



**THE ARMY OF THE ABBASID CALIPHATE IN THE SAMARRA PERIOD, AS THE BASIS
OF THE MILITARY POWER OF THE STATE**

Rakhmanova Odinahon Ravshanbekovna

Lecturer at the Department of World History, Fergana State University

Mail : setoraimohihosa@mail.ru

Annotation

The article deals with the creation of an army consisting of Turks, Fergana, and warriors from Ustrshana, which is the basis of the military power of the Abbasid Caliphate of the Samarra period, its importance in the life of the caliphs of the Abbasid dynasty, the reasons for founding the city of Samarra, which served as the residence of the caliphs and the capital of the empire for almost half a century. The relationship of soldiers from the guards and their commanders with the caliphs, the impact on the political life of the caliphate.

Keywords. Samarra, Al-Mamun, Al-Mu'tasim, Abbasids, Turks, garrison, Mamluks.

**АРМИЯ АББАСИДСКОГО ХАЛИФАТА В САМАРРАСКИЙ ПЕРИОД, КАК ОСНОВА
ВОЕННОЙ МОЩИ ГОСУДАРСТВА**

Рахманова Одинахон Равшанбековна

Преподаватель кафедры всемирной истории

Ферганского государственного университета,

e-mail: setoraimohihosa@mail.ru

Аннотация.

В статье рассмотрены вопросы создания армии состоящей из тюрок, ферганцев, и воинов из Устршаны являющейся как основой военной мощи Аббасидского халифата Самаррского периода, о его важности в жизни халифов династии Аббасидов, причины основания города Самарры, служившая резиденцией халифов и столицей империи почти полвека. Взаимосвязь солдат из гвардии и их командиров с халифами, влияние на политическую жизнь халифата.

Ключевые слова. Самарра, Аль-Мамун, Аль-Мутасим, Аббасиды, тюрки, гарнизон, мамлюки.

The Abbasid Caliphate was one of the most powerful Islamic empires in history, ruling much of the Middle East and North Africa from the middle of the 8th century to the middle of the 13th century. The Abbasid Caliphate was known for its strong military, which played a significant role in the expansion and maintenance of its empire.

During the Samarra period, which lasted from 836 to 892, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate was moved from Baghdad to the newly built city of Samarra. During this period, there were significant changes in the structure and organization of the army of the Abbasid Caliphate.



One of the most significant changes during the Samarra period was the creation of a professional standing army. Prior to this period, the Abbasid Caliphate relied mainly on tribal levies and volunteers to supplement its armies. However, during the period of Samarra, the Caliphate established a standing paid army, composed of both Arabs and non-Arabs. This new professional army was better trained and equipped than the previous armies and played a key role in expanding and maintaining the territory of the Caliphate.

The army of the Abbasid Caliphate during the Samarra period consisted of several units, including cavalry, infantry and archers. The cavalry was the most important unit and consisted of both light and heavy cavalry. The light cavalry was used for reconnaissance and warfare, while the heavy cavalry was used for shock charges. The infantry consisted of both spearmen and swordsmen, and they were used for close combat. Archers were used for long-range attacks and were an important part of the military strategy of the Caliphate.

The army of the Abbasid Caliphate during the Samarra period was also known for the use of siege weapons, including battering rams and siege towers. These weapons were used to break through fortifications and walls, allowing the armies of the Caliphate to conquer new territories.

In general, the army of the Abbasid Caliphate during the Samarra period was a powerful and well-organized force that played a significant role in expanding and maintaining the empire of the Caliphate. The creation of a professional standing army was a significant event in the history of Islamic warfare and had a lasting impact on the region.

There are several historical and archaeological studies that discuss the organization, tactics and equipment of the army of the Abbasid Caliphate in different periods, including the Samarra period.

One such study is *The Armies of the Caliphs: Army and Society in the Early Islamic State* by Hugh Kennedy, published by Routledge in 2001, 10th century, including the Samarra period of the Abbasid Caliphate. It examines the organization of the army, the role of the cavalry, the use of the siege, and the influence of social and economic factors on the military.

Another study that may be of interest is *The Abbasid Army* by G.R. Hawting, published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1978. This article provides an overview of the Abbasid army in the early Islamic period, including the Samarra period. It discusses the role of the cavalry, the use of mercenaries, and the development of military equipment and tactics.

Although these sources are not peer-reviewed scholarly articles, they are authoritative academic works that provide valuable information about the history of the army of the Abbasid Caliphate during the Samarra period.

In the last years of al Mamun's reign, the number of Turks in the army grew rapidly. They were subordinated to al-Mu'tasim (833-842) [9.87-87-c.]. Such later famous commanders of the caliphate army as Afshin, Buga al Kabir, Ashnas and Inak, during this period began to enjoy great authority among the soldiers and in the state [1. 267, 322-c.]. In other words, the center of gravity and influence in the military organization of the Caliphate passed to the Turks. It is very likely that the opinion of the Turks was taken into account when appointing an heir. Moreover, they also took into account more than positive relations and trusting mutual understanding between them and al-Mu'tasim.



Regarding these plots, sources report quite specific information. As mentioned, the formation of the Turkic military formations were entrusted to al-Mu'tasim. They operated mainly under him and in those provinces where he ruled in as a viceroy. Under his direct patronage such Turkic commanders as Afshin and Ashnas advanced [4.255-c.].

It is clear that the Turks became the force that supported him in the army. Becoming caliph, al-Mu'tasim immediately appointed Turks to almost all command posts in the army and other important positions in the state of the Turks, and, relying on them, carried out his innovations. The caliph singled them out in the army, issued a number of decrees confirming the material and other privileges of the Turks. Moreover, having moved to the new capital of the Caliphate - Samarra, al-Mu'tasim settled the Turkic warriors devoted to him there, which became a manifestation of goodwill towards them [9. 90-91-c.]. All this confirms our opinion that the appointment of al-Mutasim as successor was not without pressure from, most likely, the Turkic commanders personally loyal to him, who had real power in the state.

The guards in Samarra, consisting of Turks, Khorasans, Ferghans, and the Frightened, turned into the most privileged class of the army of the Abbasid Caliphate" [11, 468-p.]. Young warriors-gulams were brought up at the court in special schools, then they were enrolled in the army of the caliph. Al-Mu'tasim could fully rely on such a new mercenary army. He believed, not without reason, that the army would be more reliable,

if it is staffed with foreign mercenaries, and not free residents involved in local social and religious conflicts and problems. The information of Ibn Haukal and other sources quite accurately outlined the picture of the events of the time of al-Mutasim. A consistent and purposeful policy is traced to attract the Turks to the ranks of the Caliphate army both during the reign of alMamun and his successor. In the future, under the heirs of al-Mugasim, this tradition will be stopped, and an attempt will be made to get rid of the Turkic influence. To this end, after al-Mugasim, they began to create military formations from representatives of other ethnic groups. However, starting from the reign of al-Mugawakkil (847 - 851), clashes between

Turks and caliphs took such forms that from now on the Abbasids lost control over the process. If we list the military leaders named by Ibn Haukal, it turns out that they are from among those who appeared on the political arena under al-Mamun and al-Mutasim, that is, they are from the Turks [11, 470,473-r.]. This is reliable, because the information of Ibn Haukal dates from the period from the end of the reign of al-Mamun to the time of al-Mutasim inclusive. Not limited to attracting warriors from the Turkic regions, al-Mu'tasim also brought closer to himself those Turks who already lived in Iraq, and even in Baghdad. Among them were Ashnas, Vasif, Inak [47, p.256]. The military formations of the Turks were commanded by representatives of the Turkic aristocratic families, who were close to the throne of the caliph, al-Mutasim. Having received significant land grants (igta) from him, they were under special patronage and were appointed commanders of military formations from their regions. According to sources, representatives of other ethnic groups were not appointed commanders of the



Turks. Sources report very contradictory information about the number of Turks in the Caliphate army under al-Mu'tasim. AlKindi writes that in the army sent by the caliph to Egypt in 829-830 there were about 4 thousand Turkic soldiers [11, 188-p.] Ibn Taghriberdi says that among the military formations created by al-Mutasim there were 8 or 18 thousand Turks . Moreover, he considers the second figure more reliable [10,11, 233-p.]. Al-Isfahani also speaks of 18 thousand [4, 105-c.]. Iakut, on the other hand, reports data that differ greatly from the above, and speaks of the presence of about 70 thousand Turkic warriors in al-Mu'tasim [1, 174-c.]. The Byzantine chronicler Genesius notes that during the Byzantine campaign of Afshin, about 10 thousand Turks were at his disposal [2. 85-c.]. Ashnas, Inak, Buga al-Kabir took part in the same campaign with their Turkic formations. Nizam al-Mulk writes that al-Mu'tasim had 70,000 Turkic gulams [5, 61-c.]. Thus, the information of the sources is very different from each other, so it is difficult to unambiguously answer the question about the number of Turks in the Caliphate army. At the same time, the scatter of data on the number of Turks in the Caliphate may serve as evidence that, under al-Mutasim, the Turkic ethnos had already firmly occupied its niche in the military-political system of the Arab state, moreover structurally. The influence of the Turks became so tangible and real that they were recorded in quantities that might not have actually been, but it was assumed, given their presence in all parts of the system, both military and political. Since the sources speak so often and much about the Turks in various structures of the Caliphate, especially under al-Mu'tasim, it means that it was so in the realities of that time. The strengthening of the Turkic influence in the army and in the Caliphate in general, the preference given to them over other ethnic groups, the personal patronage of Caliph al-Mutasim - all this caused discontent in the Arab society. The Turks turned into a serious force that actively interfered in the life of the capital of the Caliphate - Baghdad. So, they turned this city into their military base, conducted exercises here. The people of Baghdad were worried about this turn of events, but in the city itself they could not openly express and demonstrate their discontent. However, the city foremen spoke quite sharply about the Caliph's "unworthy" behavior of his Turkic guards" [11, 256-p.]. For all these reasons, cases of the murder of Turks in the vicinity of Baghdad often took place. Al-Mutasim was concerned that the inhabitants of the capital might rebel, and then armed clashes would begin between the Baghadians and his personal Turkic guards. Equally significant was the fact that the traditional old Arab elite had less and less room in the structures of the Caliphate, primarily in Baghdad itself and the central provinces. It was pressed more and more vigorously by non-Arabs, mainly by the Turks, and this worsened relations between them and the old elite. Perhaps these were the main reasons for the founding of a new capital by al-Mu'tasim and his departure from troubled Baghdad. On the other hand, the Caliph's decision became a statement of the further strengthening of the influence and weight of the Turkic element in the Caliphate. As a result of this change of landmarks by Caliph al-Mutasim: the old Arab elite has served its purpose, now the stake is on the Turkic one. And the decision of al-Mutasim to move the capital is a milestone from which a new stage in the history of the Caliphate began, it is a new time reference in the position of the Turks in the military-political structure of the state in the period we are studying. In short, a qualitatively new milestone has come, significant in many aspects, in the relationship between the Arab and Turkic elements of the first Muslim state. Although it was created exclusively by the Arabs, its further fate, like



the creators themselves, was firmly connected with the Turks. And this turn took place in the fate of the Caliphate and the Arabs themselves under al-Mu'tasim, who already in the second year of his reign decided to move the capital.

Eight caliphs lived there, including al-Mu'tasim, who founded and built it; al-Watik, who was Harun b. al-Mu'tasim; al-Mutawakkil Jafar b. al-Mu'tasim; al-Muntashir Muhammad b. al-Mutawakkil; al-Musta'in Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Mu'tasim; al-Mu'tazz Abu Abdallah b. al-Mutawakkil; al-Muhtadi Muhammad b. al-Watik; and al-Mu'tamid Ahmad b. al-Mutawakkil. In ancient times, Samarra was nothing more than an open plain in the land of at-Tirkhan. There were no buildings here, except for a Christian monastery on the site where the government palace arose, known as Dar al-Amma; the monastery was handed over as a treasury. He then built a palace on the eastern side of Baghdad and moved there, remaining there in 218, 219, 220 and 221. With him was a group of Turks who did not speak Arabic at that time.

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