THE ROLE OF ABU MUSLIM AL-KHURĀSĀNI IN THE ABBASID REVOLUTION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni played a very important role in the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate. During the late 740 CEs, the Abbasid secret *daᶜwah* moved forward from secrecy to open revolution under the command of Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni in Khurāsān. After securing his position in Merv, the center of Khurāsān, Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni delivered Khurāsāni armies under the control of his commanders to the west. Consequently, his armies captured Kufa, the center of Iraq, under the command of the Abbasid leaders and also staunchly supported Abdullah bin Ali in toppling the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwan II. Thus, it is undeniable that Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's victory in Khurāsān was the starting point of the termination of the Umayyad caliphate and the creation of the Abbasid caliphate. Moreover, Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni was also one of the most important figures in selecting the first Abbasid Caliph in the beginning of the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate. Again, after the death of the first caliph, Abdullah Saffah, when the second Abbasid caliph, Abu Jafar Al-Mansur faced the revolt of Abdullah bin Ali, Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni himself marched with his Khurāsāni army and successfully suppressed the revolution. Despite Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's great contributions during the Abbasid revolution and also in the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate, he was executed by the second Abbasid caliph, Abu Jafar Al-Mansur soon after the establishment of the new caliphate. It was essential for the Abbasid caliph to execute Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni in order to establish full control over the entire caliphate. After his death, the Khurāsāni autonomy was also demolished and only when Abu Jafar Al-Mansur exercised absolute authority over the entire caliphate with a centralized government. Even though Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's contributions in the creation of the Abbasid caliphate were significant, no particular attention has been given to his major contributions in the existing literature relating to the Abbasid revolution. Accordingly, this study is designed with the intention to identify and analyze critically Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's major contributions during the Abbasid revolutionary period and in the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate.

خلاصة البحث

لعب "أبو مسلم الخرساني" دوراً مهما في تأسيس الخلافة العباسية، ففي أواخر عام ٧٤٠م، انتقلت الدعوة العباسية من المرحلة السرية إلى المرحلة العلنية وبدء الثورة تحت قيادة "أبي مسلم الخرساني" في خرسان. فبعد تأمين منصبه في "ميرف" مركز خرسان، قام أبو مسلم الخرساني بإرسال الجيش الخرساني تحت إمرة قادة جيشه إلى الغرب، فقاموا باحتلال الكوفة، مركز العراق، وذلك تحت قيادة رؤساء العباسيين وإمرتهم، فقاموا في بداية الأمر بمساعدة عبد الله بن علي عمّ أبي جعفر المنصور على إسقاط مروان الثاني –آخر خليفة أموي–. إذن، فمن دون شك يعدّ انتصار أبي مسلم الخرساني في خرسان نقطة انطلاق رئيسة لإنهاء الخلافة الأموية وولادة الخلافة العباسية، فضلا عن ذلك، فإن أبا مسلم الخرساني كان أحد الشخصيات التي كان لها دور مهم في اختيار أول خليفة عباسي وذلك في بداية تأسيس الخلافة العباسية. وعندما واجه الخليفة العباسي الثاني –أبو جعفر المنصور– حربا مع عمه عبد الله بن علي، قام أبو مسلم الخرساني بحشد جيشه لمساعدة أبي جعفر المنصور، ما أدى إلى حسم زمام الحرب لصالح المنصور، وكان هذا بعد وفاة الخليفة العباسي الأول عبد الله السفاح، وعلى الرغم من الإسهامات الكبيرة لأبي مسلم الخرساني في نهضة الخلافة العباسية وتأسيسها إلا أنّ الخليفة العباسي الثاني –أبا جعفر المنصور– قام بإعدامه، بعد تأسيس الخلافة الجديدة مباشرة. لقد كان إعدام أبي مسلم الخرساني أمرا مهم جدا بالنسبة للخليفة العباسي وذلك بغرض إحكام سيطرته التامة على الخلافة. وبعد وفاة أبي مسلم تم إزالة الحكم الذاتي لخرسان وأصبح لأبي جعفر المنصور السلطة الكاملة على الخلافة، وذلك بتأسيس حكومة مركزية في بغداد تأتمر بأمرها جميع الأقاليم، وعلى الرغم من إسهامات أبي مسلم الخرساني المهمة في تأسيس الخلافة العباسية إلا أنه لا يوجد هنالك إشارة إلى إسهاماته هذه في الأدب والتاريخ الحديثين (الحاليين) عند الحديث عن الخلافة العباسية وتكوينها. وعليه، فإن هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى التعريف بأهم إسهامات أبي مسلم الخرساني أثناء الثورة على خلافة بني أمية، وكذلك في تأسيس الخلافة العباسية، مع تحليلها والوقوف على تفاصيلها بشكل دقيق.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (History and Civilization).

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Arshad Islam
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (History and Civilization).

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Sciences

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Khin Maung Aye @ Mohd Ali Bin Haji Dawood Jamal

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……………………………….   ………………..
      Signature   Date

To my parents, wife and sons.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Amir Muawiya (661-80 CE) established the Umayyad Caliphate and became the undisputed *Amir al-Mu'minin* after the assassination of Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib (d.661 CE).[1] The caliphate was reinforced under Abdul Malik (685-705 CE),[2] whose successors as the Umayyad caliphs were his sons with the exception of his nephew, Umar bin Abdul Aziz.[3] During the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, the Caliphate was transformed into the empire of all Muslims.[4] After Umar's death, Yazid II (720-724 CE) became the caliph but failed to make any major contributions to the development of the Umayyad Caliphate. Therefore, some historians even claim that the downfall of the Umayyad Caliphate started with the death of Umar II.[5]

When Yazid II died, Hisham bin Abdul Al-Malik (724-43 CE) came to Damascus to take the oath as caliph. It was also mentioned in the will of Yazid II that Hisham should be his successor, and after him his son Al-Walid bin Yazid bin Abdul Al-Malik (743-44 CE).[6] Hisham wanted his own son to be the successor.[7] However,

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[1] Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk): The First Civil War A.D. 656-661 / A.H. 36-40, Vol. XVII,* trans. Hawting, G. R. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 212-213.

[2] In 683 CE, the dispute started when the oath was allegedly given to Muawiya II in Syria and to Abd Allah b. al-Zubayr in Hijaz. See Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk): The Collapse of Sufyanid Authority and the Coming of the Marwanids A.D. 683-685 / A.H. 64-66, Vol. XX,* trans. Hawting, G. R. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1.

[3] A. E. Hussein, *History of Islam: 1-132 AH* (Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2002), 299-300.

[4] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 89.

[5] Akbar Shah Najeebabadi, *The History of Islam*, Vol. II (London: Darussalam International Publications Ltd, 1922), 213-214.

[6] Ibid., 217.

following his death, Al-Walid II became Caliph and he imprisoned a number of sons of Yazid bin Hisham and Walid bin Abdul Al-Malik, since he assumed that the entire Banu Umayyah tribes were his enemies.[8] He also merged Khurāsān[9] with Iraq and dismissed the governor, Nasr bin Sayyar.[10] Consequently, his cousin Yazid bin Al-Walid (744 CE) revolted against him.[11] This was the major internal problem which gradually led to the downfall of the Umayyad Caliphate. Al-Walid II was killed and Yazid III acceded to the throne.[12] In his time, Abdullah bin Umar bin Abdul al-Aziz was appointed as the Governor of Iraq. Again, Abdullah bin Umar returned Khurāsān to Nasr bin Sayyar, wherein Juday Al-Kirmani revolted against him. Upon the arrival of Al-Harith bin Shuraih, the situation in Khurāsān became more controversial.[13] Yazid III's reign was short, and he died of a disease after ruling for about six months.[14]

When Ibrahim bin Al-Walid bin Abdul Al-Malik (744 CE) took over the Caliphate in accordance with the will made by his brother Yazid III, most of the people refused to make the oath of allegiance to him even though he had bribed some with the intention of being recognized as caliph.[15] Therefore, some historians do not even recognized Ibrahim as a caliph.[16] Nevertheless, his Caliphate lasted for a few

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[7] Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk): The Waning of the Umayyad Caliphate A.D. 738-745 / A.H. 121-127*, Vol. XXVI, trans. Carole Hillenbrand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 89.

[8] Akbar Shah, 233.

[9] The Khurāsān boundaries were not well-defined in history. They were generally a part of the combined territory in present-day Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. They included several major Muslim cities at that particular time such as Balkh, Bukhara, Ghazni, Herat, Kabul, Khiva, Merv, Nishapur, Samarqand and Tus. See also Gibb, H.A.R, *The Arab Conquests in central Asia.* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), 1-5

[10] Akbar Shah, 233-235.

[11] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, 134-137.

[12] Al-Tabarī, *The Waning of the Umayyad...*, 126.

[13] Akbar Shah, 238-239.

[14] Kennedy, Hugh, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (Pearson Longman, 2nd edition, 2004), 113.

[15] Al-Tabarī, *The Waning of the Umayyad...*, 256.

[16] Akbar Shah, 241.

days despite mass opposition, until Marwan bin Muhammad bin Marwan (744-50 CE) marched to Damascus with his army and seized the Caliphate.[17] Marwan II was the last Umayyad caliph. During his reign, the *Khawarij* in particular rebelled several times but were always defeated. Yazid bin Umar occupied Iraq and maintained Nasr bin Sayyar as the governor of Khurāsān. In this situation, although the Umayyads were able to establish effective control in Iraq, the rest of the Caliphate was not satisfied with the political situation and opposition to the central government increased to its highest extent.

RISE OF ABU MUSLIM

The tripartite civil war launched between Nasr bin Sayyar, Al-Harith bin Shuraih and Juday Al-Kirmani in Khurāsān triggered the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate. After the death of Al-Harith bin Shuraih, Abu Muslim al-Khurāsāni - a secret agent sent to Khurāsān by Imam Ibrahim to lead the secret *da^cwah* and later to occupy Khurāsān- came into the picture. With regard to Abu Muslim's origins, there are different views among historians. The majority of authors believe that Abu Muslim was a slave and a Muslim convert, while others depict him as a freeman. This ambiguity exists because he was reluctant to answer when someone asked him about his origins. Instead of answering the interrogators, he advised them to ignore such unimportant details.[18] Nonetheless, some commentators say that he was Yunus bin Asim's slave and was later bought by Bukayr bin Mahan for 400 *dirhams* for Imam Ibrahim.[19]

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[17] Al-Tabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari* (*Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk*): *The 'Abbāsid Revolution A.D. 743-750 / A.H. 126-132*, *Vol. XXVII,* trans. John Alden Williams (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 1-4.

[18] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, 153.

[19] Al-Maqrizi, *Niza*, trans. C. E. Bosworth, "Al-Maqrizi's Book of Contention and Strife Concerning the Relations between the Banu Umayyad and the Banu Hashim," *Journal of Islamic Studies*. Monograph no.3, University of Manchester (1980), 91.

According to Akbar Shah Najeedbabadi, Abu Muslim was a free Iranian man born in Isfahan. Initially, his name was Ibrahim bin Uthman bin Bashar. When his father Uthman bin Bashar died, he was just seven years old. Afterwards, he was brought up by Isa bin Musa Sarraj until his master was jailed by the Umayyads. From that time, Abu Muslim was motivated to revolt against the Umayyad Caliphate. Taking this opportunity, Qahtaba bin Shabib, who was in charge of propagating Abbasid ideology, presented him to Imam Ibrahim. He was renamed by Imam Ibrahim as Abu Muslim Abdur Rahman by Imam Ibrahim which epithet later replaced his real name.

From that time, he contributed to the Abbasid revolution passionately until the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate.[20] Abu Muslim's army attacked and drove Nasr bin Sayyar under the command of Ali bin Kirmani. Abu Muslim also persuaded Chief Sheban bin Abdul Aziz Khwarji to join him.[21] Nonetheless, both Sheban bin Abdul Aziz Khwarji and Ali bin Kirmani left him when they were informed by Nasr bin Sayyar that Abu Muslim was a *Shi'ah*. Thus, there were four rival groups, each led by Abu Muslim, Nasr bin Sayyar, Sheban bin Abdul Aziz Khwarji and Ali bin Kirmani in Khurāsān.[22] Subsequently, Abu Muslim murdered both Sheban bin Abdul Aziz Khwarji[23] and Ali bin Kirmani.[24] In addition, Nasr bin Sayyar was also seriously ill and died[25] on his way to Sada. Therefore, Abu Muslim had no rivals in ruling Khurāsān.

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[20] Akbar Shah, 259.
[21] Ibid., 243-244.
[22] Ibid., 245.
[23] Al-Tabarī, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*..., 54-61.
[24] Ibid., 81-85.
[25] Ibid., 125.

Consequently, in 748 CE, Abu Muslim assumed *de facto* Abbasid governorship of Khurāsān.[26] Abu Muslim's victory in Khurāsān was the starting point of the termination of the Umayyad Caliphate and the creation of the Abbasid Caliphate.[27] The Abbasid revolution was a crucial alteration in the history of the Islamic states. In the early stages of the Abbasid movement they were under Umayyad surveillance. Initially, the Abbasids began with secret *da^{c}wah*[28] (propagation), in which they[29] claimed that they should be the rightful caliphs based on the succession of Muhammad bin Ali to Abu Hashim and also being the descendants of the uncle of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*).

Abu Muslim observed the secret *da^{c}wah* in Kufa quietly until he was chosen to take charge of the secret *da^{c}wah* in Khurāsān by Imam Ibrahim. His role was that of a mere propagandist of the secret *da^{c}wah* and then to revolt openly on behalf of the Abbasid family. Thus, in fact, the Abbasid secret *da^{c}wah* had started in Kufa as had most of the early *Shi'ah* movements. At the same time, the *Khawarij* basically wanted to have a leader who was without secular or religious powers.[30] On the other hand, the *Shi'ah*[31] believed that the Imam had interpretative religious powers to occupy the position of *Amir al-Mu'minin*.[32] Afterwards, the secret *da^{c}wah* movements shifted to Khurāsān, where the citizens would never support anyone except those from the Prophet's family.[33]

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[26] Daniel, Elton L, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan Under Abbasid Rule 747-820* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979), 56-60.

[27] Ibid., 40-93.

[28] Ibid., Footnote no. 18, 62.

[29] The Abbasid were the descendants of al-Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib (d.652 CE), uncle of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*).

[30] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, 147.

[31] *Shi'ah* are supporters of the family of Ali b. Abi Talib. They believe that the leader of the Muslims must come from the family of Ali b. Abi Talib. According to them, this is the only legitimate family for this post.

[32] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, 139-140.

[33] Daniel, Elton L, 13-22.

During the late 740 CEs, the *da^cwah* moved out from secrecy and became open under the control of Abu Muslim, especially in Khurāsān. Consequently, the Abbasids launched the revolution from the province of Khurāsān for their personal interest. As a result, the Umayyad position in Khurāsān also became untenable. In occupying *Merv*, Abu Muslim had scored a significant victory, but the legitimate objective of the establishment of the new Abbasid Caliphate was yet to be attained. He became the Abbasid governor of Khurāsān, and a general in the late 740 CEs. Furthermore, in 750 CE, Abu Muslim supplied a huge Khurāsāni army to fight the Umayyad caliph at the Battle of Zab.[34] Abu Muslim assured the dominance of the pro-Abbasid sovereignty by defeating a number of rivals and opponents during the revolutionary period in the entire Khurāsān.

Despite Abu Muslim's great contributions during the Abbasid revolution and also in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate, he was assassinated by the second Abbasid Caliph, Abu Jafar Al-Mansur. After the establishment of the new Caliphate, when the second Abbasid Caliph's uncle, Abdullah bin Ali, rebelled against Abu Jafar Al-Mansur, Abu Muslim was requested by the Caliph to crush the rebellion. Abu Muslim successfully supressed the revolt on behalf of the Abbasid Caliph in Syria. Due to his heroic role in the revolution and his military skills, Abu Muslim was considered as a threat to the caliph. In addition, some clashes occurred between Abu Muslim and Abu Jafar Al-Mansur as well. Thus, he was finally assassinated by Abu Jafar Al-Mansur.[35] The assassination created disatisfaction among the people of Khurāsān, especially among the *Shi'ah* community. Later, Abu Muslim became a legendary figure in Iran.

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[34] Al-Tabarī, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*..., 162-166.
[35] Akbar Shah, 259-292.

Accordingly, this research predominantly aims to identify and analyze critically Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's major contributions during the Abbasid revolutionary period and in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate. In order to examine his contributions, it is important to study the transitional period between the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates - more precisely, the late Umayyad and the early Abbasid period. It is also extremely essential to investigate the allegations for which he was killed by the second Abbasid Caliph.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

During the period of Abbasid revolution and early Abbasid Caliphate, Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni played a very important role in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in Central Asia. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the Abbasids owed their victory to Abu Muslim. However, despite the existing literature related to Abu Muslim Al- Khurāsāni, there is no special effort to be found with respect to his major contributions in the establishment of the Abbasid dominance in Khurāsān where the actual creation of the Abbasid Caliphate took place.

Therefore, the researcher aims to provide a comprehensive discussion of Abu Muslim's major contributions during the Abbasid revolution as well as in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate through the following research questions:

1. How was the Abbasid revolution against the Umayyad Caliphate successfully implemented?

2. What were Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni's major contributions during the Abbasid revolution as well as in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate?

3. Why was Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni assassinated?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has the following major objectives:

1. to examine how the Abbasid revolution was successfully implemented;

2. to identify and critically analyze Abu Muslim's major role during the Abbasid revolutionary period and his contributions to the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate; and

3. to evaluate the factors which led to the assassination of Abu Muslim Al-Khurāsāni.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

This research will mainly be based on various primary and secondary sources. The researcher will generally rely on primary sources such as authentic English translations of Arabic texts, especially Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Al-Tabari's voluminous book entitled "The History of al-Tabari" (*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*) and translated texts which portray particularly the transitional period between the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. In addition, Al-Baladhuri's "*Kitab Futuh Al-Buldan*" translated as "The Origins of the Islamic State" and Al-Maqrizi's 155 short notes translated as "Book of Contention and Strife Concerning the Relations between the Banu Umayyad and the Banu Hashim" will also be used as primary sources. As secondary sources, a number of books, historical journals, articles and microfilms will also be utilized in order to develop this research.

Al-Tabari's writings make a great and remarkable contribution to the History of Islam. He wrote 39 volumes under the title "The History of al-Tabari" (*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*). Subsequently, these were translated by several Western historians into English. In this study, however, the researcher will especially utilize only

Volumes 17 to 28, which deal with the transitional period between the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates in which Abu Muslim's contributions were detailed.

Hawting translated the historical events of the first civil war between Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib and Amir Muawiyah.[36] The Umayyad Caliphate was established in 661CE and Muawiyah was recognized as the first Umayyad *Amir al-Mu'minin* after the Battle of Siffin. Howard explained the situation of the Umayyad Caliphate after the death of *Amir al-Mu'minin*.[37] Hawting also examined the change in political power from Sufyanid to Marwanid.[38] Rowson emphasized the Marwanid restoration during the reign of Abdul Al-Malik.[39] The Caliphate was re-strengthened during his reign in order to encounter the struggle for supremacy between the Umayyads and Abd Allah bin Al-Zubayr, which started in 683 CE. Hillenbrand highlighted most of the internal problems among Banu Umayyah which finally led to the collapse of the whole Caliphate.[40]

Williams focused on the Abbasid Revolution.[41] His book will be relied on heavily to develop this research, since it emphasizes principally on the transitional period between the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. In addition, it also outlines Abu Muslim's contributions during the Abbasid Revolution as well as in the establishment

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[36] Al-Tabarī, *The First Civil War*..., 1-230.
[37] Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk): The Caliphate of Yazid b. Mu' awiyah A.D. 680-683 / A.H. 60-64*, Vol. XIX, trans. I.K.A. Howard (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1 -226.
[38] Al-Tabarī, *The Collapse of Sufyanid*..., 1-182.
[39] Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk): The Marwanid Restoration A.D. 693-701 / A.H. 74-81*, Vol. XXII, trans. Everett K. Rowson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1-196.
[40] Al-Tabarī, *The Waning of the Umayyad*..., 1-271.
[41] Al-Tabarī, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*..., 1-185.

of the Abbasid Caliphate. It is also equally essential to utilize the book of McAuliffe in which the reasons for Abu Muslim's murder were explained.[42]

Al-Maqrizi's 155 short notes also state the conditions of the Islamic Caliphates from the origin of the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) until the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate, including Abu Muslim's origins and his position in the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate. These were translated together with commentaries by Bosworth in the book entitled "*Al-Maqrizi's* Book of Contention and Strife Concerning the Relations between the Banu Umayyad and the Banu Hashim."[43] In this book, he closely examined the relationship between the Banu Umayyah and Banu Hashim.

Another important primary source, which explains the comprehensive political development of the Khurāsān region, is the *Kitab Futuh Al-Buldan* of Al-Baladhuri. It was later translated by Murgotten under the title of "The Origins of the Islamic State." This book will greatly contribute to the investigation of the political situation in Khurāsān from the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-44 CE) until it was under Abbasid rule. The region is also very important for this study, since Abu Muslim sparked the Abbasid revolution from Khurasan.[44]

Tayeb El-Hibri broke with traditional approaches and applied a literal-critical reading to examine the lives of the Caliphs. In his book entitled "Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate*"*, he highlighted the important role of the revolution in Khurāsān for the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate.[45] Hawting discussed the rise and fall of the Umayyad

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[42] Al-Tabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Jarīr, *The History of al-Tabari* (*Tārīkh al-rusul wal-mulūk*)*: 'Abbāsid Authority Affirmed A.D. 753-763 / A.H. 136-145, Vol. XXVIII,* trans. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1-44.
[43] Al-Maqrizi, 1-144.
[44] Al-Baladhuri, *Kitab Futuh Al-Buldan*, trans. F. C. Murgotten, "The Origins of the Islamic State," Part II (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 159-203.
[45] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, 1999), 1-16.

Caliphate generally in his book "The First Dynasty of Islam: *The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*".[46] His book will especially be used to capture the overall picture of the Umayyad Caliphate since the time of its establishment until its collapse. In this regard, Lapidus pointed out in his book "A History of Islamic Societies" that the Arabs were no longer entitled privileged rates of tax during the period of Umar II. Moreover, he ordered the enrolment of 20,000 *Mawali* in the *Diwan* and treated the *Mawali* forces and Arab forces equally as active Muslim soldiers.[47] This was a key source to the dissatisfaction of the Arabs with the Umayyad Caliphate.

Furthermore, Humphreys critically analyzed the problems in Islamic history in his book entitled "Islamic History: A Framework for Enquiry". He emphasized the interpretation of the Abbasid Revolution made by modern historians. Then van Voten drew attention to three main aspects of the fall of the Umayyads and the evolution of the Abbasid revolution. Firstly, the alleged designation by Ali's grandson Abu Hashim of his counterpart Muhammad bin Ali (a grandson of al-Abbas, the Prophet's paternal uncle and father of Al-Saffah and Abu Jafar Al-Mansur) to succeed him as the chief of Banu Hashim. The second step was to carry out the reorganization of the sect under Muhammad bin Ali and its underground agitation in Khurāsān. The third aspect was the uprising which finally overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate led by Abu Muslim in Khurāsān. Humphreys' analysis helps us to understand comprehensively the whole scenario of the Abbasid revolution as well as the important role of Abu Muslim's participation and contributions.[48]

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[46] Hawting, G. R, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 1-115.
[47] Lapidus, Ira M, *A History of Islamic Socities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 63-65.
[48] Humphreys, R. S, *Islamic History: A Framework for enquiry* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1991), 104-127.

The Abbasid Revolution was a crucial change in the history of Islamic states. Sharon differentiated between propaganda and revolution by saying that "every revolution has its propaganda". Accordingly, the Abbasid revolution, begun as a secret *da^cwah*, and later turned to an open revolution. He further explained the sources of Abbasid *da^cwah* and its ideological background in his book titled "Black Banners from the East: the Establishment of the Abbasid State – Incubation of a Revolt".[49] Akbar Shah Najeebabadi elucidated in his book "The History of Islam" that the tripartite civil war launched among Nasr bin Sayyar, Al-Harith bin Shuraih and Juday Al-Kirmani in Khurāsān triggered the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate.[50]

Shaban analyzed the different concepts of leadership between the *da^cwah* of the Abbasids, *Khawarij* and *Shi'ah*. The *Khawarij*[51] sought to have a leader (*Amir al-Muminin*) without secular or religious powers. On the other hand, the *Shi'ah* believed that a leader needed to have interpretative religious power apart from political power. At this point, however, they came together as the first step to topple the Umayyad regime and, secondly, to choose a member of the Prophet's descendants to be the *Imam*.[52] This sensitivity created the schism between *Sunni* and *Shi'ah* after the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate. Nevertheless, it is still important to investigate the political agenda of both the *Sunni* and *Shi'ah* groups involved in the revolution rather than their sincerity and loyalty to the members of the Prophet's family. Details of this analysis will also be investigated in this research.

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[49] Sharon, Moshe, *Black Banners from the East: the Establishment of the Abbasid State – Incubation of a Revolt* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press – The Hebrew University, 1983). 17-73.
[50] Akbar Shah, 243-245.
[51] The political theory of the *Khawarij* is different from that of the *Sunni* and *Shi'ah*. According to them, any qualified Muslim can be the Caliph regardless of his race. They do not accept the priority for "*Quraish/ Ahl al- Bayt.*"
[52] M. A. Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, 142-149.

Kennedy introduced Islamic history from the time of the Prophet (*s.a.w.*) to the vast upheaval caused by the arrival of the Turks in the book entitled "The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates".[53] He also provided comprehensive details of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 2006 book entitled "When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Greatest Dynasty".[54] This book portrayed the story of the Abbasid caliphs and their bureaucracy rather than the social and economic factors. However, the Abbasid revolutionary period and the establishment of the new Caliphate are presented accordingly. He also explained the cause of Abu Muslim's death.

Abu Muslim's contributions in the Abbasid revolutionary period were also mentioned by Daniel in his book "The Political and Social History of Khurasan Under Abbasid Rule 747-820". He explained how Abu Muslim became the Abbasid governor or the leader of the Abbasid army in Khurasan and how Abu Muslim assisted Khurasani army in defeating the Umayyad army at the Battle of Zab. He further discussed the origins of Abu Muslim, since there were two rival groups originating from different backgrounds. The first group said that he was a freeman while the other argued that he was associated with *Banu Ijl* as a slave or servant. [55] According to the Oxford Islamic Studies database, Abu Muslim was a slave and a Muslim convert who mobilized Arab and Iranian forces in Khurāsān and governed the area under the Abbasid authority until he was assassinated by Caliph Al-Mansur.[56]

In a nutshell, the existing literature is often contradictory and/or vague in terms of detailed facts related to Abu Muslim's origins and contributions during the Abbasid

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[53] Kennedy, Hugh, *The Prophet and…*, 1-343.
[54] Kennedy, Hugh, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islamic Greatest Dynasty* (Da Capo Press, 2006), 1-50.
[55] Daniel, Elton L, 40-117.
[56] Oxford Islamic Studies Online, "Abu Muslim al-Khurasani," <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com /article/opr/t125/e35?_hi=0&_pos=2>

revolution and the reasons why he was assassinated after the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate. A closer examination is essentially needed in order to address the above mentioned contradictions and confusion. For that reason, the researcher needs to analyze his major contributions during the Abbasid revolutionary period as well as to the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate and the reasons for his assassination.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The researcher, with regard to the research methodology, will employ the qualitative method of historical research. As for the research design, the exploratory qualitative research design will be applied. This research will be developed by utilizing a variety of primary and secondary sources. Since the research is predominantly a library-based research, both primary and secondary sources will be collected mainly from the IIUM library, the National Library of Malaysia and libraries from other Malaysian universities.

The researcher will generally rely on primary sources such as authentic English translations of Arabic texts, especially Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir Al-Tabari's volumnious "The History of al-Tabari" (*Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk*), Al-Baladhuri's *Kitab Futuh Al-Buldan* translated as "The Origins of the Islamic State"; Al-Maqrizi's 155 short notes entitled "Al-Maqrizi's Book of Contention and Strife Concerning the Relations between the Banu Umayyad and the Banu Hashim"; and location maps of Syria, Iraq and Khurāsān during the transitional period between the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates. As secondary sources, the researcher will utilize books, historical journals, articles, microfilms and so forth. Moreover, numerous online search tools such as A-Z Journals, ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis and the like will also be used for collecting both primary and secondary materials.