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Crucifixion in the Muslim World: An Overview of Prominent Cases from 600s to 1300s CE

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Abstract: This study examines cases of crucifixion that occurred between the 600s and 1300s in the Muslim world, drawing from first-hand accounts of notable Muslim historians of the time. Through in-depth reading and analysis of these historical sources, this study sheds light on selected cases of crucifixion that emerged as a result of political and warfare situations in the medieval Muslim world, highlighting the devastating effects of war, particularly civil war, on society. The study also explores the Islamic perspective of crucifixion, which is justified in the Qur'an and Hadith as a form of discretionary punishment for crimes such as brigandage, murder, heresy and apostasy, and even revolt against legitimate authority. However, this study also reveals that the imposition of crucifixion was often influenced by factors such as blood feud, political bias, tribal enmity, and personal vendetta, leading to instances of unjust punishment. This study concludes that the severity of crucifixion as a punishment necessitates careful and thorough investigation and consultation to ensure justice and fairness, in adherence to the foundational virtues of Islam.

Keywords: Crucifixion, gibbeting, punishment, revolt, rebel, heretic, apostate

Introduction

One of the earliest documented threats of imposition of crucifixion in human history was pronounced by the Qur'anic Pharaoh against his magicians who, after losing in a 'magical powers showdown' against the Prophets Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron), chose to repent and follow the teachings brought by the two messengers of Allah. As stated in verse 71 of Surah Ṭāhā and verses 121 to 124 of Surah al-Aʿrāf, when he felt that his hegemony was in peril, the Pharaoh threatened: "Then indeed I will cut off your hands and feet all of you crosswise, and indeed I will crucify you all at the base of the date palm tree." This event possibly occurred between 1400 and 1300 BCE. After the deaths of Prophets Musa and Harun, Prophet Yūsha' ibn Nūn (Joshua), after his success in conquering the Kingdom of Ai, crucified its king on a piece of wood, and burned its city. Meanwhile, in the battle against the Amorites, which took place in Gibeon, Allah sent down hailstones that killed most of the Amorite army. Frightened by the Israelites, the five Amorite kings hid in a cave, only for Prophet Yūsha' to later kill and crucify them on a piece of wood. Subsequently, he ordered their bodies to be taken down from the cross and thrown into the cave where they hid (Al-Ṭabarī, 1991a).

Centuries later, a case of crucifixion was found among the Assyrians in Mesopotamia during the rule of Ashurnasirpal II. Renowned for his expansionist policy, this king, who ascended to the throne in 883 BCE, severely crushed the rebellion in Ashur, plundered the city, selected some of its most guilty inhabitants, and crucified them (Rawlinson, 1870). Another case that occurred among the ancient Persians and was related in Herodotus' *Histories* is the execution of a general named Artayctes, who was crucified alive (Hengel,

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1977). Herodotus explains that Artayctes was crucified because "he was in the habit of taking women directly to the Temple of Protesilaus at Elaeus and committing impious acts there," and he also plundered Protesilaus' treasures (Book 9, Chapter 116). A similar punishment was also imposed by Darius III (r. 336–330 BCE), who reportedly crucified thousands of Babylonians in order to conclude their revolt once and for all; the same king reportedly crucified his chief adherents as well. Later, when Alexander the Great was about to finally conquer Persia and found out that Darius III was assaulted by the latter's guards (in another version, the assailants were his chamberlains), the former ordered the capture, beheading, and crucifixion of the assailants. In justifying the crucifixion, Alexander proclaimed, "Such is the punishment of him who dares to raise a hand against his king, and is disloyal to his people" (Al-Ṭabarī, 1987b, pp. 87–93), which implied that the act of treason was punishable by death.

There are many other examples of crucifixion imposed among the ancient Persians to the point that this punishment was described as an ordinary punishment against rebels (Rawlinson, 1870). In a similar vein, among the Romans, crucifixion was also commonly imposed on criminals, including political or religious agitators, pirates, and slaves. One famous case is the crucifixion ordered by Marcus Crassus upon the army of Spartacus in 71 BCE, including some 3,000 rebel slaves. In later periods, crucifixion was again inflicted on rebels, as ordered by the Judean King Alexander Jannaeus on 800 Jewish rebels who, before their eventual crucifixion, were forced to witness their wives and children being slaughtered. It goes without saying that the most famous case is the alleged crucifixion of Prophet Īsā ibn Maryam (Jesus son of Mary) by Pontius Pilate in about 32 CE. Prophet Īsā was considered by the Romans and the Jewish authorities to be a political and religious threat and a seditious instigator, and was therefore arrested on charges of treason. Just as Spartacus and his followers, Prophet Īsā was probably also considered an iconoclast and a scourge on the authorities, and was thus labelled as a "criminal." However, it is worth mentioning that since the crucifixion of Prophet Īsā is not recognised in Islam and by Muslims, several medieval Arab writers referred to Christians as "the worshippers of the crucified" or "worshippers of the cross."

From the exposition above, it is evident that crucifixion as a form of capital punishment has been imposed since time immemorial by ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Seleucids, Scythians, Indians, Carthaginians, Romans, Celts, Germanic, Britannic, Arabs, and other nations of the antiquities. The common characteristic of the older form of crucifixion is that the condemned, living or dead, were either fastened, bound, or nailed to a *crux*, a vertical structure made from wood (pole, stake, plank, or the trunk of a tree), or even hung on a gibbet—thus this kind of *crux* is termed *crux simplex*. Alternatively, the condemned were also fastened, bound, or nailed to a *crux compacta*, which was made "by two joined wooden stakes or beams" and considered the full and true version of crucifixion since it combined the *crux* (vertical pole, or stake, or plank) and the *patibulum* (crossbeam). Furthermore, the *crux compacta* can be divided into two types: as the letter "X" (*crux decussata*), or the letter "T" (*crux commissa*) (Hengel, 1977, pp. 22–29; Samuelsson, 2010, pp. 3–4, 7). In view of these variations of norms in crucifixion, in the early Muslim world, particularly in Arabia, *ṣalb* is considered the equivalent of crucifixion and gibbeting alike. In the Arabic tradition, *ṣalb* means tying and hanging—without nailing, which is considered heretical in Islam and perceived as the worst form of execution in the Greco-Roman world—someone on a tree bark, tree, pole, stake, or cross (El Fadl, 2001; Hengel, 1977).

Due to the slow, painful, gruesome, and humiliating death of the condemned, since he/she would be displayed in public for days, thus undergoing an 'exemplary punishment,' crucifixion was intended to deter people from committing crimes and to protect society from criminals. Sometimes, for added humiliation, animals such as dogs, cats, or fish were also crucified alongside the criminals, and the bodies of criminals were sometimes left unburied

and served as food for beasts (Peters, 2005; Hengel, 1977). Furthermore, it is important to note that although in the general 'Arabic-style' crucifixion victims were usually executed before they were crucified since Islam forbids torture, and that crucifixion in the medieval Muslim world usually involved headless cadavers (Noldeke, in al-Ṭabarī, 1990d; El Fadl, 2001), the Malikites held that bandits must be crucified first and then executed by stabbing him/her on the breast, while in the Shiite tradition bandits must be crucified for three days and can be spared if they survived this period (Peters, 2005).

There are a considerable number of documented cases of crucifixion that occurred in the medieval Muslim world, which largely encompassed the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, Egypt, Northern Africa (including Ifriqiya), Central Asia, and al-Andalus. However, due to limited space, this article will only discuss a few of the most important cases related in prominent historical sources, such as the translated accounts of notable medieval Muslim historians such as al-Balādhurī (d. 892), al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Ibn al-Qūṭiyya (d. 977), al-Bīrūnī (973–1048), Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1233), Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1369), al-Maqrizī (1364–1442), and al-Maqqarī (1577–1632), as well as Christian historians such as Michael Rabo (d. 1199) and William of Tyre (1130–1186). The descriptions of cases of crucifixion contained in their works—which, in many cases, were passed to them from previous narrators—are too precious to be left out since they can not only shed some light on the political and warfare situation in the medieval Muslim world, but also show the devastating effects of war, civil war in particular. Additionally, analysis presented by modern scholars is also consulted since it can provide additional context and better understanding of crucifixion. These historical facts can impart a lesson as well as become a vivid reminder of what can happen to the *ummah* (Muslim community) if the 'strongmen' are preoccupied with worldly power and drenched in their will to gain power but not submit to the command of Allah, make peace, and maintain unity.

Crucifixion in the Muslim World and its Gory Imposition

Crucifixion of rebels, agitators, bandits, and murderers

Many historical accounts testify that there were numerous cases of crucifixion that occurred in the Muslim world between the 600s and 1300s CE, mostly in West Asia, Persia, Central Asia, Northern Africa (including Ifriqiya), and al-Andalus. Perhaps, among the earliest instances of crucifixion in the Muslim world was around the same time as the Battle of Badr (624 CE). As related in Sunan Abī Dāwud 591, Umm Waraqa bint 'Abdullah was murdered by her slave and slave-girl by strangulation using "a sheet of cloth." Upon learning of her death, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ordered those slaves to be captured and crucified, becoming the first crucifixion to take place in Medina. It is worthy to note that prior to her death, Umm Waraqa bint 'Abdullah had asked Prophet Muḥammad to be allowed to accompany him to the Battle of Badr, but he rejected her request and, instead, said to her, "Allah, the Almighty, will bestow martyrdom upon you." Later, during the Muslim conquest of Iraq, in the Battle of 'Ayn al-Tamr in 633 CE, the legendary Muslim military commander Khālid ibn al-Walīd managed to best the Sassanian forces and their Arab Christian auxiliary forces. The commander of Arab Christian forces, Hilāl ibn Aqqa ibn Qays ibn Bashir, who thought that he knew Arab Muslims better than his Persian comrades and was determined to eliminate the Khālid forces, was personally captured by Khālid, after which he was killed and crucified (Al-Baladhuri, 1916; Al-Ṭabarī, 1993).

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was again involved in the imposition of another crucifixion that occurred soon after the conclusion of the Battle of Yarmouk (636 CE), though this time the crucified was, again, by no means a Muslim. As narrated by Michael Rabo, after being

defeated by the Arabs and losing 40,000 cavalry, one of Heraclius' lieutenants of Persian origin, Niketas (whom Rabo referred to as "the son of Shahrvaraz"), came before 'Umar in Homs to plead for mercy and offer his service to help the caliph conquer Persia. However, Khosrow II's daughters, who happened to be among the captives, warned 'Umar not to be deceived by Niketas and testified that his father, Shahrvaraz, usurped the throne from Ardhashir III and "killed anyone who did not swear an oath to support the king and his sons." 'Umar believed their story and had Niketas executed and crucified him on a wood in Homs (Michael Rabo, 2014, pp. 456–457). Furthermore, during the early days of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān's reign, a rebellion launched in Tripoli, Lebanon, led by one of the Greek patricians who was given a safe haven and allowed to stay in the city. However, after staying in the city for around two years, this Greek patrician seized the city. After shutting the city's gate and killing the city's *'āmil* (administer), he took this city's soldiers and Jews as captives. According to one account, after the Muslims besieged and defeated him, he was captured, executed, and crucified (al-Baladhuri, 1916).

In the early days of the Umayyad Caliphate, crucifixion was imposed as a penalty upon Sahm ibn Ghālib al-Hujaymi, who not only rebelled against 'Abd Allah ibn 'Āmir, the Governor of Basra under Muawiyah, in 41 AH (May 7, 661 CE–April 25, 662 CE), but also unjustly took the life of Qudamah ibn Maẓ'ūn, one of the earliest reverts. Around five years later, in 46 AH (March 13, 666 CE–March 2, 667 CE), Sahm rebelled again by causing mischief in al-Ahwaz and went as far as to proclaim the Kharijite slogan, "Judgement belongs only to God." In response, the then-Governor of Basra, Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyān (Ziyād ibn Abīhi), denied him a safe conduct, and subsequently hunted, killed, and crucified him for his crime (Al-Ṭabarī, 1987c, pp. 19, 89–90). While Sahm's case clearly demonstrated the imposition of a just death penalty on an unrepentant rebel, the crucifixion of Hānī ibn 'Urwa al-Murādī serves as an eerie reminder of the rigorous punishment that fell upon those who were only suspected to have helped or aligned with the Alids during the Second Fitna (680–692 CE). After he was suspected to have harboured Muslim ibn 'Aqīl—an envoy of Husayn ibn 'Alī, to rally the allegiance of Kufans and then raise a revolt, and thus was 'marked for death' by Yazīd I—Hānī was probed by the Governor of Kufah, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyād. According to various accounts, Hānī bravely refused to deliver Muslim, who was both a refugee and his guest, to 'Ubayd Allah. As a result, 'Ubayd Allah dragged Hānī to a certain place in al-Kunāsah (the camel market in Kufah), and beheaded and crucified his body there; subsequently, his head was presented to Yazīd I. This event, which occurred on September 10, 680 CE, clearly demonstrated how the Umayyad government was truly anxious to secure their position by suppressing their political opponent, the Alids in particular (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990, pp. 16–63). Around the same year, 'Ubayd Allah played a certain role in the crucifixion of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Afīf al-Azdī al-Ghimidī, a Shiite and sympathiser of the Alids. However, it was his own tribe, Azd, who crucified him in Basra since the leader declared that 'Abd Allah brought trouble for others and destroyed his own tribe (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990a, pp. 167–168).

Perhaps, among the most famous yet tragic cases of crucifixion during the early years of the Umayyad era is the crucifixion of 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām and his younger brother, 'Amr, the first and fifth sons of al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām respectively. Being a grandson of 'Abū Bakr though Asmā', 'Abd Allah held vast influence and power, gained support from people in the Arabian Peninsula, was even recognised as a caliph, and was later known for his refusal to give allegiance to Yazīd I. Therefore, it was only natural that the new Umayyad caliph perceived 'Abd Allah as a threat to his authority, branded him as a rebel, and was determined to stop him. While not much is known about 'Amr, it is related that he received much money and power from the Umayyads but resented his own family. Although they were brothers, the animosity between them was so intense. This rift was exploited by Yazīd I, who, in July or August 680 CE, appointed 'Amr ibn Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ, the Umayyad Governor of Medina, as the commander of his *shurṭah* (police), or army, and then sent him to

subjugate and persecute ʻAbd Allah along with his followers. The bad blood between the two brothers grew so severe that ʻAmr planned to attack ʻAbd Allah at the Kaʻbah, but he was instead defeated by the latter, after which he was incarcerated, flogged to death, and gibbeted. This event took place in 681 CE, at the Cemetery of Mecca, which is located outside of Maʻlā Gate (thus called al-Muʻalla Cemetery) (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990a; ibn Battuta, 1958; Gibb, 1960).

ʻAbd Allah's truly heroic action and his last stand in Mecca are documented in detail in al-Ṭabarī's chronicle. He managed to withstand more than six months of siege laid by Al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf (Umayyad Governor of the Hejaz), without any trench, fortress, or stronghold, severely outnumbered and overwhelmed, and eventually abandoned by his own people, including his sons and family (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990c). While al-Ṭabarī does not specify any crucifixion of him, Ibn Battuta mentions that in 692 CE, ʻAbd Allah's body was crucified at the same spot where ʻAmr was gibbeted earlier, while Ibn al-Athīr notes that ʻAbd Allah was crucified with a dog or a fish. After being crucified for some time, his head was sent to and displayed in Medina (Ibn Battuta, 1958; see also Hitti, 1970; Gibb, 1960; Ibn al- Athīr in Fadl, 2001). Apart from ʻAmr and ʻAbd Allah, another son of al-Zubayr ibn al-ʻAwwām, Musʻab, was reportedly also crucified in 692 CE. His body was crucified by al-Hajjāj on the order of Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik in Thaniyya Kada' in al-Hajoon, Mecca, at a spot known as Munakkasah. As related by Ibn Kathir, this crucifixion was, among others, driven by al-Hajjāj's retaliation for Musʻab's prior killing of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī ʻUbayd al-Thaqafī who, despite being a rebel, belonged to the same tribe as al-Hajjāj. Musʻab's lifeless body was crucified on a tree for months, and it was ʻAbd Allah ibn ʻUmar who later requested al-Hajjāj to take Musʻab's body down and bury it (Ibn Kathir, 2012).

In the 8th century, crucifixions occurred between 708 and 710 CE, though they befell upon rebels-cum-heathens. During his military campaign in Central Asia, the Umayyad Governor of Khorasan, Qutaybah ibn Muslim al-Bahilī, was notorious for his role behind the crucifixions of the rebellious king and people of Talaqan "in two straight parallel rows 4 parasangs (19–22 kilometres) long" and the brigands in this city. It is worth noting that the abovementioned crucifixions were the result of their cooperation with the Badghis prince Nezak Tarkhan in waging war on Qutaybah after Nezak's perfidy and breaking the peace agreement with the Muslims. Nezak himself was eventually captured and crucified by Qutaybah in Ishkamish, Lower Tocharistan (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990). However, Qutaybah's crucifixion stint was far from over, since around the same year he hunted the *marzban* (margrave) of Marw Rudh (in Khurasan) for his conspiracy with Nezak against the governor. The *marzban* managed to flee, but his two sons were captured by Qutaybah and crucified. Interestingly, Qutaybah later launched an ill-fated rebellion against Sulaymān ibn ʻAbd al-Malik, the new Umayyad caliph. Fearing that he would fall in favour with Sulaymān, whom he presumed would appoint another figure to be the Governor of Khurasan, Qutaybah sent three letters to Sulaymān, threatening to renounce his allegiance to him. When Qutaybah eventually decided to renounce his allegiance to Sulaymān, several warlords in his rank plotted against him, and this former governor—along with his son, a few of his brothers, and their sons—were slain by the plotters and crucified in Khurasan in August 715 (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989a). Later, another mass crucifixion, which was no less brutal than the one imposed by Qutaybah, repeated during the Muslim conquest of Gorgan, Persia. It was reported that in 98 AH (August 25, 716 CE–August 13, 717 CE), the Umayyad Governor of Iraq, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab, crucified the soldiers of Gorgan on palm trunks "over the courses of 4 *farsakhs* (24 kilometres)" after the Gorgani broke their peace agreement with him and treacherously waylaid his army (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989a, pp. 57–58).

During the Umayyad era, crucifixions were not only imposed in Arabia, Iraq, and Persia/Iran, but also in al-Andalus, with the crucifixion of Zeyyad Ibn ʻAmru al-Lakhmi probably being the first ever recorded. During the course of the Berber Revolt (740–743 CE), the newly-appointed Governor of Ifriqiya, Kulthūm ibn ʻIyāḍ al-Qushayrī, was sent from Iraq

to defeat the rebels but later found himself and his nephew, Balj ibn Bishr al-Qushayrī, cornered and besieged by the Berber rebels in the castle of Ceuta. Balj requested the Umayyad Governor of al-Andalus, ʻAbd-al Malik ibn Kattan al-Fihrī, to send some ships so he could safely cross to al-Andalus, hence saving his life and the lives of his men. Fearing that Balj's presence in al-Andalus would eventually pose a challenge to him, ʻAbd-al Malik denied his request; consequently, the former's uncle perished. However, Zeyyad, against the will of his superior, ʻAbd-al Malik, sent two provisions-laden vessels, thus saving Balj and his men from starvation. Perceiving Zeyyad's initiative as an act of disobedience, ʻAbd-al Malik ordered his immediate arrest and punished him with 700 lashes. Additionally, since ʻAbd-al Malik also accused Zeyyad of conspiracy, he ordered that the latter be first deprived of his sight, then beheaded and crucified with a dog on the left side of his cadaver (Al-Maqqari, 1964, pp. 40–41).

Despite all the hardships he encountered in Ceuta, Balj came to an agreement with and was invited by ʻAbd-al Malik to destroy the Berber rebels in al-Andalus. Thus, with large troops, Balj managed to cross the Strait of Gibraltar safely, land in al-Andalus, and immediately launch a campaign against Berber rebels in al-Andalus. However, Balj and his men were soon turned against ʻAbd-al Malik for the latter's refusal to aid him but punished those who had helped him, and seemingly sought retaliation for the death of his uncle. As it turned out, Balj men were also determined to avenge ʻAbd-al Malik's bad treatment toward them in the Battle of al-Harrah (683), in which they were doomed to "eat dogs and the skins of animals." The two first engaged in a battle near Algeciras, followed by 18 subsequent battles. Eventually, Balj managed to defeat ʻAbd al-Malik in a battle near Cordoba and crucified him in September or October 741 CE, on the opposite bank of the river, at the head of the bridge where the Great Mosque of Cordoba is located, with a crucified pig placed on his right hand and dog on his left hand (Ibn Qutiya, 2009, pp. 60–61; Collins, 1983, p. 168; Al-Maqqari, 1964, p. 39–43). So cruel was the crucifixion that the body of ʻAbd al-Malik remained on the beam for a long time until a few of his friends and clients stole his mangled remains one night and buried them. The spot of this lamentable execution was later known as Masslab ibn Kattan, or "the place of execution of Ibn Kattan" (Al-Maqqari, 1964, pp. 38–39). Additionally, it is also important to note that many scholars, including Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Bashkuwāl, maintain that ʻAbd al-Malik had previously instigated a revolt in al-Andalus, as the extension of the revolt in Tangier, in around 740 CE and deposed the incumbent Governor of al-Andalus, ʻUqba ibn al-Hajjāj (Ibn Qutiya, 2009; Al-Maqqari, 1964). Therefore, apart from the enactment of Balj's revenge, the crucifixion of ʻAbd al-Malik may as well be viewed as a punishment imposed for the rebel.

Despite their apparent glory in Central Asia, during the first half of the 8th century, the Arabs, as the new overlord of this region, faced challenges posed by their rivalry with the Chinese in gaining control over this region, as well as their rivalry and ongoing military conflicts with the Turco-Persian people. Moreover, onerous taxes imposed by the Arabs intensified resentment among the local population, and the fact that new reverts in Khurasan were also targeted by Abbasid propaganda and became breeding grounds for Shiism only created a situation where rebellion and revolt became all the more possible and jeopardised the position of the Arabs (Gibb, 1923). It was also at this point that ʻAmmār ibn Yazīd, who later changed his name to Khidash, rallied support for Muḥammad ibn ʻAlī as the new *imam* (cleric). However, the newly-appointed Governor of Khurasan, Asad ibn ʻAbd Allah al-Qasrī, who perceived Khidash's activity as incitement, immediately seized and crucified him in Amul (now Turkmenabat) in 736 CE. It is also worthy to mention the vicious manner in which Khidash was crucified: Asad ordered this inciter's hands be cut off, his tongue torn out, and his eyes gouged out (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989b; Ibn Kathir, 2012). Furthermore, reportedly in the same year, Asad also crucified around 400 rebels in Balkh who surrendered the city to a rebellion

leader, al-Hārith ibn Surayj. Similar to the previous crucifixion, the rebels' hands and feet were cut off (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989b, pp. 127–128).

Another anti-Shiite measure was taken between 739 CE and 740 CE, which was followed by the imposition of crucifixion on several leaders of the Shiite rebellion. Zayd ibn ʻAlī was prominent among these leaders, and he rallied the masses' allegiance for himself under the argument that it is necessary to wage war against:

> those who act tyrannically, to defend those who have been oppressed, to give pensions to those who have been deprived of them, to distribute this booty (*fay'*) equally amongst those who are entitled to it, to make restitution to those who have been wronged, to bring home those who have been detained on the frontiers, and to help the *ahl al-bayt* against those who have opposed us and disregard our just cause. (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989c, p. 23)

However, many of Zayd's followers eventually renounced their allegiance to him, and even his slave gave his position away. Under the order of the Umayyad Governor of Iraq, Yūsuf ibn ʻUmar, Zayd was slain and crucified at al-Kunāsah, Kufah. One account relates that Zayd was first beheaded before crucified, while other accounts mention that his body was buried but later exhumed and crucified (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989c). Al-Biruni relates that after Zayd's crucifixion, his body was burnt and his ashes thrown into the water (Al-Biruni, 1879). A similar bizarre crucifixion repeated several years later in 127 AH (October 24, 743 CE–September 13, 744 CE) when the body of Yazīd III was exhumed and crucified at al-Jabiyah Gate in Damascus by the supporters of Al-Walīd II, who probably viewed Yazīd III as a usurper (Ibn Kathir, 2012).

Other than the abovementioned cases, crucifixions of rebels became more common around the end of the Umayyad era, during the Third Fitna (744–747 CE), and prior to the outbreak of the Abbasid revolution in the 8th century, when anti-Umayyad sentiments were intensified among Arabs and non-Arabs alike. Among the noteworthy rebellions is the rebellion of Banu Kalb in Homs, which resulted in the crucifixion of around 500 to 600 rebels after a cavalry led by Marwān II recaptured the city on June 28, 745 CE (two days after Eid al-Fitr in 127 AH). Soon, the instigator, Thābit ibn Nuʻaym, was crucified on the gates of Damascus (Al-Ṭabarī, 1985). Another case of crucifixion is that of the famous anti-Umayyad rebel, al-Hārith ibn Surayj, whose headless body was crucified under an olive or sorb tree in the city of Merv at the end of May 746 CE. A year later, an Umayyad general-turned-rebel, Judayʻ ibn ʻAlī al-Kirmānī, was slain in the course of a peace treaty negotiation with the Umayyad Governor of Khurasan, Naṣr ibn Sayyār. While al-Ṭabarī attributed the slaying and crucifixion of Judayʻ to Naṣr, a modern historian holds that it was al-Hārith's son who speared and crucified him, exacting blood revenge for his father's death (Al-Ṭabarī, 1985; Ibn Kathir, 2012; Sharon, 1990). It is also worth mentioning that in 121 AH (December 738 CE–November 739 CE), when Naṣr conducted a military expansion on the lands of the Turks, he was involved in an imposition of crucifixion. In this campaign, he bested, captured, and crucified the Turk king Kursul, who once led Turk armies to fight Muslims and was deemed too dangerous to be let live (Ibn Kathir, 2012).

When the Abbasids came into power in the mid-8th century, political struggles did not end altogether. In fact, rebellions remained a common occurrence and generated certain situations that resulted in the crucifixion of rebels, including the crucifixion of the Marwanid family shortly after the Abbasid takeover (El Fadl, 2001; Collins, 1983). Another instance occurred in 156 AH (December 1, 772 CE–December 20, 773 CE), when ʻAmr ibn Shaddād, who rebelled in 762 CE and took over Fars, was captured and interrogated—his hand and legs were cut off before he was beheaded and crucified in Basra by the authority (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990d). A similar fate was also experienced by Yūsuf ibn Ibrāhīm (also known as Yūsuf al-Barm) and his followers around 776 CE as a consequence of their rebellion in Khurasan (Al-

Ṭabarī, 1990d). Almost a century later, one of the longest and among the most devastating rebellions occurred during the Abbasid era, in which black slaves and freemen from Zanj (in East Africa)—hence the name Zanj Rebellion—and Arabs played their part. The leader of this rebellion launched their attack on Wednesday, August 6, 870 CE, in southern Iraq, which was soon followed by a series of attacks on other cities in the province. It is related that in one of the episodes in the course of this rebellion, in mid-881 CE, under the command of Abū Aḥmad Ṭalḥa ibn Ja'far al-Muwaffaq, the Abbasid army managed to inflict heavy losses on the rebels in Jawwith Barubah on the Tigris, an event soon followed by the beheadings and crucifixions of the rebels. In order to make his point, al-Muwaffaq then catapulted the heads of the rebels to the leaders of the rebellion so that "the friends of the dead recognised the heads of their compatriots and broke out in tears." Abandoned by most of his followers, the leader of the rebellion himself, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad (designated as "the abominable one'), was captured and beheaded on the order of al-Muwaffaq on August 11, 883 CE (Al-Ṭabarī, 1987e, pp. 53, 139).

Crucifixion in al-Andalus was again imposed by its ruler in the early 9th century, this time during the rule of Umayyad Emir of Cordoba, al-Ḥakam ibn Hishām, or al-Ḥakam I. In 805 CE, it was reported that al-Ḥakam I was attacked by mobs, and many theologians applauded his next action. He ordered an investigation, only to find out that 72 masterminds were involved in a conspiracy against him. Thus, these ringleaders were apprehended and crucified (Hitti, 1970; Dozy, 1913). Later, an unfortunate event was experienced by the people of Toledo—who were described as "haughty, malevolent, and disdainful of his governors"—during al-Ḥakam I's rule. Al-Ḥakam I instructed his newly-appointed Governor of Toledo to prepare a banquet for the notables of Toledo at the newly-built fort in this city. Thus, on November 16, 806 CE, around 5,300 leading Toledans attended the banquet, only to find themselves being awaited by executioners and then decapitated. In the same year, Al-Ḥakam I crucified three plotters, one of whom was Mūsā ibn Sālim al-Khawlānī, who was crucified with his son's head hanging around his neck (Ibn Qutiya, 2009, pp. 87–89; Collins, 1983, p. 189). A bloody event again occurred in 814 CE, when al-Ḥakam I was surrounded by a furious mob and was forced to isolate in his palace. However, his cavalry managed to ruthlessly suppress the mob and its instigators, and around 300 of them were crucified upside down on crosses (Hitti, 1970). In 817 CE, another revolt broke out in the Arrabal suburb in Cordoba, but was swiftly put down; Al-Ḥakam I then ordered the execution and crucifixion of its leader (Ibn Qutiya, 2009). Despite being known for his outstanding deeds for Muslims, as specified by Ibn Qutiya and al-Maqqari, al-Ḥakam I was described as wild, "addicted to chase and wine" (Hitti, 1970, p. 512), and, as a result of his extremely harsh forms of rebellion suppression, he was also notoriously touted as "'the Massacre of the Suburb,' and 'a tyrant and shedder of blood'" (Al-Maqqari, 1964, pp. 106–107).

Returning to West Asia, while widely regarded as the leader who brought the Abbasid Caliphate to its golden era and for the flourishing of Baghdad and establishment of the legendary library Bayt al-Hikmah, Hārūn al-Rashīd also played his role behind a several warranted cases of crucifixion. In 779 CE, before he even ascended to the throne, during the campaign in Asia Minor and having conquered the fort of Samālu, he crucified an Abyssinian who was heard cursing him and Muslims on one of the towers of this fort (Al-Baladhuri, 1916). Later, in the 9th century, during the rule of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the newly appointed ruler of Abbasid Oman, Īsā ibn Ja'far, reportedly caused disturbances and corruption in this land. Leaving Basra with his troops, in his new domain of Oman, they "began to violate women, and rob the people, and make public use of musical instruments." The people of Oman—who at that time were ardent Kharijites who reconverted to Islam during Abū Bakr's rule after previously apostatising upon Prophet Muḥammad's death—heavily opposed the action of Īsā and his men, and proceeded to fight them, ultimately killing and crucifying Īsā (Al-Baladhuri, 1916, pp. 117–118).

In Central Asia, a region well known for its political turbulence, another notable rebellion occurred between 817 and 837 CE in present-day Azerbaijan, in the form of the Khurramiyah movement, led by a Persian cattle herder-turned-warlord, Bābak Khorramdin. This movement was not merely political in nature since the Khurramites were also viewed as heretic due to their inclination to neo-Mazdakism. Reportedly, the devastating effect of this rebellion was unparalleled in this period since, in the course of 20 years, Bābak and his followers launched numerous military operations from their base in northern Azerbaijan, killed 255,000 people, as well as defeated and killed several Abbasid military commanders. However, Bābak's luck ended after Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, in 835 CE, appointed Khaydhar ibn Kāwūs al-Afshīn, a Persian general who later repeatedly defeated Bābak until he captured the latter's capital, Badhdh (now Kaleybar), on August 26, 837 CE. Bābak's fate was sealed when al-Afshīn brought him to Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim in Samarra, where the latter ordered his belly to be slit open and head removed, to then be paraded in Khurasan and exhibited on a pole at Nishapur, while his trunk was to be crucified in Samarra. Soon after, Bābak's brother, ʿAbd Allah, experienced the same fate, except that he was crucified in Medina (Al-Ṭabarī, 1987d; and 1991b, pp. 14–88; Rabo, 2014, pp. 547, 564–567). Additionally, it is also worthy to note that Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim reportedly crucified several Byzantines during the Sack of ʿAmmuriyyah (Amorium) in 838 CE.

Despite all this, Bābak's crucifixion simply did not end the disobediences among the Iranians, which became evident in the rebellion led by Mazyār ibn Qārin ibn Vindadhhurmuzd. While it started with the hostile relationship between the Qarinids and Tahirids, this rivalry soon escalated into a serious conflict due to intrigue played by ʿAbd Allah ibn Ṭāhir in agitating the Caliph by means of letters and by al-Afshīn, who encouraged Mazyār to wage war with the Tahirids and rebel against the Caliph. Eventually, Mazyār was captured in 839 CE, and al-Muʿtaṣim ordered him to receive 450 lashes until he died, and his corpse be gibbeted in Samarra, beside Bābak's corpse (Al-Ṭabarī, 1991b). Upon learning of al-Afshīn's devious role behind Mazyār's rebellion, al-Muʿtaṣim became angry, dismissed him from the caliphal guard, and incarcerated him in a special cramped prison in the form of a minaret until he died in the middle of 841 CE. Upon his death, al-Afshīn's body was gibbeted on a wooden beam at al-ʿAmmah Gate, Samarra, but it was then flung down and burned, and his ashes were thrown into the Tigris (Al-Ṭabarī, 1991b). According to Michael Rabo, among the reasons behind al-Afshīn's rebellion was that he discovered enormous treasures left by Bābak that were buried underground, a discovery that made him rich and gave him the audacity to rebel, while Al-Ṭabarī holds that idol worshipping and heresy may have been another factor behind the crucifixion of al-Afshīn (Rabo, 2014; Al-Ṭabarī, 1991b).

While Islamic teachings are definitely against torture, an unorthodox fashion of crucifixion was imposed in 813 CE, during the Abbasid civil war, an event also known as the Fourth Fitna (811–813 CE). This fashion of crucifixion is, without a doubt, among the most horrifying and painful punishments since the victim was crucified alive. At this time, when two sons of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, Muḥammad al-Amīn and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Maʾmūn, were engaged in a civil war, there was a general named al-Samarqandī who served in al-Amīn's army as a *manjaniq* (trebuchet) and *ʿarrddah* (a smaller kind of *manjaniq*) shooter, renowned for his excellent dexterity and his role in the bombardments of al-Maʾmūn's castles in Baghdad as well as civilian houses and streets nearby. However, since al-Samarqandī inflicted more damage and loss to civilians than al-Maʾmūn's army, his fate was changed altogether after he was captured following the execution of Muḥammad al-Amīn. Consequently, a beam was raised for al-Samarqandī on the east bank of Tigris, where he was crucified alive while people threw stones, shot arrows, and thrusted spears at him until he died. As a matter of fact, the shootings continued even after he lost his life and only a day later, on October 1, 813 CE, his cadaver was dismounted from the beam and burnt, and part of it was torn apart by dogs (Al-Ṭabarī, 1992). While the fate of al-Samarqandī is undoubtedly

very unfortunate, a similar fate also befell al-Faḍl ibn Qārin. As a skilled military commander, al-Faḍl was deployed to crush a rebellion in Hiṃs (also known as Homs) in 862 CE, where he captured rebels and executed them in considerable numbers. However, in 864 CE, during his tenure as the Abbasid Governor of Hiṃs, the people of Hiṃs, along with the people of Banū Kalb, rebelled against him. His situation worsened when his follower betrayed and handed him over to the rebels who, after robbing him of his money and seizing his wives, executed and crucified him (Al-Baladhuri, 1916; Al-Ṭabarī, 1985a).

Another crucifixion occurred in the 11th century in al-Andalus, and this time it was imposed on a corrupted and cruel high state official, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī. Although he himself did not launch or instigate a rebellion or riot, due to his profligate life, impious habits, his familiarity with common soldiers and persons of lowest rank, and his constant and immoderate habit of drinking wine and spirituous liquor, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī earned the title of "Sanchol," meaning "madman" (hence, *sanchuelo*), from the people. Inheriting his father's position as the *ḥājib* (chief minister) of the Caliphate of Cordoba under Caliph Hishām II in 1008 CE, his excessive impudence and presumption prompted him to exact, from the inhabitants of Cordoba, an oath of allegiance to himself as their lawful sovereign. He even went as far as proclaiming himself as *al-mahdī* and *walī ʻabd al-Islam* (presumptive heir to the throne), who will eventually replace Hishām II. His proclamation invoked the wrath of Banī Umayyah, who were already disgusted with his tyranny and excesses. Thus, a conspiracy against him was formed among the people of Cordoba under the leadership of an Ummayad prince. In turn, this conspiracy culminated into a rebellion that was joined by a greater part of the army and by almost all inhabitants of Cordoba. Subsequently, ʻAbd al-Raḥmān "Sanchol" was captured, executed, and crucified in 1009 CE (Al-Maqqari, 1964).

As one of the major urban centres in al-Andalus, from historical records it is evident that Cordoba had witnessed numerous disturbing political dynamics and turbulences, including one that took place in the 1070s CE, when it was briefly seized from the grasp of Taifa of Seville. This time, it was Ibn Okasha who captured it for Yaḥyā ibn Ismāʻīl al-Maʼmūn of Toledo, from its youthful governor, ʻAbbad, the son of the Emir of Seville, ʻAbbad III al-Muʻtamid. A former mountain bandit who was known as a fierce and bloodthirsty man, Ibn Okasha played his part well in the city's politics, and was even able to start a conspiracy within a city. Additionally, he also knew the city well and managed to gather some intelligence from the city's garrisons. In 1075 CE, Ibn Okasha and his men stormed the governor's palace and even though the young governor "defended himself like a lion," he was eventually killed by one of his assailants and decapitated. ʻAbbad's head was put on a spear and paraded through the city, while his lifeless body was left half-naked on the street. Devastated by the fact that he lost his son and Cordoba, it took three years for the father of the murdered governor, ʻAbbad III, to eventually recapture Cordoba on September 4, 1078 CE. Ibn Okasha attempted to flee the city while ʻAbbad III and his men stormed in, but he was cornered and outnumbered, and eventually killed. Subsequently, Ibn Okasha's body was crucified beside a dog's cadaver on the order of ʻAbbad III (Dozy, 1913, pp. 674–676).

During the course of the 12th century, military and political conflicts between Muslim rulers did not diminish, despite the fact that the encroachments of European Crusaders were also deeply felt in some parts of the Muslim world. As contestation for power among Muslim elites—which gave birth to conspiracies, defamations, rebellions, and civil wars—was still a common feature in the 12th-century Muslim world, so were crucifixion and gibbeting. Those who were crucified ranged from viziers, such as Saʻd al-Mulk Abū-l-Maḥāsin (in 1107 CE) and Abū ʻAbd Allāh ibn al-Batāʼiḥī (in 1126 CE), to brigands, thieves, and even to construction workers, in this case plasterers, who conspired against the ruler of Mosul (in the mid-1133 CE). Nonetheless, perhaps among the most interesting cases of crucifixion and gibbeting was conducted by a Mamluk official named Īldakīn. As the deputy prefect of Baghdad, Īldakīn was

personally ordered by Seljuk Sultan Ghiyāth ad-Dīn Mas'ūd to crush the gangs of Baghdad who interestingly operated under the protection of the vizier's son and the brother-in-law of the sultan. This was an assignment he could not refuse, as the sultan threatened that he would crucify Īldakīn instead. Thus, Īldakīn launched a raid against the gang members; while most of them fled, he managed to arrest many of them, as well as crucify the vizier's son and gibbet the son of the brother-in-law of the sultan. Another case of crucifixion was that of the Alid Shia in Egypt, who had conspired with the Franks of Sicily in return for money and land, conspired against and even made an attempt on Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ibn Ayyūb, and also tried to restore the Alid dynasty in Egypt (Ibn al-Athīr, 2016a; 2016b).

Cases of crucifixion and gibbeting also occurred during the 12th-century Crusades, which were not only imposed on Muslims by their fellow believers but also by Christians. For example, following the failed siege of Edessa by Muslims between April and May 1115 CE, the Franks managed to hold their position and even seized nine Muslim soldiers and crucified them on the city wall. Later, when there was an uprising in Ifriqiya against the reprehensible rule of the Frankish kingdom of Sicily, which was followed by a large-scale massacre of Franks and Christians in Ifriqiya, William I of Sicily retaliated by crucifying the former Sicily Governor of Ifriqiya, Abū-l-Ḥasan, since the latter refused to convince his son to put an end to the resistance. It is related that Abū-l-Ḥasan, who was taken as a hostage in Sicily in order to discourage the inhabitants of Ifriqiya from rebelling against the Franks, "continued to call upon God Almighty until he died" when he was crucified sometime around 1156/1157 CE. Meanwhile, the Frankish rule over Ifriqiya ended in early 1160 CE when they left Mahdiyya after ruling for 12 years (Ibn al-Athīr, 2016b, pp. 77, 106). Moreover, as far as the crucifixion of Christians is concerned, a Christian clergyman named William of Tyre reported that during the Battle of Arsuf in 1101 CE, some Christian soldiers under the leadership of Baldwin I were crucified before their comrades by the Saracens (Muslims) and that a few Christian communities who lived in Egypt at the end of the 12th century were subjected to crucifixion, though he failed to specify a single case of crucifixion of Christians that occurred in Egypt at that time (William of Tyre, 1943).

Later, in 1260 CE, during the Mamluk era, crucifixion was again imposed on the participants of a revolt in Cairo—people of colour, squires, and pages. As mentioned by al-Maqrizi, the instigator of this revolt was a rosary-bearing hermit called Kourāni, who, in the previous year, had been arrested and prosecuted for his heresy but then released after he agreed to renew his *shahadah* (proclamation of faith). This time, however, he agitated the mass by invoking the family of 'Alī. The revolt began in the middle of the night but was swiftly crushed, and the participants were gibbeted outside Zuweila Gate (al-Maqrizi, 1838). Additionally, according to Ibn al-Athīr's account, crucifixion was not only imposed on able-bodied men, but on the disabled as well. For example, in 1205 CE, a blind man in Baghdad was crucified because he had killed and tried to steal from another blind man in a mosque (Ibn al-Athīr, 2016c). Furthermore, still in the Mamluk era, it was reported that a number of riots broke out in 14th-century Egypt. For example, in 1327 CE, a riot broke out in Alexandria, which ended with "the deaths of thirty-six of the men of the city, and had each man cut in two and the bodies placed on crosses in two rows" (Ibn Battuta, 1958, pp. 27–28). Another case was the rebellion of al-Kanz in Cairo, which ended with the crucifixion of the rebels in April 1379 CE. Al-Maqrizi attributed these riots to the weakness of the state (Webb, 2019).

Crucifixion of false prophets, heretics, apostates, and atheists

It must be borne in mind that, as recorded in historical sources, apart from plotters, rebels, and instigators, in the medieval Muslim world, crucifixions were also imposed on those who claimed prophethood as well as those who were viewed as heretics and/or atheists. As related

by Mālik ibn Anas, during the rule of Caliph ʻAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, an influential false prophet named Al-Ḥārith al-Mutanabbī al-Kadhdhāb was crucified and killed in Jerusalem in 698 CE (El Fadl, 2001). Subsequently, a crucifixion was imposed on a *zindiq* (heretic) named Ibn Abī al-Awja'. It is related that this person also confessed to have notoriously invented 4,000 Hadiths in which he "forbid what is lawful and make lawful what is forbidden" and make people break fast when they should be fasting and fast when they should be breaking their fast. Consequently, Ibn Abī al-Awja' was imprisoned and beheaded, and his body crucified in al-Kunāsah, Kufah. This event took place around the end of 772 CE (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990d, pp. 72–74). Meanwhile, the atheists of Aleppo were crucified on the order of the authority in 163 AH (September 17, 779 CE–September 5, 780 CE) (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990d, p. 214). Another prominent heretic was a follower of Rāwandiyya, al-Ablaq, who preached that ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad were gods and that "the spirit that was in Jesus, son of Mary" resided in them; he was crucified in 158 AH (November 11, 774 CE–October 30, 775 CE) (Al-Ṭabarī, 1990d, p. 122).

At the turn of the 9th century, during the Abbasid era, crucifixion also imposed on an apostate. As related by al-Biruni, the day of the crucifixion of an apostate named Antonius was celebrated by Christians every 29th day of December in the Syrian calendar. It is said that this apostate, whom Christians held with high regard as a martyr and sanctified with miraculous tales, was a cousin of Hārūn al-Rashīd named Abū Rūḥ. Although al-Biruni failed to mention when this penalty was imposed, it is evident that this event occurred during Hārūn al-Rashīd's rule since it was the Caliph himself who ordered the crucifixion of Antonius (al-Biruni, 1879). Gibbeting of a prominent apostate also took place during the Abbasid era, on March 26, 922 CE. This time, Manṣūr al-Hallāj, a Persian Sufi renowned for his proclamations "I am the Truth" and "I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I," and whose teachings were so influential that it inspired social and political turbulence in Baghdad. As the target of the Abbasid inquisition, the authority believed that if al-Hallāj were to be let live, he would corrupt the law and apostatise the people, which will lead to the demise of the Abbasid dynasty. Caliph al-Muqtadir thus ordered the local police to scourge al-Hallāj "with a thousand stripes," amputate his hands and feet, and fasten him on a gibbet at the city square. Al-Hallāj was gibbeted overnight, but he was still alive by the next morning, so the police decapitated him, burnt his body, and threw his ashes over the Tigris. As for his head, it was displayed on a bridge for two days and then sent to Khurasan to be exhibited (Kritzeck, 1964, pp. 96–104; Hitti, 1970, pp. 435–436).

One extremely violent and truly unfortunate event that took place in al-Andalus was the crucifixion of a Jewish vizier named Joseph ibn Naghrela, followed by the massacre of Jews in Granada. As related by Ibn Idhārī, Joseph—who replaced his father, Samuel ibn Naghrillah, as the vizier of Taifa of Granada in 1056—came from a line of statesmen-cum-rabbi. As a prominent public functionary, he enthusiastically conducted the affairs of the kingdom and ensured that taxes were paid accurately; these qualities made the ruler of Granada, Badis ibn Habus, respect him. However, Joseph was also described as a person who was ignorant of the favourable conditions enjoyed by the *dhimmī* (non-Muslim subjects) under Muslim rule. Additionally, a local poet of the time, Abū Isḥāq al-Ilbirī, composed his own views about Joseph: he was a presumptuous and proud man, had a tendency to entrust high official positions to Jews, had amassed immense treasures, kept spies in royal palaces and affairs, was irreligious, insulted Islam and even ridiculed verses of the Qur'an, had orchestrated a few assassinations (including that of the firstborn son of Badis, Buluggin ibn Badis, in 1064 CE), and had committed high treason by inviting the army of the neighbouring Taifa of Almeria (which was also the arch-rival of Granada) to invade Granada, even opening the gate for them. While the poem inked by Abū Isḥāq had little effect on Badis, the Granadan mobs, which consisted mostly of Berbers, were agitated. They raised a riot, captured and executed Joseph, and fastened him to a cross. The impact of Abū Isḥāq's poem was soon

proven to be overwhelming since the masses proceeded to massacre 4,000 Jews and plunder their dwellings (Dozy, 1913).

Continuing from previous centuries, in the 13th century, crucifixion was still imposed on heretics. One such case was that of 'Umar ibn Yazan, who encouraged a Mamluk named Aybak Bāk to create chaos in Multan by "gathering troublemakers, seizing property, and making the roads dangerous." Consequently, in early 1205 CE, 'Umar ibn Yazan and Aybak Bāk, along with the latter's followers, were crucified on the order of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ghūrī (Ibn al-Athīr, 2016c). During the Mamluk era, another heretic was gibbeted for causing disturbance in Cairo. This sagacious, erudite, yet misled man named Fakhr al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Moḥammad ibn al-Bakaki blamed those who were fasting during Ramadhan while he did not fast. He also despised and insulted the *qadi* (Islamic judges), "looked at them with disdain, and treated them as ignorant" and inexistent—he even went as far as to put his feet on the Qur'an. He was tried immediately and a charge was fixed upon him wherein he would get the death sentence. Despite the fact that he pronounced the *shahadah* before he was put to death, no one heeded his profession of faith and complaints, and he was beheaded on November 16, 1302 CE. Later, his head was placed on a lance and paraded across the city, while his body was dragged to Zuweila Gate and tied to a gibbet (al-Maqrizi, 1838, pp. 192–193).

Justification for Crucifixions

From the cases presented above, it is evident that crucifixion was imposed on many criminals, evildoers, and heretics. Evidently, many cases of crucifixion of criminals, evildoers, and heretics indeed found its legitimation in the divine perspectives that are clearly stated in the Qur'an and the Hadīth, and that crucifixion is commonly accepted as a part of *hadd*, or discretionary punishment—as mentioned in Verse 37 of Surah al-Mā'idah:

> This is the recompense of those who fight against God and His Messenger, and hasten about the earth to do corruption there: they shall be slaughtered, or crucified, or their hands and feet shall alternately be struck off, or they shall be banished from the land. That is a degradation for them in this world; and in the world to come awaits them a mighty chastisement.

Similarly, Prophet Muḥammad himself, as narrated by his wife, 'Ā'isha (Sunan al-Nasā'i 4743; Sunan al-Nasā'i 4048; Sunan Abī Dāwud 4353), said that "one who goes forth to fight with Allah and His Apostle, in which case he should be killed or crucified or exiled from the land." Therefore, crucifixion can be legally imposed since brigands, bandits, murderous robbers, gang members, and rioters can be unanimously considered as spreading corruption and calamity in society, while heresy and atheism can be categorised as waging war against Allah and Prophet Muḥammad's teachings. However, all Sunnite schools agree that, in certain cases, a sincere repentance can save the condemned (apostates and bandits in particular) from the death penalty, including crucifixion (Peters, 2005).

Concerning rebellion against a legitimate government, the Qur'an has strongly advised in verse 59 of Surah al-Nisā' that all believers must "obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you" and must refer to Allah and His messenger if any disagreement arises. Furthermore, if a disagreement between believers intensifies, then, as mentioned in verse 9 of Surah al-Ḥujurāt, both parties are encouraged to make peace. Even though the Qur'an deems it necessary to fight the transgressor "until they are willing to submit to the rule of Allah," peace, which is based on fairness and justice, can be achieved. Moreover, verses 75 and 76 of Surah al-Nisā' also encourages believers to fight oppressors, which in some cases include corrupted and/or unjust rulers, for the cause of Allah. While the Qur'an does not prohibit rebellion against corrupted and/or unjust rulers—considering the

fact that rebellion was not viewed as a crime in the medieval Muslim world and since the rebels themselves might have legitimate causes—rebellions in the medieval Muslim world were generally aimed at replacing or usurping legitimate rulers (El Fadl, 2001). Unfortunately, more often than not, such actions have resulted in serious corruption (mischief), chaos, disturbances, and havoc in society, rendered disorder, instability, and insecurity in an established state, even large-scale killings and the destruction of properties. Hence, it is safe to state that, to a certain degree, the impact of rebellions was quite similar to the actions of bandits, brigands, or terrorists. Furthermore, given that Prophet Muḥammad has mentioned that believers are like a body to the point that "when any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 5665; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2586), and in many cases rebellions caused more harm than good and have rendered such devastating effects to the *ummah*, perhaps the imposition of crucifixion upon certain rebels can be soundly justified and understandable. Notwithstanding, it must be borne in mind that many jurists, chief among them Imam Shāfiʿī, argued for a more humane treatment against rebels and argued against their execution, crucifixion, or decapitation, and that their corpses must be properly washed and buried (El Fadl, 2001).

However, it must be noted that, in many cases, the imposition of crucifixion was also motivated by many factors, including blood feud, which was a traditional feature of Arab society and can be traced back to the pre-Islamic era. Therefore, instead of law enforcement in its truest sense, many crucifixions against rebels were apparently imposed based on judgments that were heavily overshadowed by the hatred, vengeance, or political bias of Muslim rulers. Moreover, although in many cases, as presented above, crucifixion may appear as a conclusion to the struggle for the throne and served as a harsh warning to discourage rebellions, insurrections, revolts, and the like, sometimes such a form of punishment can only spark an unrelenting spiral of vengeance, vendetta, and violence in Muslim society (Collins, 1983) which, in turn, widens disunity and schism in people, especially among the political elite. Therefore, given the severity of this punishment, it is only natural that crucifixion should only be imposed upon rebels and criminals after a careful and thorough investigation and consultation, for the foundation of Islam is justice and good deeds. Such virtue is reflected in the advice of Caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz: "…do not hasten, on your own initiative, to cut off the arm of the thief or to crucify someone until you have consulted with me on the matter" (Al-Ṭabarī, 1989, pp. 96), as well as verse 8 of Surah al-Mā'idah, which warns believers to not let hatred lead them to injustice.

Conclusion

From the selected cases presented above, crucifixion can be perceived as a political, military, and legal punishment. Furthermore, based on consulted materials, only a few individuals who waged war against Allah—namely apostates, atheists, and heretics—were crucified. Mainly, most of the documented crucifixions were imposed upon those who rebelled against the authority. It is also evident that a significantly large number of documented crucifixions in the Muslim world occurred during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras, and these phenomena clearly reflect the significant degree of disunity and schism among a few Muslim leaders, which further developed into larger political and military conflicts as well as rebellions. This disunity and schism proved that these Muslim leaders did not heed the Qur'anic advice specifically contained in verse 103 of Surah Āli ʿImrān, in which they should "hold firmly together to the rope of Allah and do not be divided." They also forgot the fact that "a believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2446) as well as proven the truth of Prophet Muāammad's saying that the *ummah* will split after his demise (Musnad Aḥmad 704). While the Qur'an and Hadīth would obviously be the elixir to such a situation and the former strongly advises transgressors to make peace and submit to

the will of Allah, it seems that, more often than not, the political elite in the Muslim world at that time were blinded by their intense hatred as well as excessive will and love for worldly power to the point that they were reluctant to seek guidance and truth in the Qur'an. Finally, while it is difficult to ascertain the impact of crucifixion on the improvement of public order with precision, in view of the recurring cases of rebellion in the selected period of this study, it is safe to assume that the imposition of this severe, gruesome, and humiliating public execution only witnessed limited success in deterring rebellions, heresies, and other deviations in society. Instead, as evidenced in several cases, crucifixion only invited more vengeance, violence, and bloodshed.

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