

## SOME REMARKS ON THE DRESS OF THE 'ABBĀSID CALIPHS IN EGYPT

THE 'Abbāsīd caliphs in Egypt, on the whole, lived in the shadow of the Mamlūk sultāns<sup>1</sup> and attracted neither the attention of those mediæval Oriental artists who depicted court scenes,<sup>2</sup> nor that of the European painters who managed to sketch some of the official receptions.<sup>3</sup> They were too highly placed to serve as models for illustrations of the books dealing with military exercises (*furūsiyya*),<sup>4</sup> nor was there any reason to show them and their court when illuminating the texts of those books which used to be most illustrated in the Mamlūk realm, *viz.*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, the *Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī*, and al-Jazarī's famous technical handbook on automata.<sup>5</sup> We are thus deprived of any Oriental or Occidental representation of their costumes and have to visualise them through the mist of literary sources only.

1. Besides the fact that Mamlūk sultāns were powerful enough to appoint or dismiss caliphs at will, and often did so, the caliph sometimes appeared, as Suyūfī puts it, as if he were merely an amir in the sultān's service (*Ta'riḫ ul-Khulafā*, Cairo, 1305, p. 164, l. 17 f.). In 726 A.H., during Ibn-Baṭṭūṭa's visit to Mecca, several contemporary rulers were mentioned in the *khutba*, first among them being the Egyptian sultān Muḥammad b. Qalāūn, but there is no mention of any caliph (ed. Defrémery et Sanguinetti, I, p. 378).

2. To quote only two extremes : cf. such miniatures as the frontispiece of the Viennese Ḥarīrī (A.F. 9) or Pseudo-Galen (A.F. 10) reproduced by Arnold and Grohmann, *The Islamic Book*, pls. 43 and 31 resp. or those of Master Osman, first published by Tahsin Oz, 'Hünernamé. Tome I' (in *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, XVIII, 1938, p. 167 ff., pl. XXIV).

3. I am referring to the sources of such collections of portraits as those of Paulus Jovius, Theodore de Bry, or Cesare Vecellio ; to drawings which must have circulated in the ateliers of Venice and which found their way into the paintings of Carpaccio, Mansueti, and other contemporary Venetians ; to such original painting as the so-called "Reception of Domenico Trevisano" (cf. Schéfer, 'Note sur un tableau du Louvre, naguère attribué á Gentile Bellini in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Vol. XIV, 1895, pp. 201-204 ; Artin Pasha, *Contribution a l'étude du blason en Orient*, London, 1902, No. 90 bis. p. 120, fig. XIV ; A. J. B. Wace and Muriel Clayton, 'A tapestry at Powis Castle' in *Burlington Magazine*, August 1938, pp. 65-69), now in the Louvre Museum, at various times attributed to various masters, but probably painted by Lazzaro Bastiani.

4. Cf. Ritter, 'La Parure des Cavaliers' in *Islam*, XVIII, 1929, p. 116 ff.

5. كتاب في معرفة الحيل الهندسية .

The 'Abbāsīd caliphs in Egypt (1261-1517) continued the Baghdād tradition, of wearing black,<sup>1</sup> which remained their distinctive colour and an emblem (*shi'ār*) of their following. In accordance with their position as spiritual rather than temporal rulers they mostly wore ecclesiastical garb. The caliphs' headgear consisted of a fine round turban with a trailing end-piece (*raḡraf*) at the back, about two feet long and one foot wide reaching from the top to the bottom of the turban. They wore a tight-sleeved coat (*qabā'*) over which was a tight-sleeved *kāmiliyya* (overcoat) with a vent in the middle of the back, from the hem upwards.<sup>2</sup> We have several descriptions of their clothes, mainly of those worn during their investiture<sup>3</sup> or on ceremonial occasions. Thus, for example, the caliph al-Mustakfī-billāh watched the battle of Shaqḥab in the company of the sultān Muḥammad b. Qalāūn wearing a turban with a long trailing end, carrying a richly ornamented sword across the shoulder of his black dress,<sup>4</sup> but for his investiture the same caliph received a black robe of honour (*khil'a*) and black head shawl (*ṭarḥa*).<sup>5</sup> During the coronation of sultān Faraj, the caliph received a black robe of honour, and a black embroidered turban, over which was worn a black embroidered head shawl (*ṭarḥa*).<sup>6</sup> During his first public procession on the first Ramaḍān 914, when presenting his wishes for the new month to sultān Qānṣūh al-Ghaurī,<sup>7</sup> the caliph Muḥammad al-Mutawakkil-'ala-allāh b. Ya'qūb wore an *'imāma baghdādiyya*,<sup>8</sup> that is a small turban with one or two trailing ends as mentioned before. Occasionally we read that the caliph's clothes were not entirely black. Thus, e.g., at the coronation of al-Malik al-Mansūr Abū-Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Qalāūn (22nd Muḥarram 742), the caliph

1. Hence the general expression *sawād* for the Caliphal black costume, cf., e.g., Ṭabarī, III, ser. p. 1012, l. 15; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, p. 242, ll. 25, 33; idem, *Sulūk*, ed. M. Ziada, I, p. 477, l. 16, Suyūṭī, *op. laud.*, p. 192, l. 4, and often elsewhere; for the followers of the 'Abbāsīds in general *Musawwida*, cf. Ibn Taghribirdī, *an-Nujūm az-Zāhira*, Cairo, 1929, I, pp. 302, l. 2, 316, l. 16; cf. also Levy, 'Notes on costume from Arabic sources' in *JRAS*, 1935, p. 337.

2. Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, III, p. 280, ll. 5-7; Levy, *op. laud.*, p. 332.

3. Too often dismissed with curt phrases, of which the following may be considered typical examples: on al-Mu'taḍid's accession in 753 A.H.: اخلع عليه خلعة الخلافة (Ibn-Taghribirdī, *an-Nujūm az-Zāhira*, ed. Popper, V, p. 133, l. 2/3); or on al-Mutawakkil's, in Jumādā, I, 791; ما جارت العادة به اخلع (Ibn-ul-Furāt, *Tā'riḫh*, ed. Zurayk, IX, p. 69, l. 10 f.); or on al-Mustakfī's, in 845 A.H.: لبس الشريف ثم اخضروا شعاره (Sakhāwī, *al-Tibr al-Masubūk*, p. 13, l. 20 f.); or on al-Mutawakkil's in Sha'bān 914: لبس الخليفة (Ibn-Iyās, *Badā'i'uz-Zuhūr*, ed. Kahle and Mustafa, IV, p. 140, l. 15-18).

4. *Khiṭaṭ*, II, p. 242, l. 33.

5. Yūnīnī, Top Kapu Saray Muzesi Library, No. 2907 E, Vol. II, fo. 215v.: خلعة الخلافة سوداء و . . . طرحة سوداء .

6. Qalqashandī, *op. laud.*, III, p. 281, l. 9 f.

7. Ibn-Iyās, IV, p. 143, l. 6.

8. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bakrī aṣ-Ṣiddīqī, *at-Tuḥfa al-Bahiyya* (MS. Copenhagen, No. 80, Cat. No. CLVIII, fol. 8v: العمامة البغدادية التي بالعبدين).

wore a green robe of honour (*khil'a*), and over his turban (of unspecified colour) a black shawl (*ṭarḥa*) with white embroidery.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in Dhī'l-Hijja 920, the caliph riding to the right of the sultān, when the latter entered Cairo on his return from Alexandria, wore an 'imāma *baghdādiyya*, a *qabā'*-coat of white wool with *revers* of green wool (*bi-muqallab ṣūf akḥḍar*).<sup>2</sup> But there were official occasions when the caliph appeared in more modest attire. Thus, when homage was paid to the caliph al-Musta'in-billāh in Damascus as sultān, his robe of honour was only a black overcoat, taken from the wardrobe of a Friday preacher of a mosque near by.<sup>3</sup> Under the Circassian sultāns, when divested of his caliphal robe, the caliph sometimes wore the clothes of the military aristocracy of his day.<sup>4</sup> In 857 A.H., for instance, on the coronation of 'Uthmān b. Jaqmaq, the caliph received a satin coat with a pattern of stripes or spots (*aṭlas munammar*),<sup>5</sup> a robe of honour which was offered, at the same time, to the atābak,<sup>6</sup> and on various other occasions to other officials of high military rank. Similarly, in Sha'bān 914, the caliph Ya'qūb al-Mustamsik-billāh on his abdication was presented with a white woollen tunic (*sallārī*) lined with sable fur (*simmaur*), chosen from amongst the sultān's own clothes.<sup>7</sup> On at least one occasion, the brother and the nephews of the caliph were also honoured with amirial clothes.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Qalqashandī, *op. laud.*, III, p. 280 l. 13; Suyūṭī, *Ḥusnūl-Muhādāra*, ed. 1299, II, p. 77 l. 10 ff. says that the embroidery was of gold. This wearing on very special occasions, of other colours by 'Abbāsīd caliphs is found in 'Irāq as well as, e.g., when Mā'mūn entered Baghdad on the 15th Ṣafar, 204, wearing green and insisting on all loyal subjects wearing the same colour (although the decree was abrogated a week later and black reinstalled), cf. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭāifūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, Vol. 6, p. 2, l. 5; p. 3, l. 2; p. 4, ll. 2, 11-13; Ṭabarī, III, ser., pp. 1012, l. 15, 1037, l. 7-1038, l. 8; Ibn al-Athīr, ed. Tornberg, VI, p. 253, ll. 9-17; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, Būlāq, 1299, I, p. 240, l. 14 f.; 'Alī Dede as-Sigetwārī al-Bosnawī, *Muhādārāt al-Awā'il*, 2nd ed. (on the title page wrongly called "first ed."), Cairo 1311, p. 128/9, and often elsewhere, cf. also Levy, *op. laud.* pp. 325, n. 10, 329, n. 9.

2. Ibn-Iyās, IV, pp. 418, l. 16 f., 420, l. 20.

3. Ibn-Taghribirdī, *op. laud.*, VI, p. 305, l. 2 f.

4. I venture to suggest that the robe of honour unfortunately merely mentioned but not described—offered by sultān Barqūq to the caliph Zakariyyā' al-Mu'taṣim-billāh خلع السلطان عليه خلعة غير خلعة الخلافة (Ibn-Taghribirdī, *op. laud.*, V, p. 383, l. 1) belongs to the same class of military dress.

5. *Munammar* seems to me preferable to *muthammar* or *mutammar*.

6. Sakhāwī, *op. laud.*, p. 423, l. pu. The overcoat with bands of embroidered decoration, فوقاني بطرز زركش which the caliph was offered at a subsequent ceremony, l.c., p. 424, l. 12, is perhaps too general a term to be quoted as a further instance.

7. Ibn-Iyās, IV, 140, l. 14.

8. Yūnīnī, *op. laud.*, fo. 215v. : The sultān al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāūn offered a regular caliphal robe of honour to the new caliph al-Mustakfī-billāh but خلع على اخيه و اولاد اخيه خلع الامراء الا كابر ملونة.