reduced to abject poverty. Ibn al-Sā‘ī reported the following in her biography: “Malikshāh was found dying in abject poverty in the vicinity of a place called Qarāḥ al-Shahm with no shroud or a straw mat beneath her”⁷⁹³ Ibn al-Sā‘ī said that

he saw her in her prime when she was surrounded by *jawāri* and servants with a house full of gold and silver utensils, precious jewels and top quality dresses, in addition to the considerable amounts of money at her disposal. However, she ended by asking people for subsistence and eventually died in a miserable condition.⁷⁹⁴

Although this story involves some sort of misuse of money, it also signifies the area of freedom given by the community to women in an unrestricted right of disposal of their financial affairs without any form of guardianship or intervention by a man. The report also implies the respect placed on the inviolability of the property and fortune of women by the community. This was similarly confirmed by Ibn al-Jawzī in the following narration:

Once, my grandfather asked for a certain amount of material support for an outer trail front. He was approached by Abū ‘Amr al-Slamī who was carrying a bag containing one thousand dinars and said to my grandfather: let this compensate those who lagged behind. Abū ‘Uthmān was very pleased and so he invoked a blessing upon him. Then Abū ‘Uthmān sat and addressed his audience by saying: Oh, people, I have wished the best for Abū ‘Amr in return for what he did on behalf of the rest of you since he donated a sum of such and such. However, Abū ‘Amr stepped up and said: I gave that donation from mother's money but she does not approve of what I did, therefore, may that donation be returned to me in order to give it back to her.⁷⁹⁵

The community's aspiration to separate the husband's capital and the wife's fortune is manifested in Ibn al-Jawzī's observation that, in several instances, the

⁷⁹³ Ibn al-Sā‘ī, *al-Jāmi ‘al-mukhtaṣar*, p.111

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 111 - 112.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 7, p.84.

driving factor for wives to buy servant *jawārī* from their own moneys was jealousy because a *jāriyah* might be attractive to the husband. This was a wife's right, by way of *milk al-yamīn* (those their right hands possess)⁷⁹⁶, unless the wife, unreservedly, accorded the *jāriyah* to him.⁷⁹⁷ Another indication of the demarcation lines between the husband's capital and his wife's fortune, was that some husbands tried to force their wives to waive the right to their delayed dowry.⁷⁹⁸

Other transactions denoting the legal competence of a person, included the ability to sell, buy, and to take and receive a pledge..According to Ibn al-Jawzī's women wrote deeds of vending and buying in their own names without the need of a man to take care of them or act on their behalf.⁷⁹⁹ Moreover, women had the right to put their fortune in pledge. This was deduced from an incident involving a woman who had pledged her house in 525/1130; but the vendor falsified the deed of pledge into a deed of sale so he was indicted and punished by lashing in front of the community.⁸⁰⁰

Again, the incidents of falsifying the handwriting of women in the deeds of sale and purchase is one more evidence to support the full legal competence of women on the financial level and on their transactions pertaining to real estates and capital. In one such incident, the judge Muḥammad Ibn Ja'far al-'Abbāsī (d.595/1198) was deposed from his office because he falsified a deed of a woman trader called Fatima bint Muḥammad Ibn Ḥudaydah. The falsified deed stipulated that she was considerably in debt to a trader known as al-Ḥusayn Astarābādhī who, in order to prove his claim, bribed the judge to forge the signature of the lady for a sum of fifty dinars.⁸⁰¹ Furthermore, the elder sister of the judge Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Dāmaghānī accused him of forging her handwriting in a deed in which he claimed that his sister was heavily in debt in his favour. She therefore, raised a complaint against him before Caliph al-Mustarshid (reg.512-529/1118-1135). In his defence, he said to

⁷⁹⁶Q 23:6

⁷⁹⁷ Anonymous, *daqā'iq al-ḥīlal*, p.32.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.p.103.

⁷⁹⁹ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.1, p.4.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibn al- Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 21.

⁸⁰¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi āl-mukhtaṣar*, p.10. Also see Ibn al-Dubaythī, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayhi min Tārīkh*, p.77.

the Caliph, 'he inadvertently mistook her name for his younger sister's name. The Caliph then decreed that the name of the elder sister be erased from the deed, as it was obvious that the judge al-Dāmaghānī had forged his sister's handwriting.⁸⁰²

On the contrary, women had a wide range of freedoms that enabled them to control, manage and dispose of their property in different aspects of commercial and financial transactions such as selling, purchasing or pledging of property and real estates. This proves, beyond doubt, that women were independent at least on a financial level. Indeed, some of them preferred to run their businesses independently.

In spite of the above, images of Muslim women of that time and their status, have been shaped in two stereotypical ways: the exotic odalisque of the *ḥarīm*, dedicated to men's pleasure; and/or a creature born for childbearing and household chores inside the home. As far as women's status in commerce and business is concerned, Soha Kader⁸⁰³ takes a critical look at the treatment of the Arab woman which to a large extent can also be applied to Muslim women in general and to their roles in the economic, social, political and ideological history of the Arab states. Kader argues that Arab women contributed in significant ways to family economies through their work in agriculture and the 'informal sector' of the economy. Because their work is unremunerated, however, for the most part it is ignored in labour force census data.⁸⁰⁴ Perhaps this has always been so.

At the beginning of this chapter, the research questioned whether it was correct to say that there has been a routine trivialization of women in records of human achievement during the period under discussion. According to Fatima Mernissi there have been more than seventy books studying women that have been identified in Salah Ed-Din al-Mounajid's article entitled, 'What was Written on the Subject of Women'. Al-Mounajid's book attempts to provide a list of these works, some of which are no longer available due to the destruction of libraries during

⁸⁰² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 9, 206.

⁸⁰³ S.Kader, *The Role of Women in the History of the Arab States*, p. 88.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

foreign invasions. However, many have in fact been printed and many are in manuscript form in Persian, Turkish and Arabic libraries.⁸⁰⁵ Mernissi argues that, “there is empirical evidence to show that the tradition of historicizing women as active, full participants in the making of culture still continues today”.⁸⁰⁶ To that end, this study contends that upon consulting these manuscripts; women’s financial independence among the various other aspects of women’s lives and roles they played in these eras will become increasingly evident.

Following this strategy, the thesis found that during the discussed period, women indeed enjoyed a great deal of financial independence without much interference from men. They assumed the burden of guardianship, selling, purchasing, pledging of property and all the other commercial and trading activities. It is also noticed that there existed clear demarcation lines between the husband's security of property and that of his wife; a matter, which denotes the significant independence women had achieved during the era. The following section will explore other aspects of women’s involvement in society, particularly in terms of occupations and crafts: women will be seen to have participated in medical professions as well various other cultural and scientific fields.

4.2 Women’s Occupations and Crafts

So far this research has found that it was obvious that no restrictions were made on women's activities with respect to the kind of work they practised. Indeed, women were found to have worked side by side with men in some trades and professions that required knowledge and expertise such as the medical profession. It is well known that medicine is one branch of the sciences that Muslims excelled in, as well as guaranteeing special care and concern.⁸⁰⁷ In the period discussed, the study of Medicine was one of the most prolonged and difficult amongst the professions. In addition to studying medical theory, and before becoming

⁸⁰⁵ Ş.al-Munjid, *‘mā ullifa ‘An al-nisā’* (Damascus: Majma’ al-Lughah al-‘Arabīyah,1941),p 216. Since 1941 several of the books that were still in manuscript form have been printed due to the efforts of pro-women scholars such as, Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munjid.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.p.341.

⁸⁰⁷ H.Sa’dī *al-Nisā’ wa-mihnat al-ṭibb fī al-mujtama’āt al-Islāmīyah*, (Cairo: Multaqá al-Mar’ah wa-al-Dhākīrah, 1999),p. 503.

accredited practitioners of Medicine students were required to study the science of Medicine in the *Bīmāristānāt* (hospitals) where they focused on the practical side of Medicine. This was carried out among the patients in the Islamic Hospitals that were equipped with session rooms and specialized medical libraries. It was also compulsory for students of Medicine to constantly practice their skills with an established doctor to guide and facilitate their progress. In most cases, a father acted as the medicine master to his son or daughter as it was customary for entire families to carry on the profession of medicine.⁸⁰⁸

In spite of the scarcity of information on Abbasid women and their practice in the medical profession, this study found that women were working as female doctors and general practitioners in the public *Bīmāristānāt*. In this regard, al-Ṭabarī stated that during the events of the year 300/912, Abū al-Hasan the Oculist at *Bab al-Muḥawwil* said to him:

a woman came to me after she utterly failed to find a doctor who could cure a wound in her shoulder. I said to her that I am just an oculist, but there is a woman here who treats women and cures their wounds; so wait for her. When the female doctor arrived, I referred the woman to her with my recommendation to treat her well. The female doctor treated the lady's wound and gave her an ointment for further treatment.⁸⁰⁹

Women were not only involved in the practice of medicine as a profession, they tended to choose very difficult specializations, such as surgery and they became renowned for their proficiency in the field of their chosen practice.⁸¹⁰

Al-Tanūkhī (d.384/994) also spoke about a dermatologist female living in the town of al-Anbār, close to Baghdad, who was known to cure skin diseases as well as being famous for treating pimples, pustules and other kinds of skin ailments. For this reason she became renowned among the people of Baghdad and was sought after by people from other places, for her cures and treatment.⁸¹¹ However her name was not mentioned, which reminds one of the selective omissions seen with

⁸⁰⁸ H.Sa'dī *al-Nisā' wa-mihnat al-ṭibbī al-mujtama'āt al-Islāmiya*, pp. 503-504.

⁸⁰⁹ M.al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-umam wa-al-mulūk* ver.Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm,vol.10, (Cairo ,Dār al-Ma'ārif,1979), p.100.

⁸¹⁰ H.Sa'dī *al-Nisā' wa-mihnat al-ṭibb fi al-mujtama'āt al-Islāmiyah*,pp. 503-504.

⁸¹¹ Al-Tanūkhī, *jāmi' al-tawārīkh*,vol.2, p.94.

regard to the Būyid jawārī in Chapter Two. Despite these omissions, one cannot merely blame the absence of women in the resources on the historians, since it has been found that they did mention the roles and contribution of women to medical science.

Another example of selective omission, is the woman who was known as *al-Māristānya* (hospital), and whose real name was omitted from the sources. However, she originated from the Arabian tribe of *Qaḥṭān*.⁸¹² Accounts in the biographies of doctors and medicine men did not include her biography since all information relating to her was gathered from her son's biography 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ali ibn Naṣr ibn Ḥamzah (d.599/1202) who was one of the famous doctors of the city of Baghdad ⁸¹³ and best known to the public as Ibn al-Māristānyah (Son of al-Māristānyah).⁸¹⁴ Notwithstanding, this thesis found that *al-Māristānyah mother of Ibn al-Māristānyah* was a genius in the profession of medicine to the extent that she was promoted as a Custodian (chief doctor) at the *al-Tatshī Māristān (al-Tatshī Hospital)* ⁸¹⁵ in Baghdad.⁸¹⁶ This signifies how famous and proficient she was in her field and how committed she was in discharging her responsibilities, to the level that led her to the presidency of a public hospital which was considered, by the standards of the era, to be one of the exalted posts ever occupied by a female doctor. Her son, Ibn al-Māristānyah, inherited his profession of medicine from his mother and he too excelled over his peers because of her high standard of teaching.⁸¹⁷ In this connection, Ibn Abū Uṣaybi'ah said when describing Ibn al-Māristānyah as a professional doctor, 'he was a man of culture and refinement in his medical profession who had been entrusted with the administration of *Māristān al-'Adudī (al-'Adudī Hospital)*.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹² Al-Baghdādī, *Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*, vol.2, p.95.

⁸¹³ I. Uṣaybi'ah (668/1269), *'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, vol.1, (Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1987), p.333.

⁸¹⁴ Ibn Rajab, *Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābilah*, p.442.

⁸¹⁵ *Tatshī Māristān* Hospital: It might have been built by Tāj al-Dawla Tatsh, son of Alb Arslān, as indicated by the name of the founder. However, the contemporary sources lack information that supports this conclusion.

⁸¹⁶ Z. al-Mundhirī (d.656/1258), *al-takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqalah*, ver. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, vol.2, (Beirut: Mu'asasat al-Risālah, 1968), p.429.

⁸¹⁷ Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *'Uyūn al-anbā'*, vol.2, p.333.

⁸¹⁸ This hospital was named on behalf of the 'Aḍud al-Dawla See Ibid.

The profession of medicine co-relates to the profession of midwifery, which was known as *al-Qabbālah* (midwife), a woman who assists at childbirth. The midwife of the time was tasked with treating sterility, caring for pregnant women, and eventually, assisting them through childbirth. Afterwards, she watched over the hygiene and health of the newly born infants. The historian Ibn Khaldūn ⁸¹⁹ summarizes the duties of a midwife as follows: “*al-Qābbalah*, is acquainted with all of these illnesses and diseases and the remedies. Also, she understands all the diseases that the infant is susceptible to during the nursing period up to the weaning of the infant; the midwives are as aware of them as is the proficient doctor”.⁸²⁰ Additionally, in some instances, the midwives were familiar with the diagnosis of intestinal and stomach diseases of both men and women and were able to deal with these complaints in a very skilled and proficient manner. To that end, al-Jāhīz said, “do not disdain or demean much of the treatment you see carried out by the midwives because much of this treatment was passed on to them by the ancient doctors”.⁸²¹ Al-Tanūkhī also said that it was a common practice, at the time that each neighbourhood in Baghdad be provided with a specialist midwife.⁸²²

Also correlated to the medical profession was Pharmacology. Pharmacy was one of the complex professions that required a sound knowledge of the properties of medicinal plants and medicaments. It also requires that the Pharmacist be well aware of the benefits derived from such plants or herbs for all diseases and sicknesses. Despite the complexities, women did not shy away from the field, and asserted themselves through their excellence. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī recollects that when ‘Aḍud al-Dawla was constructing the *Māristān* al-‘Aḍudīy, he appointed dozens of women to work in the hospital as pharmacists.⁸²³ Likewise, Zumurrud *Khātūn*, the mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir, was one of the ladies who was very fond of the science of Pharmacy to the extent that when she died in 599/1202 she left behind in her cabinet a tremendous legacy of medicines, preparations and

⁸¹⁹ *al-‘Ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada’ wa-al-khabar*, vol.1, p. 439.

⁸²⁰ Ibid.

⁸²¹ Al-Jāhīz(d.255/868), *al-Ḥayawān*, ver.‘Abd-as-Salām Hārūn,vol. 4, (Cairo: Muṣṭafá al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī,1966), p.143.

⁸²² Al-Tanūkhī, *jāmi’ al-tawārīkh*, vol.5, p.130.

⁸²³ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī,*Mir’āt al-zamān*,vol. 11, p. 121.

compositions of drugs. After her death, her son the Caliph ordered all these materials to be given away as a public endowment in her name for *Māristān al-'Adudī*, in Baghdad.⁸²⁴

In addition to the medical and scientific fields, Abbasid women were also involved in the business of copying manuscripts, *al-warrāqah* (that is, the copying of books), which is one of the trades strongly connected to the cultural and scientific life of the era. At the beginning, this trade was only limited to copying books. Eventually, it expanded to include all activities related to the papermaking and stationery business, such as the copying, binding, selling and purchasing of related items. Not only that, even the books' vendor was categorized as a stationer or papermaker.⁸²⁵

As mentioned earlier, women took an active part in this trade, which was highly connected to the cultural life of the era. They were very engaged in the manufacturing of *al-Kāghad* (smooth and tender paper)⁸²⁶ and 'Umm al-Faqīh Aḥmad b. Ghālib b. 'Abdullāh al-Warrāq (d.548/1153) was found to be one of the famous manufacturers who produced high quality *Kāghad*. When making her *Kāghad*, she painted it with flour paste until it became very soft and delicate, after which it was smoothed to become shiny and glossy. Therefore, she became famous by the name of al-Ṭallāyah⁸²⁷ and, subsequently, her son was known as Ibn al-Ṭallāyah.⁸²⁸

As for the process or trade of copying, the first category to be involved in this profession were those women who specialized in the copying of the Holy Quran. It was a difficult job that entailed precision, patience, endurance and a thorough

⁸²⁴ Ibid. vol. 8, p.514.

⁸²⁵ S.al-Nāṣirī, *al-Wirāqah wa-al-warrāqūn fī al-ḥaḍārah al-'Arabīyah al-Islāmīyah*, Issue No.4, (Riyadh: Majallat al-Dārah,1989) p.180.

⁸²⁶ *Al-Kāghad*: is a type of smooth and tender paper. The Arabs relocated its industry from China following the conquest of Samarkand in the year 134/751. However, due to the extensive use of *Kāghad* paper by the Muslims, the demand for Egyptian Papyrus was reduced to a minimum. For more details, see al-Tha'ālibī(429/1037), *Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif*,(Leiden: Brill, 1876), p.126. Muḥammad Ṭāhā Ḥājirī, *al-waraq wa-al-warrāqīn fī al-ḥaḍārah al-'Arabīyah al-Islāmīyah*, vol. 12 (Baghdad:Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1965), p.174.

⁸²⁷ A.Ibn al-Dimyāṭī(749/1348), *al-Mustafād Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*, (Beirut : Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiya,1994), p.65.

⁸²⁸ Ibn al-Athīr,*al-Kāmil fī al-tārikh* vol.11, p.190. Ibn Khaldūn *al-'Ibar wa-dīwān*, vol. 3, p.5.

knowledge of the fundamentals of the verses of the Holy Quran, such as: the rhymes of the Quran parts and verses; the positions of prostrations; continuations, pauses and other fundamentals, in addition to the high standard of calligraphy that reflects to the dignity of the Holy Quran. In this connection, Ibn al-Nadīm (d.377/978) narrates that a group of women in Baghdad, contemporaneous to his era, who were involved simultaneously in the professional copying of the Holy Quran, included Thanā', a *Jāriyah* of a man called Ibn Qayyūmā⁸²⁹; also Ghunyah, known as 'umm al-Ḥimārs, who wrote in the same style as al-Sukkarī,⁸³⁰ and Ghaythah, better known by the surname of 'umm al-Haytham.⁸³¹

Moreover, women were engaged in copying other types of books. This work is described as one of the most tedious of professions as it was necessary for the copyist to be widely cultured and cognizant of every science, discipline or field of work..⁸³² This was to avoid any faults or misrepresentation in the terms and jargons of the discipline. Of course, this is in addition to patience and stamina since the copyist was required to sit for prolonged periods to finish the task. One of the renowned copyists in that era was Karīmah bint Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī, better known as Bint b. al-Khāḍbah (d.527/1143), who inherited the profession from her father. Karīmah was regarded as the best in her profession among *wirāqah* of Baghdad and the sources spared no effort in documented her biography. Therefore, it has been confirmed that Karīmah was talented in calligraphy and she executed her profession with her father's skills and proficiency. Al-Baghdādī's outstanding talents were manifested in her execution of the copying of the book *Tārīkh Baghdād*, as well as the authentic Hadith books of Bukhārī wa-Muslim.⁸³³

Women also practiced the copying profession as a useful personal hobby in their own houses. The sources stated that the *faqīh* al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-'Abbās ibn al-ḥasan

⁸²⁹ Mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm(437/1045) as one among a group of women with an added supplement saying 'here are those who wrote the well-proportioned lines and no one else, other than they'. M.Ibn al-Nadīm ,*al-Fihrist*, (Beirut :Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,1996), p.17.

⁸³⁰ Ibid.p.76.

⁸³¹ Ibid.

⁸³² K.Sa'īd, *Mawsū'at al-warrāqah wa-al-warrāqīn fī al-ḥaḍārah al-'Arabīyah al-Islāmiyah*,vol.5 (Beirut:Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī,2011),180.

⁸³³ Al-Ṣafadī ,*al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*,vol. 24, p. 338.

ibn al-Furāt (d.384/994), because of his continuous engagement in the fiqh sessions and lessons, had little time to practice his copying profession. So, his *jāriyah* copied the original text and then compared it with the text that he had written.⁸³⁴ In the same way, the poet Ibn Sukkarah al-Hāshimī's wife was very intent on recording each of her husband's poems. In fact, it could be argued that she is the reason his poetry was delivered to the sources in a very professional manner. al-Tha'ālibī said: "she had brought before the public the unique and best of his anecdotes that lavishly entertain both sight and hearing".⁸³⁵ He also claimed that she was apparently in the habit of writing her husband's poems daily, which illustrates her fervent commitment to her mission.⁸³⁶

Additionally, women worked as librarians, presenters and handlers of books in the education facilities and general libraries. The profession of librarian was defined as one who takes the books out of storage and presents them to the readers or borrowers. Hence, it was necessary for the librarian to keep a register of the borrowers and the locations of the books. The librarian was supposed to record the date and name of the borrower against each book borrowed in order to avoid loss and misplacement.⁸³⁷ Among the women who were engaged in this profession was Tawfīq the black *jāriyah* who was assigned to Dār al-'Ilm in Baghdad as an assistant to the custodian of the house, Abū Manṣūr al-Khāzin (d.418/1027).⁸³⁸

The profession of book vending in the *al-Warrāqīn* Market was yet another field that women were involved in. It required a thorough knowledge of the authors' names and the titles of books, in addition to the price of each individual book. In this regard, the sources mentioned that the famous poet al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015) had purchased a book from a woman in the *al-Warrāqīn* Market and found that part of it had been written by the calligrapher Ibn Muqlah.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁴ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.3, p.123. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī al-aflāk al-dā'irah*, vol .4, p.168.

⁸³⁵ Al-Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, vol.3, p.11.

⁸³⁶ Ibid.p.3. Also see p.12.

⁸³⁷ N.Ma'rūf, *Tārīkh 'ulamā' al-Mustaṣirīyah*, vol.1, (Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, 1971) p.325.

⁸³⁸ A.al-Ma'arrī, *Risālat al-ghufrān*, ver. 'Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977),p.73.

⁸³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, p.7, p. 277. Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayat*, vol. 2, p.379.

As such, one may deduce that women were involved in trade and commerce; they sat in the markets either buying or selling commodities. One of the famous female traders cited by the sources was Nafīṣah *al-Bazā'azh*.⁸⁴⁰ Aside from her work Nafīṣah *al-Bazā'azh* was a famous narrator sought after by the *fuqahā'* students in order to learn more about their discipline from her.⁸⁴¹ Furthermore, women were involved in the business of selling water in the streets and markets of Baghdad, where it was common for female water sellers to carry their full water-skins on cattle back and sell them to whoever wanted to pay for water.⁸⁴²

Additionally, according to al-Shīrāzī, *al-Muḥtasūb* was responsible for protecting women in the market: as he “saw a man standing in front of these trades women talking to them on issues other than buying and selling, he would punish him right away; this was because it was common for idle young men to roam about the markets with nothing to do except harass the women”.⁸⁴³ Another record of women being in the market is clear in Ibn al-Athīr's documentation of the burning of one of the Baghdad markets. In it, he mentions the fire had taken the lives of several women as well as men.⁸⁴⁴

On a different front, women were engaged in the field of Agriculture: a profession that was normal to them because originally the Iraqi community was an agricultural one. Accordingly, women insisted on helping their husbands in various agricultural operations. It was common practice for the sources to describe farmers, the people of the rural areas of Iraq *Ahl al-sawād* (people who dress in black).⁸⁴⁵ It is regrettable nevertheless, that the sources failed to provide us with a full description of rural life in the Iraqi villages or the standard of living conditions of the peasants during the era under study.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibn Khaldūn *al-'Ibar wa-dīwān*, vol. 3, p. 41. *Al-Baz* who was defined as trading in clothes and woven fabrics

⁸⁴¹ For more information about Nafīṣah *al-Bazā'azh*, see p. 238. Also see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*

⁸⁴² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p. 43 – vol.10, p.69.

⁸⁴³ Al-Shīrāzī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, p.110.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.* vol. 8, p. 612.

⁸⁴⁵ M. Ibn Ḥawqal (d.367/977), *ṣūrat al-ard*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-islāmī,1964),p. 210.

In addition to the above, many women were active in the profession of spinning, in their houses as a profitable personal hobby during their leisure time.⁸⁴⁶ Women were very fond of spinning work as it was described by Ibn ‘Abbās: “The profession of righteous women”.⁸⁴⁷ The profit gained by these female spinners was taken as an example of legitimate and licit earnings, which the women of Baghdad used to keep for performing the religious duty of *Hajj*.⁸⁴⁸ It was possible for a female spinner to earn half a Dirham per day for spinning a reasonable amount of cotton or wool.⁸⁴⁹ Also, the looms (spinning Jennies) of Baghdad were used by dozens of female spinners⁸⁵⁰ who worked there for wage.

Women were equally active in the profession of sun-dried brick making that is, they made a kind of unburned or unbaked brick out of alluvial mud and left in an open space to dry in the sun. Ibn al-Jawzī stated that a multitude of Baghdad women were engaged in this sun-dried brick making work. This industry’s market became increasingly popular following the heavy flooding of the River Tigris, which inflicted much damage⁸⁵¹ and the destruction of buildings and residences. Sun-dried bricks became highly sought after by the people of Baghdad. Women’s involvement in the field of construction will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3, below.

Some women were also employed as housekeepers in the residencies of the rich people of Baghdad. However, these female house servants were known for their ill manners and lack of integrity. It was common among them to inform the loafers or burglars about the places where precious family belongings were kept and the safest times to break into the house, that is, when it is empty except for women and children.⁸⁵² Also, at times when the house was vacant because the family was away from home, some female house servants discreetly made an agreement with the loafers to break into the empty house in exchange for half of the loot.⁸⁵³ As

⁸⁴⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 6, p.179.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.vol.1, p.59.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid.vol.7, p.75. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p.76. & Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, vol. 8, vol. 6, p.206.

⁸⁴⁹ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayat*, vol. 3, p.118.

⁸⁵⁰ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol.3, p. 251. Ibn al-Jawzī’s aunt, who took him under her custody supported him by her work as a spinner. See also Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, vol.8, p.563.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.vol.9, p.25.

⁸⁵² Ibid.vol.6, p.69.

⁸⁵³ Ibn al-‘Ibrī, *Tārīkh Al-Zamān* p. 153.

such, it may be said that women also engaged in illegal trades such as theft, looting, robbery and plundering.

For example, there was a group of women who were well known as *al-ṭurarat* (beggars, in this context women beggars).⁸⁵⁴ In contrast to the general public some might argue that they led an odd and strange existence, as it was common for an *al-ṭurarat* to live simultaneously, with more than one husband and provide for their support equally.⁸⁵⁵ The sources say that an example of their trickery is that a *ṭurara* might dress herself in a stylish manner and pose as a rich woman in the markets of Baghdad. She would wait to see a person fastening his moneybag around his belt and immediately grab him and shout, 'my package'. Startled by this sudden attack the person would have had no choice other than to leave his moneybag to her for fear of being accused of stealing because the punishment is that his hand would be chopped off.⁸⁵⁶

Also, a *ṭurara* might rent a house in a neighbourhood where nobody knew her and claim that she was going to marry her daughter in that house. Then she would borrow the furniture, household effects, jewels, odds and ends etc from her neighbours and then run away carrying her loot in the dark of the night.⁸⁵⁷ One more example of their tricks is that a *ṭurara* would enter a house that she already knew to be empty. Then she would move the trunks and furniture and relocate them to the front door and ask the porters to transport the loot away. Sources cited that a notorious a *ṭurara*, who dwelt in the al-Ma'mūnya⁸⁵⁸ neighbourhood, was very famous for this daring type of looting. Also, in 532/1137, another a *ṭurara* was captured while looting in this manner.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁴ The word *ṭurara* is derived from the three-lettered verb " *ṭur*" the man, " *ṭurara* "(ed) the cutting of cloth. So, the " *ṭurara* " is the thief who cuts the clothing of a person with the intension of robbing him. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* vol. 4, p. 2654.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p.26. There may be some similarities between this practice and the morals of the Gypsy women either in Egypt or in other countries where they reside.

⁸⁵⁶ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 5, p.135.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al-Hawādith al-jāmi'ah*, p.118. Also see M.Najjār, *Hikāyat al-shuṭṭār wa-al-'ayyārīn*, (Kuwait: al-Majālis al-Waṭanī lil-Thaqāfah wa-al-Funūn wa-al-Ādāb 1981), p. 78.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al-Hawādith al-jāmi'ah*, vol.4, p.118.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibn al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh Al-Zamā*, p.398.

Before continuing it is important to reflect on the findings of the chapter so far, and juxtapose them against the claims of Aḥmad and like-minded researchers. In doing so, one finds that the accounts of the self-sufficient, businesswomen and those occupied in the copying trades illustrate the undeniable presence and financial independence of women of the periods in question. With this in mind, the following section examines the extent of women's involvement in construction work that contributed to their communities in Abbasid Iraq.

4.3 Women and Construction

Besides finance and commerce, women were involved in construction and development-works all over Iraq especially in Baghdad, where their contribution included many aspects of building. Their efforts in these areas went beyond the boundaries of Iraq to become more general in nature. Such works outside Iraq included the maintenance and development of the road to *Hajj*, in addition to the construction, restoration and repair of many facilities in Mecca and Medina. General history books, genealogies and chronicles identified women as active participants and fully involved partners in historical events, including the crucial emergence of Islam.⁸⁶⁰ This section aims to illustrate how women played an important role in the making of Baghdad, especially in terms of neighbourhoods, schools and sacred buildings.

4.3.1 *al-Maḥallāt* Neighbourhoods

The rebuilding of Baghdad, especially the areas adjacent to the *dār al-khilāfah* (Caliphate House)⁸⁶¹ in eastern Baghdad, was one of the major repair works carried out by Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg467-467/1075-1075). He understood the state of dilapidation that had spread into Baghdad, not to mention shortages in its

⁸⁶⁰ F. Mernissi, *Women in Muslim History* in *Retrieving Women's History*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg, p.340.

⁸⁶¹ The Caliphate House does not specifically mean a certain house but it refers to all lands lying to the east of the River Tigris and those extending down the course of the River *Maḥallah*. The House of the Abbasid Caliphate used to comprise hundreds of houses and palaces and only the inhabited parts were called The Caliphate House. As for the uninhabited part, it was given the name of *Ḥarīm* of the Caliphate House. Al-Ḥamawī, *mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 2, p. 151. M. Jawād, *dār al-khilāfah al-'Abbāsīyah*, (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1965), p. 98. The Caliphate House stretched over approximately one third of the actual area of Baghdad. In this regard, Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said 'I have moved about the Caliphate House and I walked through its inhabited parts, the dilapidated areas, the *Ḥarīm* extensions along with the areas adjoining and bordering it and I found it, area wise, just as big as the city of Shiraz'. See Al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 100. Also Ibn Jubayr said, 'The House of the Caliphate stretches over an area almost equal to one quarter or more of the area of Baghdad'. See *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr*, p. 202.

residential neighbourhoods. Hence, he decreed that several new residential neighbourhoods be constructed on the eastern side of Baghdad.⁸⁶² The Caliph's wife, Māh Malik *Khātūn*, in response to his gesture decided to participate in the rebuilding by erecting a new *Maḥallah*⁸⁶³ (neighbourhood) named *Khātūniyya* to denote her as its originator.⁸⁶⁴

The *Khātūniyya Maḥallah* was very prosperous during the fifth and sixth *Hijrī* centuries since it was regarded as one of the largest in Baghdad. However, we discovered the names of two of its roads, which are: *Darb al-darajah* 'al-darajah Road'⁸⁶⁵ and *Darb Qawwās* (Qawwās Road).⁸⁶⁶ The *al-Khātūniyya Maḥallah* was considered to be the area where the rich people and the dignitaries of Baghdad lived due to its close proximity to the Caliphate court.⁸⁶⁷ No analytical information on the layout of the *Maḥallah* was found in the resources, except that it had been divided into two neighbourhoods namely, the Inner *Khātūniyya*, which was directly attached to the Caliphate court and the Outer *Khātūniyya*⁸⁶⁸ which was connected to the Inner *al-Khātūniyya* but stretched out to the external end of the Caliphate court.⁸⁶⁹

Maḥallah was badly damaged as a result of a huge conflagration that hit eastern Baghdad in 551/1156⁸⁷⁰, but it was restored to its normal state shortly after. It is confirmed that this restoration took place in preparation for accommodating Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's envoy to Baghdad for a visit to Caliph al-Nāṣir (reg.575-622/1180-1225).⁸⁷¹ It was destroyed once again following the conquest of

⁸⁶² The names of the neighbourhoods were *al-Basaliyah*, *al-qaṭī'ah*, *al-Ḥalbah*, *alAjmah*, *Darb al-Qayār*, *Kharābah Ibn Jardat*, *Kharābah al-Harrās* and *al-Muqtadyah*. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 293. Also see Ibn al-Athīr (d.630/1232), *al-tārīkh al-bāhir fī al-dawlah al-Atābikah*, ver.'Abd al-Qādir Ṭulaymāt, (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā 1963),p.13.

⁸⁶³ *al-Maḥallah*: is a term used in construction and building works which corresponds to the term neighbourhood nowadays. In this connection, *Ibn Jubayr*, said 'the rebuilding of the eastern side is a modern work, but though dilapidated as it was, it comprised seventeen neighbourhoods each of which looked as if it was a city in its own'. *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, p. 201. The neighbourhood was divided into several thoroughfares each of which is subdivided into many roads and each road leads to several streets. Y.Lisnar, *Khīṭaṭ Baghdād* (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1984), p.357.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Ḥawādith al-jāmi'ah*, vol.4, p.395.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid. vol. 4, p.843.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., p.395.

⁸⁶⁷ *Jawād ,dār al-khilāfah al-Abbāsīyah* , p. 46.

⁸⁶⁸ Sometimes it is called the interior and exterior *al-Khātūniyya*. Ibn Shahanshāh, *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq*, p.85.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Ḥawādith al-jāmi'ah*, vol. 4, p.395.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.165. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. 11, p. 216.

⁸⁷¹ Ibn Shahanshāh, *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq*,p. 85.

Baghdad by the Mongols in 656/1058. However, research found that despite the destruction, the *Khātūniyya Maḥallah* remained. After the consequent end of the Abbasid Caliphate, one source demonstrates that the city was rebuilt, yet again. In the epilogue of one of the manuscripts of *Kitāb al-tanjīm* by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, in his own handwriting, he says: ‘suspended by “Alqah ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Ahmad Ibn Muḥammad al-Baghdādī in his house at the outer *Khātūniyya* area to the east of the City of Peace on Thursday, the tenth of *Shawwāl*, of the year 680”.⁸⁷²

4.3.2 *Jawāmī’*

Women were greatly involved in the construction of a large number of *Jawāmī’* (mosques) that is, central mosques as well as ordinary mosques.⁸⁷³ The most famous of the *Jawāmī’* built by women, was *Jāmi’* al-Sultan at the eastern side of Baghdad. It was built according to the order of Tūrkān *Khātūn*, wife of Sultan Malikshāh in 485/1092. She died in the year 487/1094 before the completion of the *Jāmi’* al-Sultan. Ibn al-Jawzī, said, “the *Khātūn* built a mint structure in addition to the *Jāmi’* central mosque which was fully completed by Bihrūz al-Khadem in 524/1129”.⁸⁷⁴ This is perhaps why the public named the mosque ‘the Sultan’s Mosque’ without any tie or link to the specific name of any of the Saljūq Sultans

Jāmi’ al-Sultan was situated near to the course of the River *al-mukharram* in close proximity to the strand of the River Tigris.⁸⁷⁵ It survived the demolition works of the Saljūq buildings carried out by Caliph al-Mustaẓhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) following the completion of the *ḥarīm* perimeter enclosure. The mosque must have been situated on the outside of it, and this was confirmed by Ibn al-Jawzī during

⁸⁷² Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Ḥawādith al-jāmi’ah*, vol. 4, p.25.

⁸⁷³The central mosque differs from the ordinary mosque in that the central mosque is larger. It is not permissible to perform the Friday Prayer in the ordinary mosques, as it is restricted only to Central Mosques. While it is not allowed to build two Central Mosques in one neighbourhood, there is no objection to building any number of ordinary mosques in the same neighbourhood. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 1, p.108.

⁸⁷⁴Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol .9, p.60.

⁸⁷⁵ *Dar al-Sultanah* (The Sultanate House): this is the same house of the Būyid Kingdom premises which was founded by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla who was the first to build a grand palace near the upper course of the River al-Mukharram as the headquarters for his government and named it the Kingdom House. Likewise, the Saljūqs, following their conquest of Baghdad, copied the Būyids in making the same place as their residential area but they changed its name to the Sultanate House. See Lisnar, *Khīṭāṭ Baghdād*, p. 189.

the course of reporting the conflict between Caliph al-Rāshid 529-530/1135-1136 and Sultan Mas'ūd in 530/1135. Ibn al-Jawzī states:

...after two days, Zankī advised Caliph al-Rāshid to pitch his camp at the *Jāmi'* al-Sultan by the River Tigris; and so he did. In the late evening of Sunday, the fourth of Ramadan, a spy came to Zankī and told him that their adversaries had decided to launch a sudden attack against them. Zankī, the Caliph and their followers left the place and re-pitched their camp deep inside the perimeter enclosure.⁸⁷⁶

Accordingly, the central *Jāmi'* Sultan was practically located on the inside of the *ḥarīm* Enclosure and near the Saljūq Sultanate House to the upper course of the River *al-mukharram*. No adequate information relative to the mosque is available other than the description given in the Travels of Ibn Jubair who visited and performed his prayers inside it. He said: "the *Jāmi'* al-Sultan, which is located outside the city"⁸⁷⁷ was connected to some palaces attributed to the Sultan known as ShāhnShāh,⁸⁷⁸ who was previously the Chief of Staff of the grandfather of Caliph al-Naṣir. The Sultan ShāhnShāh lived in that area so the *Jāmi'* was built in front of his house.⁸⁷⁹

Furthermore, Binfashā, Caliph al-Mustaḍī's mistress (reg.566-576/1170-1180) erected a *Jāmi'* in Eastern Baghdad, known to the public as the *Jāmi'* of the Eminent Binfashā, at the centre of the Tuesday Market.⁸⁸⁰ She built the *Jāmi'* as an outstanding piece of architecture in both its construction and furnishing. Binfashā asked Ibn al-Jawzī to find a qualified Imam for it so the latter nominated Binfashā's request from Ibn al-Jawzī gave him a first-hand exposure to her role and influence in such a project. It can be argued that reason her narrative and role in building this mosque is present in his writings is in some way an acknowledgement of her

⁸⁷⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p.57.

⁸⁷⁷ This confirms our suggestion that it was located outside the al-Mustaẓhīr enclosure

⁸⁷⁸ This was a general title assumed by all Saljūqs Sultans. It is noticed that Ibn Jubayr did not know about the founder of this central mosque. See the previous statements pertaining to the attribution of this mosque to its real founder. *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, p.204.

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid.p.204.

⁸⁸⁰ Tuesday Market, of eastern Baghdad, was one of the largest markets in Baghdad. It was located at the centre of eastern Baghdad. Al-Ḥamawī, *mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 3, p.283. It is necessary to distinguish this market from another one bearing the same name in western Baghdad near to al-Karkh neighbourhood. See Leistering: Baghdad, p. 68.

efforts and to a large extent her influence. Indeed, he heeded her request by recommending his son-in-law, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-‘ayby,⁸⁸¹ who was described by Ibn al-Dubaythīas “one of the reciters who was better known for memorizing the Quran, mastery of reciting and knowledge of the different reading styles according to the established rules of pronunciation and intonation.” ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-‘ayby performed the first prayer in the *Jāmi’* on the night between the 14th and 15th of Shaaban in 570/1174.⁸⁸²

Similarly, Zumurrud *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Naṣīr’s mother ordered that a mosque be constructed on the strand of the River Tigris. Ibn ShāhnShāh reports the only information available about this mosque during the events of the year 580/1184. Ibn ShāhnShāh said:

...the Caliph's mother paid a great deal of money to build a mosque on the strand of the river Tigris at *al-sāqayn* [water vendors or carriers] road close to *al-Ḥaṭṭābyn* [firewood vendors] road. She stipulated, “no man other than a Ḥanbalī shall pray in this mosque”. So they brought along, from *Bab al-Azaj*, a good reciter of the Quran. She ordered her followers to carry him to the door of the room and dress him with the Robe of Honour. They did as they were told and he became the Imam of the mosque.⁸⁸³

There appeared to be no confirmation of the location of the *al-sāqayn* road or the *al-Ḥaṭṭābyn* road in Abbasid Baghdad despite the hint given by Ibn ShāhnShāh that the mosque was situated directly on the strand of the river Tigris. Indeed, it remained difficult to prove whether it was located on the eastern or western bank of the river. As stated above, this was the only information available with regards to the mosque, which adds to the complexity of the issue of confirming narratives.

Zumurrud *Khātūn* built yet another mosque, which was known to the public as the *al-ḥaḏīār* Mosque. It was regarded as the largest in Baghdad, built on the strand of

⁸⁸¹ See Al-Dubaythī (d.637/1239), *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayhi*, ver. Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2001), p.263

⁸⁸² Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.4. Also see Ibn al-Sā‘ī, *Nisā’ al-khulafā’*, pp. 113 - 114.

⁸⁸³ *Miḏmār al-ḥaqā’iq*, p.178.

the river Tigris in the *al-ḥaẓīr* neighbourhood⁸⁸⁴ close to *al-Muzmlāt* Road.⁸⁸⁵ However, resources indicate that nothing was left of this structure except its huge minaret, which was believed to be the oldest minaret ever built in Baghdad. The mosque's architectural decorations and marvellous ornamental inscriptions are set among graceful, characteristic blue baked bricks. In the bottom basin of the minaret are decorated vaults and arches that add an aesthetical shape to the minaret of unique architectural style.⁸⁸⁶ Zumurrud *Khātūn* constructed another additional mosque, in honour of one of the great ascetic sheikhs at the time: Sheikh 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Zāhid (d.583/1187). The information regarding this mosque appears in the briefing given by Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī in his work on the biography of the sheikh 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Zāhid, where he states that the mosque was located in the area of *al-Zaynabīyah* hill⁸⁸⁷ in Eastern Baghdad. Not enough adequate information relating to *al-Zaynabīyah* is available, except that according to the description given by Ibn Shahinshā, *al-Zaynabīyah* Road was located near *al-maṣṭna'*.

The above-mentioned women's contribution towards building mosques further emphasizes their roles in development of religion (discussed in Chapter Three). As such, it is difficult not to remember their participation in education and commitment to it. Indeed, in addition to their contribution to the constructions of neighbourhoods and mosques, Abbasid women also helped their communities by facilitating the building of schools, as will be discussed below.

⁸⁸⁴ It was given that name because of the number of horse stables there. Richard Coke, *Baghdad, the city of peace*, vol.2, (London: T. Butterworth, 1927) p. 275. Apparently, the construction of this mosque by Zumurrud *Khātūn* was made with a view to restore and rebuild the neighbourhood as Ibn al-Athīr had already reported that fire which hit the neighbourhood in the year 583/1187. *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, vol. 11, p. 562.

⁸⁸⁵ Unknown, *Insān al-'uyūn*, p. 227. A. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma' al-ādāb fī mu'jam al-alqāb*, vol. 4, (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1962), p. 427. This was the mosque adjacent to which the Caliph al-Mustanshir built, at a later stage, his famous al-Mustanshiriyah School on the strand of the river Tigris. The school was separated by one house only from the mosque. Z. al-Qazwīnī (d.628/1230), *Āthār al-bilād*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968) p. 216. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma' al-ādāb fī mu'jam al-alqāb*, p.231.

⁸⁸⁶ M. Jawād, *Dalīl khāriṭat Baghdād al-mufaṣṣal fī khiṭat Baghdād qadīman wa-ḥadīthan*, (Baghdad, l-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1958), p. 188.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibn Rajab, *al-dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, vol. 2, p.184. See *Miqmār al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 78. Also, Al-Ḥamawī gave the following description 'you walk out of the square of the Palace Mosque heading east until you pass al-*maṣṭna'*, which was a great door in the centre of the market'. See *mu'jam al-buldān*, vol. 2, p. 350. By comparing the above with what Ibn al-Fuwaṭī had said about al-fakhrīyah School in his summary, pt.4, q3, p. 1055 that it was built at *al-maṣṭna'*, in al-Ma'mūnīyah Neighbourhood, it is concluded that *al-Zaynabīyah* hill was adjacent to *al-maṣṭna'*, which was one of the Tuesday Market doors of the Ma'mouniah Neighbourhood. Therefore, *al-Zaynabīyah* hill is one of the roads of al-Ma'mūnīyah Neighbourhood. See *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol.4, p.1055. For more information on schools in Islam see G.Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

5.3.3 *Madāris*

Central and ordinary mosques were at the core of life at that time as per the concept of the Arab Islamic Civilization in its early beginnings. In their quest for knowledge, the students gathered around their sheiks after performing their prayers. In time, Muslims began to feel the necessity of separating scientific activity from the mosques and houses of religious observances.⁸⁸⁸ Hence the concept of an Islamic school⁸⁸⁹ was brought into being. It was usual however for the *Madāris* (schools) to be regarded as a *waqf* for science and the people of knowledge. The donor of the *Waqf* was expected to set aside some inalienable properties and real estate to ensure the continued process of education along with the provision of subsistence for both teachers and students. The school normally comprises accommodation for the teachers as well as some of the students.⁸⁹⁰ It was also customary that study in the school was to be restricted to one orthodox rite of *Fiqh* only (i.e. one religious creed only).

As such, the school built by Tūrkān *Khātūn* in favour of the Ḥanbalī School is said to be the first school ever built by a woman throughout the history of Islam. Tūrkān *Khātūn* ordered that the school be devoted only to the Ḥanbalī School,⁸⁹¹ and its location was in eastern Baghdad, opposite the Saljūq Sultanate House.⁸⁹² There are no records of the names of teachers appointed by Tūrkān *Khātūn*. However, it is known that the school continued to offer education until 494/1100 when Caliph al-Mustazhīr (reg.487-512/1094-1118) demolished it along with all the Saljūq buildings surrounding Baghdad while erecting the *ḥarīm* Enclosure.⁸⁹³

Al-Muwaffaqyah School was one important example of the schools built by

⁸⁸⁸ A.Ḥasanayn , *Salājiqat Irān wa-al-'Irāq*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1970), p.79.

⁸⁸⁹ It is not true that Nizām al-Mulk, *Wazīr* of Sultan Mālikshāh, was the first man to build a school that is truly compatible to the Islamic concept of a school. See Ibid. However, Tamara Talbot Rice believes that the concept of the school occurred to the *Wazīr* Nizām al-Mulk from India; as the Buddhists had their own *Fiqh* schools of the same strain as central universities. See T.Rice *The Seljuks in Asia minor*, (London: Thames Hudson, 1966), p.147. p. 472. Yet, by close examination of the contemporary sources, it is proven that the genesis of the Islamic Schools and their division into independent institutions, from central and ordinary mosques had been initiated since the beginning of the 4th/5th *Hijrī* century, when al-Rashāyah School, for memorizing the Holy Quran, was established in Damascus on the verge of the year 400H See A.Nu'aymī (d.927/1520), *al-daris fi tarikh al-madaris*, vol. 1, (Beirut, Dār Ṣādi,1990) p.42.

⁸⁹⁰ I.Ra'ūf, *Madāris Baghdād fi al-'aṣr al-'Abbāsī*, (Baghdad : Maṭba'at al-Baṣrī,1966),p.41.

⁸⁹¹ L.Sédiillot *Tārīkh al-'Arab al-'āmm* ,tran.'Ādil Zu'aytir, (Cairo: 'Isā'āl-Bābī al-Ḥalabī Press , 1969) p. 221.

⁸⁹² Ibn al-Jawzī ,*al-muntaẓam*,vol. 9, p. 135. See also I.Ra'ūf, *Madāris Baghdād* ,p. 44.

⁸⁹³ Ibid. We are unable to ascertain the opinion of Nājī Ma'rūf, who believes without evidence at hand, that the process of education in this school continued until the devastating conquest of Baghdad by Timūrlank in 803/1400. See N.Ma'rūf, *Tārīkh 'ulamā' al-Mustanṣirīyah* ,vol.1, (Cairo:Dār al-Sha'b, 1976), p.37.

women. It was built and assigned as a *Waqf* for the fuqahā' of the Ḥanafī School, by Iṣmat *Khātūn*, Caliph al-Mustazḥīr's wife. It was located at the top of the Zākhī Road on the strand of the river Tigris.⁸⁹⁴ At first, it was known as The *Khātūn* al-Mustazḥīryyah School as briefed by Ibn al-Jawzī when he was reporting the events of the year 522/1128: "in *Jumādā*, al-Manbijī was appointed in The *Khātūn* al-Mustazḥīryyah School by Muwaffaq al-Khadem".⁸⁹⁵ However, in time, the school was attributed to Muwaffaq al-Khadem, one of the attendants of Iṣmat *Khātūn*, who had supervised the construction works and assumed the management of the school; and the name changed to al-Muwaffaqyah School, to reflect that.⁸⁹⁶

Iṣmat *Khātūn* entrusted Aḥmad Ibn Salāmah Ibn Sā'id al-Manbijī (d. 573/1176) with teaching responsibilities in the school, where education continued throughout the Abbasid Era. Indeed, to the astonishment of all, it continued even beyond that: even after the devastating conquest of Baghdad by Hülākū 654/1256. Throughout the length of the Mongols Era the headship of the school was entrusted to Muẓaffar al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Ibn Sā'ātī in 694/1294;⁸⁹⁷ i.e. thirty eight years after the conquest of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan in 656/1258.⁸⁹⁸ It is not, however, evident whether the school continued to educate students until the conquest of Baghdad by Timurlenk in 803/1400. Considering the remarks of the Traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who visited Baghdad in 721/1320 and noticed the destruction carried out on most of the schools in Baghdad,⁸⁹⁹ it is hard to believe that the education continued until that relatively late time.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 9. See also R.Coke: Baghdad, vol. 2, p. 278. & Ma'rūf, *Tārīkh 'ulamā' al-Mustanṣirīyah*, vol.1, p.75.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.9.

⁸⁹⁶ When Muwaffaq al-Khādīm died, he was buried in the courtyard of the same school. Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi 'al-mukhtaṣar*, p.178.

⁸⁹⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol. 4, p. 803. A.Quṭlūbughā, *Tāj al-tarājim fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyah* ver. by Ibrāhīm Šāliḥ, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'mūn lil-Turāth, 1992) p.116.

⁸⁹⁸ In the light of their beliefs it is possible to understand the manifestation of the incessant educational process throughout the Mongols Era. Despite their devastating actions: the looting and plundering of Baghdad, The Mongols did not target the *awqāf* schools, mosques and other charitable institutions. The logical explanation of this odd behaviour is tacit within the religious creeds of the Mongols who regard the capital legacy of the diseased as a bad omen that warrants a curse upon someone, if touched. Hence, if a Mongol, who had no heirs, dies, and his legacy is surrendered to his slave or hireling otherwise it is disposed of one way or another. In this connection, 'Aṭā Malik al-Juwaynī said: 'I was tasked by Hülākū to review the accounts of the legacies and old *awqāf* in Baghdad, but, at the same time, ordered me not to include or transfer such accounts to the Public Treasury'. See A.al-Juwaynī, *tārīkh Jahān'gushā*, trans.Muḥammad Tūnjī, vol.1,(Damascus: Dār al-Malāh, 1985), p.68.

⁸⁹⁹ A.Ibn Baṭṭūṭah(d.777/1375),*Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭah*,(Beirut:Dār Ṣādir,1964) p.236.

Another school that was established by a woman, was that erected by Binfashā, mistress of Caliph al-Mustaḍī (reg.566-576/1170-1180). She built and donated it as a *Waqf* for the Ḥanbalī School after she took ownership of the vacant house upon the death of Niẓāmu'd-Dīn Fakhr al-Dawla Ibn Jahīr, the previous *Wazīr* of Caliph al-Qā'im (reg.422-467/1030-1074). The house was adjacent to Binfashā's near Bab al-Azj, which was situated inside the Caliphate court. She ordered the repair and renovation of the house and ⁹⁰⁰ the rebuilding of the school was completed in 570/1174; so at first, Binfashā authorized the faqīh Abū Ja'far Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh to assume the task of organizing education in the school. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh kept the keys to the school for several days but Binfashā retrieved them and instead, tasked Ibn al-Jawzī with the responsibility of arranging lessons. In this regard Ibn al-Jawzī recounted:

...on Thursday, the fifteenth of Shabān, the school, which had previously been the residence of the *Wazīr* Niẓām u'd-Dīn Fakhr al-Dawla Ibn Jahīr was handed over to me without my prior knowledge of the situation. On said Thursday, I started my lessons in the attendance of the Chief Magistrate, Grand Chamberlain and the *fuqahā'* of Baghdad where I was bestowed with a robe of honour. This occasion was attended by thousands of people during the course of which I gave many lessons on the fundamentals and applied ethics of *Fiqh*. It was an unparalleled memorable day.⁹⁰¹

Initially, this school was known as the Shāṭi'īyah School.⁹⁰² It was one of the largest in Baghdad that taught the Ḥanbalī School and was the most renowned in Ibn al-Jawzī's time. The Traveller ibn Jubayr visited it and attended the teachings of Ibn al-Jawzī more than once. He said that there were more than twenty students speaking from the Holy Quran at the time⁹⁰³ and Ibn al-Jawzī used to allow the public to attend his teaching and guidance sessions every Saturday of each week.⁹⁰⁴ However, hardly any information was found about this school since Ibn al-

⁹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p.111. & al-Mundhirī, *al-takmilah*, vol. 2, p .343. & Abū Shāmah, *al-dhayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn*, p. 29. al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, vol.1, p.293. Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi 'al-mukhtaṣar*, p. 88.

Sibt ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, vol.8, p.235. Ibn Rajab, *al-dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, vol.1 p. 404.

⁹⁰¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓim*, vol. 10, p. 252.

⁹⁰² Ibn Jubayr, *Rihlah Ibn Jubayr*, p. 196.

⁹⁰³ Ibid. p.197 .

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 200.

Jawzī became distressed and was exiled from Baghdad in 590/1193 by Caliph al-Naṣir.⁹⁰⁵

4.3.4 *Ribāṭ*

Sufīs gather to perform their rituals and withdraw for spiritual communion at the *Ribāṭ*. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the *Ribāṭ* played a crucial part in religious life during the era, and women participated in the teaching, learning and construction. While Chapter Three focused on women’s educational contributions and participation to the *Ribāṭ*, this section will focus on their contributions to the construction of these spaces. The Arjwānyah *Ribāṭ* was attributed to Arjwān, Caliph al-Muqṭadī’s mother, who erected the *Ribāṭ* on the tip of the *Zākhī* Road on the strand of the river Tigris.⁹⁰⁶ The significance of this *Ribāṭ* is the fact that it is the first ever built by a woman in Islamic History, and is still known as, the Arjwānyah *Ribāṭ*, which was one of the largest Sufīs *Ribāṭs* in Baghdad.⁹⁰⁷ Sheikh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī (d. 577/1181) assumed the leadership of the Sufīs in the *Ribāṭ*⁹⁰⁸ and was succeeded by the Sheikh Abū Ya’qūb al-Shīrāzī who passed away in 585/1189.⁹⁰⁹ The Arjwānyah *Ribāṭ* was known to be popular throughout the seventh *Hijrī* century, which is confirmed by the fact that Sheikh Bahā’ al-Dīn Abū Ṭālib Ibn al-Yazdī was appointed as leader of the Sufīs there in 639/1241.⁹¹⁰

Similarly, Iṣmat *Khātūn*, wife of Caliph al-Mustadher, ordered the construction of a *Ribāṭ* close to the al-Azj Door, which was one of the doors of the Caliphate court. The only information relating to this *Ribāṭ* was reported by Ibn al-Jawzī. He determined its precise location, in the context of the events of the year 551/1156, when he mentioned it in his work on the biography of Ali b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ghaznawī. The latter came to Baghdad in 516/1122, and learned the Hadith at the hands of

⁹⁰⁵ The Caliph accused Ibn al-Jawzī of embezzling money allocated as *Waqf* for the school. Ibn Rajab, *al-dhayl ‘alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābilah*, vol. 2, p. 426.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibn Ṣābūnī, *Takmilat Ikmāl*, p.309. M.Jawād, *Sayyidāt al-balāṭ al-‘Abbāsī*, p.135. This is the same location on which Iṣmat *Khātūn* built her school.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol. 4, p.1055.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid.vol. 4, p.403.

⁹¹⁰ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Hawādith al-jāmi’ah*, p.134.

Sheikhs, after which he subsequently started his own guidance sessions.⁹¹¹ Iṣmat *Khātūn*, decreed that a *Ribāṭ* should be built for him at al-Azj Door.⁹¹² However, no further information was found on that *Ribāṭ*, which might suggest that it was closed after the death of its founder Iṣmat *Khātūn*, or after the death of al-Ghaznawī who assumed the leadership of the Sufis at the *Ribāṭ*.

The Shuwānīzyyah *Ribāṭ*⁹¹³ was attributed to the Persian Historian Ḥamd Allāh al-Qazwīnī who is frequently mentioned in the sources but there is no information on the person who founded it on behalf of Binfashā, al-Mustaḍī's mistress.⁹¹⁴ Among those who assumed the position of the Chief Sufī in this *Ribāṭ* was Sheikh Abū 'Amr 'Uthmā Othman al-Hamadhānī (d. 605/1208).⁹¹⁵ The successor to this position was the Sufī Sheikh Abdul Rahman ibn Yaḥyá al-Zubaydī who died in 620/1223.⁹¹⁶ Binfashā built and inaugurated another *Ribāṭ* for Sufī women at the School Market ⁹¹⁷ on the first of Rajab in 573/1177. It was the venue for a great celebration attended by Ibn al-Jawzī who addressed the audience. She distributed money ⁹¹⁸ to the audience on this occasion and assigned the *Ribāṭ* especially for the sister of Abū Bakr al-Sufī, the chief Sufī of al-Zawzanī *Ribāṭ*. Worth noting here is that it is the only *Ribāṭ* found that was exclusively assigned to Sufī women in Baghdad.⁹¹⁹

Among the *Ribāṭs* built by women in the era was '*al-kātibah Ribāṭ*' constructed by Fakhr al-nisā' Shuhdah bint Ahmad b. Abū Naṣir al-Bīrī, better known in her time as *al-kātibah* (d. 574/1178). The *Ribāṭ* was built near her house in Palace Mosque Square. Moreover, Shuhdah donated one of her gardens, known as the *Dībājī Garden*⁹²⁰, as the *Waqf* of the *Ribāṭ*. The leadership of Sufis in the *Ribāṭ* was

⁹¹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol.10, p.166

⁹¹² Ibid.

⁹¹³ Shwnīzyah, or the Great Shwnīzyah Graveyard: was one of the largest graveyards in Baghdad located behind the 'Isá River at the west side of Baghdad. See G.Makdisi, *Khīṭaṭ Baghdad fī al-qarn al-khāmis al-Hijrī*, (Baghdad : al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī, 1984) p. 51.

⁹¹⁴ Ḥ. al-Qazwīnī (d.730/1329), *tārīkh Kuzaidah*, (London: Dār al-Warrāq lil-Nashr,1910) vol. 2, p.368.

⁹¹⁵ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p.273.

⁹¹⁶ Ibn al-Dubaythī, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayhi*, p.234.

⁹¹⁷ This is the Tuesday Market in the centre of which The Nizāmiyyah School was located; therefore, the area of the Market next to it was known as The School Market.

⁹¹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 271.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

⁹²⁰ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī says in the biography of the Sheikh 'Izz al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ali al-Khawarī 'a transaction pertaining to the *Waqf* took place between him and me as he was responsible for purchasing the fruit crops of

assigned to the Sheikh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥasan al-Qaṣṣār (d. 542/1147).⁹²¹ The *Ribāṭ* was more popular under the Sufī leadership of the Sheikh Abū al-badr al-Nafīs ibn Hilāl al-Ṣūfī in 611/1214⁹²²; who was succeeded by the Sufī Sheikh Qamar al-Dīn ibn Abī al-badr in 621/1224.⁹²³

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that rich Muslim women, other than *al-hara’ir* of the Court, had a role in the construction of these facilities. Although there may have been other *Ribāṭs*, schools and small mosques built by wealthy women during the era, very little information about them was found, possibly because they are so few. It is important to note, that one of the largest Sufī *Ribāṭs* ever built in the era, was built by a woman: the Saljūqī *Khātūn*, daughter of Sultan Qulj Arslān and wife of Caliph al-Nāṣir. Saljūqī *Khātūn*, selected the site adjacent to the religious Shrine of *Awn* and *Mu’in*⁹²⁴ on the strand of the river Tigris on the western side with a view to building a tomb for herself and a *Ribāṭ*.⁹²⁵ However, she died in 584/1188 before the building was one fathom in height as described by Ibn al-Sā’ī.⁹²⁶ Hence, Caliph al-Nāṣir ordered the completion of the building and

the Dībājī Garden which were reserved as *Waqf* for the *Rabṭ* of al-Katibah Shuhdah al-Ibarī’. See Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol. 4, p. 35.

⁹²¹ Al-Baghdādī, *Dhayl tārikh Baghdād*, vol. 1, p. 340. N.Ma’rūf, *Tārikh ‘ulamā’ al-Mustanṣirīyah*, vol. 1, p. 53. Also see M. Jawād, *al-rabṭ al-Baghdādīyah wa-atharuhā fī al-Thaqāfah Islāmīyah* vol 2 (Baghdad: Sūmar Press, 1955), p. 196.

⁹²² Al-Mundhirī, *al-takmilah*, vol. 2, p. 211. Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol. 4, p.312.

⁹²³ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ Majma*, vol.4, p.748.

⁹²⁴ Al-Baghdādī did not enumerate it in his citation of the graves existing on the western side of Baghdad. However, the man to view and describe the Shrine was the Traveller Ibn Jubayr who visited Baghdad in 580/1184. Ibn Jubayr said: ‘on the way to Bab al-Basra, stands a copious Shrine with a spacious summit on which was written; this is the Shrine of *Awn* and *Mu’in*, sons of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī ibn Abi Taalib. See *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr*, p. 202. The same Shrine was also seen and described by Ibn Battūṭah. Compare the description given by *Rihlat Ibn Battūṭah*, p. 235. Given the above, what was cited by al-Ṣafadī that the Caliph al-Dhaḥer had built the religious Shrine of *Aun* and *Mu’in* at the western side of Baghdad, K. Al-Ṣafadī, *Nakt al-himyān fī nukat al-umyān*, ver. Aḥma Bāshā, (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Jamālīyah, 1911) ,p.238 is in contradiction to what was seen by Ibn Jubayr in 580/1184, i.e. during the reign of the Caliph al-Nāṣir but not his son al-Zāhir as claimed by al-Ṣafadī. Although, we can not exactly determine when the Shrine was built, it seems that there is some relation between this specific Shrine and what was cited by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in his description of the site on which the Shrine was built afterwards. b al-Baghdādī said: ‘near to the grave imputed to Hishām at the western side of Baghdad, there existed some graves known as the martyrs graves; yet I still hear the public say they are the graves of some followers of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who were present with him when he was fighting *al-Khawārij* at the battle of *al-Nahrawān*. However, when they were reverting back, death caught up with them. They were buried in that site’. *Tārikh Baghdād* vol.1, p.113.

⁹²⁵ Ibn al-Sā’ī, *Nisā’ al-khulafā’*, p. 116. & R.Coke, *Baghdad, the city of peace*, vol .2, p. 258. M.Jawād, *al-rabṭ al-Baghdādīyah*, vol.1, p. 234.

⁹²⁶ Ibn al-Sā’ī, *Nisā’ al-khulafā’*, p.117.

eventually, both the tomb and the *Ribāṭ* were finished in 585/1189.⁹²⁷ The details of *Ribāṭs* were discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.⁹²⁸

Zumurrud *Khātūn*'s *Ribāṭ*, better known as the *al-ma'mūniyah Ribāṭ*, was originally a house in the *al-ma'mūniyah* neighbourhood⁹²⁹, at the eastern side of Baghdad. It had belonged to one of the followers of the *Amīrs* of Caliph al-Nāṣir, as reported by Ibn Shāhanshāh.⁹³⁰ However, the Caliph's mother asked her son for the house because she wanted to build a Sufī *Ribāṭ* there and the construction was completed in 577/1181.⁹³¹ In relation to the above, Ibn Shāhanshāh reports as follows:

The Caliph had old grudges against young Sangr al-Ṣaghīr since the days of his father; therefore, he apprehended him and confiscated his properties. So, once his mother requested that a house be built as a *Ribāṭ* and asked for his assistance, the Caliph ordered the Custodian of the Caliphate House to proceed with the site. Masons, carpenters, craftsmen, artisans, manufacturers and man-made works were summoned in order to begin and complete the construction of the *Ribāṭ*, at *al-ma'mūniyah Neighbourhood* in the centre of the Market Place.⁹³²

This *Ribāṭ* was the largest among the Sufī *Ribāṭs* in Baghdad at the end of the Sixth Hijrī Century/the Thirteenth Christian Century owing to the large number of *Awqāf* devoted to it. Accordingly, most of the Sufīs abandoned their old *Ribāṭs* and stayed in the *al-ma'mūniyah Ribāṭ* instead. Al-Sam'ānī said: "as such, most of the Sufīs arrived and resided at the *al-ma'mūniyah Ribāṭ* which was built by the mother of our Honourable Master al-Imam al-Nāṣir, The Commander of the Faithful".⁹³³ Zumurrud *Khātūn* devoted a huge library as a *Waqf* for her *Ribāṭ* as a result of which it became a seat of learning for numbers of students and scholars.

⁹²⁷ A.al-Khazrajī (d.923/1517), *al-'Asjad al-masbūk fi man waliya al-Yaman min al-mulūk*, (Yemen: Wizārat al-l'ām wa-al-Thaqāfah, 1981), p.95

⁹²⁸ See Chapter Four page,186.

⁹²⁹ *al-ma'mūniyah* Neighbourhood, imputed to the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, is located on the eastern side of Baghdad in between the river al-mu'allā and al-Azjī Door next to dār al-khilāfahq. See Al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* vol. 5, p. 44.

⁹³⁰ Ibn Shahanshāh, *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 92.

⁹³¹ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol.8, p.365. See Ibn al-Athīr where he mentioned that the *Rabṭ* was inaugurated in 579H. However, we think that the statement of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī is more appropriate because he was an eyewitness. Moreover, his statement was endorsed by Ibn Shahanshāh himself. See *Al-Kāmil fi al-tārīkh*, vol. 11, p. 503.

⁹³² Ibn Shahanshāh, *Miḍmār al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 92.

⁹³³ *Dhayl tārīkh Baghdād*, p. 188

The traveller ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629/1231) was one of the visitors to this library and read Kitāb al-uṣūl, by Ibn al-Sarrāj, in the copy of the *Waqf* of Ibn al-Khashshāb, which was deposited in the *al-ma’mūniyah Ribāṭ*.⁹³⁴ Indeed, this *Ribāṭ* remained renowned on account of its library until the advent of the conquest of Baghdad by the Mongols. This is true because Caliph al-Musta‘ṣim (reg.640-656/1242-1258), the last of the Abbasid Caliphs, had granted the Sufī leadership in the *Ribāṭ* to the Sheikh Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Muẓaffar Ali b. al-Nayār. He bestowed the robe of honour on him and gave him the surname of The Sheikh of the Sheikhs in 653/1221, that is, three years before the Mongols invaded Baghdad.⁹³⁵

It is not true, however, that the *Ribāṭ*, which stands at the western side of Baghdad and located adjacent to her school and tomb opposite the tomb of Ma’rūf al-Karkhī, was established by Zumurrud *Khātūn*, as well. The confusion might have arisen because the sources identified it as Umm Caliph al-Nāṣir *al-Ribāṭ*.⁹³⁶ The truth is, the *Ribāṭ*, might have been an old, abandoned Sufī *Ribāṭ* but, Zumurrud *Khātūn* deserved the credit for its renovation and, as such, the *Ribāṭ* was dedicated to her. The anonymous author, who wrote the book of *al-Ḥawādith al-jāmi‘ah*, says: “Zumurrud *Khātūn* gave orders to renovate the *Ribāṭ* adjacent to the Shrine of ‘Ubayd Allāh al-‘Alawī, because it had decayed and crumbled after the flood”.⁹³⁷ The *Ribāṭ* was restored to its previous condition.⁹³⁸ The flood event cited by the anonymous author occurred in 466/1073, which witnessed one of the most damaging floods of the river Tigris. Therefore, this *Ribāṭ*, which was mistakenly imputed to Zumurrud *Khātūn*, had already been in existence in the second half of the fifth *Hijrī* century/eleventh Gregorian century. Hence, Zumurrud *Khātūn* deserved credit for the renovation works on the *Ribāṭ*, at her own expense, on the eve of the seventh *Hijrī* century/thirteenth Gregorian century; and that was presumably why the *Ribāṭ* was dedicated to her. The *Ribāṭ* was known as Um Al Nasser's *Ribāṭ* on the western side to distinguish it from Um Al Nasser's *Ribāṭ* in the Ma'mouniah Neighbourhood on the eastern side of Baghdad. Umm Caliph al-Nāṣir appointed

⁹³⁴ M. Jawād, *al-rabṭ al-Baghdādīyah*, vol. 1, p. 224.

⁹³⁵ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al-Ḥawādith al-jāmi‘ah*, p.285.

⁹³⁶ Unknown, *Insān al-‘uyūn*, p.2 26. Also see Ibn Ṣābūnī, *Takmilat Ikmāl al-Ikmāl*, p. 278.

⁹³⁷ The year of the Baghdad Flood in 466/1073.

⁹³⁸ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al-Ḥawādith al-jāmi‘ah*, p. 261.

the *faqīh* ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Miṣr (d.591/1194) to assume the Sufī leadership and to take care of the various duties at the *Ribāṭ*.⁹³⁹

The *Ribāṭ al-Fayrūzjyah* was another *Ribāṭ* built by a woman. It was attributed to ‘Ā’ishah, daughter of Caliph al-Mustanjid, better known as *al-Fayrūzjyah* (d. 640/1243). The sources that gave an account of the *Ribāṭ* in her biography hinted that she had built it for the Sufīs and that it was known by her name. Nevertheless, it proved difficult to find any information relative to this *Ribāṭ* either about its location or about the Sheikhs who assumed its Sufī leadership even in the sources that recorded the layouts of Baghdad. It may be argued that the *Ribāṭ* was so small and insignificant that the historians and the travellers ignored it.⁹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that researchers and historians argue that Muslim women have played so small a part in their histories because it is widely believed that they lived confined lives, it is obvious, in accordance with Kleinbergs assertions, that deeper research and a little re-evaluation unveils the fallacy of such claims. In the following section, women were found to have been involved in construction to include the building of some of the most magnificent houses of their time. This is will then be followed by a discussion of their contribution to the important work of bridge construction.

4.3.5 Houses

As well as mosques and schools, women also took great interest in building splendid⁹⁴¹ residencies inside the Caliphate House and its surrounding *Ḥarīm* areas. These houses were located in a huge residential area in eastern Baghdad. The first that came to knowledge was the one constructed by Māh Malik *Khātūn*, daughter of Sultan Malikshāh and wife of Caliph al-Muqtadī (reg.467-467/1075-1075), at the northern part of the Caliphate House near to the *al-ghurbah* Door. This house remained intact until Caliph al-Mustazhīr’s era (reg.487-512/1094-1118) when he demolished it in 507/1113 along with another house belonging to

⁹³⁹ Al-Mundhirī, *al-takmilah* vol.1, p.340.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibn al-Sā’ī, *al-Jāmi āl-mukhtaṣar*, p. 135.& Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Ḥawādith al-jāmi’ah*, p. 183. Also see Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 16, p.608.

⁹⁴¹ Al-Dar: as in the modern layouts or plans is equivalent to a palace such as the Caliphate Palace, Kingdom House, Sultanate House, etc

his sister, called *Dar al-sayyidah*, as part of his plan to modify the Caliphate house toward the area of *Bab al-ghurbah*. In this respect, al-Khaṭīb al-Mawṣilī says: “he demolished the house of the *Khātūn* along with the house of al-Muqtaḍī’s daughter and consolidated them into one house with four facades facing each other in the centre of which was a garden that comprised over sixty rooms called *Dar al-Rayḥānīn*”.⁹⁴²

Among the grand houses constructed by a woman was a house known as the *Dūdrkā*⁹⁴³ of the *Khātūn* that was built by Iṣmat *Khātūn*, wife of Caliph al-Mustazḥīr. The location of this *Daūdrkā* was close to *Bab al-Nūbī*⁹⁴⁴ and it ended at the point where an exceedingly high door stands. Ibn Khallikān recorded that it was one of the most magnificent and greatest buildings of the Caliphate House: Fāṭimah *Khātūn*, wife of Caliph al-Muqtaḍī, solicited her husband to reside in the *Daūdrkā* following the death of Iṣmat *Khātūn* in 542/1147.⁹⁴⁵ The *Daūdrkā* continued to be a residential centre for the leading personalities of the state and the close companions of the Caliph, over and above those whom the Caliph desired to honour. In the same context, it is known that Caliph al-Mustaḍī donated this *Daūdrkā* as a residence for Qabūl bint ‘Abdullāh al-Mustanjidyah, the *qahramāna* of his father al-Mustanjid, after her retirement due to old age until her death in 600/1203.⁹⁴⁶

Binfashā’s house, in the vicinity of *Bab al-Azj*, also stands out as one of the largest palaces within the area of the Caliphate House. It was thought to be the first house that Binfashā, the mistress of Caliph al-Mustaḍī, had built for herself. It was located near *Bab al-Azj*, directly facing the strand of the river Tigris.⁹⁴⁷ However, she did not stay there long because she was granted ownership of *Wazīr* Fakhr al-Dawla Ibn Jahīr’s house. This house was next door to the school, so Binfashā gave

⁹⁴² Y. Al-‘Umarī, (d.1232/1816), *Ghāyat al-marām fī tārikh maḥāsīn Baghdād Dār al-Salām*, (Baghdad, Dār Manshūrāt al-Baṣrī, 1968). p.28.

⁹⁴³ *Dūdrkā*: a Persian word which means the window or the fractured entrance

⁹⁴⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, vol.5, p.73.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibn al-Sā‘ī, *al-Jāmi ‘al-mukhtaṣar*, p.137.

⁹⁴⁶ Abū Shāmah, *al-dhayl ‘alā al-rawḍatayn*

⁹⁴⁷ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, vol.5, p. 39

it to Ibn al-Jawzī (then a teacher at the school) as a present so that he could be as near to the school as possible.⁹⁴⁸

Binfashā must have given her house to Ibn al-Jawzī as a gift after the year 571/1175, because up to that date she still lived in the house adjacent to Bab al-Azj. In confirmation of the above, Ibn al-Jawzī stated that his daughter's wedding was held in Binfashā's house located at *al-Dawāb* Road on that date. This was in compliance with Binfashā's request that the girl was to be married there.⁹⁴⁹ There is no information about this house except for the description of its location given by the Traveller ibn Jubayr:

...on Saturday morning, we attended the *Majālis* of the *faqīh* and the Sole Imam Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍā'il Ibn al-Jawzī which faces his house that was situated on the bank at the eastern side of Baghdad where the house continues to connect with the palaces of the Caliph and stands in close proximity to *al-Başalyah* Door, the last of the eastern side doors.⁹⁵⁰

However, it seems that Caliph al-Nāṣir had obtained the house from Ibn al-Jawzī following his apprehension and exile from Baghdad. This conclusion does in fact coincide with Ibn al-Sā'ī's statement that Ibn al-Jawzī died in a house in the *Qaṭfā* Neighbourhood on the eastern side of Baghdad.⁹⁵¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī said that the time of Ibn al-Jawzī's death was unknown, but this is not exactly accurate as Sibṭ ibn al-Ta'āwīdhī dated the poem in which the latter delivered his congratulations for Binfashā on the occasion of completing her house to have taken place in the year 568/1172.⁹⁵² Hence, it may be safe to say he was alive at least until that date.

After leaving the house at *al-Dawāb* Road, Binfashā built another house at *Bab al-ghurbah* to the south of the Caliphate House. On this topic Ibn al-Sā'ī says:

she built a house for herself near to *Bab al-ghurbah* on the strand of the river Tigris. The house was very lofty in construction and embraced a generous courtyard including rooms, compartments, sceneries and recreation grounds.

⁹⁴⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 10, p. 262.

⁹⁴⁹ Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*, p.196

⁹⁵⁰ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p.67.

⁹⁵¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p.113.

⁹⁵² See S.al-Ta'āwīdhī (d.583/1187), *Dīwān al-Ta'āwīdhī*, Ver.Margoliouth,(Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Muqtaṭaf,1903), p. 452.

Adjacent to this house, four water wheels were installed which lift up the water from the river Tigris to the Caliphate court.⁹⁵³

Although the construction of this house was completed in 569/1173⁹⁵⁴ Binfashā only lived in it until 574/1178. This was because Caliph al-Nāṣir, in recognition of her assistance to him in holding the supreme power of the Caliphate, proposed that she live with his mother, Zumurrud *Khātūn*, in her palace.⁹⁵⁵

Still, Binfashā's house remained as one of the most magnificent houses of the Caliphate, and was considered to be the second best house, after *Dar al-Rayḥānīn*. Therefore, it was made as a residence for the second man in the State until Baghdad was invaded by the Mongols and Caliph al-Nāṣir availed this house as the home of *Amīr* Qushtumur al-Nāṣirīy, Commander in Chief of the Caliph's Army.⁹⁵⁶ The latest details found with regards to this house were those written by Ḥawādith al-jāmi'ah directly prior to the invasion of Baghdad by the Mongols. He says:

when his son was acknowledged as sovereign and Commander of the Faithful, our master and patron, Imam al-Musta'ṣim bi Allah, he moved her (one of the mistresses of his father) to live next to him, with all her servants and subjects, in the house known as the house of Binfashā at *Bab al-ghurbah*.⁹⁵⁷

Furthermore, Seljūqī *Khātūn* built another grand residence inside the Caliphate, the design of which she ensured was similar to the house she left behind in *Khallāṭ*.⁹⁵⁸ In this connection, Ibn al-'Ibrī explains that she worked out the plans of the house, and then she hired two hundred masons and two thousand workers. She ordered the bricks and gypsum to be prepared and made each group of labourers work on a different façade of the house. Seljūqī *Khātūn* then stripped off several doors from the *Khallāṭ* House and worked them out to fit in the new house. She even uprooted the trees and transplanted them in her new garden. Moreover, Seljūqī *Khātūn* laid out the mats and curtains and provided for everything in this house to look like the

⁹⁵³ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafa*, p.113.

⁹⁵⁴ For more information see Chapter Three of this thesis.

⁹⁵⁵ For more information see Chapter Two of this thesis pp.135-136.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *al Ḥawādith al-jāmi'ah*, p.131.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid. p.146.

⁹⁵⁸ Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-al-wafayāt*, vol. 15, p. 269.

old one in *Khallāf*. However, before long she died and the Caliph mourned her and decreed that the new house and garden be demolished.⁹⁵⁹

4.3.6 Bridges and the Repair of River Courses

Abbasid women also had an important role in the repair of river courses and bridge building. A rich woman in Basra, whose name was not mentioned in the sources, assumed the repair works at the embouchure of the *al-Ablah* River at Basra. The only information found in relation to this lady, was in a report written by the traveller Nāṣir-i Khusraw who visited Baghdad in 443/1051. He mentioned that a section of the *al-Ablah* River was not navigable because its deep waters created enormous whirlpools that forced ship and sailboat navigators to avoid steering through the area to the detriment of the activities on the river. The unknown woman purchased four hundred boats full of stones and rubble and threw them down to the bottom of the river thus raising the riverbed and therefore, making the navigation in that section of the *al-Ablah* River possible.⁹⁶⁰

The Binfashā Bridge on the River Tigris represents one of the greatest construction works handled by women during the history of the Abbasid Caliphate. The nature of Baghdad with its extended edifices and inhabitants on both banks of the River Tigris, meant that the people of Baghdad had to seek creative means for crossing the river, among which was via sailing boats. However, these boats were not suitable for carrying animals and heavy materials. Until Caliph al-Mustaḍī (reg.566-576/1170-1180) came into power, Baghdad had only one bridge that was known as *al-jisr al-‘atīq* (the old bridge) on the River Tigris. Caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, the founder of the city of Baghdad, was the first caliph to interlink bridges on the River Tigris. Subsequently, Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd added two more bridges. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī said: “ ... when al-Amīn was killed, the bridges were put out of service except for three. Then another one had malfunctioned”.⁹⁶¹ Ali Ibn Shādhān also said: “...when I arrived at Baghdad I found three bridges.

⁹⁵⁹ Al-‘Ibrī, *Tārikh al-zamān*, p. 219.

⁹⁶⁰ N. Khusraw(444/1052), *Riḥlah Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, trans Yahyá Khashshāb,(Cairo: al-Hay‘ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb 1987) p.150.

⁹⁶¹ Al-Baghdādī, *Tārikh Baghdād*, vol.1, p. 100

One was facing the Tuesday Market and the other was at Bab al-Ṭāq. So, there were two bridges; one for on- going traffic and the other for returning traffic. Eventually only one bridge was left”.⁹⁶² The fact that there was only one bridge to serve a vast and highly populated city like Baghdad was a source of pain and distress for its people. Hence, Binfashā started to build a large bridge on the River Tigris made out of a series of chained boats⁹⁶³, which served as the foundation or support of the bridge on the waters of the Tigris. Moreover, she ordered that *al-jisr al-‘atīq* (the old bridge) be relocated from its original site at the Tuesday Market to be built on the ‘Īsá River⁹⁶⁴ on the western side.⁹⁶⁵

Binfashā's bridge was inaugurated on the 22nd of Muḥarram, 570/1174. It was built on a site called *al-Riqqah*,⁹⁶⁶ which was directly opposite to Binfashā's newly built house located next to Bab *al-ghurba*.⁹⁶⁷ It extended across the River Tigris to the western bank. Ibn al-Jawzī says: “ ... on Friday, the 22nd of Muharram, a new bridge was erected by order of Her Eminence Binfashā. Her name was written on a steel plate under the *al-Riqqah* at the place of *al-jisr al-‘atīq*, which was relocated to the ‘Īsá River. The people of Baghdad were relieved when two bridges served their city”.⁹⁶⁸

As for *al-Jisr al-‘Atīq*, it soon became known by her name since the general public called it *-jisr al-Rūmīyah*⁹⁶⁹ (the bridge of the Roman woman) and Binfashā. However, the exact location of the bridge on the ‘Īsá River, cannot be determined except for a hint made by the Persian historian Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī. The

⁹⁶² A. Ibn al Jawzī(d.597/1200), *Risālat Manāqib Baghdad*, ver. Muḥammad Atharī, (Baghdad : Maṭba‘at Dār al-Salām,1923) p.20. Salmon: Introduction, p.71.

⁹⁶³ Ibn al Jawzī, *Risālat Manāqib* , p.20.

⁹⁶⁴ ‘Īsá River: the largest tributary, at the western bank that offers a wealth of water to the River Tigris. It originates from the River Euphrates heading east in a semi circle pattern before it reaches the southern outskirts of *al-Karkh* and eventually pours out into the River Tigris. See G.Strang, *Baghdad: During the Abbasid Caliphate*, Trans. Bashīr Fransīs (Baghdad: al-Aṭlasīyah lil-Nashr, 1936), p.54.

⁹⁶⁵ Al-Irbilī ,*Khulāṣat al-Dhahab*, p. 206. Also see Ibn al-Sā‘ī,*Nisā’ al-khulafā’*, p. 112. Ş.Aḥmad, *al-‘Alī,Khiṭaṭ Baghdād* , vol. 2,(Baghdad: Maṭba‘at al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Irāqī,1985) ,p.93.

⁹⁶⁶ *Al-Riqqah*: a group of gardens belonging to the Caliphate House. See Al-Mundhirī, *al-Takmilah* ,vol. 2, p. 243.& Al- Sam‘ānī,*al-ansāb*,vol. 2, p. 403.

⁹⁶⁷This hints that Binfashā began the construction works of the bridge following the completion of her house in 568/1172, which means the building of the bridge took two years to complete.

⁹⁶⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī , *al-Muntaẓam*,vol. 10, p. 250. Ibn al-Sā‘ī says that the linkage of the bridge to *al-Riqqah* gardens on the western side made the bridge a recreational area for all. Ibn al-Sā‘ī,*Nisā’ al-khulafā’*, p. 112.

⁹⁶⁹ A.Suhrāb, *ajā‘ib al-aqālim al-sab‘ah ilá nihāyat al-‘imārah* ,ver. Hans von Mžik, (Vienna :Ādūlf Hülzhawzin, 1929) p.123.

latter has provided a valuable service to those studying the cultural development in Baghdad. Suffice to say that he was the sole historian to decide that the exact location of *al-jisr al-'atīq* on the 'Īsá River was on the site adjacent to al- Shūnīzyah *Ribāṭ*. Al-Qazwīnī said "Binfashā, mistress of Caliph al-Mustaḍī", who was famous for her generosity and devotion to charitable deeds, built the Shūnīzyah *Ribāṭ* and the bridge adjacent to it".⁹⁷⁰ It is obvious that Al-Qazwīnī believed that *al-jisr al-'atīq* on 'Īsá River, was also built by Binfashā. This assertion is of great significance: On one hand it highlights the role Abbasid women played in construction, and on the other it demonstrates the progress that took place in the art of making layouts/maps of Baghdad especially in the Abbasid Era.⁹⁷¹

Binfashā's bridge, which had replaced the old bridge, became the only one to serve Baghdad on the River Tigris and there are some indications to confirm that the bridge still remained on the same site for many years to follow. That is to say, the bridge looked the same as was described by the sources or as illustrated on the map of Baghdad drawn by the French Traveller Jean Baptist Tavernier who visited Baghdad in 1091/1676.⁹⁷²

4.3.7 Women and the Reconstruction Works on *Hajj* Road

One of the main activities that the women of the Abbasid Court became involved in, especially after Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife, Zubaydah, had achieved her great success through her numerous building and rebuilding works, was the reconstruction of the Road to *Hajj* from Baghdad to Mecca. They were also involved in the rebuilding of the Holy Shrines of *Hajj*. During the era under investigation, women participated greatly in taking care of the Road to *Hajj*, the Pilgrims and the rebuilding of the facilities attached to the *Hajj* Holy Shrines in Hejaz. Perhaps, the first woman to have played a significant role in such works was al-Jihah al-Qā'īmya, the mother of the son of Caliph al-Qā'im, who ordered that

⁹⁷⁰al-Qazwīnī(d.730/1329),*tārīkh Kuzāidah* vol.2, p.368.

⁹⁷¹ Ibid.

⁹⁷² J.Tavernier, *ilā al-'Irāq fī al-qarn al-sābi' 'ashar*, trans.Kūrķīs 'Awwād & Bashīr Fransīs , (Baghdad: Maṭb'ah al-ma'ārif 1994) p.78.

all her capital, real estates and jewellery be devoted to repair the Road to *Ḥajj* from Baghdad to Medina after her death.⁹⁷³

Caliph al-Muqtadī's mother, Arjwān, who performed the religious duty of *Ḥajj* for three consecutive years,⁹⁷⁴ also added to her many good deeds by repairing the Road to *Ḥajj* and ordering the construction of a Sufī *Ribāṭ* in Mecca⁹⁷⁵ in 492/1098. She also built a second *Ribāṭ* known as *al-Fuqaīyyāt Ribāṭ*, which was dedicated to the women of the Sufī Sect, next to this edifice.⁹⁷⁶ Moreover, Iṣmat *Khātūn* took great pains to repair the Public Rest-Houses for Pilgrims and along the Road to *Ḥajj*. Ibn al-Jawzī reported that in 515/1021:

an Arab gang of *Nabhān* Tribe Raiders looted the Public Rest-Houses and filled up the wells which the Pilgrims mainly depend on for their water supply, with earth. However, with a view to rectifying this issue, Iṣmat *Khātūn*, sent a caravan led by her chamberlain Muwaffaq al-khadem to restore the wells to their previous condition.⁹⁷⁷

On the order of the *Khātūn*, Muwaffaq al-Khadem brought steel doors with him to safeguard the Rest Houses from the raids of the Arab gangs, as well as a group of well diggers. This mission cost Iṣmat *Khātūn* a significant amount of money.⁹⁷⁸ Furthermore, one of the *'umm walad* of Caliph al-Mustazhīr, known as al-Jihah al-Karīmah Razīn bint 'Abdullāh⁹⁷⁹ also established a *Ribāṭ* annexed to the Mosque of '*al-Kawthar*' in the valley of Mina near Mecca. As indicated in the foundation stone of this *Ribāṭ* (which still exists to date), the site and *Ribāṭ* were devoted by al-Jihah al-Karīmah Razīn to one of the Sufī Sheiks in Medina known as Omar b. Ali al-Baghdadī and to his wife surnamed Fakhr al-nisā'.⁹⁸⁰ No biographical information

⁹⁷³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol.9, p.25.

⁹⁷⁴ J. al-Azdī (613/1216), *Akhhbār al-duwal al-munqaṭi'ah : tārikh al-Dawlah al-'Abbāsīyah*, ver. Muḥammad Zahrānī (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1988), p. 279.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibn 'Imrānī, *al-Anbā'*, p.3 11. Al-Khazrajī, *al-'Asjad al-masbūk*, p. 39. Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mukhtaṣar al-muḥtāj ilayhi*, p. 399. Arjwān must have erected other establishments in addition to these *Ribāṭs* because al-Suyūṭī says that "Arjawan has many good relics in Mecca". J. al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505), *al-Mustazraf min akhhbār al-jawārī*, 'Abd al-Fattāh Tammām (Cairo:Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1989), p. 58.

⁹⁷⁶ M. Fāsī(d.832/1428), *Shifā' al-gharām bi-akhhbār al-Balad al-Ḥarām*, (Cairo :Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Ḥadīthah. 1956), p.331.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p.227.

⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 9, p.209.

regarding this woman is found in the history books available to us. However, all information relevant to her is confined to the founding stone erected on the door of said *Ribaṭ*. As for Binfashā, no sources were found with regards to exactly what facilities she had built on the Road to Mecca. However, Ibn al-Sā'ī reported that she built many grand monuments there.⁹⁸¹

Seljūqī *Khātūn* also dedicated a large portion of her capital to the rebuilding of facilities and edifices on the Road to *Ḥajj*. She specified how the money should be spent. For example, she wanted a holy man to perform *Ḥajj* for her each year and an amount of the capital was to be allocated for whoever he may desire to perform the *Ḥajj* if he needed the money. Also, part of her capital was to be designated for the purchase of water, food supplies, clothing, footgear and all the other requisites necessary for the pilgrims to complete their long journey to Mecca. Moreover, she allocated for the purchase of medicaments for the treatment of epidemic diseases, which were likely to spread amongst the pilgrims during the *Ḥajj* season.⁹⁸²

As for Zumurrud *Khātūn*, mother of Caliph al-Nāṣir, she ordered that a *Ribaṭ* be erected in Medina near the Mosque of the Prophet at Gabriel's Door. She stipulated a clause in the institution of this religious endowment, the *Khātūn* made clear that the *Ribaṭ* was to accommodate the poor, the separated and those who sought to live in the vicinity of Medina.⁹⁸³ Zumurrud *Khātūn* also ordered the restoration of the Mosque of 'al-Kawthar' in the valley of Mina near Mecca as it had deteriorated and was on the verge of collapse. The *Khātūn* brought craftsmen to repair and decorate the Mosque, and she furnished and carpeted it. For that, she paid a considerable amount of money.⁹⁸⁴

Finally, it is worth noting that Zumurrud *Khātūn* deserves all the credit for the repair and maintenance works of the water ponds and *al-maṣāni'* (man-made drinking sites) which were constructed by Zubaydah the wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd. This was

⁹⁸¹ Ibn al-Sā'ī, *al-Jāmi' al-mukhtaṣar*, p. 88.

⁹⁸² Ibn al-Sā'ī, *Nisā' al-khulafā'*, p. 115.

⁹⁸³ A. al-Najjār (d. 643-1245), *al-Durrah al-thamīnah fīmā li-zā'ir al-Nabī ilā al-Madīnah*, (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1947), p. 79.

⁹⁸⁴ I. Fāsī (d. 832/1428), *Shifā' al-gharām*, vol. 1, p. 118.

to provide water to the Pilgrims on their long journey from Baghdad to Mecca.⁹⁸⁵ During the course of time, the installations had deteriorated to a deplorable condition through wear and tear. It has been reported that the *Khātūn* spent a total sum of three hundred thousand dinars for their repair and maintenance works.⁹⁸⁶

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how, during the course of this era, women were able to execute huge constructional and rebuilding efforts that were manifested in the establishment of many social, religious and educational institutions such as central and ordinary mosques, schools, shrines and religious *Ribāṭs*. Additionally, they contributed to many magnificent edifices built all over the area. Women also donated to charity and civil works such as the repair of river courses, the building of bridges and eventually, they crowned their outstanding performances with the reconstruction and rebuilding works along the Road of *Ḥajj* and attending to the Holy shrines in Mecca and Medina.

After the examination of women's roles in reconstruction, one can argue that women, whether *al-ḥarā'ir*, *Umm walad* or *jawārī* contributed heavily to the development of their societies. While some built bridges, others built schools and mosques; similarly while some participated in the medical professions, others enjoyed writing and copying; all of which greatly impacted on the progression of their communities.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the thesis has found that Abbasid women were not only politically very powerful; they were also financially very astute. Women were seen to have made enormous contributions to the commercial, financial, scientific spheres and, as discussed above, to the construction fields as

⁹⁸⁵ The largest of these water collection sites was *al-Zubaydiyyah* which was a pitfall dug by Zubaydah between Mecca and *al-Adhthib*. Y.al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* vol.3, p.132. Another water site, was 'Umm Ja'far Pond erected between al-Mughīthyah and al-'Adhthib. It also included large water well. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol.1, p. 401. Among such water sites, were Al-muḥaddith, which was water well and a public rest-house for the Pilgrims that was situated at a six miles distance from Mecca. See Ibid, vol. 5, p. 60. See also Y. Ibn al-Mujāwir (d.690/1291), *Ta'rikh al-mustabṣir*, ver.Oscar Löfgren, vol.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1951), p.29.

⁹⁸⁶ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. 8, sec .2, p. 514. Abū Shāmah, *Dhayl al-rawḍatayn*, p.33. It is said that Zumurrud *Khātūn* performed the *Hajj* and donated a two thousand camel-loads. Unkonwn: Insān al-'uyūn, p. 226.

well. Hence, it is strongly argued, that a proper and comprehensive understanding of the roles that Muslim women have played throughout Islamic history will have a positive impact on the way Muslim women are viewed and portray themselves today, in all facets of life.

CONCLUSION

The role of Muslim women in society has been an issue of interest and discussion in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres. The perception that Muslim women are oppressed, suppressed or victimised has long dominated the narrative that portrays them as weak, submissive, or worse, trivial. To address this topic, this research delved into the historical narratives relating to Muslim women and their roles during the period of the greatest of the medieval Islamic dynasties: the Abbasid caliphate, particularly the Būyid and Saljūq eras. The thesis examined the roles of women during these periods by asking the following questions: what roles did women play during the Būyid and Saljūq periods? Were women properly historicized during these periods? Does the lack of historical records for individual women indicate a severely limited political and social role for females during this period? And finally, what can modern feminist historians deduce from the little we do know of the women of the period; and what kind of influence, behind the scenes, did their female contemporaries exert on the men of power? By employing a chronological analysis of the limited resources covering the evolution of the roles of Muslim women during the Abbasid era, the research uncovered and presented a considerable number of contributions to women's studies. Indeed, these findings significantly alter the perception of Muslim women and their involvement in society throughout history.

In order to resolve the questions posed by the thesis, the research used textual analysis and criticism of the different readings of historical records, as well as some modern materials that explored the role of women in medieval Islamic history. By using *Retrieving women's history* by Jay Kleinberg, Fatima Mernissi's 'Women in Muslim History: Traditional perspectives and New Strategies' and the 'Symbolic Annihilation' (of women) proposed by Gaye Tuchman, the research created a theoretical framework upon which it based the foundation of this thesis. These theories were merged to form a troika through which the roles of Abbasid women were re-assessed.

The study was two pronged: the first focused on the different roles of women in aspects such as politics, culture and education during the Būyid and Saljūq periods as evidenced in historical books and researches; and the second aimed at accurately analysing the relationship between women's roles during the eras in question vis-à-vis their inclusion and representation in historical narratives. Essentially, the goal was to investigate meticulously, the missing pieces of the puzzle that represents women and their roles in Islamic history.

Before addressing the findings of this research, it is first important to discuss the periodization of this study and the implications of setting the chronological parameters to this particular period. In examining the elements of the Būyid and Saljūq periods, certain contrasts come to light. For instance, the religious and cultural differences between these periods each contributed to the politics and stance of women. The Būyids were a Shī'ah group from Daylam in Persia whereas the Saljūqs were a Sunni group belonging to Turkish tribes. Women were more visible in historical narratives during the Saljūq era than they were during the Būyid one, and while there is no tangible evidence as to why that is the case, the cultural dimensions of each of these groups is certainly worth considering. Furthermore, the primary sources authors' background and the motivations for their representations of some women was another element in setting the chronological parameters of this study. As amply mentioned throughout the thesis, women of these periods had yet to be adequately studied or understood.

Authors who had made valuable efforts in this direction were crucial to facilitate the understanding of women's invisibility in history during Būyid and Saljūq periods. As these authors' writings are our only window to that time, understanding their affiliations and motivations must be examined to better comprehend how and why women's stories presented in the thesis were told. For example, the author Abī Ashḩāq al-Ṣābi (d.384/994), who served under the regime of 'Izz al-Dawla bkhtiar , al-Ṣābi was a *wazīr* and the writer of 'Izz al-Dawla at the same time, therefore anything he wrote regarding 'Izz al-Dawla had a negative impact on 'Adud al-Dawla

which naturally created animosity.⁹⁸⁷ However, after the death of ‘Izz al-Dawla , ‘Adud al-Dawla became the *Amīr* of the Būyids and imprisoned Abī Ashāq al-Şābi until 371/981, when he released him and ordered him to write a book about the Būyids and their history. Surely enough, al-Şābi wrote *al-Tājī fī akhbār al-dawla al-Dulaymyah* and more commonly used “*al-Tājī alMilah*” as the title, which was also ‘Adud al-Dawla ‘s title at that time.⁹⁸⁸ This book was the only source available referring to ‘Adud al-Dawla’s wife and the mother of Şamşām al-Dawla. Considering the circumstances of how this book came into being, it is not hard to imagine that it is biased, at best.

This research argued that women, regardless of their social standing, were far from invisible in the narrative of this period, and their manipulation of situations (particularly political ones) must not be taken lightly. They creatively and resourcefully used, and in some instances manipulated, opportunities that came their way in order to serve their agendas. Ultimately, they asserted their stance and in turn, their role in society. This reassessment highlighted the significance of Muslim women and their roles in Islamic History, and argues that it was women’s *representation* in historical narratives as opposed to history itself that obscured the role of Muslim women during the period.

Women contributed to the establishment and development of a strong political relationship between the Būyid and Saljūq leaders and the Abbasid caliphate through marriage alliances. Chapter Two asserted that the role marriage alliances played by allowing women to reach positions of authority and to climb the power ladder cannot be emphasised enough. Indeed, its omission from historical narratives has largely contributed to the perceived victimisation of Muslim women to date.

The political role of women, particularly during the Būyid era, was evidently

⁹⁸⁷ Al-Fidā, A. (d.732/1331), *al-mukhtaşar fī akhbār al-bashar*, vol.2, (Beirut: al-Kitāb al- Lubnānī, 1961),p.129.

⁹⁸⁸ Abū Shujā, M. (d.448/1095), *Dhayl Kitāb tajārib al-umam*,vol.3 (Baghdad: Maktabat al- Muthannā, 1960),pp.22-23

undeniable in mothers tactically fighting to secure the throne for their sons. In fact, the most striking element of the *'umm walads'* influence was seen in their fierce struggle to win the caliphate for their sons and in turn, elevate their social and political standing. Still more outstanding was the political presence of women in the Saljūq era, which witnessed significant political activity by *al-ḥarā'ir*. One might go as far as to argue that, while *al-ḥarā'ir* had a distinct and extremely active role during the Saljūq period, the Būyid period witnessed a shift in the balance of power that boosted the *jawāri* and the *'umm walad's* roles in society. This links directly to one of the main research questions of this study regarding the relation between the lack of historical records of individual women and the perception of women's lack of presence or roles in the political and social affairs of the period. That is to say, the lack of resources or narratives is not, in any way, representative of Abbasid women's roles in society; and by examining the various facets of both the Būyid and Saljūq societies with a focus on women's roles, this thesis prove this.

Qahramānas also played a crucial role via their influence on the financial aspects of the *ḥarīm*, which inevitably involved them in political events and decision-making. These influences were nevertheless denied legitimacy by being trivialised if not completely omitted in historical narratives. With this in mind, it is worth revisiting one of the main questions underpinning this research: were women properly historicised during this era? In short, the answer is no. With regard to women's political roles during the era in question, the findings of this research assert that the political scene of the time cannot be fully comprehended without exploring the role of Muslim women. For this, the thesis contends that it is essential not to overlook the historians' and intellectuals' evaluation of the role of women in the political life of the era, and approach this topic in an interdisciplinary manner. That is to say, one must dissect the authors and their motivations for (mis)representing women as much as they examine women and the various aspects of their lives. In doing so, this study reasserted women's active role, not just in politics, but in other aspects of Abbasid society as well.

The assessments of women's political role have been predominantly negative,

since women have incited conspiracies, struggles and discords. The political trend that argued against the intervention of women in political life was augmented during and after the riots and struggles that were kindled by Turkān Khātūn. She brought upon herself the hatred of scholars, intellectuals, historians, *Fuqahā'* and the general public, following her elimination of the *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk in her desperate defence of the right of her young son to come to power. This incident brought her into confrontation with Caliph al-Muqtadī and caused her to wage a civil war against Sultan Barkiyāruq in the same year that the Crusades against the Islamic world became prominent. Considering the engagement of the State in the wars and intrigues she engaged in, the Saljūq rule was unable to stop or impede the advance of the Crusades. This was due to the absence of a shrewd and remarkable politician such as the *wazīr* Niẓām al-Mulk. Abū Shujā', the *wazīr* of Caliph al-Muqtadī, echoed Niẓām al-Mulk when he made an implicit accusation against Turkān Khātūn. In his strongly worded criticism of her, he said, as if he were criticizing the mother of Şamşām al-Dawla:

if the State is undertaken by women, then its conditions will corrupt and its power will weaken and then it becomes shaky and finally collapses. However, should they possess the power of command then it becomes ineffective, baseless and its consequences are devastating. Should they share in making an opinion, it becomes irrelevant and devoid of senses.⁹⁸⁹

In the same way, the famous historian, Abū Manşūr al-Tha'ālibī (d.429/1037) bore a negative attitude towards women. He launched a severe attack, accusing them of narrow mindedness and futility of opinion. He said: "women's opinion is quoted as an example of weakness and incorrectness; that is why the Prophet said 'consult them, but contradict them'".⁹⁹⁰ Also, Ibn al Jawzī, quoting Ibn Hījjah al-Ḥamawī (d.837/1344) wrote as follows:

The mind of a woman equals the mind of seventy weavers; and the mind of a weaver equals the mind of seventy teachers. The reason why a teacher has a small mind is because by day he is engaged with the boys and by night he is engaged with the women.⁹⁹¹

⁹⁸⁹ Abū Shujā', *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, p.104.

⁹⁹⁰ A. Al-Tha'ālibī(d.429/1037) , *Thimār al-Qulūb fī al-Muḍāf wa-al-Mansūb*, ver.Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl(Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif,1985) p. 37.

⁹⁹¹ A. Al-Ḥamawī *Thamarāt al-awraq*, ver.Abu Faḍl Ibrāhīm, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanjī, 1971) p 306.

Perhaps this attitude can be justified by the reality that the assault on women was a predominant feature in the cultural and intellectual life of the era. This supports the thesis' argument that, Abbasid women have been poorly historicised.

The role of women in the literary, scientific and religious aspects of society during the Būyid and Saljūq eras was also examined in this thesis. After analysis, it became increasingly evident that the tremendous role they played was far more substantial than today's tainted stigma of 'house-wife' status suggests. Similar to the political realm, class did not limit women's involvement in the social and cultural construct. Indeed, their roles in the literary, scientific and religious aspects of both the Būyid and Saljūq eras cannot be denied. Contrary to what some feminist scholars⁹⁹² argued, even the *jawāri* were much more than mere slaves. They were highly cultured and proficient in delivering the most refined types of instrumental music and singing. Furthermore, women's contributions and achievements, particularly in the Sciences of the Holy Quran, are yet to be fully uncovered from historical documents.

It would seem that women's roles during the discussed periods are equally significant. But over the course of this research yet another similarity came to light: women were trivialized and actively omitted from some of the historical narratives for reasons ranging from authors catering to their cultural views or religious/political motivations to manuscripts having been lost through history. The result was inevitably the same: a gross invisibility of women and their roles at the time. To fully grasp the magnitude of their roles and attributes, their omission from historical resources must be remedied by further research.

By analyzing the role of women at court, the research proved that not only did they succeed in their political manipulations behind the scenes, but they also managed to occupy important functions and hold influential positions throughout both the Būyid and the Saljūq regimes. The study also found that women made enormous contributions to the commercial, financial, and scientific segments of society. For

⁹⁹² L. Ahmad, *Western Ethnocentrism and perceptions of the Harem*, (Autumn: Feminist Studies, Inc, 1982), p.521.

example, we saw in Chapter Four that during the Abbasid era women were seen to be involved in construction. That is, regardless of their social standing, women were able to organise and execute huge structural and rebuilding developments manifested in the establishment of many social, religious and educational institutions. They also actively contributed to charity, and civil works, most significant of which was the reconstruction and rebuilding works along the road of *Hajj* by caring for the Holy shrines in Mecca and Medina.

Women's ability to manage their own finances reflected on the status of the caliphate system itself. For instance, the change in the name of *Kātib al-sayyidah*, from a clerk, to a ministerial position was attributed primarily to the Abbasid Caliphs' resentment against the Saljūq women's influence in the court. It was further noted in this research that during the Saljūq era women had more freedom in their financial dealings than in the Būyids' era, which may be attributed to the different regimes. Nevertheless, women of both periods were categorically omitted from historical narratives. While history can be distorted because it is sometimes difficult to find records in the sources of their professional prowess and altruistic deeds, this research has proven that it is incorrect to say that Muslim women had been trivialized by society during the studied eras. However, it remains the responsibility of the researchers and historians to unearth their roles.

This thesis argued that despite the wide range of freedom women enjoyed and regardless of the efficient roles they played in the political, social and cultural arenas, they were not regarded justly by their own society. In the same way, one can observe the decline of women's status in their society through the vicious campaigns by the scholars and the intellectuals who accused them of being the root of the spread of dissolution and moral decline. This was particularly seen when the *Qiyān* and *jawārī* were viciously attacked by al-Washshā' (d.325/936) in his book *al-Muwashshá*: "Deception is their nature and stalling is their instinct; and let it be known that they neither keep a promise nor remain loyal".⁹⁹³ Al-Washshā'

⁹⁹³ al-Washshā', *al-Muwashshá*, p. 19

further heavily attacked the *jawārī*, describing them as people with, “vile attitudes and bad morals”.⁹⁹⁴

Additionally, in their tales, the storytellers exposed several of the adverse phenomena that were produced by the exaggerated acquisition of the *jawārī* and its associated manifestations of corruption and dissolution. For example, one storyteller gave an account of the events between Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṣayrafī and al-Muṭaḍid's *jāriyah* in which he expressed his opinion about the *jawārī* by saying, “May God disgrace them; how much they infatuate people”.⁹⁹⁵ Also, *Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*⁹⁹⁶ authored by Abū al-Muṭahhar al-Azdī, is considered to be a good example of the accusations against women, in general, and the *jawārī* in particular. He accused them of being the social and moral decline that hit the Iraqi Community. He raged at the *jawārī* many times with remarks such as, “*jāriyah al-Baghdādayh* knows nothing except the earthly matters and the *dinar*”.⁹⁹⁷ The book also discussed the significant impact of the corruption and moral disintegration caused by the *jawārī* as seen in the statements about ZādMihr, a *jāriyah* of the merchant Abū al-Hassan ibn jumhūr, which is an example of the *jawārī*'s culture that embraced dissolution and indecency.⁹⁹⁸

Furthermore, the concubine system had a negative impact on the position of women on a social level. Their dignity declined as a result of the spreading of corruption, moral dissolution, pleasure and the uninhibited way of life, which became phenomenal in that era. As such, the scholars of the time such as, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d.416/1025) and the *wazīr* Abū ‘Abdullāh al-‘āriḍ⁹⁹⁹ burdened

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid. p 120

⁹⁹⁵ S.Qalamāwī, *Alf laylah wa-laylah*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1966) p.310.

⁹⁹⁶ Nothing concrete is known about the author named Abū al-Muṭahhar al-Azdī. However, some investigators such as Muṣṭafā Jawād and Iḥsān ‘Abbās believe that the real author of “*Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*” is Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī himself (died 416/1025); but he assumed the name of Abū al-Muṭahhar al-Azdī because he was afraid and reluctant to add his name to a book filled with a predominant spirit of dissoluteness and indecency. The book was ascribed to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī specifically, and not to other writers of his time because of the similarity of the writing style of the book with that distinguished prose writing of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. Furthermore, complete paragraphs of the book were detected that were scattered, here and there, amidst the different writings of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, especially the book called “*Kitāb al-imtā’ wa-al-mu’ānasah*”. ‘Abbūd Shālījī has recently re-verified and re-published the book of “*Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*” and ascribed it directly to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*, p.71.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid. p.76.

⁹⁹⁹ *Kitāb al-imtā’ wa-al-mu’ānasah*, vol.1, p.23.

women with the responsibility of this demoralization and accused them of being the cause of all sins and negative manifestations in the Iraqi community.

Findings like this, together with many others offered in this thesis, essentially alter many of the contemporary images in the media that have given a negative impression of Muslim women. In effect, this research argues that once sufficient resources are made available for research into the lives of Muslim women in the past, today's image of their lives in society may completely change. One of the primary lessons this thesis and its conclusions offer is that by rewriting these women's stories, one may unearth a different history: that is, one that provides a new perspective of women and redefines their role and status both in history and modern day.

As mentioned earlier, contrary to common belief, women during the Abbasid period contributed to political life, managed their financial affairs, participated in the educational, scientific and religious life of their times including the building of schools, mosques and communities. The Abbasid era witnessed women enjoying a great deal of financial independence with no interference from men. As such, women assumed the burden of guardianship, selling, purchasing, pledging of property and all the other commercial and trading activities. How then is it not generally known that women during this period were often financially independent? And how did Muslim women come to have such a lowly image in their own society? This study concluded that the absence of information on Muslim women is inextricably linked to the image of their lives in the past, but more significantly, to the image one has of them, today. Women played major roles in various facets of society; and this thesis proved that during the Būyid and Saljūq periods, women did not only influence society and the individual members of a community, their influence also affected the State. At the heart of this thesis is an investigation of why women's roles remain at best, ridiculed in historical narratives. Mernissi suggested a strategy to understand Muslim women beyond their status of females affiliated to powerful men, be it through marriage or otherwise. Kandal's¹⁰⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰⁰ T. Kandal, *The women question in classical sociological theory*, (Florida: University of Florida Press, 1988), p.3.

research complemented this assertion perfectly, by stating that the reassessment made by feminist research led to a deeper understanding of women in history. However, information on the history of Muslim women is scarce, especially with regard to their roles and achievements and there is no significant recognition by critics. Few writers found women important enough to address their roles by examining the historical context. As an illustration of this paucity of sources the research cited recent findings, such as the study provided by Delia Cortese and Simonetta Calderini on women in Fatimid's history; as well as Nabia Abbott's *Two queens of Baghdad*; and Eric J. Hanne's book entitled, *Women, power, and the eleventh and twelfth century Abbasid court*. These authors focus on the contributions of a select number of elite women during the Abbasid period. This study went further, by looking at women of all the social classes.

Essentially, this thesis should be viewed as a bridge between Western theories and Islamic research material, which opened the discussion on Muslim women and their roles in history. By employing Western theories, the research re-visited Islamic history, by taking into account the partiality of history in general. Muslim women and their image in Islamic history were examined with the aim of a better understanding of both them and their status in society today. There are several historical viewpoints depending on the author's and their ideological backgrounds. Women's history, especially in Islam, needs to be presented via a new approach. With this in mind, this thesis offered a unique and important view of women's history by asking whether or not the sources and researchers presented women as subjects.

Presented in the findings of this research is a very interesting, and perhaps largely overlooked, connection between Muslim women, their lives during the Abbasid period and their lives and perceptions of their image, today. It is astonishing to see the similarity in women's determination to manipulate everyday situations to serve their goals and the desire to excel. More curious still is the extent to which these efforts were, and indeed continue to be, trivialized by researchers and analysts alike. The findings in this research advance knowledge of this era in an original manner by focusing on the actions of a select number of women attached to the

Abbasid dynasty under the Būyid and Saljūq periods. The originality and importance of this thesis lies in the rereading of the Muslim woman's history, showing Islamic history under a different light than that which today's media has seasoned people to accept.

It is no exaggeration that modern images of Muslim women in the media are the legacy of misunderstandings about their roles and status throughout history. These misunderstandings continue to impact negatively on the present, not only in how the media perceives Muslim women but more importantly, how they view themselves. This thesis thoroughly examined the roles that women played during the Būyid and Saljūq periods and the magnitude of the impact these roles had on society. The findings this research unearthed can be integrated, and indeed developed upon, to provide a realistic, believable, and more accurate image of Muslim women's roles and the various aspects of their lives at the time.

The issue of women's history and their current roles in society has been a second major issue after feminist controversies on women's rights. What is yet to be found in feminist studies is 'action' to deal with women in history.¹⁰⁰¹ This study examined the reason behind the absence of women's narratives and asserted that by looking at the basic level of women and how they are presented in history one could provide a theory of the study of women during any era. There are numerous historic narratives and accounts of women still waiting to be uncovered and re-assessed; this thesis is merely the beginning. It is now time to stop looking at Muslim women from behind the *ḥarīm's* curtains. It is time to understand the magnitude of their capabilities. The findings of this research may have filled a gap in the puzzle, but the bigger picture is far from complete.

¹⁰⁰¹ T.Kandal, *The women question in classical sociological theory*, (Florida: University of Florida Press, 1988), p.3.

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