



Social Reforms in Islamic World During the Period of First Four Khalifas (Caliphs)

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Abstract: The time in Islamic history right after the death of the Prophet Muhammad is known as the Rashidun Caliphate (632-661). Muhammad did not build an empire, but he did govern a small religious republic in Medina under his charismatic prophetic leadership. During the Rashidun period, the Islamic government rapidly expanded throughout the Near East under the leadership of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, the four caliphs. Significant military, legal, & economic systems, as well as the beginnings of an imperial bureaucracy, were built by them, laying the groundwork for the eventual triumph of the Islamic state. While the Rashidun Caliphate is commonly regarded as a religious-political zenith, it was really the site of heated discussions over issues like the legitimacy of the caliph's position and the proper role of religion in government. It was incredibly difficult to rule a vast empire and maintain religious unity, as evidenced by the fact that the Rashidun Caliphate collapsed into a disastrous civil war that irrevocably split the fledgling Muslim community.

Keywords: Islamism, Religious reforms, Islamic caliphate, Ijtihad, Development.

Introduction:

The Rashidun Caliphate was the first Islamic caliphate after Muhammad's death. After Muhammad's death in 632 CE (11 AH), the region was administered by his first four caliphs in chronological order [1]. The empire was the dominant political, cultural, & military force in West Asia for its entire existence.

After Muhammad's death in June 632 and the ensuing struggle for power, the caliphate was established. The Banu Taym clan member and close friend of Muhammad, Abu Bakr (r. 632–634), was chosen as the first caliph at Medina and launched the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula during his reign [2]. In August of 634, he passed away, and his selected successor from the Banu Adi clan, Umar (r. 634-644), took over as caliph. Umar oversaw the rapid expansion of the caliphate, during which it came to control over two-thirds of the Byzantine Empire and almost the entire Sasanian Empire. After Umar's death in November 644, the Banu Umayya clan's Uthman (r. 644-656) was elected by a six-person committee Umar had set up. In 651, the caliphate under Uthman finished its conquest of Persia and kept on with its operations into Byzantine territory. Rebels killed Uthman in June 656 after he had angered some Muslim generals with his nepotistic practices [3].

Ali (r. 656–661), a descendant of Muhammad's Banu Hashim clan, took over after him and moved the capital to Kufa. Since Uthman's relative and the governor of Syria, Mu'awiya I (r.

661-680), refused to accept Ali's suzerainty, a civil war known as the First Fitna broke out under Ali's watch. Additionally, a third group known as Kharijites, who were former followers of Ali [4], rebelled against both Ali & Mu'awiya after failing to accept the arbitration in the Battle of Siffin. As a result of the conflict, Mu'awiya established the Umayyad Caliphate in 661, replacing the Rashidun Caliphate. The civil war solidified the schism between Shia and Sunni Muslims for good, with Shia Muslims favoring Ali's bloodline tie to Muhammad and considering him the first rightful caliph and Imam after Muhammad [5].

There were twenty-five years of fast military growth under the Rashidun Caliphate, followed by five years of internal turmoil. At its height, the Rashidun Army consisted of over a hundred thousand soldiers [6]. By the middle of the sixth century, the caliphate had expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula and into the Levant, North Africa from Egypt to modern-day Tunisia, and the Iranian Plateau and parts of Central Asia as well as South Asia. The shr, or small electoral body, was made up of influential Quraysh tribesmen who picked the four Rashidun caliphs.

The First Four Caliphs:

The first four Muslim rulers after Muhammad were known as the Four Caliphs. Since they all received their initial training in Islam from Muhammad himself, historians sometimes refer to them as the "Rightly Guided" Caliphs. During the formative years of Islam, they were also Muhammad's closest friends and counsellors [6]. Historians refer to the period when the Four Caliphs were in power as the Rashidun Caliphate. From 632 until 661 CE, the Rashidun Caliphate ruled Islam. The Umayyad Caliphate came after it. The first Caliphate capital was located in Medina. Kufa replaced Nippur as the city's capital.

- **Abu Bakr**

Abu Bakr, the first caliph, reigned from 632 to 634 CE. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, converted to Islam at an early date. His moniker was "The Truthful." After Muhammad's death, Abu Bakr briefly served as caliph and put down rebellions by several Arab tribes, solidifying the Caliphate's position as regional ruler [7].

- **Umaribn-Khattab**

Umar ibn al-Khattab was the second caliph. The name "Umar" is usually all that's needed to refer to him. From 634-644 CE, Umar reigned for a full decade. This was a moment of tremendous growth for the Islamic Empire. He defeated the Sassanid dynasty in Iraq and established dominance over the entire Middle East. He eventually consolidated his power over most of the region, including Egypt, Syria, and much of North Africa. The reign of Umar ended.

- **Uthman ibn Affan**

Uthman ibn Affan was the third caliph. From 644-656 CE, he ruled as Caliph for a full decade. Uthman, one of the Four Caliphs, was a close friend of Muhammad. Uthman is most recognized for establishing the canonical Quran from a compilation done by Abu Bakr. This variant was then replicated and adopted as the official variant going forward. In 656 CE, rebels assassinated Uthman in his own home.

- **Ali ibn Abi Talib**

Ali ibn Abi Talib became caliph number four. Ali was the cousin and the son-in-law of Muhammad. Fatimah, Muhammad's youngest daughter, was his wife. He is sometimes cited as the earliest known male conversion to Islam. From 656 through 661, Ali served as the Islamic Empire's ruler. Ali was a respected leader who penned numerous speeches and sayings. He was killed in the Kufa Great Mosque as he prayed.

Governance in politics:

The foundations of the Dar al-Islamiyyah's (The House of Islam) administrative structure were laid during Muhammad's lifetime. In his inaugural sermon after becoming caliph, Abu Bakr said, "If I order anything that would go against the order of Allah or his Messenger; then do not obey me." They used this as a cornerstone for the Caliphate. It is believed that Caliph Umar once said, "O Muslims, straighten me with your hands when I go wrong," to which a Muslim man responded, "O Amir al-Mu'minin (Leader of the Believers), if you are not straightened by our hands, we will use our sword to straighten you!" Caliph Umar heard this and said, "Praise be to Allah, I have such followers."

Divisions, like states,

Although there were several administrative districts, the empire was not properly organized into provinces under Abu Bakr.

Umar subdivided the Empire into a number of provinces, including:

- Arabia into two provinces, Medina and Mecca.
- The provinces of Basra and Kufa were created after Iraq was split in two.
- Syria was a province of Jazira, which was split in two by the Tigris and the Euphrates.
- Aylya and Ramlah are the two provinces that make up Palestine.
- Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt were the two administrative regions of Egypt.
- The provinces of Khorasan, Azerbaijan, and Fars were established inside Persia.

Umar's will had urged his successor, Uthman, to wait a year after his death before making any changes to the administrative structure, and Uthman complied; but, when the year had passed, Uthman unified Egypt into a single province and established a second province that included all of North Africa. He also united the two Syrian provinces into a single state.

The caliphate was split into twelve regions during Uthman's rule. This included:

Egypt, Syria, and Yemen as well as Medina and Mecca, Kufa, Basra, Jazira, Fars, Azerbaijan, and Khorasan

Maghreb Ali ruled over the remaining ten provinces, with no changes to their administrative structure, while Syria was under Muawiyah I's rule and Egypt was lost to the rebel army of Amr ibn Al-A'as in the last years of Ali's caliphate.

Districts were created as sub-units of the provinces. A governor (Wli) oversaw the administration of each of the empire's one hundred or more districts and the principal cities. Additional provincial officers included:

- Katib, the President's top aide.
- General Secretary of the Armed Forces Katib-ud-Diwan.
- The Tax Collector, Sahib-ul-Kharaj.
- Chief of Police Sahib-ul-Ahdath.
- Officer of the Treasury (Sahib-ul-Bait-ul-Mal).
- The Chief Judge, or Qadi.

While the governor was often the top military officer in the province, each district may have had its own military officer.

The Caliph selected the officers. All scheduled meetings were confirmed in writing. A document of instructions was issued at the time of appointment to govern the governors' behavior. The Governor had to call a meeting of the people in the main mosque soon after taking office so that he could read them the instrument of instructions.

Umar's general orders to his troops were as follows:

Keep in mind that I have not installed you as rulers and dictators over the people. I have instead sent you as leaders to provide an example for the people to follow. Stop abusing

Muslims and respect their rights by not beating them. Don't give them false praise or they can start thinking too highly of themselves. The stronger ones will consume the weaker ones if you shut the door in their faces. And don't act superior to them, since that's just tyranny.

The state's economy was weak during Abu Bakr's rule, but it was on the upswing toward prosperity during Umar's rule, thanks to an increase in revenues as well as additional sources of wealth. Umar reasoned that being harsh with the officers was vital to combat corruption. At the time of their appointment, all officers under his rule took the following oath:

- That he had no intention of riding a Turkic horse (a point of pride for the Turkic people).
- He would not dress formally.
- That he would not use sifted flour in his cooking, that he would not employ a doorman, and that he would always welcome visitors.

The caliph Umar adhered rigorously to the aforementioned principles. Caliph Uthman rescinded the oath's third and fourth postulates since the state's economy flourished during his rule, citizens' allowances were raised by 25 percent, and the standard of living for the average person improved.

A thorough inventory of each officer's belongings was taken and filed away at the time of his appointment. Later, if his wealth suddenly ballooned, the State would demand an explanation and seize the ill-gotten gains. Those with grievances against the top officers were encouraged to bring them to Mecca during the Hajj. Umar made it a point to pay high salaries to the personnel in order to reduce the likelihood of corruption. In addition to their share of war booty (if they were also the commander-in-chief of their sector's army), provincial governors may earn as much as 5,000 to 7,000 dirhams per year.

Economy:

- Bait-ul-Maal

The state's revenues and other financial affairs were handled by Bait-ul-Maal (lit., the house of money). There was no fixed public treasury or Bait-ul-Mal during Muhammad's lifetime. Distributions were made promptly upon receipt of any revenues or other sums. There was no need for a public treasury because neither wages nor any other governmental expenditures were incurred.

Abu Bakr (632–633) set up a safe deposit box at his residence. When Abu Bakr died, there was just one dirham in the public treasury because of the rapid nature with which all money was disbursed.

- Bait-ul-Maal Construction

Things shifted when Umar was in power. Profits grew with the number of cities conquered. Umar also started paying the army. Umar received 500,000 dirhams in revenue from Bahrain's governor, Abu Huraira. Umar called a meeting of his Consultative Assembly to get the Companions' advice on how to spend the money. Uthman ibn Affan suggested putting the money aside for the time being. Walid bin Hisham proposed establishing specialized Treasury and Accounts departments in the style of the Byzantine Empire.

Umar decided to move the government's main bank from Mecca to Medina after conferring with his other companions. It was decided to make Abdullah bin Arqam the Treasury Officer. Abdur Rahman bin Awf&Muiqib helped him out. To keep track of all the money being spent, an Accounts Department was also established. Treasury offices were subsequently established throughout the states. Once regional budgets were balanced, any remaining revenue was sent to Medina, the Islamic caliphate's central bank. Yaqubi claims

that more than 30 million dirhams were spent on salaries and allowances that were paid out of the central treasury.

Although some sources claim Umar was the first Rashidun caliph to mint coins, the majority of historians agree that Uthman was the first. Baghli coins were worth eight dang, Tabari coins were worth four dang, and Maghribi coins were worth three dang when Persia was conquered. According to some sources, the first Islamic dirham was minted by Umar (or Uthman).

One of the Five Pillars of Islam is zakt (charity), and since the time of Umar, social assistance and pensions have been codified in Islamic law. Taxes (such as zakt and jizya) paid into an Islamic state's treasury were redistributed to the poor, the aged, the orphaned, the widowed, and the disabled. Islamic jurist Al-Ghazali (Algazel, 1058–1111) held that food reserves should be maintained across the country in the event of natural disasters or famines. One could consider the Caliphate a precursor to modern welfare governments.

The State's Financial Means:

The State's economy was supported by Zakt, Ushr, Jizya, Fay, Khums, and Kharaj.

- **Zakat**

To put it simply, zakt is the Islamic version of a wealth tax. The Muslims had 2.5% of their idle riches (i.e., anything over a specific amount that had been sitting in the bank for more than a year) confiscated and distributed to the needy. Only those with an annual income above a set threshold (nisab) were included in the tally. One's principal dwelling, one's primary source of transportation, a reasonable quantity of woven jewelry, etc. were not included in the nisab. Zakat is one of Islam's Five Pillars.

- **Jizya**

Since non-Muslims were exempt from paying zakt, a per capita tax was levied on able-bodied males of military age who were not Muslims. The destitute, the elderly, those with disabilities, hermits, slaves, and monks were exempt. In addition to the exemptions, the state also provided financial aid to select low-income non-Muslims.

- **Fay**

Fay was the money made from any State-owned property, be it farmland, pasture, or land with mineral deposits.

- **Khums**

War loot, measured in Ghanimah or Khums, was divided four ways among active-duty military personnel and one way was set aside for the state.

- **Kharaj**

A levy on farmland known as kharaj. Kharaj originally referred to a one-time tax imposed by Muslim conquerors on their non-Muslim subjects, the dhimmis, after the first Muslim conquests in the seventh century. This tax was collected by officials from the defeated Byzantine and Sasanian empires. Kharaj was used interchangeably with jizyah, the poll tax paid by dhimmis, at the period. However, Muslim landowners simply paid ushr (a religious tithe) which was a considerably more modest tax.

- **Ushr**

Ushr was a 10% tax levied on farmland and goods imported from countries that also taxed Muslims. As the first Muslim ruler, Umar instituted the ushr tax. Umar gave orders for the imposition of ushr in a way that would cause minimal suffering and not disrupt commerce inside the Caliphate. Only items imported with commercial intent were subject to the levy; items imported for personal use were exempt. Products costing less than 200 dirhams were exempt from sales tax [8]. The customs charge or import tax was reduced for goods imported by citizens for commercial purposes. The tax for dhimmis was 5%, whereas the

rate for Muslims was 2.5% (the same as zak't). The tax was thus included into the concept of zakt rather than being treated as a distinct charge.

Allowance:

The Start of Your Allowance

The Muslims filled the treasuries at Medina with the wealth they amassed after the battles of Yarmouk and al-Qadisiyyah [9]. What to do with all this cash was the question before Umar. It was proposed that this sum be put aside in the treasury for future use. The vast majority of Muslims, however, did not agree with this stance. As a result, the populace as a whole was agreed to get 100% of the annual income.

The second inquiry concerned the best method of distribution. It was proposed that it be split evenly on an as-needed basis. Others raised concerns that the scheme would lead to widespread wealth because the spoils were so large. Instead of dividing the spoils on the spot, it was decided that the allotment to the stipend would be set in advance and would be paid irrespective of the amount of the spoils.

There were divergent views on how much of an allowance should be provided. Some argued that it ought to be uniform throughout all Muslims. Umar, on the other hand, thought that it was appropriate to tie one's share of the allowance to one's level of Islamic merit.

The question of how to prioritize among them naturally arose. Some have proposed setting the highest stipend for the Caliph and reducing it gradually for everyone else. Umar turned down the offer and instead decided to focus on the Muhammad family.

Umar formed a group to create a ranking of people's proximity to Muhammad. The committee compiled the roster by family name. The Bani Hashim were the first to show up, followed by the Abu Bakr and the Umar clans. Umar agreed with the first two, but he put his family further down the scale.

Umar's authorized final scale of allowance mostly consisted of the following:

- A yearly payment of 7,000 dirhams was given to Muhammad's uncle,
- 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. Each of Muhammad's widows received 12,000.
- Veterans of the Battle of Badr were given 6,000 dirhams each; converts to Islam by the time of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah were given 4,000 dirhams;
- converts to Islam during the Conquest of Mecca were given 3,000 dirhams;
- converts during the Apostasy Wars were given 3,000 dirhams;
- and the grandsons of Muhammad were given 5,000 dirhams each.

Abdullah ibn Umar, Umar's son, was given a monthly stipend of 3,000 dirhams, whereas Usama ibn Zaid was given 4,000 dirhams. The average Muslim citizen received an allowance of \$2,000. Since city dwellers are the economic backbone of a state, they were the only ones to get the standard annual allowance. Despite being cut off from official affairs and progress, the Bedouin who live in the desert are frequently given handouts. Uthman doubled these payments once he became power.

Public works:

The mosques served as more than just prayer houses; they were also hubs for the local communities they served, where people could come together to talk about pressing issues facing their society and culture. From Persia in the east to Egypt in the west, during Umar's caliphate, as many as four thousand mosques were built. Both the Prophet's Mosque (Al-

Masjid an-Nabawi) and the Holy Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) were significantly enlarged under the reigns of Umar and Uthman ibn Affan.

Several new urban centers emerged during Umar's caliphate. Kufa, Basra, and Fustat were among these. These metropolitan areas are all planned and organized well. In these urban centers, the Friday Mosque stood at the geographic center, and all roads converged there. Markets were set up at convenient locations, and market officials were tasked with monitoring product quality. Each city was subdivided into four sections, with each section set aside for a specific tribe. Because of the rising standard of living, Uthman lifted restrictions on the building of palatial buildings by the rich and elites that had been put in place during Umar's reign (palatial buildings being a symbol of the egalitarian society of Islam, where all are equal). Uthman's massive palace at Medina, Al-Zawar, was one of several magnificent structures built across the empire with his own money as a result.

A lot of structures were put up for administrative functions. Government offices and officer housing were located in the Dar-ul-Amarat district. Diwans were built specifically to store government documents. The royal treasuries were kept in Bait-ul-Mal. For the first time in Muslim history, jails were built. Guest rooms were built in strategic cities to accommodate traveling merchants and tradesmen. The public now has access to newly built roads and bridges. Shelters, wells, and eating halls were built at various points along the route from Medina to Mecca to accommodate the pilgrims doing the hajj.

Strategic locations were chosen for the construction of military cantonments. Stables designed specifically for the cavalry were capable of housing up to four thousand horses. Bait-ul-Mal livestock had access to dedicated pastures that were well-maintained.

To irrigate crops and give people with potable water, canals were dug. The Abu Musa canal was a nine-mile (14 km) long canal that carried water from the Tigris to Basra and was named for the city's governor. Additionally, the Maqal canal was excavated from the Tigris. To connect the Nile with the Red Sea, Umar ordered the construction of a canal with the honorific name Amir al-Mu'minin. Millions of people's lives were spared during the famine of 639 because grain was transported from Egypt to Arabia via this canal. Water from the Euphrates was diverted through the Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas canal, named after the governor of Kufa. Egypt's governor under Umar's rule, Amr ibn al-'As, advocated for connecting the Mediterranean and the Red Sea by creating a canal. For whatever reason, this plan never came to fruition, and it wasn't until 1200 years later that a canal of this type was really dug: the contemporary Suez Canal. Uthman ordered the construction of a new port city, Jeddah, because the existing one, Shuaibia, was too far away from Mecca. Uthman also overhauled the city's law enforcement agencies.

Legacy:

Traditional Sunni views of the Rashidun have been contested by secular historians. The names of the first four caliphs do not appear on coins, inscriptions, or documents, and Robert G. Hoyland claims that "writers who lived at the same time as the first four caliphs... recorded next to nothing about them." For the first time, his name appears on the official state media during the reign of Muawiyah I (661-680), the fifth caliph. Umar's name and the year of his death are mentioned on an inscription from the time period, and coins were minted during his reign (although, as Hoyland points out, they do not bear his name, only "In the name of God,")

Hoyland also questions the idea of a divinely guided "golden age" of early Islam, wondering if it arose from a need by late Umayyad as well as Abbasid religious scholars to differentiate

the first caliphs (or at least Uthman and Ali) from their Umayyad successors, noting that Ali was involved in the first civil war (First Fitna) as well as Uthman had "already inaugurated a nepotistic style of government," for which later Therefore, the companions were "reimagined" as "role models of piety and incorruptibility."

This accords with how Shi'ites, like the Rashidun Caliphs, perceive the companions. Many Shi'a do not agree with the Sunni notion that the companions were all paragons of virtue; instead, they accuse the companions of plotting against Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants after the Prophet's death to strip them of their rightful place as the de facto leaders of Islam. Many of the associates and their successors are usurpers, even hypocrites, who never stopped subverting the religion for their own goals, according to this Shi'ite interpretation.

The gulf in opinion between these two groups has stoked sectarian tensions that have sometimes erupted into violence.

Conclusion:

Dated typically between the 8th through 13th centuries, the Islamic Golden Age was a time of scientific, economic, and cultural flowering in the history of Islam.

During the era of the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809), scholars from all over the Muslim world flocked to Baghdad, the largest city in the world at the time, to translate the classical knowledge of the known world into Arabic and Persian at the House of Wisdom.[4] Historically, the end of the era is dated to 1258, when the Abbasid caliphate finally fell victim to Mongol invasions and the Siege of Baghdad.

Several parallel histories can be imagined. Some historians place the conclusion of the Islamic Golden Age as late as the end of the 15th or 16th century, which would include the establishment of the Islamic gunpowder empires, while others argue that it ended around 1350 and encompassed the Timurid Renaissance.

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