BOOK REVIEW

S.M. Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims*, Najmah sons, Dacca, 9,
Vol. II, Part I, pp. i-xxv + 164, Price Rs. 25/-
Vol. II, Part II, pp. 391, Price Rs. 35/-

Dr. S. Imamuddin, Professor of Islamic History & Culture, University of Dacca, has been my colleague in Dacca University till December 1960 when I left the University and joined Sind University, Hyderabad. Dr. Imamuddin has devoted his life to the study of Islamic history, Islamic sciences and followers of Islam. He has won some name by publishing his works (1) *Some Aspects of the Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Muslim Spain*, (2) *The Economic History of Spain Under the Umayyads* and (3) *A Modern History of the Middle East and North Africa*, etc.

Dr. Imamuddin has also admirably edited the Persian texts of *Ta’rikh Khān Jahān* and *Ta’rikh Sher Shāhi* and published them with excellent introductions in English.

Like his other works mentioned above, Dr. Imamuddin has recently published *A Political History of the Muslims* in two volumes for the use of students and those readers who like to study the subject in English.

The two Parts of the Second Volume of his Political History of the Muslims present the events of the periods of the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsid Caliphs (r. 661-1258 A.D.) in a simple and lucid style. He has concisely touched almost all noted political changes that took place in capital cities as well as in remote corners of their dominion.

The First Part contains a very useful Introduction which discusses ‘Historiography’ of the Muslims briefly. The readers would be greatly benefited by its theme which is generally neglected or not at all mentioned in works dealing with political history.

Chapters I-IX deal with the Umayyad Caliphs and chapters X-XV with the ‘Abbāsid Caliphs upto the end of Al-Musta‘simbillāh.

The Second Part begins with chapt. XVI and continues upto chap. XIX which discusses the Decay and Fall of Baghdad.

The subsequent two chapters XX and XXI (vide pp. 247-302-319), deal with “Administration under the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsids” and “Islamic Civilization”. These two chapters, in fact, distinguish this work from similar others.

In chapter XX the author has tried in his own way to explain the system of administration that was in vogue in the time of these caliphs. Some of the points mentioned in the beginning of this chapter would, however, catch the attention of those who are acquainted with the sad events which occurred with tremendous speed after the very tragic assassination of the third Rightful Caliph, ‘Uthmān. Some of these points are as follows:-
1. The author states (p. 247), 'Under the influence of the Romans and the Persians and on the advice of Mughirah ibn Shu'ba, Mu'awiyah thus introduced the hereditary principle of Khilafat'.

Obviously the author has, perhaps, followed some of his favourite Orientalists in giving out the underlined expressions which would surely not concur with the demeanour of a serious scholar. The influence of the Romans and the Persians is never mentioned by early historians. The expression 'hereditary principle of Khilafat' is also his own coinage, as no early authority has ever used this sort of principle for 'khilafat'. Mu'awiyah, in fact, had in his mind the purport of the Prophetic saying; 'The Khilafat would continue after me for a little more than thirty years, and then there would follow kingship'. He therefore desired, and that too in conformity with the Arab tradition, to keep 'imārat' chiftainship or authority in his family. After all, his elder brother, Yazid ibn Sufyān, preceded him as Governor of Syria and his father and grandfather were the chiefs of the tribe in Mecca.

2. The author adds, again without referring to any authority, “Husayn ibn 'Ali and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr established themselves as rival Caliphs one after the other at Kūfa and Makka respectively (pp. 247-248)”. The statement is partly correct concerning 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr but is baseless concerning Husayn ibn 'Ali, as he never reached Kūfa, nor did he ever establish himself as Caliph.

3. Likewise, it sounds rather harsh and uncouth to say that “By constructing the Qubbat al-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock) at Jerusalem 'Abd al-Malik had tried to divert the attention of the Muslims from Makkah to Jerusalem” (p. 248). Muslims no doubt believe in the sanctity of the city due to the Isra' of the Prophet which forms the opening theme of the Sūra Bani Isrā'il in the Holy Qur'ān, the Divine Book itself.

4. Again, just after some European Islamists, the author seems to be unfair and far from being just in accusing the Umayyad Caliphs of being “truly kings secular in character” (p. 249). Now one can deny that these were the caliphs who in their true Islamic spirit spread the light of Islam as far as the shores of the Atlantic in Maghrib Aqṣā, Ifriqiyyah, and up to the wall of China in Aqṣā Sharq. Moreover, it is these followers of Islam who established supremacy of the Muslims after uprooting the power of the Romans and a number of other Western Emperors.

5. The author also contradicts himself when the states, “... but from the time of the third caliph, 'Uthmān, not much importance was attached to Shūrā. During the time of Mu'awiyah the Shūrā consisting of a few topmost men was more or less a Council of Elders of the Umayyad Caliphs only” (p. 249).

A historian is expected to be free from bias in stating facts and narrating events that occurred centuries earlier which were recorded down after almost one century or even more. Again, the narrators of political events of the period themselves were not immune from biases. Moreover, 'Uthmān and Mu'awiyah consulted prominent contemporary Ṣahābah just like the first two Caliphs who also consulted only 'Ali, 'Uthmān, Ŭltha, Zubair and a few others. In the presence of dissension and opposition it was quite a
wise policy to rely on the counsel of supporting chiefs of the period only.

6. The use of 'Mir Munshi', under the 'Abbasids (p. 254) is also strange. Though the Persians were the supporters of the 'Abbasids this epithet was not adopted in the period under reference.

Chapter XXI summarizes 'Islamic Civilization' admirably well. The readers will no doubt have a vivid idea of the development of arts and culture from this chapter. A few mistakes may however be corrected in the second edition of the book as follows:-

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<td>Abū Mikhnaf</td>
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<td>Al-Sāyib</td>
<td>in place of al-Sayyib</td>
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<td>Abū'l Aswad</td>
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The book is undoubtedly useful and elaborate as it comprehends most of the important political changes and cultural developments that concern the two periods which were golden, indeed.

Additions of 'Bibliography', Appendices of 'Chronology', 'Genealogical Tables, a Map of Muslim Expansion and an 'Index' at the end of Part II, have immensely increased the value of the book. The author deserves congratulations for making the political history of the Muslims available to the students and general readers at a very moderate price.

Karachi

M.S.H. Ma’ṣūmi