

## **Transregional and Regional Elites – Connecting the Early Islamic Empire**

# **Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East**



Edited by  
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## **Volume 36**

# **Transregional and Regional Elites – Connecting the Early Islamic Empire**



The Early Islamic Empire at Work Volume 1

Edited by

Hannah-Lena Hagemann and Stefan Heidemann

**DE GRUYTER**

Supported by:



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

ISBN 978-3-11-066648-9

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-066980-0

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-066656-4

ISSN 2198-0853



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**Library of Congress Control Number: 2019949235**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2020 Hannah-Lena Hagemann and Stefan Heidemann,  
published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston  
The book is published open access at [www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com).

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

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Stefan Heidemann

# Introduction: Transregional and Regional Elites – Connecting the Early Islamic Empire

## The Project of the ‘Early Islamic Empire at Work’

Our knowledge about the working of the early Islamic Empire is still rather imbalanced. The caliphate ruled an expanse from Central Asia to North Africa for about 300 years until the 940s, creating in the process a distinct civilization and culture. Research on the early Islamic Empire, and consequently our knowledge thereof, is still dominated by the perspective of the sources. Whilst unsurprising, the tendency of researchers to rely upon the viewpoint of the major historians of the Islamic Empire has led them to adopt the same geographical biases that these historians maintained. The most important of these is al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), who provides us with a monumental history of the world and the Islamic Empire until the time when its power was waning. As informative as al-Ṭabarī is, even about the far regions of the empire, his primary concern is the developments of its political and economic center, Greater Mesopotamia. This region, which comprised important metropolises such as al-Kūfa, al-Baṣra, Wāsiṭ, Baghdād, Sāmarrā’, and al-Mawṣil, was tightly controlled and taxed. It also served as the power base of the Sasanians, an imperial tradition on which the Islamic Empire subsequently built. Historians have often transposed the information provided by al-Ṭabarī and others regarding this economic, agricultural, and political heartland to the empire as a whole. It became the governing paradigm for the narrative of the empire.

The questioning of this assumption was the starting point of the European Research Council project ‘*The Early Islamic Empire at Work*’, which ran from April 2014 to September 2019. In investigating how the vast and diverse Islamic Empire was governed, the project critiques the reigning ‘top-down’ conceptualization, according to which the caliph and his court constitute the center from which imperial power, politics, and indeed history were transmitted. Instead, it posited a ‘*View from the Regions Toward the Center*’, which, inspired by scholars of European Medieval Studies such as Peter Thorau<sup>1</sup> and Chris Wickham,<sup>2</sup>

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1 Thorau 1998, 4–5

2 Wickham 2011.

connects regional histories to find coherence between imperial dynastic history and regional events. Five key regions were selected for the project, based on the diversity of their people, languages, religions and cultures, and history. These were Ifriqiya, al-Shām (Syria), the Jazīra (Northern Mesopotamia), Fārs, and Khurāsān (eastern Iran). Through a combination of in-depth regional analyses and interregional comparisons, the project thus sought to explain the working of the early Islamic Empire from a regional perspective.

## The Question of Elites

A key factor in understanding governance with regard to the early Islamic Empire are the various elites who were essential for the processes of regional integration and imperial cohesion. When acts of imperial governance are contextualized within the stream of regional and transregional events, against a backdrop of the movements of elites and individuals, the functioning of the empire within its legal and institutional framework becomes apparent, embedded in a network of reciprocal relations, dependencies, and permeations. These layers of imperial government, regional, and transregional activity, can then be synthesized into a comprehensive imperial history.

Relations between an empire and its subjected regions are never unilateral. No pre-modern empire could be ruled through the threat of military force alone. Significant sections of the provincial elites often consented to being part of an empire because of the advantages that it could provide, such as reliable communication and transportation lines, and an enforceable common legal framework. The regional elites were usually culturally, historically, socially, and economically rooted in their regions. Those who joined the empire's ranks were positioned between its demand for taxes and loyalty on the one hand, and the agricultural workforce, comprising the demographic majority in pre-modern societies, on the other. In every empire, the regions were burdened with taxes and other contributions to the maintenance of the central administration, its capital, courts, and military, and the privileges of the upper echelons of the regions and the imperial center. While the Islamic Empire seems to have been at the same time both bureaucratic, at least in its fiscal administration, and 'informal', meaning without any discernable formal 'Byzantine' hierarchy, the diversity of the regions and its elites entailed variations of governance, almost as a pattern. Practices differed from region to region, but so too did the resulting interactions with the elites in these regions.

The question of who constituted these elites, and the need to forge an operational terminology strong enough to analyze their identity and function, became

a driving question at an early stage in the project. Rather than focusing on institutions, we pursued an actor-driven approach to understand the role played by persons (whether groups or individuals) and their networks in the Islamic Empire.

The elites we were most interested in are ‘functional’ elites. This category includes mainly political and economic elites who were crucial to the empire’s stability. This still vague definition includes all administrative, and military elites, but also judicial elites. For questions of governance, the ‘economic elites’ mainly comprise the landholding elites. Although this group also includes the leaders of urban artisans and merchants, the *sūqa* and *bay’a*, and the long-distance merchants (*tujjār*), it was the landholding elites, a group which was often closely connected with the administration and the fisc, that were more relevant for our project. Old regional elites were often marked by their possession of land, and the new elites of the empire were investing their gains in landholding.

By design, the project’s approach placed less emphasis on the importance of those elites who defined religion, religious-political ideology, and intellectual culture, such as theologians, and urban literates, although clerics and *qāḍīs* who served in the regional administrations are included in the category of functional elites mentioned above.

The qualifier for functional elites is the terminological pair ‘transregional’ and ‘regional’. The two terms comprise large and diverse groups which serve various functions, but they highlight mobility as a crucial trait of those elites. The term transregional refers to highly mobile elites operating across the empire and connecting its various regions. Examples of this category are governor families, military groups, legal scholars and other officials, as well as investors of large estates or long-distance merchants. Transregional elites and groups were vital for the maintenance of the Islamic Empire and for the creation of a specific imperial culture.

By contrast, regional elites tended to originate from the specific region in which they were active. It was in these regions where their influence was strongest. The regional elites rarely held leading positions in the caliphal administrative centers or at the caliph’s court and it was the transregional rather than the regional elites who maintained the links between the court and the regions. The status of the regional elites often pre-dated the Islamic Empire and was based on various factors such as local military forces (e. g., Daylamites or Berbers), possession of strongholds, extended landholdings, or a position within religious hierarchies. Examples of such regional elites are the Sogdian nobility or high-ranking Christian clergy. The example of the Christian clergy, however, also underlines the potential for an intermediary group or a partial overlap between the two categories: bishops often studied outside their home regions but in

Christian centers, appointments to different dioceses resulted in a high degree of mobility within the regions, and those who were elected as patriarchs not infrequently occupied positions of influence with the caliph.

As a rule, regional elites were stronger in places where the fiscal and administrative interest of the empire was clearly present, but not yet firmly established. The regional elite frequently took over judicial and tax-collecting functions, as Petra Sijpesteijn and Philip Wood show in their contributions to this volume. Other elites and groups within the regions were more loosely connected with the empire, or even opposed it. Examples include the Ibāḍī Berbers in North Africa, nomad tribes, or old Iranian nobility in their own strongholds and castles.

A second look, however, offers an even more complex picture. Regional elites could evolve into transregional elites, such as the Sogdian nobility in the Iraqī centers. Vice versa, the founder of the Aghlabids, Ibrāhīm b. Aghlab, was a Khurāsānī Arab who grew up in Egypt and was evidently part of the transregional elite. During the war of succession between al-Amin and al-Ma'mūn (809–813) he built up an autonomous regional emirate in Ifriqiya which his family ruled for generations, making them part of a regional elite. Similarly, the Arab garrisons of Fustāṭ in Egypt, originally a transregional military and elite group, underwent a process of 'regionalization' when the province was taken over by new Khurāsānian troops and their commanders.

Looking at the military, administrative, and political elites, we can distinguish fundamental shifts within the elite structure of the empire over time, a feature which sets the early Islamic Empire apart from its Roman and Sasanian predecessors. Every two to three generations, a new distinct class of elites took over the most important key positions. They each differed in terms of their geographical, ethnic, and social backgrounds. These new elites emerged largely by promotion and by privilege, from the top rather than by bottom-up social mobility or through revolutionary changes. This is most evident in the creation of the class of the administrators (*kuttāb*) or the Central Asian elite and 'bonded military' in the period following al-Mu'taṣim billāh (r. 833–842).

The integration of the new elites into the administrative and military structures occurred through conversion to the privileged imperial religion, Islam. Islam as the religion of the empire had transcended ethnic privileges, but this did not preclude ethnic prejudices within the elite society (e.g., *shu'ūbiyya*), regional bonds, and/or power struggles between ethnically or regionally defined groups. The rise of the 'Abbāsids, for instance, was largely seen as the waning of the elite of the Arab conquerors and their descendants. Only the position of the caliph remained reserved for a member of Quraysh, or more specifically, a member of the 'Abbāsīd family.

Three major shifts in the structure of the military transregional elite can be observed. Under the Umayyads, the military consisted almost entirely of Muslim Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula and Syria who retained important governor positions, especially in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia, until the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amīn (c. 660s to 820s). Between 750 and 820, they were gradually replaced by Khurāsānī *amīrs* and their armies, who took up key positions at the nodes of the empire. Among the Khurāsānians, Persianized Arabs and Arabized Iranians were almost indistinguishable from one another, due to the common Persian-Arab heritage that both shared. Between the 820s and 860s, the Khurāsānians were replaced in key positions by Central Asians, Sogdians, Turkish nobility and bonded military (*ghulāms* or *mamlūks*), a shift initiated by al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim billāh, and al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh. The new Central Asian military elites and their armies were not only deployed in large garrison cities in the agglomerations of Baghdād, Sāmarrā', and al-Mutawakkiliyya, but were also stationed in key provinces such as Egypt.

These shifts, initiated from the top, occurred gradually rather than as a sudden disruption. This does not imply however, that the transitions from pre-Islamic to Islamic, from Arab to Khurāsānian to Central Asian elites were frictionless. They were often the backdrop of major rebellions, mainly orchestrated by those individuals or groups who saw their interests or status being threatened. Under certain circumstances they could – and did – mobilize support from the wider populace. Examples include the uprisings in Eastern Iran<sup>3</sup> or in Egypt at the time of al-Ma'mūn.

The advantage of the use of the qualifiers 'transregional' and 'regional' over others – such as 'imperial', 'Muslim', 'religious', or 'administrative' – is that they are verifiable, and respond to the question of the integration of the regions into the wider empire. Prosopographical research into the careers of individuals and groups reveals their movements across the empire and/or their regional importance (see the contributions of Khan, Hagemann, and Gundelfinger/Verkinderen). A term such as 'imperial elites' can hardly be made operational; it may refer to entitlement and privilege granted by the caliphal administration, but it can describe either transregional or regional actors. Dionysius of Tall Maḥrē, for example, the West Syrian patriarch from c. 818–846, was a representative of the regional Jazīran elite, but cultivated close connections to the caliphal court, as Philip Wood shows. Appointments of *qāḍīs* from the regional elite, Hagemann shows, were also carried out by the caliph. The term 'transregional

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<sup>3</sup> Crone 2012.

elites' avoids such difficulties and emphasizes an elite's function in the integration of the empire.

A terminological differentiation between 'Islamic' and 'non-Islamic' elites, such as Zoroastrian priests, Christian clergy, Jewish Geonim, and Buddhist leaders, would also not reveal much about their function within the empire. These groups include administrative, economic, intellectual, legal, and theological elites, but they were not static. Bishops, for example, fulfilled vital functions within the provinces: they dispensed justice and were involved in the taxation practices (see Wood and Sijpesteijn). Certain Muslim elites, on the other hand, were not involved in running the empire. On the contrary; the leaders of the predominantly anti-imperial Khārijites sometimes came from elite families or were former holders of positions in the imperial military.

The importance of understanding the role of elites becomes even more apparent when we look at how the provinces and regions functioned. Unlike studies of the Roman Empire, research on the Islamic Empire does not operate on an agreed concept of territoriality. The 'Early Islamic Empire' project generally questioned the concept of territoriality regarding the provinces of the empire. As Stuart Elden has argued, territoriality is the condition of being a territory, which is a "bounded space under the control of people, usually a state, [and] therefore is historically produced". It usually implies that the state can enforce its rules across its entire territory.<sup>4</sup>

Studies of the Roman Empire tend to use the concept of territoriality within a vision of empire based on the clear demarcation of provinces and dioceses under imperial control, expressed through established provincial borders that were often marked with boundary stones. Territoriality necessitates a very high level of control, suitable in a situation where a densely populated, continuous agricultural landscape had to be divided for administrative purposes such as tax collection or property rights on land. In the case of the early Islamic Empire, this form of territoriality is less evident and can only be reasonably assumed in densely populated areas, such as Greater Mesopotamia and perhaps Egypt.<sup>5</sup> On the macro level, territoriality does not seem to have been a defining category for the provinces of the Islamic Empire, which covered almost all of the Old World Dry Belt, a mostly arid zone with oases, river and valley systems, and were mainly separated from each other by natural boundaries like steppes, deserts, mountain ridges, and large rivers. In Arabic geographic descriptions of the regions it is not boundaries which are marked, but roads and realms (*al-masālik*

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<sup>4</sup> For a broad discussion of the concept of territoriality, see Elden 2013, esp. 322.

<sup>5</sup> For a comparison with the Sasanian Empire, see Payne 2017.

*wa-l-mamālik*).<sup>6</sup> For this reason, our research group laid less emphasis on territory as a basis for understanding administration and worked instead with a layered, but not necessarily hierarchical structure of authority within each province/region studied within the project.

The default concept of a province is a layered structure of transregional elites projecting and concentrating imperial power into a region, which is defined as a larger geographic entity. By virtue of the geographical setting, its people might have had a shared common history, religion, or language. This differs from an administrative concept of a province. The transregional elites functioned as conduits of imperial power. They were located in key cities that were often situated amidst a fertile, tax-rich agricultural hinterland. The projection of power was implemented through the governor and the deployment of garrisons of large transregional armies. Thus the provinces were formed mostly for the provisioning of state institutions, the administration, the military, and those transregional elites. A highly developed accounting system recorded in the caliphal administrative centers is evidence of tight control over those taxable areas. Where a governor could not subject sub-regions such as neighboring oases to his direct control, he appointed *wālis* or *‘āmilis*. Those areas or zones could still be quite closely connected to the provincial administration by taxation and military control. The *junds* in al-Shām or the *Zāb* in Ifrīqiya are such cases. Rebellions and uprisings against the governor testify to this tighter control, thus affirming the expanding power of the provincial administration within the region.

Outside these core regions, many forms of integration or co-optation of regional groups, nomads, mountain dwellers, and other regional populations existed. Numerous regional rulers, vassals at best and rebels at worst, nobilities, and self-governed communities were present across the imperial landscape. They often held onto their pre-Islamic positions and privileges, ruling large swathes of a region while its main cities were usually administered by Muslim governors. Examples are the Sogdian Bukhārkhōdās in the Bukhārā Oasis and the Ikshīds in Samarqand.<sup>7</sup> How exactly they shared power with the transregional elites should be analyzed on a case to case basis.

When direct taxation was not feasible, tribute from the vassal zone to the state coffers provided assurance of the former’s commitment, whilst a gift from the governor could ensure the loyalty of an unpredictable local ruler. Jürgen

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6 Brauer 1995.

7 See for example Kennedy 2010.

Paul describes a layered structure for the Seljūq period and sees centralized taxation in money as a legacy of the ‘Abbāsīd administration.<sup>8</sup>

The autonomy of nomads and mountain dwellers was even more pronounced. The Berber Khārijites, who lived in the Atlas mountains, remained at the fringes of the administration and could be ignored at length. The same can be said for those living in mountain fortresses or in the steppes with their livestock. Pre-Islamic belief systems continued or even survived in these zones for long periods, but were transformed by the Islamic culture of the empire over time. These zones were hardly taxed if at all and often kept militarily at bay, but they lay within the commercial and cultural reach of the empire.

The task of the provincial governor was therefore to manage this layered structure of the region for the tax benefit of the empire rather than to impose the rule of the caliph in a defined territory. The regional elites played an important role in the management of the empire.

## The Conference and this Volume

In order to explore the subject of elites and their role in imperial governance in more detail, the ‘Early Islamic Empire’ project held a conference on 7–8 October 2016 dedicated to ‘Regional and Transregional Elites’. The conference sought to address a number of core issues such as, who were the various elites of a given region? How did these regional elites interact with the empire, what mechanisms and strategies did they employ, and (how) did they change in the course of interaction? How were transregional elites influenced by their interaction with regional elites, and how did they balance their relationships with both the latter and the central caliphal authorities? Where and how were transregional elites recruited, and was the shift from one such elite to another a sign of failure or were some elites ‘simply’ better at reproducing themselves? Which existing networks and emerging institutions helped elites to connect the empire and its diverse regions (e. g., tribal affiliations, family policies, strategic appointments, ecclesiastical hierarchies)?

It quickly became evident that the term ‘elite’ itself was used differently by the participants. The concluding roundtable discussion highlighted the lack of a terminology of elites common to our field as a whole, applicable irrespective of geographical or historical specificities, and with interdisciplinary relevance. The first chapter of the present volume picks up from this discussion and seeks to

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<sup>8</sup> Paul 2015.

respond to the identified gap. “Studying Elites in Early Islamic History” by Hannah-Lena Hagemann, Katharina Mewes, and Peter Verkinderen explores the term elite and its conceptualization for the study of early Islamic history. In addition to reviewing the terminology used to refer to socially dominant groups in Arabic and Persian sources, Hagemann et al. also examine the development of ‘elite studies’ in the social sciences and related fields. In discussing its suitability for the field of Islamic Studies, they identify a number of problems that lead them to question the applicability of terms for socially dominant groups as defined in other disciplines to Islamic Studies.

Instead, the authors put forward their own working definition of ‘elite’ in an early Islamic context. They define elites “as individuals and groups of individuals who were in a position or had the potential to influence social, political, economic, and religious processes and decision-making in their communities.” These people enjoyed an elevated (political, military, judicial, religious, and/or economic) status that entitled them to power, wealth, influence, and other notable benefits. The status of elites depended on conceptions of merit, performance, ethnicity, ancestry, wealth, military prowess, religion, education, social capital, and other forms of privilege. These categories are entangled and can hardly be separated from each other, but predominant categories can often be discerned.

The case studies that follow are roughly organized according to geography, beginning with Arabia as the cradle of the empire and continuing with Iraq as the imperial center in the period most contributions focus on. These are followed by studies on regions of the Iranian east, which share a Sasanian past, followed by the Eastern Mediterranean and the north of the empire as former Byzantine territories with a strong Christian heritage. North Africa, with its Roman-Latin heritage, concludes the volume.

Most conference participants began with the assumption that their region forms a specific exception to the Greater Mesopotamian paradigm. However, the chapters of this volume reveal that it may in fact have been Greater Mesopotamia which formed the exception. The regions’ geographical outlooks, their many cultures and religions, seemed at first to be too different to perceive any common ground for interregional comparisons and parallels; the sources differ for each region in scope, wealth of information, and emphasis. Despite the relationships and interactions between regional and transregional elites differing from region to region, however, the case studies in this volume exhibit certain common patterns in the case studies from North Africa to Khurāsān, for instance regarding the importance of informal governance structures or forms of social organization.

Georg Leube, “Insult the Caliph, Marry al-Ḥasan, and Redeem Your Kingdom: *Freiheitsgrade* of Kindī Elites During the 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, investigates the regional networks of the Kinda tribe. Al-Ash‘ath, a descendant of the kings of the South Arabian tribe of Kinda, was able to elevate his family to the highest echelons of the fledgling Islamic Empire through marriage ties. However, in a later stage, the significance of tribal networks was reduced to a regional level, at least in the case of the Kinda. His grandson, Ibn al-Ash‘ath, attempted again to interfere in transregional affairs and led the revolt of the Iraqī tribes against ‘Abd al-Malik. He mobilized the Iraqī milieu of pious Qur‘ān readers (*qurrā’*), who were opposed to the state building efforts of the Islamic administration, for which Ibn al-Ash‘ath used religious claims and downplayed his tribal affiliations.

Noémie Lucas, “Landowners in Lower-Iraq During the 8<sup>th</sup> Century: Types and Interplays”, analyzes social shifts in the landholding class of Lower Iraq. She defines a number of types of landowners, local Jews and Christians alongside Persian landowners (*dahāqīn*) and the new landed Islamic transregional elites investing in land. She looks into the advancing concentration of land in the hands of the latter in particular. These owners of large estates were often members of the Baghdādī elite and the ‘Abbāsīd family. Their growth was at the expense of small, local landowners. Her study also provides examples of transregional elites ‘going regional’, however.

Hugh Kennedy, “The Rise and Fall of the Early ‘Abbāsīd Political and Military Elite”, shifts attention to the transregional military elites. He takes up the question of their changing origins and al-Manṣūr’s creation of the Khurāsānī military. He observes that in the early ‘Abbāsīd Empire, the inner core provinces, such as Iraq, the Jazīra, and Syria, remained reserved for members of the ‘Abbāsīd family, while the newly created class of *quwwād* went to the threatened frontiers of Ifrīqiya, Armīniya, and Khurāsān. Almost all of them came from Khurāsān, but not exclusively. As a transregional elite by imperial privilege close to the court, these men were geographically mobile, returning to Baghdād after their assignment, before again receiving new provincial appointments. Their status was almost hereditary. Their leaders, such as Khuzayma b. Khāzim, served their retainers as conduits of royal patronage and influence. This newly created ‘Abbāsīd elite of *quwwād* lasted at most three generations. Their dominance ended in the war of succession between al-Amin and al-Ma‘mūn in 813–814. Kennedy also takes up the case of the Kinda, whose leaders frequently served as governors of al-Kūfa under the ‘Abbāsīds, from Georg Leube.

Jürgen Paul, “Who Were the *Mulūk Fārs?*”, returns to the discussion on landed regional elites, but from a different angle compared to Noémie Lucas. He looks into a section of the elite that is usually difficult to pin down in the avail-

able sources: local lords in Iran. Using al-Iṣṭakhri's discussion of the mulūk Fārs as a starting point, he lays out the characteristics of this class. As a case study, he presents the Arab family of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, who moved to Fārs in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century and became part of the regional land-holding elite.

Ahmad Khan, “An Empire of Elites: Mobility in the Early Islamic Empire”, studies prosopographies pertaining to political and mostly transregional elites in order to examine patterns of social mobility, professional circulation, and structures of imperial rule in the ‘Abbāsīd Empire during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. He comes to an important conclusion hinting at seemingly contradictory patterns. At least in the cases that he analyzes, it can be seen that the early ‘Abbāsīd empire was dominated by informal patterns of rule that depended disproportionately on personal retainers as well as governor and military families to maintain structures, while the empire appears as a bureaucratic centralized empire with regard to the fiscal administration.

Amikam Elad, “Preliminary Notes on the Term and Institution of *al-Shākiriyya* in Early Islam”, addresses the problem of contemporary terminology for transregional military forces and elites in Arabic sources. He focuses on the case of the *shākiriyya*. In a close examination of references pertaining to this military group in primary sources up to the reign of al-Ma'mūn, he challenges the current scholarship regarding this term. According to his interpretation, the term denotes different groups in varying contexts. Sometimes, it refers to a group of people with a military character, such as armed guards or a fighting force on the battlefield. In other contexts, no military connection is apparent, and the *shākiriyya* in question appear to be simply servants or devoted followers. A certain link with Khurāsānī/Central Asian practices seems apparent, but Elad shows that both the institution and the meaning of its name could change when moved to another context.

Alison Vacca's contribution, “Khurāsānī and Transoxanian *Ostikans* of Early ‘Abbāsīd Armenia”, takes up some of the issues raised in Kennedy's study. With her entry, the volume enters a zone inhabited by a predominantly Christian population. Vacca uses Armenian and Arabic sources to analyze Armenia's multilayered provincial structure. The presence of Khurāsānī governors (*ostikans*) and troops in Armenia challenges the idea that Armenia was separated or isolated from developments in the Islamic Empire; on the contrary, Armenia was not infrequently the scene of conflicts between different segments of the Khurāsānī elite. A familiar pattern also emerges in her study of a layered structure of a provincial region and the (occasional) projection of power from the caliphal center via governors and garrisons.

Peter Verkinderen and Simon Gundelfinger's chapter, “Governors of the Early Islamic Empire – A Comparative Regional Perspective”, analyzes the ap-

pointments of governors in Fārs and al-Shām on several levels until the reign of al-Mu‘tamid ‘alā Allāh (r. 870–892). Due to the lack of a distinct contemporary hierarchical terminology in the sources, these individuals were classified using the terms governor, super-governor, and sub-governor. By examining their backgrounds, Gundelfinger and Verkinderen identify appointment patterns, which differed clearly between Fārs and al-Shām. Al-Shām under the Umayyads was the seat of government, and its administration was presumably organized in the environment of the court, while Fārs was part of the super-province of al-Baṣra. Appointment patterns changed over time, but they did not follow the periodization of Sufyānid, Zubayrid, Marwānid, early ‘Abbāsīd, or pre-Sāmarran and Sāmarran eras that is often applied to the empire as a whole. The authors discuss the tribal patterns of appointments of Arab governors in the Umayyad period, the involvement of Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd family members in governing the provinces, and the decline of their influence towards the end of the period under study. The different patterns of appointments and the modes of governance, such as the super-provinces, display a common strategy for brief periods; more often policies were tailored according to the situation of the province. Their conclusions thus tie well into what Ahmad Khan calls informal structures of government.

Hannah-Lena Hagemann, “Muslim Elites in the Early Islamic Jazīra: The *Qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, and al-Mawṣil”, looks into the local and regional networks of power within the province of al-Jazīra during the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd period. She also applies a prosopographical approach, focusing on the office of the *qāḍī* as an intersection of imperial and provincial authority. Using the cities of Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, and al-Mawṣil as case studies, a comparative analysis of the individuals appointed to the *qāḍī*ship reveals some commonalities in their backgrounds, but also clear differences in the appointment patterns. For example, the judges of Ḥarrān formed part of the local elite, had a local power base, and were thus more independent from court patronage. In contrast, the *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā were frequently appointed from the transregional elites. The judges of al-Mawṣil, on the other hand, feature instances of appointments of local, regional, and transregional representatives. The variance was likely due to political and administrative factors in each of the cities and appears to have been a constant feature of the early Islamic period.

Philip Wood studies the “Christian Elite Networks in the Jazīra, c.730–850”. He looks at the same geographical area but focuses on a different group of elites. He uses Chris Wickham’s definition of aristocracy as comprising individuals and groups possessing memory of ancestry, land, office, lifestyle, mutual recognition, and proximity to royal patronage to describe the episcopal and monastic networks of different denominations in the Jazīra. This Christian ‘aristocratic’

elite had its roots in the Roman Near East. Drawing on the information of the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian in particular, Wood argues that the caliphate became an increasingly hostile environment for Christian landed lay elites, incentivizing powerful families to take roles in the state's administration or within the church as bishops. Using examples from the Jacobite church, most famously Dionysius of Tall Mahrē, Wood argues that the state acted through the regional institutions of the church. It became increasingly involved in the governance of the church by publicly endorsing the patriarch and his ability to raise revenues from Christians, and also by supporting him against rival clerics. In the early 'Abbāsīd period, the empire thus became involved in church matters as a part of its repertoire of governance.

Petra Sijpesteijn presents a similar case for Egypt, which shares a Roman Christian past and the perseverance of ecclesiastical networks with the Jazīra. Her main argument relates to "Establishing Local Elite Authority in Egypt through Arbitration and Mediation". She uses evidence from Arabic, Coptic, and Greek papyri to examine the role of individuals involved in mediation during the first four centuries following the Muslim conquest of Egypt. Her focus lies on the strategies of conflict resolution, the regional and transregional actors involved, and the question of whether these processes took place in an institutional framework or in a more informal environment. Sijpesteijn shows how these processes can inform us about changing power relations within the province. On a local level, arbitration and dispute resolution was sought from bishops, Muslim governors, and later qāḍīs alike. Hence, arbitration was to be found within a community, offering a strong alternative to a complicated and expensive Islamic legal system. Christian, Jewish, and Muslim community leaders continued to serve the needs of their specific constituencies. The authority inherent in conflict mediation itself created and affirmed local elite status. She discusses the changes in the composition of Egypt's elite, as they emerge from the analysis of local processes of conflict resolution, and how these changes can be connected to developments at the caliphal center.

Yaacov Lev, "The Civilian Ruling Elite of the Ṭūlūnid Ikhshīdīd Period", also looks at the situation in Egypt, but shifts the attention to different Muslim elites. His contribution is divided into two parts. In the first, Lev studies the terminology employed by the Arabic sources to refer to subjects and elite groups alike. Certain terms, such as *ṣīnf* (pl. *aṣnāf*), *fīrqa* (pl. *fīraq*), *ṭā'ifa* (pl. *ṭawā'if*), and *ṭabaqa* (pl. *ṭibāq*), appear to have applied to more or less distinct social groups, but on the whole the primary sources seem to have conceived of society as polarized between the general categories of *khāṣṣa* (elite) and *'amma* (commoners). In the second part, Lev examines the participation of the civilian elites of the Ikhshīdīd period in the succession crises of 946 and 961.

In his contribution, “Connecting the Ibāḍī Network in North Africa with the Empire (2<sup>nd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Century)”, Cyrille Aillet looks at a region which was one of the first to slip out of ‘Abbāsīd control during the war of succession between al-Amīn and al-Ma’mūn. At first sight, North African Ibāḍism emerged during the Berber uprisings against Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd rule and seemingly stayed at the margins of the empire. However, during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries the civilian transregional elite of Ibāḍī merchants served as a conduit of imperial Islamic culture and the economy of the empire, albeit not of caliphal government. North African Ibāḍīs remained under the influence of their eastern strongholds, particularly al-Baṣra, where the Ibāḍī elite was integrated into ‘Abbāsīd society. Al-Baṣra was an important emporium and Ibāḍī merchants circulated widely between the ‘Abbāsīd realm and its western fringes. Trans-Saharan trade, including slaves and gold, was presumably initiated by demand from within the empire, connecting the regional economies of North Africa with that of the imperial system. Intense scholarly exchange also linked west and east, thanks to intermediary meeting points such as Mecca, particularly during the *ḥajj*, and Fustāt.

Some of the papers that were presented at the conference will be published in other venues, but contributed immensely to our discussion. Matthew Gordon and Luke Treadwell took contrasting attitudes towards the Sāmarran establishment. Matthew Gordon, in his talk on “Sāmarran Politics and the ‘Abbāsīd Provinces”, set the career of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn in the context of what he termed ‘Sāmarran politics.’ Ibn Ṭūlūn conducted himself very much in the manner of his peers in the Sāmarran military elite, at the heart of whose efforts lay twin goals: securing lucrative interests, including authority over appointments to Egypt, and maintaining an upper hand over the ‘Abbāsīd court in Sāmarrā’. As Gordon puts it: Ibn Ṭūlūn “overplayed his hand” trying to balance his interest in Sāmarrā’ and in his own powerbase in Syria and Egypt, until he became an enemy of the all-powerful regent al-Muwaffaq and his successors.

Luke Treadwell’s talk on “Muṭṭawwi’ī and Mamlūk: Military Elites in Sāmānīd Central Asia and Beyond”, looked at the case of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s contemporaries, the Sāmānīds, a family that had already emerged as a regional elite in the 820, when al-Ma’mūn moved to Baghdād. In striking contrast to the Ṭūlūnīds in Egypt, the Sāmānīds never strove for caliphal patronage or positions at court, far from it: when they became actual rulers of Transoxania and Khurāsān, their geographical outlook differed tremendously from that of the ‘Abbāsīd Empire. They were focused northwards toward the steppes, and their commercial enterprise even reached via the Volga to the Baltic Sea. One reason for their seemingly atypical behavior might be that they were content with their status in the empire, viewing themselves almost as equals of the ‘Abbāsīds, without challenging their position in Baghdād nor ‘stepping on their carpet’ as clients.

## What Remains to be Done?

The roundtable discussion that followed the presentations highlighted the importance of studying the provinces of the empire individually and from a comparative perspective. Studying a particular province in isolation carries the risk of ignoring the effects of how developments in one province affected those in others, which can obscure broader patterns of imperial rule. An integrative approach promises insights into the structures and administration of the empire, especially as we deal with layered structures of authority in each province. This, in turn, brings into focus the role of elites and how their character and function varied from province to province.

Certain themes and patterns recurred in several papers and the ensuing discussions, but the discussion also gave rise to new questions, whilst others remain unanswered. Questions of group formation and the identity of elites (as regards ethnicity, military assignments, economic patterns, landowning, and religious affiliations) have yet to be addressed, as do further conceptual questions relating to territoriality and elite governance. We hope that the contributions in this volume will serve as a foundation on which further research can be based.

## Acknowledgements

The research for this volume and its publication would not have been possible without the generous support of a European Research Council Advanced Grant. We owe gratitude to the anonymous reviewers of this project, who saw the potential in studying the ‘View from the Regions Toward the Center’.

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# Studying Elites in Early Islamic History: Concepts and Terminology

**Abstract:** This paper conceptualizes the term elite for the study of early Islamic history and aims to provide a usable definition for historians of early Islam. It gives an overview of existing terminology referring to socially dominant groups in Arabic and Persian sources as well as in the social sciences and related fields, discussing and dismissing its suitability for the field of Islamic Studies. The article traces the development of the term elite in scholarly discourse from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward and presents its own definition suited to the complex organizational structure of early Islamic society, pointing out both the challenges of and possible strategies for studying early Islamic elites.

**Keywords:** Elites; Islamic history; early Islamic Empire; Umayyads; ‘Abbāsids; prosopography

## Introduction

This paper is a collaborative effort by some of the team members working within the ERC project “The Early Islamic Empire at Work—The View from the Regions Toward the Center”, based at Hamburg University and led by Stefan Heidemann. The project seeks to study the early Islamic Empire from the inception of the Umayyad caliphate until the end of effective ‘Abbāsīd rule in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century. It focuses not on the caliph (usually considered the lynchpin of the imperial enterprise) and his court, but rather on five key provinces (Ifriqiya, al-Shām, al-Jazīra, Fārs, and Khurāsān) that serve as case studies illustrating the reciprocal relations and power dynamics between the so-called center and periphery.

One of the subjects investigated within the framework of this project pertains to early Islamic elites and their roles in connecting the empire across a vast territory inhabited by highly diverse subject populations. The elites we are primarily interested in are those who had a significant impact on the political dimension of the empire. They represent a key—albeit not the only—factor in understanding how the early Islamic Empire came into being and developed over time.

When we first began to study elites in our five provinces, we did not have a clear concept or definition of what we actually meant by the word elite. The individual members of our team held sometimes significantly divergent views of

what elite status meant in an early Islamic context, and accordingly different ideas of what groups we should investigate. Moreover, our views were mostly informed by vague connotations of political power and wealth rather than a systematic approach to the issue. That this is true of the field of Islamic Studies more generally became obvious following our conference on regional and trans-regional elites in October 2016. Over the course of this conference, many fascinating and insightful papers were read and discussed. However, there were almost no references to theories or concepts of the study of elites in the 17 papers that were presented. The need for a more systematic approach to this subject was one of the main topics discussed during the concluding round table. This paper is a first step towards meeting this need. We seek to give an overview of how the study of elites has impacted our own research. We also offer suggestions on how to deal with this complex issue more generally, pointing out pertinent questions and difficulties as well as providing our own definition of socially dominant groups and individuals in the context of the early Islamic Empire.

As stated above, this project primarily considers the political dimension of the early Islamic Empire. We envision this dimension not as an abstract, rigid structure of institutions, but as a collection of relations between people forming overlapping networks. Three distinct but related levels are included: the judiciary, the military, and the administration. The administration represents the form in which the empire organized its claim to supremacy over its various subjects and territories. One key element of the administration was the taxation system, which represented “the principal point of contact between a state and its citizens”<sup>1</sup> and was vital to the survival of the empire. The judiciary and the military both served to enforce the imperial authorities’ claim to supremacy. However, these last two were not simply imposed by the imperial state on its subject population; they also reflected a demand for justice and security on the part of said subjects. This was particularly true of the judiciary, which was also less centrally organized than the military and not as well structured.

Apart from a comparatively small number of works on statecraft (e.g. ‘mirrors for princes’ literature, legal treatises), the bulk of our primary sources predominantly talk about people, not institutions or offices *per se*. This works to our advantage, as we are primarily interested in how the empire actually operated on the ground rather than how it was ideally supposed to work. We thus approach the early Islamic Empire from the perspective of those who held positions or offices within the framework of its institutions. In other words, we do not pursue an institutional approach focusing on the responsibilities and outputs of an of-

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1 Grey 2011, 181.

fice as an end in itself, but rather an actor-oriented one that studies the concrete actions of individuals holding a particular office. This better reflects the fluidity and diversity of a system whose rules could change depending on individual office holders and whose institutions often did not constitute diachronically stable and recognizable entities.

In this study, we look at two different (albeit sometimes overlapping) groups of actors who engaged with the empire's political dimension in all its forms. Primarily, we investigate those who held official positions within this dimension. However, we also study non-state actors, meaning individuals who were not appointed to a certain office or position by a member of the imperial apparatus but who nevertheless could and often did organize their communities. In her contribution to this volume, Petra Sijpesteijn highlights the role of non-state protagonists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who were vital for the administration of justice on the local level in early Islamic Egypt. Such actors were instrumental in facilitating the smooth operation of the empire, but under certain circumstances they could also cause conflict. As engagement of any kind with the political dimension of the early Islamic Empire is the focus of our research, resistance to the enforcement of imperial dominion and/or imperial organization is also specifically included.

On a secondary level, we also investigate the economic dimension of the early Islamic Empire, i.e. the production of money and goods that kept the state running. Taxation was the empire's most important source of revenue. The comprehensive breakdown of the flow of taxation to the caliphal center in the so-called 'period of anarchy' contributed to the decline of 'Abbāsid power and the development of a polycentric Islamic Empire. That said, here we investigate economic structures and actors only as far as they are directly related to the political dimension. Both the political and the economic dimensions were present in varying degrees on every level of organization, from the village to the caliphal capital.

## Terminology

One problematic aspect in the study of socially dominant groups is terminology. Any discussion of elites in the early Islamic period would be incomplete without considering what contemporary authors have had to say on the matter. Classicists often refer to elites by the terms used in their primary sources, but this is not as common a practice in the field of early Islamic history. Our primary sources also use many different terms to refer to various groups of higher status. Some 'political' texts develop a relatively complex classification of early Islamic

society,<sup>2</sup> but the most general and widespread concept comprises a bipolar description consisting of the undefined masses (*al-‘amma*) and the distinguished minorities (*al-khāṣṣa*). This distinction does not translate into a conceptualization of elites.

One of the main reasons why Arabic/Islamic terminology for elites is not often used by scholars in our field is that the terms’ various connotations have overall not been studied in depth yet. The one exception is probably *al-khāṣṣa*, which has been the subject of a number of short studies pointing out that the term is often mentioned in conjunction with *al-‘amma*, “the general people”. Together, they constitute the entire population of a city or state. In this context, it can be translated as “the elite” or “the upper class”. In other contexts, the term is variously used to indicate a ruler’s entourage or, in a more restrictive sense, the caliphal family, “people of merit and quality” and “the rich and cultivated people”.<sup>3</sup>

On the level below *al-khāṣṣa*, there are many terms describing leading groups in society at large or within specific communities. Some (at least initially) referred to specific criteria like honor (*ashrāf*) or ancestry (*aṣīlān*, *ahl al-manāqib*, *dhawī l-manāqib*, *buyūt(āt)*), exemplariness (*amāthil*), or something that makes the group proud (*mafākhīr*, *maḥāsīn*). Other terms are metaphors for being at the front or top of a group (*wujūh*, *ru’asā’*, *a’yān*, *ṣadr*, *taqaddum*), for greatness (*kibār*, *akābir*, *ajilla*, *buzurgān*), or for manliness/vigorousness (*fuḥūl*, *sarāt*). Some of these terms, like *ashrāf*, have found their way into scholarship as designations of particular groups, but only in specific contexts (such as the uprisings by Iraqi tribal leaders called *al-ashrāf* against the Umayyads), not as a general term for elites.<sup>4</sup>

While these terms appear to refer to certain (usually only loosely defined) social groups, none of them are suitable to describe the superordinate modern concepts of elites and their functions. For one, it seems difficult to relate any of these terms to various levels of social organization (from the village to the court, from military to religious groups). Some of them are too specific to one particular group and cannot be applied to members of other groups; others are too broad. Most of these terms are also value judgments (which we seek to avoid) and are too focused on one or two aspects of social dominance (e.g.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Marlow 2016, I, 95–128 (ps.-Māwardī’s *Nasīhat al-Mulūk*).

<sup>3</sup> *EF*<sup>2</sup>, “Al-Khāṣṣa wa ‘l-‘amma” (M.A.J. Beg); Van Renterghem 2004, 183–5.

<sup>4</sup> In South Asia, *‘ashrāf* was (and continues to be) used to indicate the Arab origin of immigrants. See Dumont 1980, 207 ff. For discussions of *ashrāf* and other terms of social distinction in pre-modern Islamic history, see Van Renterghem 2004; Marlow 2016; Durand-Guédy 2010; and Yaacov Lev’s contribution in this volume.

wealth, political power, ancestry). This excludes important groups that do not fulfill the relevant criteria (e.g. merchants, scholars, elite women). Finally, these terms for elites also have different meanings in different chronological and geographical contexts, rendering them unhelpful for broader comparative studies and for research examining the general mechanisms and structures underlying the formation and development of socially dominant groups.

The term ‘elite’, which has been adopted in this paper, has become increasingly popular in Islamic Studies since the 1980s (see Fig. 1 below), following in the footsteps of academic disciplines such as history and the social sciences. It is certainly not the only term used to describe socially dominant groups: aristocracy, oligarchy, ruling class, notables, patricians, or upper class are just some of the most common alternatives. These are often used interchangeably with elite without proper distinction or clarification of their subject matter.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, there is also no general consensus on what exactly these concepts denote and which phenomena they are meant to describe.

The term ‘aristocracy’ originally meant “rule of the excellent”. It has since been used to describe vastly different social groups in vastly different contexts. It can be applied very generally to denote more or less closed-off ruling groups,<sup>6</sup> whose composition is based primarily on ancestry but also on other criteria such as (landed) wealth and/or (hereditary) office. It implies recognition by other dominant groups as well as a particular lifestyle.<sup>7</sup> While the term has a certain European ring to it, it can be used for some elite groups in early Islamic society, but it is not a viable alternative to the more general term elites.

The term ‘patriciate’ originated in a Roman context, but well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was used to describe urban ruling elites in different contexts. Patricians were usually considered to constitute a social as well as a political group, defined by an association with wealth, prestige, ancestry, and social power. The distinction between the patriciate and the aristocracy is often unclear.<sup>8</sup> The term was famously introduced into Islamic Studies by Richard Bulliet, whose pioneering 1972 work *Patricians of Nishapur* drew much praise but also criticism for its use of the term. The European connotations of the term have proven too strong for use in our field; Bulliet’s use of the term has not taken hold.

‘Oligarchy’ or the “rule of the few” is another term that is frequently used to refer to dominant elites, focusing first and foremost on the ruling elite. The term

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<sup>5</sup> Morris 1990, 10. See also Gunn 2007, 195.

<sup>6</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Wickham 2005, 154. For examples of other definitions, each with its own slightly different focus, see Fox 2014, 51, 52; Mitchell 1973, 27; Grey 2011, 122.

<sup>8</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 4–5.

does not primarily denote social distinction but belongs to the field of politics, and therefore cannot be used interchangeably with elite.<sup>9</sup>

The terms ‘nobility’ and ‘notables’ are still frequently encountered, but there seems to be a lot of conceptual overlap between nobility and aristocracy, especially regarding the weight given to ancestry. Notably, French scholars have argued in favor of using notables (Weber’s “Honoratioren”) to describe elites because the term is relatively open and can be applied to every level of society. The main criticism of this is that the term does not translate well, especially because in French academic discourse it is closely connected to specific historical contexts.<sup>10</sup>

In the field of Islamic Studies, the notion of the “politics of notables” was first introduced by Albert Hourani in 1981.<sup>11</sup> He applied this concept to the Ottoman period, and while Boaz Shoshan later argued for its usage in pre-Ottoman Islamic history,<sup>12</sup> both understood notables to refer to urban dignitaries who engaged in ‘politics’ by “acting as intermediaries between the government and the people”,<sup>13</sup> usually without seeking autonomous rule for themselves. Both scholars were interested in the status of provincial towns vis-à-vis the imperial centers rather than the question of elite status and membership. Shoshan acknowledges the difficulties involved in dealing with notables as a “mixed bag of social groups”<sup>14</sup> but leaves open the question of whether “one [can] reach precision in treating the medieval Muslim ‘notables’”. He simply defines the term as “standing for Arabic classificatory terms which suggest an elevated social position”.<sup>15</sup>

Concepts such as ‘dominant’ or ‘ruling class’ have mostly gone out of fashion as they are linked to Marxist theories that maintain the upper class should be comprised of those who hold the primary means of production. Since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this has increasingly limited the appeal of these concepts to historians. Moreover, this particular definition does not apply fully to many socially dominant groups in history, such as the medieval patriciate.<sup>16</sup>

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9 Beriou/Carraz 2015, 373.

10 Cébeillac-Gervasoni 2003, 704.

11 Hourani 1981.

12 Shoshan 1986.

13 Shoshan 1986, 181.

14 Shoshan 1986, 180. On the problem of defining ‘notables’ as a social group, see also Khoury 1983, 12–13, paraphrased in Shoshan 1986, 181.

15 Shoshan 1986, 181.

16 Dumolyn 2013, 5.

Finally, German historiography puts forward the term *Schicht* (“stratum”), dividing society into an *Oberschicht* (“upper stratum”) of patricians, a *Mittelschicht* (“middle stratum” of artisans and small merchants), and an *Unterschicht* (“lower stratum” of proletarians). It also identifies a *Führungsschicht* (“ruling stratum”), which can either be part of the *Oberschicht* or separate from it. This *Führungsschicht* has in turn been called a “political class” or a “power elite” by other sociologists.<sup>17</sup>

This short overview illustrates the great variety and occasional confusion regarding how a society’s dominant social groups can be described. Here we use the term elite rather than the alternatives just described because it appears less influenced by specific historiographical approaches than other terms. Categories such as aristocracy or patriciate, for instance, have other connotations in academic and in public discourse that are often closely tied to specific historical contexts. Most of these connotations concern the right to rule, primarily in a political and military sense, and focus strongly on ancestry and wealth. Other (social, cultural, and religious) dimensions often fall by the wayside. Oligarchy is another good example of this: by focusing on the top level of a seemingly obvious ruling elite, it frequently fails to acknowledge the complex socio-political structures and hierarchies of medieval societies, with their often diffused systems of power.<sup>18</sup> It also describes a type of government more than a group of people sharing certain defining characteristics. Finally, it is questionable to what extent ideas and concepts regarding other societies, such as medieval western European aristocracies, can be readily applied to pre-modern Islamic societies.

The term elite is not neutral either, and it does contain problematic aspects inherent to both the concept itself and to how the concept has been employed in elite studies.<sup>19</sup> Normativity, for instance, is one such problem. In common usage, the term elite has a number of connotations, mostly associated with notions of excellence, upper-class status, privilege, and superiority. As current public discourse in the political sphere illustrates quite nicely, however, identifying something as elite can also take on negative associations very quickly. We thus want to emphasize here that we do *not* use the term normatively, but only to describe certain mechanisms and functions underlying social structures. As postulated by Vilfredo Pareto, one of the founding fathers of elite theory, in our work the term

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<sup>17</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 6–7.

<sup>18</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 6. See also Haldon 2004, 6.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. the “areas of concern” identified by Gunn 2007, 195–198, and his suggestions for how to deal with these concerns, *ibid.*, 198–202.

elite will be “treated as a value-free term meaning those who score highest on scales measuring any social value or commodity”.<sup>20</sup>

Systematic definitions of elite are few and far between not only in our field, but also in many works of historical sociology and the various branches of history.<sup>21</sup> In part, this is due to a lack of precision regarding the term and the analytical category of elite.<sup>22</sup> This is aptly summarized in a well-known quote by the political scientist George Marcus:

Clear in what it signifies but ambiguous as to its precise referents, the concept of elite in general usage has a certain force; it locates agency in social events, by evoking the image of a ruling, controlling few, while being intractably vague.<sup>23</sup>

However, the vagueness of the term can also be viewed as an advantage:

Indeed, the notion of “elite” is often deliberately used because it is a vague one. Usually it does not become really clear what the term exactly denotes and this gives the historian the liberty to define it exactly as she or he wants to or, as is regrettably often the case, not to define it at all.<sup>24</sup>

Another advantage of employing the term elite to delineate socially dominant groups is that it can be used across all levels of the social hierarchy,<sup>25</sup> highlighting similarities between structures and processes that otherwise seem very different.

Finally, it appears that elite has superseded, although not entirely replaced, the other terms discussed above in the academic discourse of the last 30 years.<sup>26</sup>

## The Theoretical Study of Elites

Having decided to use the term elite, our first step towards a conceptualization of early Islamic elites was a foray into the social sciences. The study of elites has been a well-established field within the disciplines of sociology, political science, psychology, and related subjects for about a century. Much of what has

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<sup>20</sup> Zetterberg 1968, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Dreyer/Mittag 2011, 9–10.

<sup>22</sup> Gunn 2007, 191.

<sup>23</sup> Marcus 1983, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 3. See also Settapani 2006, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Wickham 2004, 285; Couperus et al. 2004, x-xi.

<sup>26</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 4; Gunn 2007, 198.

been done in that regard is not particularly useful for or applicable to early Islamic history, as many theories were advanced on the basis of research into the emerging elites of 18<sup>th</sup>- to early 20<sup>th</sup>-century European history. In fact, the term elite appeared in Western social and political thought only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century: “the notion of elite is an academic and post-hoc construction. There is little evidence that historically people have thought of themselves as members of an elite *per se*.”<sup>27</sup> We cannot therefore simply impose definitions of elites derived from the social sciences onto our own field of history.

Since antiquity, there have been discussions of social and moral distinction, and the concept of elite (if not the term itself) is sometimes traced as far back as Plato.<sup>28</sup> Its systematic development into a number of theoretical frameworks is based in modern sociology, namely the works of Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Max Weber, and C. Wright Mills (to mention some of the most prominent early theoreticians). The conceptualization of modern sociological elite theory developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the aftermath of the social upheaval caused by the French Revolution, in dialogue with and as a counterparadigm to Marxism.<sup>29</sup>

At the core of the sociological elite theories developed by 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars lies the assumption that elite rule is inevitable. Rather than economics and class-like collectivities, it is elite choices and power competitions, and thus to a certain degree the wider social order, that determine politics: “in the elite paradigm... tiny but powerful minorities are made up of autonomous social and political actors who are interested in maintaining and enhancing their power.”<sup>30</sup>

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an increasing number of sociologists have contributed to the conceptualization of elites. Vilfredo Pareto distinguishes between governing and non-governing elites. He further separates governing elites into those who dominate by force and those who dominate by skills and persuasion. In a number of works, the first of which was published in 1901,<sup>31</sup> Pareto puts regime change down to the “circulation of elites” as new elites constantly arise to take the old elite’s place.<sup>32</sup> His elite theory does not provide criteria of measuring

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<sup>27</sup> Gunn 2007, 196.

<sup>28</sup> Dartmann et al. 2015, 37; Daloz 2010, 7–13.

<sup>29</sup> Dartmann et al. 2015, 37; Gunn 2007, 191–192.

<sup>30</sup> Higley/Pakulski 2012, 321.

<sup>31</sup> Pareto 1968.

<sup>32</sup> For Pareto, regime change does not occur because rulers are overthrown from below, but because one ruling elite replaces another. The functioning of elite and society depends on a constant circulation of elites. Elite groups decline, degenerate, and die, decaying in numbers as well as quality. This creates room for the entry of new elements from other parts of society, and the

and distinguishing the superior qualities of its subjects, and it should be noted that Pareto, though often reduced to his interest in elites, was mainly concerned with social behavior.<sup>33</sup>

In his 1939 book *Ruling Class*, Gaetano Mosca stresses the material conditions as well as the intellectual and moral superiority of the ruling elite.<sup>34</sup> He also points out the organizational skills that enabled elites to gain political power. For Mosca, elite status is not hereditary in nature, but attainable by all classes. Legitimizing the power of (governing) elites and constructing ideological foundations to defend their rule thus forms an important part of Mosca's work.<sup>35</sup>

Max Weber does not use the term elite himself. He does refer to "leaders" (*Herren, Herrscher*), their (administrative) "staff" (*[Verwaltungs-]Stab*), and "ruling minorities" as the apex of a bureaucratized state apparatus. Like many elite theorists, Weber is concerned with effective governance. Through his focus on power concentration and legitimacy of rule (closely related to mass consent) he stresses the advantage of small numbers as an attribute of dominant groups. A ruling minority, according to Weber, can communicate rapidly to organize its own defense. Furthermore, it has the advantage of being able to keep its knowledge, intentions, and decisions secret.<sup>36</sup> Authorized elites gain autonomy, which is necessary for rational, consistent, and responsible ruling. Weber's analyses of the structure, integration, and dynamics of these ruling minorities and their monopoly on legitimate power have greatly influenced elite research and theory. Additionally, his concepts of power and domination (through control exerted mainly in the economic sphere and/or by virtue of authority) have become a fundamental pillar of current elite theories. They anticipate the work of those contemporary elite theorists who focus on elite structures, modern nation-state based elites, elite integration, and ruling consensus.<sup>37</sup>

After the Second World War, the concept of elites was developed further by C. Wright Mills and other American scholars, who used the concept to criticize the state of American democracy. In his book *The Power Elite* (1956), Mills demonstrates the entanglement of interests of different elite groups in American so-

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"circulation of elites" is set in motion. Only constant exchange and circulation between the governing elite and the governed society can ensure the rise of new elites capable of governing according to the developing needs of that society and thus providing social stability. For a detailed overview, see Kolegar 1967.

**33** López 2013, 2; Van Renterghem 2004, 75.

**34** Mosca 1939.

**35** Endruweit 1979, 38–39, 41–42.

**36** Weber 1922, 603–612.

**37** Pakulski 2012, 39–44.

ciety. He describes the resulting power elite as consisting of “those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences.”<sup>38</sup> He does not regard the power elite as one homogenous group, as factions and conflicts of interests do exist. Nevertheless, the internal discipline and community of interest of the power elite is more powerful than the divisions among them.<sup>39</sup> Whether or not the members of the power elite make decisions is less important than their potential to do so, due to their command of the major hierarchies and organizations of society.<sup>40</sup>

Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the literature on elites has grown exponentially in the social sciences and in adjacent fields like history. The 1970s and 1980s saw a debate in social history regarding whether class or elite was a more useful concept, with the former often predominant. Historians came to different conclusions regarding the nature of the political ruling class compared to the relative power of wealthy groups like landowners or industrial magnates. These differences often turned on possession of wealth versus possession of office. However, the period in question “also saw an increasingly self-conscious effort in urban social history to bring the elite model and the class model into a more fruitful rapprochement.”<sup>41</sup>

The conceptualizations and definitions of elite groups developed over the past century vary greatly. Almost all theorists agree that the elite is a minority consisting of those members of a social system who due to selective criteria consider themselves superior to others and/or are considered superior by others.<sup>42</sup> Determining the nature of the selective criteria used heavily depends on the researcher’s focus and approach. Function, moral qualities, or merits and achievements are just some of the possible elite characteristics considered.<sup>43</sup> Pareto’s and Mosca’s theories, for instance, can both be classified as a positional approach, as they are mainly focused on status-based elites, i.e. elite status as determined by one’s position within the socio-economic structures of a given society. As the title of his main work implies, C. Wright Mill’s concept of elite follows a power approach. Weber’s theory of socially dominant groups can be described

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**38** Mills 2000, 18. See also Horowitz 1981, 376.

**39** Mills 2000, 283.

**40** Mills 2000, 286.

**41** Gunn 2007, 193.

**42** Endruweit 1979, 34.

**43** See e.g. Endruweit 1979, 36–37.

as a functional approach, where elites are defined by their ability to preserve, shape, and/or re-shape a social context.<sup>44</sup>

## Studying Elites in an Early Islamic Context

An analysis of the use of the term elite in book and paper titles in the Index Islamicus, our field's most important bibliographical database, shows that the term elite came into vogue in the 1960s. However, it only took root in studies on pre-16<sup>th</sup>-century Islamic history in the late 1990s (see Fig. 1). Of course this does not mean that elites were not the focus of research prior to the 1990s. Other terms were used instead to convey similar concepts, but since the 1990s elite has become the main paradigm employed.<sup>45</sup>

When previous research on early Islamic elites is more closely examined, the first observation is that even in cases where the term elite is used, a theoretical framework for it is often missing. This is no surprise: in comparison with Roman, Greek, or medieval European history, Islamic history generally has only recently begun to apply a theoretical framework to its work. This is partly due to the fact that our discipline is very young compared to those fields and still lacks much basic groundwork. Many sources (manuscripts, inscriptions, papyri) remain unedited or even unknown, most subjects have been studied only superficially,<sup>46</sup> and research tools indispensable in other fields are lacking in ours.<sup>47</sup> A second, related problem is that the relevant theoretical frameworks and methodologies have been developed within European milieus and are often not easily translated to other contexts. Moreover, much of early elite research in our field was based on the study of biographical dictionaries, producing work over-focused on religious scholars.<sup>48</sup>

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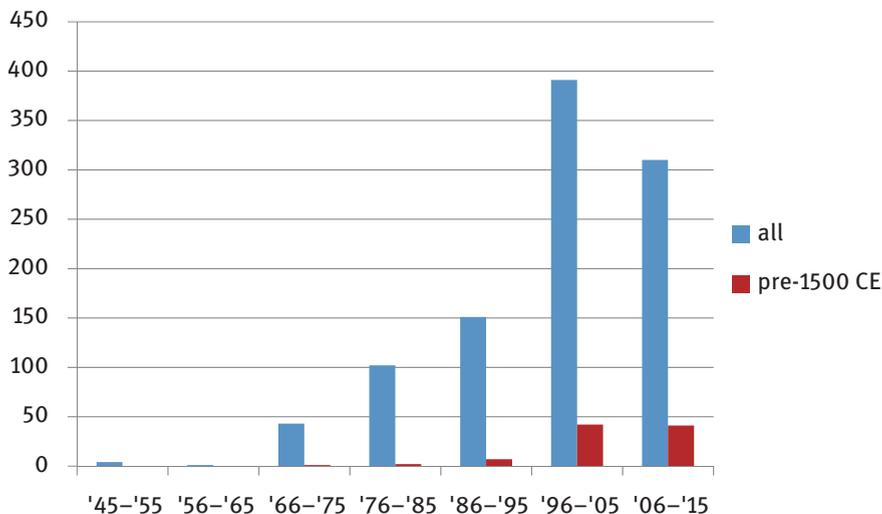
<sup>44</sup> Endruweit 1979, 38–39, 43–44.

<sup>45</sup> For example, in his famous pioneering study on the urban elite of Nishapur Richard Bulliet decided against the use of the term elite. In his view the term does not “convey the important concept of heredity that characterized the group” (Bulliet 1972, 20). He opted instead for ‘patricians’.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Almut Höfert states that the catalogue of the library of the University of Basel contains about 52 biographies of Charlemagne, while for the fifth Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān only one biography exists (Höfert 2015, 60).

<sup>47</sup> For the study of elites, for instance, we lack onomastica and (diachronic and synchronic) lists of functionaries, the basic tools of the study of elites in the Roman world.

<sup>48</sup> In Roy Mottahedeh's words: “Ulamalogy is a noble science—at least we have to think so, because it is almost all the Islamic social history we will ever have.” (Mottahedeh 1975, 495.)



**Fig. 1:** Analysis of titles of articles and books from 1945–2015 listed in the Index Islamicus that have “elite” in the title. The red columns mark the titles of studies that focus on pre-16<sup>th</sup>-century history.

The 1999 workshop on elites in the Byzantine and early Islamic Near East at the University of Birmingham marks an important turning point in the history of the study of early Islamic elites. The proceedings, which were edited by John Haldon and Lawrence Conrad and published in 2004,<sup>49</sup> contain a good overview of the state of the subject at that point in time and a number of important case studies. Both Haldon’s introduction and Chris Wickham’s conclusion provide a valuable first attempt to place the study of elites in early Islamic history within a theoretical framework.

Since then, a substantial amount of research has been conducted on early Islamic elites of different types. Military, political, judiciary, religious, intellectual,<sup>50</sup> Jewish and Christian,<sup>51</sup> court, urban, and local elites<sup>52</sup> have been the subject of case studies in the last 20 years. Their backgrounds, relations, roles in society,

<sup>49</sup> Haldon/Conrad 2004.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Kennedy 1981; Toru/Philips 2000; Van Steenbergen 2005; Hirschler 2008; Lev 2007; Ahmed 2011; El Hour 2012; Nef 2004; Christys 2018.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Payne 2015, 5–32.

<sup>52</sup> E.g. Fuess/Hartung 2011; Durand-Guédy 2010; Preiser-Kapeller 2018.

lifestyles, sources of income,<sup>53</sup> and intra-elite social processes have all been studied.

Unfortunately, most of these studies are thin on theory and conceptualization. It remains to be seen whether the few meaningful exceptions will significantly impact future scholarship in our field.<sup>54</sup> Concepts like ‘the *‘ulamā*’, ‘the army’, or ‘the political ruling class’ are often used as though they are self-explanatory and as though they self-evidently represent the only or primary elite of early Islam. All too often the term elite is used in the singular, implying the existence of a single, somehow unified upper class.

## Definitions

As discussed in the preceding section, one of the reasons we chose the term elites is that it is relatively neutral compared to other designations. We must now clearly outline our understanding of what it covers and the contexts in which it is applied.

We define elites in the context of the early Islamic Empire as individuals and groups of individuals who were in a position or had the potential to influence social, political, economic, and religious processes and decision-making in their communities. These communities existed on every level of organization, from the village to the court, the Church to the army, and merchants to *qāḍīs*. They gained influence through a combination of some or all of the following resources:

- Ancestry (including [constructions of] ethnic, tribal, and family affiliation)
- Exceptional personal qualities (such as charisma, intelligence, strength, or poetical/musical talent)
- Wealth (from inheritance, landownership, commerce, gifts, salaries, corruption, etc.)
- Military power
- Education/training
- Office-holding
- Personal relations (retainers, clients, supporters, patronage, marriage patterns)

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53 E.g. Kennedy 2011, 54–79.

54 E.g. Van Renterghem 2004; Paul 1996; Paul 2016.

We consider the first two criteria ‘internal factors’, not bestowed by outside forces but inherent to an individual. The remaining resources we consider ‘external’, in the sense that an individual would need the support or patronage of others to achieve access to them.

The boundaries between these categories are not absolute, of course. The integration of an individual or a group into a more prestigious tribal faction, for example, could improve access to other resources. Poetical talent needed to be discovered, fostered, and honed, which almost always required the input of teachers. Conversely, one could argue that being born into a wealthy family or a family of scholars provided an individual with automatic access to these resources. Nevertheless, we believe the difference between these two kinds of resources significant enough to justify a formal distinction.

The above resources correspond roughly to what Mann calls the “sources of social power”<sup>55</sup> and Bourdieu “types of capital” in his “field theory”<sup>56</sup> of interaction between social actors. Resources are almost always interdependent, and access to one usually facilitates access to others. Attaining them provides an individual with access to networks and bestows status and privileges, consolidating and advancing (potential) ability to influence processes and decision-making.

Status is a multifaceted concept, and it is often futile to attempt to boil down each individual’s claim to elite status to one main factor. In one sense, it corresponds to Bourdieu’s notion of “symbolic capital”, which is determined by how other social actors perceive different types of capital (economic, political, etc.) in an individual or a group. In our conceptualization of elites, such capital, whether ideological or symbolic, is thus considered to derive from the basic resources just mentioned. It is not a resource in and of itself. This is closely related to the issue of representation. Elites do not legitimize themselves. They *claim* legitimacy on the basis of a number of criteria such as descent or wealth. Bourdieu stresses that elites use “taste” (in music, literature, food, clothing, etc.) and lifestyle as a way to distinguish themselves from non-elites. The acceptance of the superiority of these preferences by subordinate groups he considers a form of symbolic violence.<sup>57</sup> This brings up an important point: whether or not elite status is bestowed depends on its acceptance by the target audience. Status is thus always a process of (asymmetric) negotiation: “elites should be viewed not only as the product of struggles between elites (Pareto’s ‘circulation’), but also a product of

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55 Mann 1986.

56 Bourdieu 1979, 1986.

57 Bourdieu 1979.

struggles about the definition of eliteness, about what came to count as ‘elite’ at any given historical juncture.”<sup>58</sup>

We specifically stress both the vertical and the horizontal heterogeneity of elites. Village elites often had very little standing in the next big city; urban notables did not necessarily enjoy elite status at the caliphal court. Dorotheos of Gaza, a 6<sup>th</sup>-century Christian monk, once remarked that a man who was a leader in Gaza would be a lesser figure in Caesarea, a peasant in Antioch, and in Constantinople a poor man.<sup>59</sup> Elites are thus not internally egalitarian, but can be highly stratified.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, several different elite groups could exist at the same level of organization.<sup>61</sup> A city or province, for example, will have many more or less distinct groups claiming elite status, such as religious authorities (of all denominations), office holders (e.g. leaders of the army or armed forces; *qāḍīs*), and economically dominant actors (e.g. landowners; rich merchants). There could be and often was some overlap between the different elite groups.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, individuals could be part of more than one elite group or move from one elite segment to another. One example is Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, the famous ‘Ḥanafī’ jurist: he was born into a prosperous family as the son of a military officer, but chose a religious career in the course of which he rose to the top of the intellectual elite thanks to his erudition. This granted him access to official state positions, and he was appointed as *qāḍī* of the caliphal capital al-Raqqā, with direct access to Hārūn al-Rashīd.<sup>63</sup>

It is thus important to recognize that “elites themselves were mobile and permeable, not the separate monoliths of sociological imagination.”<sup>64</sup> As indicated in the introduction to this paper, we should view a pre-modern society in particular as:

...a fluid social space rather than as [a] fixed structure or hierarchy, in which individuals and groups were in constant movement relative to others...[remembering] the porousness

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<sup>58</sup> Gunn 2007, 200–201. See also Tacoma 2006, 159.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Wickham 2004, 285. See also Fox 2014, 52.

<sup>60</sup> Tacoma 2006, 13.

<sup>61</sup> See also Gunn 2007, 199.

<sup>62</sup> Couperus et al. 2007, xi.

<sup>63</sup> See also the example of Augustine of Hippo as described in Wickham 2004, 285, and the collection of studies on local elites under Hellenistic kings in Dreyer/Mittag 2011, 290.

<sup>64</sup> Gunn 2007, 199.

of the boundaries that divided elites from one another and the often fragmentary nature of their networks.<sup>65</sup>

We believe that a relatively wide definition of elite is necessary to indicate that while the local contexts of different elites, and thus of their formation, development, and functions, might vary, the underlying structures and patterns that govern elites are very similar. Finally, when talking about elite actors in the early Islamic Empire, we will use the term in its plural form to emphasize the diversity and complexity of early Islamic social structures and to acknowledge that the term refers to very different social and historical contexts.<sup>66</sup>

## Operationalizing the Term Elite for Early Islamic History

The study of elites is of course based on the investigation of people. However, the question of *which* people fall under this definition is far from straightforward. The major issue of research on elites, and historical elites in particular, is selection. Which groups and actors are considered elites and selected for study? How are defining characteristics such as power and influence displayed in the sources? Is an empirical study of these characteristics possible at all? What we need to keep in mind is that definitions and categories “are not intrinsic to narrative” but imposed by the researcher.<sup>67</sup> The selection and definition of elites thus says as much about the scholar as it does about their subjects of study and sources. Scholars need to be aware of how their own beliefs and theories shape these very subjects of study:

In most cases, however, the target group is not a group in the sociological sense... The group is created and analysed by the researcher himself, e.g. the power elite, the marginals, the migrants etc. This is no problem as such but one has to avoid turning the target group into a social group in itself with a distinctive characteristic and ‘group solidarity’.<sup>68</sup>

Closely connected to the question of which groups and individuals should be considered elites is the complex issue of how far to extend the boundaries of

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<sup>65</sup> Gunn 2007, 199. Gunn is referring to urban Victorian societies, but his remarks certainly apply to (pre-modern) societies in general. See also Tacoma 2006, 158–160 (on the concept of “cyclical mobility”), 271.

<sup>66</sup> Dumolyn 2013, 8; Bériou/Carraz 2015, 373.

<sup>67</sup> Robinson 2003, 57.

<sup>68</sup> Verboven et al. 2007, 51.

an elite group. If we study office holding as a criterion of elite membership, for example, should we investigate all office holders from the *qāḍī l-quḍāt* to local prison administrators? What about prominent families; did all 'Alids by virtue of their claim to Prophetic descent possess elite status, regardless of their actual status and real living conditions? Can we consider all Arab tribesmen of the conquest period to constitute one elite? How do we approach *mawālī* whose patrons fulfilled the criteria just specified: does or should elite status extend to them?

Most often, context is the deciding factor in answering these questions. Within the framework of our project, we are primarily interested in those who were based in our five key provinces and in a position to at least potentially influence the political dimension of the empire. This influence could exist because they held offices in the state apparatus or because the influence they exerted over their communities had an effect on the functioning of the empire at the local, regional, and/or imperial level. Rebels and non-Muslims are explicitly included as potential elites. We investigate questions of loyalty and are especially interested in the reciprocal dynamics between the empire and its elites: to what extent did the imperial level rely on regional elites? How important was imperial support for local and regional elites? What role did factors like kinship play in gaining and maintaining elite status?

There are other difficulties involved in studying pre-modern Islamic elites. As all historians of early Islam are very much aware, the sources at our disposal can make the study of people and events somewhat difficult. Except for the highest positions in provincial administration, they provide information for only a fraction of the people and groups we are interested in regarding our provinces. Even on the highest level, that of the governor, surviving information is by no means complete.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, certain groups, especially non-Muslims, hardly appear in the Muslim sources.

The project takes a prosopographical approach, which is well adapted to dealing with scarce data: we focus on individuals, but also try to discern patterns that give insight into phenomena that transcend individual lives. This is not to say that all tax collectors, landowners, or army commanders will be treated as coherent groups. Moreover, there is of course concern about generalizing patterns from very incomplete information on far-from-complete samples: research on the *qāḍīs* of three cities in the Jazīra, for instance, has revealed that the identified office holders sometimes differed significantly in terms of background, education, access to professional and official networks, and/or standing in their

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<sup>69</sup> See e.g. the study of governors of al-Shām and Fārs by Simon Gundelfinger and Peter Verkinderen in this volume.

communities, to name just a few aspects.<sup>70</sup> Similar concerns apply to so-called social categories like slaves or *mawālī*.<sup>71</sup> However, we do think it is possible to detect patterns that transcend the individual level, and this is borne out by the evidence. Clear patterns can be discerned between the Jazīran cities regarding the backgrounds of appointees, although they are at least in this case tied to specific locations. Furthermore, while the Jazīran *qāḍīs* mentioned earlier all differed in their level of education and social mobility, almost all of them trained as *ḥadīth* scholars before taking office.

Our investigations of the relevant individuals and groups also vary from province to province. Ifrīqiya, with its Berber population, Ibāḍī rulers, and heavy involvement in the slave trade, requires a different approach than, for instance, the Jazīra or al-Shām, with their prominent Christian elites and more noticeable state presence. Needless to say, each key province also has its own source base, which we attempt to widen as much as possible. For example, Ahmad Khan studied elites in the province of Khurāsān. His work is partially based on a small but crucial corpus of documentary sources from 8<sup>th</sup>-century Khurāsān. These documents pertain to a limited range of regions within the province of Khurāsān, but they nevertheless provide fascinating and (most importantly) direct and reliable insight into the workings of the early Islamic Empire and the mobility of elites in a remote region.<sup>72</sup>

Other regions boast a different set of sources. Christian works are a major asset for the study of the early Islamic Jazīra and al-Shām. They offer a look at administrative and legal structures that were parallel to and sometimes intersected with the caliphal state.<sup>73</sup> Just as significantly, Christian chronicles can also serve as repositories of otherwise forgotten details of early Islamic history. The local Arab lords that effectively controlled a considerable area of the Jazīra in the 9<sup>th</sup> century appear on a few coins from Northern Mesopotamia, but we have to turn to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) and Elias of Nisibis (d. 1046) for information on their identity, actions, motivations, and ultimate fate. In Fārs, local lords and Kurdish chieftains played an important role, but they are rarely mentioned in the Islamic sources. We make an extra effort to thoroughly study the few that are attested, following the example of Jürgen Paul's investigation of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in his contribution to this volume. Ultimately, we seek not only to ex-

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**70** See Hannah-Lena Hagemann's contribution to this volume.

**71** The meaning of the term *mawālī* is controversial, in both primary sources and scholarship. For an introductory discussion, see *EP*<sup>3</sup>, "Client" (J. Nawas) and the references listed there.

**72** See Ahmad Khan's contribution to this volume.

**73** See Philip Wood's contribution to this volume.

pand the usual source base, but also to push the standard Muslim sources and tease out information on underrepresented and understudied groups.

## Studying Early Islamic Elites

There are many different ways of studying early Islamic elites. Due primarily to the nature of our sources, the methods most commonly used are prosopography and biography. Recent examples of the application of these methods can be found in Asad Ahmed's or Teresa Bernheimer's research on genealogy and marriage patterns and Van Renterghem's study of Baghdādī elites in the Seljuk period. Within our own project, we are in the process of building up a database of early Islamic personnel that will be made available to the public once the project finishes.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, a complete ethnography of the empire or a full prosopography is not possible, as such a task requires more evenly-distributed biographical data than historians of early Islamic history have at their disposal.

Network analysis is another promising approach slowly being added to the methodological toolkit of early Islamic history. It has yielded fascinating results in neighboring disciplines such as Byzantine Studies and medieval European history; Johannes Preiser-Kapeller has published most extensively on the use of network analysis in Roman and Byzantine history.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, the Digital Humanities have already provided many useful tools that can be adapted to the study of early Islamic elites.<sup>76</sup> The groundbreaking work of Maxim Romanov and the KITAB project led by Sarah Bowen-Savant have the potential to give fresh impetus to researchers seeking new ways of understanding the history of the early Islamic world.<sup>77</sup>

To use our own work as an example, the most important issues concern the selection of individuals to be studied and the kind of information we seek. Individuals and groups are chosen in a variety of ways. We look for all the incum-

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<sup>74</sup> Beginning in the 1990s, similar databases were set up by a few other scholars, most notably by Michael Lecker for his ongoing Jerusalem Prosopography Project (JPP), and by John Nawas and Monique Bernards within the framework of the Netherlands Ulama Project (NUP; 1994–2000). The former database is partially accessible to the public, but to our knowledge the latter cannot be accessed. For more information on JPP, go to <http://micro5.msc.huji.ac.il:81/JPP/homepage/> (last accessed 31 July 2018). On the Netherlands Ulama Project, see Nawas 1998.

<sup>75</sup> See Preiser-Kapeller 2012 and 2015.

<sup>76</sup> For an example of the use of digital tools within our own project, see Haro Peralta/Verkinderen 2016.

<sup>77</sup> See Romanov 2013; <http://maximromanov.github.io>; <http://kitab-project.org> (last accessed 31 July 2018).

bents of certain offices discoverable in written and material sources (such as coin collections). Using Jedli, the digital tool we developed for this project, we also search for names and offices connected to certain places in our provinces.<sup>78</sup>

On the basis of the lists thus compiled, we look for all the relevant contacts of our chosen individuals to further expand our collection of early Islamic elites. The primary features we investigate are family background, including the social and professional careers of family members; social, geographical, and professional mobility including marriage patterns; education; networks of patronage, commerce, religion, and so forth; and office holding and the tasks associated with exercising said office(s). We are less interested in representations of elite status in written and material culture. The question of representation is of course not a purely literary issue independent from social practice, but as it is one of the few reasonably well studied aspects of early Islamic elites we instead focus on the features listed above.<sup>79</sup>

One subject we are particularly interested in is that of changing elites. The classic example is the military elite on the imperial level. Initially the military consisted mostly of Arab tribesmen, who in the wake of the ‘Abbāsid revolution were largely replaced by Khurāsānians, who were in turn superseded by Central Asian (‘Turkish’) elites. We seek to detect similar structural changes on the provincial or local level of the empire that might or might not mirror developments on the imperial plane. These can differ from region to region. In order to study elite groups on these different levels, we use a rough classification of local, regional, and transregional elites.

Under *local elites*, we subsume all those whose power, influence, and contacts were mostly concentrated on the level of their own city or rural area. We are forced to focus mostly on urban elites in the provincial cities, since with few exceptions data on rural contexts is unfortunately scant for our regions. As outlined in Hannah-Lena Hagemann’s contribution, a good example of this type of elite are the *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān, most of whom came from Ḥarrānī families and were deeply involved in the network of *ḥadīth* transmitters in their city. The ancestors and descendants of many of them can be shown to have been active in Ḥarrān, but most of these *qāḍīs* are not attested to very far outside the city as holding offices or pursuing education or trade. A clear-cut distinction between the urban and the rural contexts does not exist, of course. Landlords often lived in the city, but their influence certainly extended at least to their city’s hin-

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<sup>78</sup> On Jedli, see Haro Peralta/Verkinderen 2016. To download Jedli, go to our website at <https://www.islamic-empire.uni-hamburg.de/en/publications-tools/digital-tools/jedli.html>.

<sup>79</sup> See Genequand 2006; Fuess/Hartung 2011.

terland. Nevertheless, our information on the rural population is very limited. There are other difficult questions: how long did one have to have lived in one place to count as local? How did the imperial administration, for example, identify local elites?<sup>80</sup> These and other issues mostly have to be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

We call *regional elites* those whose influence was not limited to one specific urban or rural area, but whose remit still did not spread far beyond the horizon of the province (in our understanding, the province is the organizational form of the region). This type of elite is exemplified by the figure of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil. He belonged to a family of Arab immigrants in Fārs who had been settled there for many generations. There they built up a regional power base, eventually controlling about one third of the regional *kharāj*. Muḥammad b. Wāṣil stepped in to fill a power vacuum in Fārs in the Samarran period, but never attempted to spread his influence to other regions.<sup>81</sup> It is often difficult to distinguish clearly between local and regional elites, and indeed significant overlap between the two was the norm.<sup>82</sup>

Elites active in more than one province are called *transregional elites*. This transregionality can be expressed in three major ways: transregional mobility (e.g. Ibādī traders with bases in Baṣra and Ifrīqiya<sup>83</sup>); transregional influence (e.g. Muslim scholars with influence in different regions, though this did not necessarily mean they were very mobile themselves—see figures such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal); and transregional power (e.g. super-governors who headed more than one province at the same time).

These terms—like the realities they describe—are very fluid and can be used for both elite groups and individuals. It was possible to move between these different elite levels. For instance, the Aghlabids started out as a transregional elite, but once entrenched in Ifrīqiya they became a regional one.

## Conclusion

The paper at hand has suggested how early Islamic elites can be studied and provided an overview of the difficulties involved in this pursuit. It aimed to illustrate some of the important questions that need to be asked and the ways in

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<sup>80</sup> On problems concerning the study of local elites, see Dreyer/Mittag 2011, 7–10.

<sup>81</sup> See Jürgen Paul's contribution to this volume.

<sup>82</sup> For an example of the intertwined nature of local and regional elites in late antique Egypt, see Tacoma 2006, 115–116, 141, 149.

<sup>83</sup> See Cyrille Aillet's contribution to this volume.

which our sources can best be exploited in order to investigate socially dominant groups within the early Islamic Empire. It also sought to draw attention to the crucial need for terminology and definitions. We opted for the term elite, but what matters is not so much what term is used but that its meaning within a particular research context is clearly defined. This is particularly important because of the diversity of elite groups over both time and space, along a vertical and horizontal continuum of social hierarchy.

Much of this paper has turned on questions of terminology, definitions, theories, and concepts. These are rather dry subjects, and not least because of that many historians are reluctant to make use of theories developed in other disciplines. Indeed, why use theory at all in historical research?

First and foremost, theory provides historians with a common language and vocabulary. The point here is not for all historians to arrive at an absolute theoretical consensus—that will remain impossible. But historical sociology, for example, offers models that might allow researchers to understand each other better and facilitate larger comparative studies. It is not even necessary to agree on the use of specific terms: one scholar's patricians might be another's notables and yet another's urban elite. However, an exchange on the subject of theory can help specify and stabilize the contents of the terms we all use. This is particularly true in our field of early Islamic history, which is nowhere near establishing a more or less coherent vocabulary of empire and elites. Comparability is another factor. Often, historians insist on the uniqueness of the historical contexts they investigate. While that is certainly true to an extent, some of this emphasis on uniqueness is due to the fact that researchers are put off comparative work in part by seemingly different terminology that in reality often describes similar structures and processes.

Another reason why it makes good sense to engage with theory—and not just when discussing elites—became obvious in the process of writing this paper. As Mann puts it, “a strong sense of theory enables us to decide what might be the key facts, what might be central and what marginal to an understanding of how a particular society works.”<sup>84</sup> Just as importantly, we have to systematically confront our own preconceptions regarding the nature of the early Islamic Empire and its elites: “If historians eschew theory of how societies operate, they imprison themselves in the commonsense notions of their own society.”<sup>85</sup>

Finally, developing theoretical approaches within (early) Islamic Studies does not only improve our understanding of (early) Islamic history, but also fos-

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<sup>84</sup> Mann 1986, vii.

<sup>85</sup> Mann 1986, vii.

ters a dialogue between our field and other disciplines such as Roman and Byzantine Studies, Chinese and Indian Studies, ethnology, historical sociology, and anthropology. Instead of isolating itself (from the field of history in particular) with assertions of uniqueness,<sup>86</sup> Islamic history can thus fully participate in the fruitful exchange of interdisciplinary research.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of a theoretical framework, it is of course equally necessary for historians to build theories from the ground up, basing ideas off their source material rather than simply imposing a model upon their work. The great sociologist Michael Mann argues that this “zigzagging” between data and theory is the only way to achieve a working and workable model of any historical society:

The real world (historical or contemporary) is messy and imperfectly documented; yet theory claims pattern and perfection. The match can never be exact. Too much scholarly attention to the facts makes one blind; too much listening to the rhythms of theory and world history makes one deaf.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Dartmann et al. 2015, 37.

<sup>87</sup> Mann 1986, viii.

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## **Arabia and Iraq**



Georg Leube

# Insult the Caliph, Marry al-Ḥasan, and Redeem Your Kingdom: *Freiheitsgrade* of Kindī Elites During the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Century

**Abstract:** This contribution aims to bring a tribal and provincial perspective to the study of the early Islamic Empire. It begins with an exploration of the boundaries, functions and possible deployment of interpersonal networks formulated in the terminology of common tribal affiliation during that period, building on the author's prosopographical study of the Arabic tribe (*qabīla*) of Kinda during the first three generations of Islamic history. It then considers the perspective of tribally founded elites, demonstrating and addressing their mainly local areas of authority as compared to administrative structures founded on visions of centralized power. In its last part, this paper moves from a *longue durée* comparison of the trajectories of families of different Kinda-affiliated tribal notables towards an assessment of the sources of authority at the disposal of a tribally-based leader, especially one in conflict with the central powers. On these three levels, this paper aims to determine the amount of independence available to tribal elites negotiating multiple roles. These roles included those of loyal provincial administrators, equal peers of global rulers and rebels contesting the legitimacy of the early Islamic Empire's ruling elites on a potentially apocalyptic scale.

**Keywords:** Prosopography; Kinda; tribe (*qabīla*); regional sources of authority; early Islamic history

Among the words of the Prophet of God [...] to the delegation of Kinda are the following: God gave me the kingdom of Kinda, the fortresses of Ḥimyar and the treasures of the Persian King and the Byzantines!<sup>1</sup>

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1 Al-Hamdānī, *al-Iklīl*, 1, 66. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Arabic are by the author.

## Introduction

Two caveats must be stated at the outset of this article. First, it builds on a comprehensive prosopography of the Arabic tribe of Kinda established by reading,<sup>2</sup> or at least perusing the tables of content and indices of,<sup>3</sup> a wide array of Arabic historiographical sources for the first three generations of Islamic history.<sup>4</sup> All were composed by authors who died before or around 350 H/962 CE. As a result, the suggestions put forth here are firmly grounded regarding the tribe of Kinda and the 1<sup>st</sup> century H/7<sup>th</sup> century CE, but become more tentative in character as the source materials are supplemented with episodes from later periods.

The second caveat concerns the very concept of tribes and tribal elites. It has fallen into disrepute over the last decades because of colonialist and culturist usage. In this article, the term ‘tribe’ is used exclusively to designate the interpersonal network described as a *qabila* in Arabic, connecting persons whose affiliation to this network is designated by means of a *nisba* or marker of tribal affiliation, as part of an individual’s names. This includes al-Kindī as well as the *nisba* of subtribes such as al-Sakūnī, al-Saksakī and al-Tujībī. The individuals so connected were in the course of the early Islamic conquests spread out over the whole Islamic *oecumene* and seem to include all the trades and lifestyles early Muslims engaged in. In this context, ‘tribe’ does not indicate homogenous lifestyles or pejorative connotations. The word is used as a mechanical selecting device, enabling the establishment of a broad prosopography spanning a wide array of historical contexts, iconic episodes and historiographical sources pertaining to the early Islamic world.

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2 Al-Azdi: *Futūḥ al-Shām*; al-Balādhuri: *Ansāb al-ashrāf*; *Futūḥ al-buldān*; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam: *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-l-Maghrib*; Ibn A‘tham: *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*; Ibn Hishām: *Al-Sira al-nabawiyya*; al-Iṣfahānī: *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyin*; Khalifa b. Khayyāt: *Ta’rikh*; al-Kindī the Elder: *Kitāb al-Wulāt wa-l-quḍāt*; al-Kindī the Younger: *Faḍā’il Miṣr*; Naṣr b. Muzāḥim: *Waq’at Ṣiffīn*; al-Ṭabarī: *Ta’rikh*; al-Wāqidī: *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*; *Kitāb al-Ridda*; al-Ya‘qūbī: *Ta’rikh*.

3 Abū Miḫnaf: *Akhbār al-Mukhtār*; *Maqṭal al-imām al-Ḥusayn*; Abū Yūsuf: *Kitāb al-Kharāj*; Agapius of Manbij / Maḥbūb al-Manbijī: *Kitāb al-Unwān*; al-Azraqī: *Akhbār Makka*; al-Dinawarī: *Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*; Euty chius of Alexandria / Sa‘īd b. al-Biṭrīq: *Naẓm al-jawhar*; al-Hamdānī: *Kitāb al-Iklīl*; *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-‘Arab*; Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī: *Kitāb Ta’rikh sinī mulūk al-arḍ wa-l-anbiyā’*; Ibn Ḥabīb: *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*; Ibn Hishām: *Kitāb al-Tijān*; Ibn Sa‘d: *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*; al-Iṣfahānī: *Kitāb al-Aghānī*; al-Jahshiyārī: *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’ wa-l-kuttāb*; Khalifa b. Khayyāt: *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt*; al-Maqdisī: *Kitāb al-Bad’ wa-l-ta’rikh*; al-Mas‘ūdī: *Akhbār al-zamān*; Murūj al-dhahab; *Al-Tanbih wa-l-ishrāf*; Sayf b. ‘Umar: *Kitāb al-Ridda wa-l-futūḥ wa-kitāb al-jamal wa-masīr ‘Ā’isha wa-‘Alī*; al-Wāqidī: *Futūḥ Bahnāsā*; *Futūḥ al-Shām*.

4 See Leube 2017.

## Boundaries and Functions of Tribally Formulated Networks

In the course of spirited polemical discussion sparked by Donner's employment of the ethnological fieldwork of Emrys Peters and others, with its concept of the "segmentary lineage" supposedly underlying tribal structures in early Islamic history,<sup>5</sup> Lecker takes a skeptical stance regarding the utility of modern fieldwork in reconstructing early Islamic conditions.

[...] it is possible that a camel can now carry the same load it could carry fourteen centuries ago. But as regards the economic, social, and political aspects of life in ancient Arabia, we have to rely, for the time being, on the evidence of the primary sources.<sup>6</sup>

Before embarking on a discussion of the possible modes in which early Islamic Arab tribal networks could be employed by central and tribal elites, it is therefore a good idea to outline the structure and fixity of tribal affiliation as evinced in the prosopography of Kinda.

Over the first three generations of Islamic history, affiliation to Kinda is often expressed via a tribal *nisba*. The main instances in which individual affiliations to Kinda (as opposed to another tribe) are ambiguous are those of the Egyptian killers of the third caliph 'Uthmān and the fourth caliph 'Alī. A contested Kindī affiliation is given for Sūdān b. Ḥumrān,<sup>7</sup> Kināna b. Bishr<sup>8</sup> and 'Abd al-Raḥmān

5 Donner 1981, *passim* and especially chapter 1, 11–49.

6 Lecker 1989, xii.

7 Sūdān b. Ḥumrān is designated as al-Sakūnī and therefore belonging to the Kindī subtribe of al-Sakūn by Sayf b. 'Umar, *Ridda*, 158, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 248 and 745, and in the form of Sa'd b. Ḥumrān al-Tujībī as belonging to the subtribe of al-Tujīb by al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2, 380. He is affiliated to the Madhḥijī subtribe of Murād by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 175, 184, 193 and 205; Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 2, 203, 236, 238 and 246; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 3, 47–48 and 54, and by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 761 and 775. An affiliation to the Ḥimyarī subtribe of the Banū dhū Aṣḥabī is given by al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 17, where his name appears in the form of Sūdān b. Rūmān al-Aṣḥabī, and also in al-Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ* according to footnote 5 of al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 17, where he seems to be called Sūdān b. Rayyān al-Aṣḥabī. I have not been able to check this in the original. In al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 248, a maximum of seven leaders of the rebellion against 'Uthmān are announced, while eight names are given. One of these eight names is a certain Sawād b. Rūmān al-Aṣḥabī who is not mentioned anywhere else. This *hapax legomenon* may be explained as a duplicate of Sūdān b. Ḥumrān, who would accordingly have been affiliated to Ḥimyar in this narrative as well. A further Aṣḥabī is in this context mentioned by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 775, as Nah-rān al-Aṣḥabī. He is also not mentioned elsewhere and can probably be explained as a duplicate of Sūdān b. Ḥumrān.

8 Kināna b. Bishr is identified as al-Kindī by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 205. He is affiliated to the Kindī subtribe of al-Sakūn by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 1, 49; 2, 219–220, and 4, 173. His affiliation to the Kindī subtribe of al-Tujīb is mentioned by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 1, 49; 2, 220; 4, 173–174, 177,

b. ‘Udays,<sup>9</sup> who were implicated in the murder of the caliph ‘Uthmān. It is also given for the killer of ‘Alī commonly known as Ibn Muljam.<sup>10</sup>

As the deaths of these two rulers form iconic and contested moments in the Islamic cultural memory of the first Islamic civil war, it is not altogether surprising to find the affiliation of the assassins contested as well. Statistically, the proposed affiliations are summarized in Table 1, counting multiple affiliations via *nasab*, *ḥilf* and *‘idād* in the case of Ibn Muljam as separate complete affiliations complete in themselves.

**Table 1:** Quantitative Distribution of Tribal Affiliations Alternating with Kinda

Name	Kinda	Ḥimyar	Madhḥij	Balī	al-Layth
Sūdān b. Ḥumrān	4 (18,2%)	4 (18,2%)	14 (63,6%)		
Kināna b. Bishr	19 (90,5%)		1 (4,8%)		1 (4,8%)
‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Udays	1 (6,7%)			14 (93,3%)	
Ibn Muljam	6 (26,1%)	4 (17,4%)	13 (56,5%)		

While the variance in the tribal affiliations of these presumably well-known villains is certainly considerable, all remain within the sphere of Southern Arabic tribes settling in Egypt after the early Islamic conquests. Otherwise, a Kindī af-

193 and 205; Ibn A‘tham, *Futūḥ*, 2, 203, 211, and 213; al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 17; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 745 and 775; and 3, 152. Differing affiliations are given for a Madhḥij subtribe as al-Nakha‘ī by Ibn A‘tham, *Futūḥ*, 2, 236, and to al-Layth by Sayf b. ‘Umar, *Ridda*, 158.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Udays is only affiliated to Kinda via the subtribe of al-Tujīb by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 758, while being affiliated to Balī by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 174–175 and 205; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 133–134 and 337–338; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3, 47; al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 17; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 2, 380; Sayf b. ‘Umar, *Ridda*, 158; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 745, 751, 761, 766–767 and 787, and al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 122.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Muljam is called al-Murādī according to al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 2, 265; al-Dinawarī, *Akh-bār*, 197; Ibn A‘tham, *Futūḥ*, 2, 255; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3, 24; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 3, 193, and al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 147.

In terms of multiple affiliations by *nasab*, *ḥilf* and *‘idād*, the following versions are suggested: *min ḥimyar*, while an ancestor fled to Murād according to al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 2, 259. *Al-ḥimyarī wa-‘idādūhū fī murād wa-huwa ḥalīf banī jabala min kinda* according to al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 2, 260. *Al-murādī wa-huwa min ḥimyar wa-‘idādūhū fī murād wa-huwa ḥalīf banī jabala min kinda* according to Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3, 25. *Min murād, ‘idādūhū fī kinda* by al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 32, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 3, 176. *Min tujīb, ‘idādūhum fī murād* by al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 2, 457. *Al-yaḥṣubī* [subtribe of Ḥimyar: Caskel/Strenziok 1966, 2, 589] *wa-‘idādūhū fī murād* according to al-Mas‘ūdī, *Tanbih*, 296. Finally, he is introduced as a *ḥalīf* of the Kindī subtribe of al-Sakūn by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘riḫ*, 2, 448.

filiation is only contested in a handful of dispersed instances during the first three generations of Islamic history.<sup>11</sup> Considering there are about 3,000 entries for Kinda as a tribe and individuals affiliated to Kinda in the author's prosopography of this period, this handful of cases where affiliation is actually contested or conflicted points to an impressive stability of tribal affiliation. Even in the context of supra-tribal contingents of troops mobilized from two or more tribes typically living in the same vicinity, Kindīs continue to be identified as affiliated to Kinda in their *nisbas*, rather than to a supra-tribal entity combining Kinda and its various partner-tribes in war.

As one nears the timeframe of the composition of the great collections of early Islamic historiography, one would expect the percentage of disputed affiliations to further decrease in proportion to the decreasing formability of events in the course of shorter periods of narrative transmission and embellishment. By contrast, what does shift during the timeframe of the first three generations of Islamic history is the particular level seen as relevant for tribal or subtribal affiliation and reference in the given *nisba*. In the case of Kinda, the most notable instance of this phenomenon is the subtribe of al-Tujīb. This group mainly settled in early Islamic Egypt. In the works of Egyptian historians such as Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, their *nisba* is given as al-Tujībī, replacing the al-Kindī of more global Islamic authors such as al-Ṭabarī. This trend of an increasingly independent Kindī subtribe in Egypt and the Islamic West giving al-Tujīb as its tribal affiliation seems to have increased during subsequent periods, as indicated by the dynasty known as the Banū Tujīb which came to prominence during the later period of Umayyad dominion over Islamic Spain in Catalayud and Zaragoza.

What are the functions pertaining to common tribal affiliation in the context of Kinda as mentioned in the sources? It has already been argued that the supra-tribal confederation of al-Yamaniyya, based on supposedly common South Ara-

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11 Mālik b. Hubayra is usually affiliated to the Kindī subtribe of al-Sakūn, but described as al-Fazārī by Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, 127–128 and 143. His *nisba* of al-Yashkurī in al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 3, 104, is possibly a simple scribal error. Abū l-'Amarraṭa 'Umayr b. Yazid, a companion of the Kindī 'Alid martyr Ḥujr b. 'Adī, is usually described as al-Kindī (e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 3, 427–428 and 441; and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 242–244), but affiliated to the tribe of Kalb as al-Kalbī by al-Ṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 17, 141. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays is in a single instance described as al-Kindī by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 3, 447, while elsewhere he is consistently called al-Fihri. Zufar b. al-Ḥārith is unanimously affiliated to the Banū Kilāb, but his supposed Kindī descent is mocked in verses reported by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 382. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7, 298, confesses that he is not quite sure whether the Syrian transmitter of *ḥadīth*, Salama b. Nufayl, was affiliated to Kinda or to Ḥaḍramawt. The possible Kindī descent of some of the pre-Islamic ancestors of a group of clients of Quraysh in Mecca predates the timeframe of this paper and is therefore excluded from the present discussion.

bic ancestry and usually including Kinda, was not as stable as later theories would have us believe.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, this supra-tribal body does not seem to have had a noticeable impact on events, as opposed to its near omnipresence in rhetorical arguments reported by some historiographical sources.<sup>13</sup> Other examples of supra-tribal cooperation between Kinda and other tribes are mainly reported in the context of the mobilization of troops from Kufa during the first three generations of Islamic history. These also appear unstable, as evinced by the bewildering array of quarters, fifths and sixths enumerated in the sources, which are frequently contradicted by the actual composition of Kufan troops. I will accordingly now focus on the functions attached to common affiliation to Kinda, rather than to some supra-tribal entity encompassing Kinda as well as other tribes.

In his discussion of the role of Arab tribes in Egypt during the first three centuries of Islamic history, al-Barrī describes the following fields in which tribal affiliation served as the main category of administration: the army,<sup>14</sup> the organization of the city quarters of al-Fuṣṭāṭ,<sup>15</sup> the tribal list of the military administration or *dīwān*,<sup>16</sup> the organization of the spring pastures (*murtaba*),<sup>17</sup> the mosques<sup>18</sup> and councils (*majālis*)<sup>19</sup> of the tribes, the designation of a member of the tribe responsible to the governor (*‘arīf*)<sup>20</sup> and the appointment of a guardian inside the tribal quarter.<sup>21</sup> It is quite clear that these administrative functions were part of interpersonal networks formulated in the terminology of common genealogical descent. They were also interdependent. Tribal contingents of the army drew their pay as a group, were settled in common quarters and were mobilized together. While the historical relevance of these networks during the period of Muḥammad’s early successors is not as clear as their narrative importance in the context of later Islamic cultural memory suggests, such tribal neighborhood-networks are palpable from the time of the emerging Umayyads and even seem to have outlasted the ascent of other networks that took away some of their administrative importance.

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12 Caskel/Strenziok 1966, I, 33.

13 Orthmann 2002, 287–292.

14 Al-Barrī 1992, 282.

15 Al-Barrī 1992, 283.

16 Al-Barrī 1992, 283–285.

17 Al-Barrī 1992, 285–286, based mainly on Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam.

18 Al-Barrī 1992, 286.

19 Al-Barrī 1992, 286–287.

20 Al-Barrī 1992, 287–288.

21 Al-Barrī 1992, 288.

Sketching the impact of common tribal affiliation in interactions beyond this level of tribally organized neighborhood committees is not an easy task. Drawing once again on the prosopography of Kinda, I will therefore discuss the circumstances of trans-regional cooperation between individuals affiliated to Kinda as reported in the sources. The first type of cooperation between Kindīs from different regions that is presented as based on common tribal affiliation is the intercession of Kindīs for members of their own tribe. Instances of such intercessions along Kindī tribal networks include the restitution of property<sup>22</sup> and the pardon of a captive<sup>23</sup> after the Battle of the Ḥarra. The latter case is especially interesting since it is explicitly stated by al-Masʿūdī that the captive ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh b. al-ʿAbbās, the ancestor of the future ʿAbbāsīd Caliphs, was pardoned thanks to the intercession of his maternal uncles of the tribe of Kinda (*akhwāluhū min Kinda*)<sup>24</sup> and not due to the pleas of his Qurashī relatives. Probably the clearest instance of such an intercession based solely on common tribal affiliation is reported in the following story:

ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAzīz al-Kindī rebelled [against the Umayyad governor in Iraq] and took his little son Muḥammad with him... [When it became clear that the battle had been lost] he called out: You people of Syria, is there anyone of Kinda among you? A number of men went forward and answered: Yes, that's us. He asked them: Take this your brother and send him to your people in Kufa (*ilā qawmikum bi-l-kūfa*), for I am ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAzīz al-Kindī! [After rejecting an offer to be personally spared, he fights alongside his comrades until he dies.]<sup>25</sup>

ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAzīz is obviously otherwise unrelated to his Syrian fellow Kindīs and asks men who are strangers to him personally to return his son safely to Kufa. This represents a clear instance of the employment of common tribal affiliation for trans-regional cooperation and cannot be explained by any other connections between the personages involved.

An example of another way in which common tribal affiliations were acted upon by Kindīs from different regions concerns the shelter given to the Egyptian Ibn Muljam (as shown above, widely held to be affiliated to Kinda) by the leader of Kinda in Kufa, al-Ashʿath b. Qays.<sup>26</sup> However, as al-Ashʿath and Ibn Muljam

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 244.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 10; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 5, 299; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, 3, 86, and al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbih*, 264.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, 3, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3, 459.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 2, 262; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3, 26; al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 33; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, 2, 458–459, and al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2, 147–148.

are among the most popular ‘villains’ of the first civil war, this sheltering of a fellow tribesman abroad may also be explained from a narrative perspective as a ‘logical addition’ ordering the otherwise quite complicated relationships between early Islamic ‘villains’ of the first civil war. As other trans-regional instances of interactions between Kindīs based on common tribal affiliation do not survive, this mode of trans-regional cooperation along tribal networks seems to have been secondary in importance to the major role played by tribally formulated networks in the organization of local society, especially in garrison towns.

In conclusion, the tribal network of Kinda is surprisingly unambiguous in its definition of Kindiness. The few cases where affiliation to Kinda is contested belong to early episodes of civil strife and may possibly be explained as the result of a narrative shifting of blame over the course of transmission. The Kindiness so defined serves mainly to facilitate mutually interdependent purposes of regional administration and mobilization.

In contrast, instances of trans-regional utilization of tribal ties are few. Accordingly, the confrontation of the Kindīs of al-Shām and the Kindīs of Iraq during the decisive phase of the Battle of Şiffin can be seen less as an acute schism in a closely-spun, interregional Kindī network relevant to the daily life of all of its members, but rather as a traumatic manifestation of the regionalization of Arab tribal networks some twenty years after the early Islamic conquests.<sup>27</sup>

## Foundations of Authority of Tribally Based Regional Elites

I will now examine the perspective of the families of Kindī elites and investigate the origins of their authority. Following the research of Paul<sup>28</sup> and Franz<sup>29</sup>, I propose to conceptualize locally based elites as negotiators between central authorities and local groups. Drawing once again on examples from the tribe of Kinda but transcending the narrower focus of the first three generations of Islamic history contained in the systematic prosopography of Kinda, I will attempt to show how claims to authority were maintained by the families of tribally based provincial elites over several early Islamic generations.

The first case study of the foundation of the authority of provincial elites and their integration in tribal networks is situated in early Islamic Egypt. Here, the two most eminent Kindī families during the time of the Marwānid caliphs

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<sup>27</sup> Ibn A‘tham, *Futūḥ*, 3, 141, and Naşr b. Muzāḥim, *Şiffin*, 227.

<sup>28</sup> Paul 1996, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Franz 2007, *passim*.

both claimed descent from heroes of the early Islamic conquests, namely Shurah̄bīl b. Ḥasana and Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj. Interestingly, these two founding figures of the families of Kindī aristocrats in Egypt came from diametrically opposed backgrounds. Shurah̄bīl grew up in Mecca as the son of a Kindī client of Quraysh and appears to have been a close companion of Muḥammad, as shown by his early. During the conquest of southern al-Shām he is depicted as leading troops from tribes other than Kinda or, for that matter, Quraysh. Accordingly, his authority must have been based not on tribal backing but almost solely on his ties to Muḥammad and his successors, the embodiment of central Islamic authority. Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj, on the other hand, does not appear in the vicinity of Muḥammad or his immediate successors and apparently owed his authority solely to the backing of the Kindī troops he commanded during the early Islamic conquests.

In the aftermath of the conquests, both Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj and the descendants of Shurah̄bīl b. Ḥasana appear to have settled in Egypt. Several sons of Shurah̄bīl are portrayed as owners of houses in al-Fuṣṭāṭ and leading figures among Egyptian *ashrāf*.<sup>30</sup> A house of Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj, also in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, is mentioned by the historian al-Kindī as pulled down by political opponents during the first civil war.<sup>31</sup>

Outside the context of their settlement in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, the sons of Shurah̄bīl remained relatively obscure.<sup>32</sup> Mu'āwiya, on the other hand, took an active role in leading the Egyptian opposition to the returning killers of the third caliph 'Uthmān during the first civil war.<sup>33</sup> After moving out (*kharija*) from the Egyptian garrison town of al-Fuṣṭāṭ and calling for vengeance for the slain caliph, he and his followers are described as 'al-Khawārij'. This is the first chronological instance of this designation in the source material evaluated for the prosopography of Kinda.<sup>34</sup> Subsequently Mu'āwiya played a crucial role in the Sufyānid conquest of Egypt.<sup>35</sup> Some years after the Sufyānid conquest of Egypt, he is reported to have been appointed as its governor on the authority of al-Wāqidi and al-

30 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 135–136, 138.

31 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 27.

32 Only Rabī'a b. Shurah̄bīl is mentioned in an *isnād* as reporting to his son Ja'far that his own father Shurah̄bīl b. Ḥasana had bequeathed half his possessions to the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. See Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 175.

33 E.g. al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 18.

34 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 145. Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 27 and 29, and al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ*, 2, 134, call the supporters of Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj *al-khārija*.

35 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 145. His deposition is reported by al-Ṭabarī *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 230.

Madā'ini,<sup>36</sup> however, this appointment is not confirmed in the accounts of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam or al-Kindī who focus on Egypt and Egyptian affairs. He is also held to have led several *ghazawāt* to Ifrīqiya and the Maghrib and is thereby included in the lists of conquerors of North Africa.<sup>37</sup> A client (*mawlā*) of his (or rather the descendant of a client of Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj) was deposed as governor of Tilimsān around 143 H/760–761 CE.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the contrasting background of their founding fathers, the trajectories of the families of Mu'āwiya and Shuraḥbīl converged in the time of their sons and grandsons during the Marwānid restoration. In 86 H/705–706 CE, after the long-time Marwānid governor of Egypt 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Marwān appointed him *ṣāḥib al-shuraṭ*<sup>39</sup> and then *qāḍī*,<sup>40</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj was deposed and succeeded by 'Imrān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shuraḥbīl, who was also appointed *qāḍī* by the new governor.<sup>41</sup> He was in turn deposed in 89 H/707–708 CE and succeeded as *qāḍī* of Egypt by the son of his predecessor, 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu'āwiya.<sup>42</sup> The responsibilities of these provincial notables appointed by centrally legitimized governors appear to have included deputy control of the *shuraṭ* when the governor was absent from al-Fuṣṭāṭ<sup>43</sup> and the supervision of the tribal '*urafā*' caring for the affairs of orphans.<sup>44</sup>

The intermediary position of such Kindī notables, constantly negotiating between local support and external governors, becomes evident when a new governor sent to Egypt wished to appoint followers of his own to positions of authority.

When [the new governor] 'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-Malik came to Egypt, he wished to replace the agents (*ummāl*) of [his predecessor] 'Abd al-'Aziz. Accordingly, he wanted to depose

36 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 8, 143–144, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 224.

37 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 351, and Khalifa, *Ta'rikh*, 126–127 and 295–296.

38 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 246.

39 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 53.

40 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 324. See also Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 264. For a general discussion of later *qāḍīs* in Egypt, see the work of Mathieu Tillier, most notably Tillier 2011. For the general context of *qāḍīs* under the Umayyads see most recently Judd 2015.

41 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 58.

42 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 60.

43 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 64. This is probably the *khilāfat al-Fuṣṭāṭ* mentioned in the biography of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu'āwiya; al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 324. Another instance of deputyship is mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 264, according to whom 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu'āwiya informed the governor daily about “the dead and other things” when the latter took refuge from a plague raging in al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

44 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 326.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwiya from his positions as *qāḍī* and *ṣāḥib al-shuraṭ*. As he was unable to find anybody to field a complaint against him, however, he appointed him general of the frontier guards of al-Iskandariyya, raised his salary and sent him away.<sup>45</sup>

While it is explicitly stated in another version of this story that the new governor wanted to “replace agents with agents and companions with companions”,<sup>46</sup> even the son of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik was unable to depose ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘āwiya without a pretext and accordingly instead promoted him out of his office. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s son ‘Abd al-Wāḥid was in turn dismissed when Qurra b. Sharīk came to Egypt as the new governor.<sup>47</sup>

While the family of Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥudayj was not in any position to claim superiority over the Marwānid central administration, the descendants of Shuraḥbīl b. Ḥasana were arguably able to advance claims of preeminence based on the prestige of their ancestor as one of Muḥammad’s closest companions. In this context, ‘Imrān b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shuraḥbīl apparently overestimated the strength of his position in dealing with the newly arrived Marwānid governor:

[There is widespread unrest in Egypt during the administration of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abd al-Malik.] ‘Abdallāh was told that ‘Imrān [b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Shuraḥbīl] had helped [a fugitive poet who had derided the governor] and had also taunted him himself with the following verses:

I, the son of my father of Badr, the *hijra* to Yathrib  
and the *hijra* to the Negus, am most splendid.  
I am exalted due to my largesse, have you forgotten the merit  
of my fathers? While this one is called the offspring of Marwān.

When this was reported to ‘Abdallāh, he deposed him from his rank as *qāḍī* and *ṣāḥib al-shuraṭ*.<sup>48</sup>

A lampoon such as this would have been unthinkable from descendants of Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥudayj. The claim to preeminence ‘Imrān voiced is voided by the governor, who according to another rendering of the story even has ‘Imrān jailed.<sup>49</sup> However, the conflict between ‘Imrān and the governor is in another account motivated by the judge’s intent to punish a secretary of ‘Abdallāh for drunkenness.<sup>50</sup> One is thus led to doubt the factual relevance of ‘Imrān’s claim to premi-

45 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 326. See also Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 266.

46 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 58.

47 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 330.

48 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 327–328.

49 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 60. See also Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 266.

50 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 328.

nence in a story that could be told without reference to poetry. In this case, the verses could be explained as rhetorical embellishments, which were taken up by traditionalists happy to see a Marwānid governor of Egypt lampooned by a pious *qāḍī*.

It is tempting to speculate on ‘Abdallāh’s reason for appointing the son of the predecessor of ‘Imrān, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, to be ‘Imrān’s successor as *qāḍī* in the light of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid’s patent unfitness for office. He is described as a youngster (*ghulām ḥadath*)<sup>51</sup> of 25 years<sup>52</sup> and “not a *faqīh*”<sup>53</sup> by al-Kindī. As the personal characteristics of the young man are clearly considered negligible, his appointment may have been motivated by a desire to use ‘Abd al-Wāḥid to mobilize the support of his tribal and other networks in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, not least the support of his father, the former *qāḍī* and *ṣāḥib al-shuraṭ*.

In searching for foundations of transgenerational local authority among the leading provincial families of Kinda, it is tempting to turn to the houses ascribed to the descendants of Shuraḥbil b. Ḥasana and Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥudayj. These apparently still formed familiar landmarks in the urban topography of al-Fuṣṭāṭ during the time of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam. The account of the tearing down of Mu‘āwiya’s house in the course of his involvement in the first civil war is paralleled inside the prosopography of Kinda by accounts of how al-Mukhtār caused the house of Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath, the leader of Kinda in Kufa, to be pulled down after his attempt to take Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath captive had failed. In the course of this conflict between the locally based leader of Kinda and the newly arrived ‘Alid agitator, the holdings of Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath are described as follows:

Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath b. Qays was in the village of al-Ash‘ath near al-Qādisiyya. Al-Mukhtār sent Ḥawshab, the guardian of the *kursī*, with a hundred men against him, saying: Fly towards him, for you will find him playing and hunting, or standing confounded, mindless with fear or lying in ambush!<sup>54</sup> But if you catch him, bring me his head. [Ḥawshab] accordingly went out to his *qaṣr* and sieged it, but Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath escaped and went to Muṣ‘ab [b. al-Zubayr]. So they sieged the *qaṣr*, thinking he was still inside, until they entered, saw that he had escaped and returned to al-Mukhtār. He [al-Mukhtār] sent word for [al-Ash‘ath’s] house to be pulled down and for the house of [the former Kindī Kufan leader of an abortive ‘Alid revolt] Ḥujr b. ‘Adī al-Kindī to be rebuilt with the bricks and stones of his house.<sup>55</sup>

51 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 328.

52 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 330.

53 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 328.

54 This part of al-Mukhtār’s speech is composed in the *saj‘* or rhymed prose characteristic of al-Mukhtār’s near-prophetic rank in the historiographical accounts.

55 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 510.

The settlement of Kufa is described as consisting of tribal quarters, with the quarter of Kinda surrounding the house of Muḥammad's father al-Ash'ath b. Qays as the most eminent leader of Kinda in Iraq during the early Islamic conquests. It is tempting to see the houses of the leading families in the early Islamic garrison towns as representing the tribally grounded urban capital at the disposal of the leading families of Kinda. Accordingly, the rebuilding of the house of Ḥujr b. 'Adī, another Kindī aspiring to tribal leadership in early Islamic Kufa who was eventually decapitated near Damascus following an abortive revolt, takes on a strong symbolic significance as the vindication of Ḥujr's family of "good Kindīs" in the re-founded Kufa after al-Mukhtār's revolt.<sup>56</sup>

Another material element of the prestige of the family of al-Ash'ath b. Qays in Kufa that was transmitted over several generations is mentioned in the above report as "the village of al-Ash'ath b. Qays." This village, otherwise called Ṭīzanābād, is said to have been given to al-Ash'ath as an *iqṭā'*<sup>57</sup> or sold to him in exchange for some possessions of al-Ash'ath in Ḥaḍramawt by the third caliph 'Uthmān.<sup>58</sup> It appears to have remained in al-Ash'ath's family at least until the time of his son Muḥammad, as evinced in the above account, and was a favorite drinking venue among Kufans:

I never went past the vineyards of Ṭīzanābād  
Without wondering who would want to drink water!<sup>59</sup>

Another garden, called Shumārā and lying in the vicinity of al-Ḥīra, seems to have remained in the possession of descendants of al-Ash'ath (*ba'd al-ashā'itha*) at least until the time of al-Rashīd.<sup>60</sup> It is tempting to speculate that similar estates on a smaller scale underpinned the authority of Kinda's leading families in other regions as well.

Regarding the troubled history of the descendants of al-Ash'ath b. Qays during the time of the unsuccessful revolt of his grandson 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath (usually known as Ibn al-Ash'ath), it is at first glance slightly surprising to find *ba'd al-ashā'itha* in continued possession of valuable estates even after the suppression of the revolt. It may be possible to explain this continued possession by re-interpreting the chronic infighting among the rela-

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<sup>56</sup> Relatives of Ḥujr b. 'Adī appear as supporters of al-Mukhtār in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 353, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 506.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 317–318.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 704.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 25, 147.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 5, 189–190.

tives of Ibn al-Ash‘ath during his revolt. From the long-term perspective of regional leading families who wished to preserve their status, it would have been a wise decision not to back any provincial revolt unambiguously (not even the revolt of one of their own), but rather to hedge by maintaining their involvement with both sides.

As the regional families perpetuated their prestige by means of the establishment of landed estates, their backing in tribal networks became less tangible. While reports of al-Ash‘ath conquering Ādharbayjān are underpinned by the settlement of Kindī at Sarā in Ādharbayjān until the time of al-Balādhurī,<sup>61</sup> and al-Ash‘ath himself settled amongst his network of supporters from Kinda and other backgrounds in Kufa, there is no indication of Kinda being particularly involved in the revolt of al-Ash‘ath’s grandson against the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik. It is therefore crucial to distinguish between the generation of the early Islamic conquests, when Kindī contingents were mobilized along tribal networks led by Kindī leaders, and the time of the second civil war, when the leading families of the tribes in Kufa to all appearances cooperated with Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr against al-Mukhtār as a collective body. I hesitate to discount the relevance of the formulation of networks of support in a tribal terminology even in this context. Care must be taken not to rigidly conceptualize local aristocrats active after the generation of the conquests as tribally founded. One should rather start by examining the different fields of authority available to local elites at the time and then aim to ascertain the relative relevance of tribal and other support during the event in question.

From the perspective of the various families among Kinda aspiring to local eminence, it appears that notwithstanding the diverse backgrounds of their respective founders, a fairly homogenous provincial aristocracy had emerged by the time of the Marwānid restoration. Based on support from local Kindī networks and other provincial supporters, such families of *ashrāf* appear to have owned important houses in the early Islamic garrison towns, and in some instances also landed estates. They transmitted these over several generations. While members of these families were forthcoming as judges or administrators for the centrally appointed provincial governors, they were in general unable to successfully challenge a governor designated by the global Islamic authorities once he had taken charge of his designated province.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 376.

<sup>62</sup> Even in the pre-Marwānid anecdote where Mu‘āwiya b. Ḥudayj successfully rejects a governor of Egypt, he is depicted as meeting the caliph’s candidate two journeys from Egypt and returning together with him to the caliph Mu‘āwiya. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 3, 274–275.

## Sources of Authority at the Disposal of Kindī Elites in Conflict with Central Authority

During the early Islamic conquests, Kindī leaders were frequently depicted as equals of the Islamic elite of Medina. This holds especially true for al-Ash'ath and his family. While a marriage planned between his sister and Muḥammad seemingly did not take place,<sup>63</sup> al-Ash'ath himself married a sister of Abū Bakr.<sup>64</sup> He later married daughters of his to sons of the caliphs 'Uthmān and 'Alī.<sup>65</sup> The daughter of al-Ash'ath married to al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī is said to have poisoned her husband, according to Ibn A'tham on the instigation of the arch-villain Marwān.<sup>66</sup> However, this intermarriage of the family of al-Ash'ath with the highest echelons of early Islamic elites ceased during the next generation. The strategically most advantageous marriage his son Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath could realize was that of a daughter to the longtime Umayyad governor of Iraq 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād.<sup>67</sup>

This shift in marriage patterns after the generation of the conquests corresponds to a general descent of Kindī elites from global Islamic power to mere provincial relevance in a number of other fields. On the level of court ceremony, al-Ash'ath is portrayed as boasting of his eminence even as he is led captive in front of the caliph Abū Bakr after the *ridda* of Kinda.<sup>68</sup> During the time of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, the caliph is shown as treating the Kindī leaders Shuraḥbil b. al-Simṭ and Mu'āwiya b. Ḥudayj rather humbly when they visit his court in Damascus.<sup>69</sup> The latter is even reported to have beaten Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān when the caliph considered cancelling military stipends.<sup>70</sup>

In contrast, such claims to acceptance as peers by the central Islamic authorities were routinely brushed off in the next generation. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath was severely scolded and sent away when he attempted to seat himself next to the caliph Mu'āwiya on his *sarīr* during an audience conducted between Mu'āwiya and al-Aḥnaf.<sup>71</sup> In other accounts, he was ordered around by the pro-

63 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 95, and al-Ṭabarī *Ta'riḫ*, 2, 256.

64 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 138 and 140; Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 1, 86–87, corresponding to al-Wāqidī, *Ridda*, 319–320; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 6, 99; al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Bad'*, 5, 156; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 2, 357–357, and al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḫ*, 2, 90.

65 Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Ṣiffīn*, 20, and Caskel/Strenziok 1966, II, 286 and 466.

66 Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 4, 206–207.

67 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4, 47.

68 See Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 1, 84, corresponding to al-Wāqidī, *Ridda*, 314.

69 See Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Ṣiffīn*, 46–47.

70 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 126–127.

71 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 3, 287.

vincial governor of Iraq.<sup>72</sup> We have already seen how ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mu‘ā-wiya owed his honorable discharge merely to his positions as *qāḍī* and *ṣāhib al-shuraṭ* in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Such a marginalization of Kindī elites, who appear to have been reduced to a merely provincial relevance by the generation after the conquests, is also apparent in the personal mobility of Kindī elites based on provincial tribal networks; they rarely if ever left their provinces.

In contrast to this decline in importance of the landed aristocrats founded by Kindī leaders of tribal troops during the conquests, a new type of Kindī leaders emerges in this period, commanding troops composed of different tribes based on their appointment by central Umayyad authorities. This type continued to act on a global Islamic scale in the early Islamic realms and includes figures such as Mālik b. Hubayra, described as a frequent leader of expeditions *fī arḍ al-Rūm* and a notable at the court of the Sufyānid caliphs, and Ḥuṣayn b. Numayr, who played a crucial role in the period of the second civil war and led troops in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Syria. Both are depicted as jointly demanding the region of al-Balqā’ in today’s Jordan as an exclusively Kindī fief in return for their support of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam.<sup>73</sup> This type of Kindī leaders appears to have been much less dependent on the support of their fellow Kindīs. They led troops composed of a number of Arab tribes and may be better understood as renegade generals in search of a central authority that would guarantee their continued prestige than as tribally founded Kindī leaders.

The regional tribal networks of the families founded by the conquerors sketched in the first part of this contribution appear to have played a significant role in later times only during times of general upheaval, such as after the ‘Abbāsīd conquest of al-Shām. The descendants of the conqueror of Ḥimṣ, al-Simṭ b. al-Aswad al-Kindī, seem to have played a particularly significant role in representing local unrest by mobilizing support along tribal and regional networks, as evinced by the surprising number of members of this family whose crucifixion after abortive revolts is reported by Ibn Ḥabīb’s *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*.<sup>74</sup>

Otherwise, it appears that tribal networks of merely regional importance were not sufficient to successfully challenge the central Islamic authorities. The great revolts led by Kindī notables after the establishment of a stable post-conquest order do not appear to have depended on the mobilizing potential of common tribal affiliation. Kindīs are underrepresented among the followers of the Kindī Ibn al-Ash‘ath in his revolt against ‘Abd al-Malik. Instead, his revolt is

<sup>72</sup> E. g. al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 17, 146–147.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 421.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 485–488.

presented as backed by the Iraqī milieu of pious readers of the Qurʾān, or *qurrāʾ*, who were opposed to the splendor of the centralized Islamic administration. Interestingly, a certain accordance of interests between the pious urban opposition of the *qurrāʾ* (or for that matter, Khawārij) and the ambitions of the leading family of Kinda in Kufa can be traced across three generations, from al-Ashʿath's leadership in the call for arbitration at Ṣiffin via the singular inefficacy of his offspring sent out from Kufa against Khawārij in the surrounding countryside,<sup>75</sup> to the backing given to Ibn al-Ashʿath's revolt by the *qurrāʾ*.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately the extent, internal composition and external functioning of such cross-tribal networks of provincial opposition joining persons of different social background is difficult to ascertain due to the lack of a stable common identifier such as a tribal *nisba* like the one underlying this study.

In renderings of the revolt of Ibn al-Ashʿath, one is also confronted with the mobilizing potential of a challenge to existing Islamic order based on apocalyptic claims. This use of apocalyptic iconography is frequently mentioned in historiographical accounts of Ibn al-Ashʿath's revolt,<sup>77</sup> and has even left material remains in the form of Arabo-Sasanian *dirhams* minted during this revolt with apocalyptic slogans and titles.<sup>78</sup> A similar use of a globally Islamic iconography of apocalyptic renewal used in challenges to Qurashī central authority also appears in the revolts of the Kindī Ibādī leader ʿAbdallāh b. Yaḥyā, commonly known as Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq, or 'searcher of justice', in 8<sup>th</sup>-century Southern Arabia,<sup>79</sup> as well as in the well-known revolt the later courtly poet al-Mutanabbī, literally 'the one aspiring to be a prophet', owed his nickname to.<sup>80</sup> I suggest interpreting the use of such titles of globally Islamic relevance as an attempt to transcend the limited regional potential of inherited tribally formulated networks. Kindī elites could voice effective challenges to the Qurashī caliphs of early Islamic empires only by leaving behind their uniquely Kindī tribal affiliations and presenting themselves as redeemers of globally Islamic relevance, as exemplified in Ibn al-Ashʿath's speech to his troops before the decisive battle against the Umayyad governor of Iraq.

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75 This is also remarked by Crone 1980, 110–111.

76 See Sayed 1977, *passim*.

77 E.g. al-Maḥdisī, *Kitāb al-Badʿ*, 6, 35.

78 Gaube 1973, 32, 36 and 52.

79 See the long account in al-Ṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, 23, 233–270, and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 6, 172–186.

80 See Franz 2007, 95–103.

Then Ibn al-Ash'ath ascended a *minbar* in his camp, which he used to carry with him, praised God and proclaimed: You people! War is a contest in which the souls of men wither.<sup>81</sup> Even the prophet of God, peace be upon him, never was victorious if victory was not given to him and his companions. If this thing [*hādihā l-amr, scilicet* rule over Islam] is among Quraysh, there is nothing to be done.<sup>82</sup> If, however, it can rest on any other among the Arab, then I am 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath b. Qays b. Ma'dikarib! [...] Afterwards, the soldiers began to fight, but Ibn al-Ash'ath continued to stand on his *minbar* while the missiles were flying about him: He however did not in any way attempt to shield himself from them or was in any way afraid.<sup>83</sup>

Notwithstanding Ibn al-Ash'ath's bravado, the subsequent battle was lost. In conjunction with the frequent parallels drawn between his revolt and the later 'Abbāsīd revolution,<sup>84</sup> it is tempting to consider the revolt of Ibn al-Ash'ath as some sort of a high-water mark of upheaval focused on a non-Qurashī pretender against central Qurashī authority. Personally qualified for rulership due to his education and his descent from the pre-Islamic kings of Kinda,<sup>85</sup> Ibn al-Ash'ath transcended the networks of his tribe to voice a universally relevant claim to opposition. As the failure of his revolt became quite clear soon after his proud challenge of 'Abd al-Malik, global Islamic authority remained invested in a Qurashī-led central administration. Tribal networks of provincial elites remained important only on a regional scale.

## Conclusion

In the first part of this paper it has been shown that affiliation to the tribally formulated network of Kinda as represented in the sources is remarkably stable. The relevance of this network seems to be limited mainly to provincial or even urban matters. While there is ample enough evidence of the administration of city quarters being directed via tribal networks, cooperation along tribal ties is very rare on a trans-regional scale.

Accordingly, the leaders of locally relevant tribal networks furnished suitable personnel for provincial administration under a centrally appointed governor. They are best described as intermediaries between the official power of a

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**81** This first passage of the speech is composed in rhymed prose or *saj'*.

**82** This passage is quite unclear. I translate *ad sensum*.

**83** Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 7, 139–140; a shorter version of his speech is given by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 688.

**84** E. g. Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 7, 127–128, and al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 681.

**85** Al-Jāhīz, *al-Ḥayawān*, 5, 194–195.

global Islamic administration and the support given to them and frequently also their ancestors and offspring by local networks formulated along tribal and other lines.

According to the local scale of such tribal networks, a global or Islamic challenge to central authority could only be voiced in a terminology other than tribal affiliation. A central role in such challenges voiced by Kindīs seems to have been played by the personal character of the respective Kindī leader, frequently drawing on apocalyptic or prophetic iconographies. When such a globally relevant claims to counter-authority were voiced by Kindīs, however, Kinda was underrepresented among the supporters of the challenge. It almost seems as if a rebel such as Ibn al-Ash‘ath had to leave behind the Kindī networks and regional prestige underpinning his family’s status in early Islamic Kufa in order to claim the universal Islamic authority of al-Manṣūr or al-Qaḥṭānī, disavowing his status as the scion of one of the leading families of Iraq in order to transform himself into a redeemer capable of challenging ‘Abd al-Malik himself.

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# Landowners in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> Century: Types and Interplays

**Abstract:** This paper aims to identify types of landowners in Lower Iraq, where land was a social, political and economic issue, especially during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The focus on landholders determines the characterisation of the imperial as well as regional Lower Iraqi elite. It takes into consideration Jewish and Christian landowners (for example, ecclesiastical landed elites in the Nestorian community), Persian landowners (for example, the *dahāqīn* who settled in the region before the Islamic conquest) and the landed Islamic elites (who are related to the conquering group). With this typology, I shed light not only on the diversity of landed elites in Lower Iraq but also on the subgroup of Islamic landowners. Defining landowner groups is a prerequisite to the study of the interplay between local and imperial elites over the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This period is regarded as that of the rise of Islamic elites. Researchers agree these elites were no longer specifically bound to military functions, a development with consequences for other landed groups. Subsequent interplays took place in the context of inter- and intra-group relationships. This paper seeks to offer a typology of these interactions in order to understand the relationships and power ratios at stake.

**Keywords:** Iraq; landholding; social conditions; Umayyads; ‘Abbāsids

## Introduction

In *Akhbār al-quḍāt*,<sup>1</sup> Waki‘ reports that between 173 H/789–90 CE and 181 H/797–98 CE in al-Baṣra, then-judge ‘Umar b. Ḥabīb had to adjudicate a conflict between Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī and some inhabitants of al-Baṣra (probably landowners) regarding the fraudulent appropriation of estates.<sup>2</sup> Yaḥyā was

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This article is part of an ongoing doctoral research devoted to the power of land in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. This research is conducted under the supervision of Prof. Anne-Marie Eddé at Panthéon Sorbonne University (Paris).

1 Judicature of ‘Umar b. Ḥabīb in al-Baṣra: 173 H/789–90 CE to 181 H/797–98 CE.

2 Waki‘, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 143–144; Tillier 2009, 295; Sourdel 1960, I, 172.

blamed, through his representative and intendant al-Qaṣabī, for appropriating lands which already had owners. Eventually he failed to establish his claim.<sup>3</sup>

This story offers a point of access to landholding issues at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It also provides information about landowners in the region of Lower Iraq. Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī was part of the imperial elite during the early ‘Abbāsīd period. He and his relatives were major landlords in al-Baṣra’s region<sup>4</sup> and later also in Baghdad or al-Raqqā.<sup>5</sup> They were not specifically tied to the Lower Iraqī region, therefore they were imperial rather than regional landowners. The identity of the Baṣran landlords suffering from Yaḥyā’s actions is not specified. Their religious, social or economic backgrounds are unknown but one can assume that they were part of the Baṣran (local?) elite. Therefore, the conflict in which Yaḥyā was involved opposed imperial and regional landowners and highlighted the competition for land between imperial and regional elites. This story also shows that the purchase of Lower Iraqī lands may have occurred at the imperial elite level as Yaḥyā bought (*abtā‘a*) lands from the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd.<sup>6</sup> However, these lands may also have been personal possessions of Hārūn al-Rashīd or have been part of the *bayt al-māl*.

This conflict exposes that landholding was a topic of discussion in Lower Iraqī society and an economic and political issue during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It also proves that studying landholding in Lower Iraq is relevant to understanding the formation of the Islamic imperial elite as well as the evolution of the regional elites, especially during the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

The sources preserved from this period are sparse for the historian of early Lower Iraqī society. The available materials produced at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century are mainly legal works: for example, the *Kitāb al-Kharāj* written by Abū Yūsuf<sup>7</sup> and then Yaḥyā b. Ādam,<sup>8</sup> or the *Kitāb al-Amwāl* of Ibn Sallām.<sup>9</sup> These books—devoted to Islamic finance, taxation systems and economic issues—contributed to legal codification. They contain many significant questions related to lands and land taxation or landownership. This importance shows the land-based concerns of the ‘Abbāsīd state (in formation at that time) and its desire for a systematized tax-system. The region of Lower Iraq is well depicted in these legal works; al-Sawād is the subject of specific chapters. East Syrian sources, like the *Judg-*

3 Wakī‘, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 144; the *qāḍī* decided in favor of the Baṣran population.

4 Sourdel 1960, I, 154; many mentions in al-Jahshyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’*, 189/229, 216–217/266.

5 Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’*, 235/293.

6 Wakī‘, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 143–144.

7 Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*.

8 Yaḥyā b. Ādam, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*.

9 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb al-Amwāl*.

ments of Henanishoʿ and more generally canonical judgments, along with Jewish documentation like Geonic *responsa*, discuss land matters as they relate to inheritance or tax. These materials strengthen the relevance of studying landowners of this time and confirm that landholding was a discussed topic in society and an economic and political issue.

The formation of an urban Muslim aristocracy or a Muslim bourgeoisie can be situated with or shortly before the composition of these sources.<sup>10</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> century in Lower Iraq is often seen as the period of the formation of an Islamic elite who were no longer specifically bound to military functions. Obviously this change had much to do with lands and landholding. This rise is twofold, inasmuch as it accompanied the economic and cultural growth of the region. The urban triangle of al-Baṣra, al-Kūfa and Wāsiṭ, with their respective *sawād* and swamps (*al-baṭāʿih*), played a key role in this formation of an elite as well.

The beginning of the period is marked by the suppression of Ibn al-Ashʿath in 81–82 H/700–701 CE. Following this upheaval, al-Ḥajjāj founded Wāsiṭ, a new administrative and military capital, and the two cities of al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa were demilitarized. These circumstances did not prevent this area from flourishing. This thriving situation can be observed until the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when the Zanj revolt broke out in 255 H/869 CE. Its consequences were far-reaching. However, the arrival of al-Maʿmūn in Baghdad in 204 H/819 CE is chosen here as an end point. This is owing to the emigration of some members of the elite from Lower Iraq to the capital and more broadly to the intensified centralization of that time. The dynastic rupture of 132 H/750 CE has to be taken into account, and consequent changes or continuity in landholding and landowners have to be kept in mind.

Many aspects of the Lower Iraqi region were singular within the Islamic Empire. The main region of settlement for the conquerors was Lower Iraq, due to the foundation of the two *amṣār* al-Baṣra and al-Kūfa. It was an area previously inhabited by important Jewish and East Syrian populations, mostly Aramaic but also Arabic speakers, and to a lesser extent by Sasanian Zoroastrian groups. These populations, who remained after the conquest owners of their lands, were in the majority during most of if not the entire period we are concerned with.

Lower Iraq is an alluvial land on the Euphrates and Tigris. Because of the climate—hot and arid—even fertile agricultural areas had to be irrigated, entailing the construction of irrigation canals. In 8 H/629 CE, just before the Islamic conquest, dams breaking caused the Tigris to change its course and inundate

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<sup>10</sup> Crone 1980, 51; Decobert 1991, 81.

large parts of cultivated land. These became marshes.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, the area close to the former course of the Tigris became a desert. This new swamp was frequently called *al-baṭīḥa*. Heavy investment in the system of irrigation and its upkeep were necessary, as well as the revival of dead lands and the clearance of swamps in order to make land farmable. Despite that, Lower Iraq can be considered a cultivated area during this entire period and more specifically after the foundation of Baghdad because it participated in the food supply of the capital.

A central region of the Islamic Empire during the period we are concerned with, Lower Iraq witnessed a number of changes in imperial dynamics. Whereas Lower Iraq was previously a province of the Umayyad Empire, whose capital was located in Damascus in Syria, it became the heart of the ‘Abbāsid Empire with the settlement of the dynasty in this area and with the foundation of Baghdad. This movement toward Iraq had consequences. Lower Iraq was no longer peripheral to the capital; from now on it was situated in the area of influence of Baghdad in Upper Iraq. Nevertheless the region remained distinct. For the purpose of this study, these changes and the relationship between Lower Iraq and Baghdad have to be considered in order to understand the implications for landholding and landowners in the area.

This paper seeks to identify landowners in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In the abstract, trying to answer the question ‘who were the landowners in this area during one century?’ forces us to pay particular attention to the evolution and/or reproduction of landowners. One century after the conquest, it is necessary to measure the changes or lack thereof brought by the end of Sasanian and the emergence of Islamic rule. The building and politics of the Umayyad state have to be taken into account. As far as the ‘Abbāsid takeover, it obviously obliges us to consider the question of reproduction or modification. But in the game of local vs. imperial dynamics, it seems more relevant to question landholding in terms of regional and/or imperial landowners. This serves as a way to go beyond the use of religious or ethnic classifications—though they can prove relevant. Moreover, one of the questions to arise from these categories is: were Lower Iraqi landowners regional elites? In other words, were they tied to the region? Did their properties make them part of Lower Iraqi society or not?

This consideration can be related to Claude Cahen’s theory regarding the rural economic history of the medieval Middle East.<sup>12</sup> According to him, during the 10<sup>th</sup> century a decline in small landholding and the assertion of power by big landowners can be observed. The deterioration of the peasant condition could be

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11 Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-A’lāq an-nafīsa*, 95; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 292–293.

12 Cahen 1953.

seen as the result of a long process in which the *iqṭāʿ* and its wider enforcement figured.<sup>13</sup> Under that theory, the Būyid period would show a surge in property being grabbed from small landowners.<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, this appealing theory has to be put to the test—not to deny or confirm it but in order to gain a better understanding of it. A study on landowners in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, about two centuries before the Būyid period, may be useful to gain a better view of the process of decline of small landholding, and to underline chronological ruptures and differences.

As is suggested by the title of this paper, I am going to focus mainly on landowners (that is, people) and not processes. This work is not about landholding as such.<sup>15</sup> I prefer to take a prosopographical approach—even one that is not systematic—and try to provide a classification. This prosopographical perspective pertains to the characterization of Lower Iraqi elites, whether regional or imperial, but also seeks to appraise the long process described by Cahen. The ‘people-based’ point of view forms a useful basis to understanding inter-group and intra-group relationships.

This work will offer a typology of Lower Iraqi landowners, using regional and imperial elites as initial classifications. Obviously, the distinction between the two categories is not rigid. The Arab conquerors who arrived in Iraq were participating in the imperial project of the Islamic conquests. They were at first imperial elites, but since they settled in al-Baṣra and/or al-Kūfa with their families and remained attached to the region, they can be considered by the 8<sup>th</sup> century as regional elites. Such settlement in the region of Lower Iraq can be seen as an indication of regional ties. On the other hand, imperial landowners may also refer to trans-regional elites, that is to say, those who participated in the working of the early Islamic Empire without being bonded to a specific region. The Umayyad family can be regarded as part of this group of imperial landowners.

I am aware of the blurring dimensions of these categories and of the difficulty in assigning one person to one box. The overlap between types will be to a certain extent discussed and questioned in the course of this study. However, it is useful to first identify these types separately in order to later examine the interplays existing between each group. This interplay will be the focus of the second part of this paper. In short, the pattern of Lower Iraqi landowners will be

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<sup>13</sup> Cahen 1953.

<sup>14</sup> Cahen 1953, 34.

<sup>15</sup> I will not return to the debate on private landed property in the Islamic world; I predicate that it existed though I am aware it is and has to be a subject of discussion. For landholding in early Islamic Iraq and debates about private landed properties, see Morony 1981 and Kennedy 2014.

drawn out, and then the way imperial and local forces met, intertwined or faced will be taken into consideration.

## Regional Landowners

Jewish and Christian landowners who inhabited Lower Iraq before the Islamic conquest and continued to own their lands afterwards can be simply referred to as non-Muslim elites. The situation of Zoroastrian landowners is more difficult to comprehend. Islamic legal sources composed at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century frequently debate the question of land status in al-Sawād with regard to the way the region was conquered.

It is worth considering the context of composition for these sources and the so-called historical narratives formulated in the associated treaties.<sup>16</sup> Whatever the narrative, the facts show that non-Muslim landowners continued to own their lands after the conquest. This is corroborated by the study of *ṣulḥan-ʿanwatan* traditions.<sup>17</sup> East Syrian sources regarding this matter (for example, the *Judgments* of Henanishoʿ) and Jewish sources<sup>18</sup> reinforce that there were still non-Muslim landowners in Lower Iraq at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. In this study, avoiding religious terminology is difficult given the available material on these landowners. As the sources are from legal-religious backgrounds, they promote the classification of regional landowners according to religious affilia-

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**16** Knowing that the book of Abū Yūsuf was written at the request of the caliph confirms the state desire for codification and systematization. The emergence of taxation literature at a time when tax systems were systematized and re-organized forces us to draw a link between composition and codification. The book of Yaḥyā b. Ādam was written at the same period or shortly after the one of Abū Yūsuf. It might have been composed for his students (we do not have detailed indications of the reasons behind the composition) but it was in line with Abū Yūsuf's work. Ibn Sallām's *Kitāb al-Amwāl* was not a commissioned work but its composition can be related to land and tax cases Ibn Sallām dealt with at Ṭarsūs when he was *qāḍī*, and thus considered indicative of his will to resolve various issues concerning Islamic finance. More generally, the composition of these treaties was concurrent with a general period of formation regarding administration and legal codification.

**17** See Noth 1974 (2008). In this article, A. Noth offers a study of these traditions, especially those of the Sawād, and he corroborates that the ownership of the land of Sawād did not pass to the Muslims after the conquest.

**18** See Sachau 1908, II, which contains the *Judgments* of Henanishoʿ and the *Regulations for Ecclesiastical Judgments and Inheritance* of Timothy I. As for *responsa*, according to Brody (1998, 186) approximately 5,000–10,000 *responsa* survive but only a small portion has been published in the various collections of Geonic *responsa*. Examples of collections include Lewin, *Oṣar ha-Geonim*, and Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes*.

tion. However, a distinction has to be made between individual lay landowners and ecclesiastical or religious properties that implied a non-individual ownership.

### Landowners within the Jewish Population

Prosopographical study of Jewish landowners in Lower Iraq is very sparse, but some evidence suggests that a group were regional landowners during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of the Sasanian period, the large Jewish population of Lower Iraq was mainly settled to the north in the *sawād* of al-Kūfa,<sup>19</sup> although we can also find some in the region of Maysān.<sup>20</sup> A large number, especially in the countryside, were farmers, either as owners of their lands or tenants. Larger wealthy landowners, however, have to be taken into account. Newman<sup>21</sup> has provided a lot of information about them.<sup>22</sup>

It is worth mentioning that during the last centuries of Sasanian rule, wealthy Jewish landowners took advantage of the difficulties faced by small Jewish peasants and increased their own estates by buying up the debts of small landlords.<sup>23</sup> It means that at the time of the conquest some Jewish landowners owned large estates and even villages in Lower Iraq. But it is also necessary to consider the continued presence of smaller landlords. At the other chronological boundary, the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a Geonic decree (*taqqanah*) promulgated by the academy of Sura and the Exilarch is indicative of the fact that Jewish landowners still owned estates in Lower Iraq while at the same time pointing out some changes.<sup>24</sup> This decree, dated 169–170 H/786–787 CE, added some changes to Talmudic laws regarding the collection of debts from the heirs of a deceased debtor. Previously a creditor could only claim the landed property belonging to the deceased parent of orphans. Following the new ordinance, debts could be collected from movable property as well. This *taqqanah* is often quoted to indicate the diminishing numbers of landholding Jews at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, some *responsa* from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries show that Jewish

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19 Morony 1984a, 309.

20 Morony 1984a, 309.

21 Newman 1932.

22 Newman 1932, 33–46.

23 Morony 1984a, 310.

24 Lewin 1928–1945, *Ketubbot, Responsa*, no. 535. About this decree: Brody 1998, 63; Morony 1984a, 312; Newman 1932, 35–36; Ackerman-Lieberman 2015.

landowners still possessed lands at that time.<sup>25</sup> Without localization, it is hard to know exactly which part or parts of the region saw a decrease in Jewish properties. If it seems immoderate to assume the total disappearance of Jewish landowners, this *taqqanah* associated with a *responsum* dating from the period of the *gaon* of Sura, Moses b. Jacob (g. 214–226 H/829–841 CE), can instead lead to the conclusion of a decrease in the numbers of small Jewish landowners.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to highlight that communal properties existed,<sup>27</sup> as well as some sort of “religious institutional ownership”. The revenue of the Geonic academies of Sura and Pumbedita partly derived from investments in real estate.<sup>28</sup> In those cases, the landowners were an institution and not a particular person. It is also necessary to gain a better understanding of the lands owned by the Exilarchs, like those of the Bustanai family who monopolized this function over the entire period in question.<sup>29</sup> Do we add them to lay landowners? Did they own their lands in a private capacity or did their lands relate to the Exilarchate?

### Christian/East Syrian Landowners

The history of the Sasanian period shows that the East Syrian population in Lower Iraq was of ancient settlement; Kashkar was the oldest diocese known in the area.<sup>30</sup> Two ecclesiastical provinces, Bēth Aramayē and Maysān, were noted in the region both during the Sasanian period and after the Islamic conquest. Our knowledge of the history of East Syrian population after that conquest is still incomplete.

In Lower Iraq, this lack of knowledge is partially because studies have mainly been made on the Church of the East and its catholicos<sup>31</sup> or on monastic history. The lack of materials devoted to this region in comparison with what we are

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25 A query addressed to Hayy Gaon (g. 939–1034) about “a Jew and a Gentile who took a field in partnership” (mentioned in Gil, 2004, 597; reference *Toratān shel re’s*, II, 57 (no. 3)) and a query addressed to Naḥshōn Gaon (g. 872–879) about “a Jew who took a field from someone and his deed of sale was lost” (mentioned in Gil 2004, 598; reference *Akargā: Resp. Sha’arē š*, 53a (no. 53)).

26 Ackerman-Lieberman 2015, reference of the *taqqanah*: Lewin, VII, no. 531.

27 Morony 1984a, 313.

28 Brody 1998, 15, 39. On the last page, Brody refers to a letter giving an indication of these lands.

29 Goode 1940.

30 Fiey 1968, 151.

31 For example, Putman 1975.

able to trace for al-Jazīra also explains the information gap.<sup>32</sup> It is, however, important to recall the ground-breaking works of Jean-Maurice Fiey,<sup>33</sup> who showed that it is possible to gain information about ownership of lands and landowners by leafing through chronicles or monastic histories.<sup>34</sup> It is also possible to resort to the legal writings of Henanisho' (catholicos 65–73 H/685–693 CE),<sup>35</sup> or to the ecclesiastical *Regulations* of Timothy I (catholicos 163–208 H/780–823 CE),<sup>36</sup> which deal for example with inheritance law and monastic property and thus provide information about East Syrian landowners. East Syrian synods also need to be taken into account, especially regarding Church properties.<sup>37</sup> This documentation demonstrates that landholding was meaningful at that time, and that land remained an important form of wealth. As Richard Payne wrote in an inspiring article: “Bishops and Christian landed elites[...] dominated Christian communities in Mesopotamia and Fārs on the basis of authorities, institutions and properties established during the Sasanian period[...]”<sup>38</sup> This is confirmed by the primary sources.

At the very end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, much evidence about inheritance laws during the patriarchate of Henanisho' can be found in the letters sent to him and preserved in his *Judgments*. The case of Ahōnā is one such. Ahōnā came from Karka d-Beit and married, in addition to his legitimate wife, another woman in Ākōlā (=al-Kūfa).<sup>39</sup> When he died, his sons solicited an episcopal ruling on whether or not the second wife was eligible to receive any inheritance. The letter provides indications of the landed property belonging to Ahōnā, who owned not only estates in Karka d-Beit but also in al-Kūfa.<sup>40</sup> The decision taken by Henanisho' provides precious information about the conditions of private property.

One century later, catholicos Timothy I was also concerned with inheritance issues and monastic property, as we can see from the 45 paragraphs (§44 to §99) devoted to these matters in his *Regulations for Ecclesiastical Judgments and In-*

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32 See the study of Robinson 2000.

33 Fiey 1968, 1980, 1990.

34 Among them: *Zuqnīn Chronicle*; Īshō'dnah, *The Book of Chastity*; Thomas of Marga, *The Book of Governors*.

35 Henanisho', “Judgments”, in Sachau 1908, II, 1–51.

36 Timothy I, “Regulations”, in Sachau 1908, II, 54–117.

37 Chabot 1902.

38 Payne 2014, 4–5.

39 Karka d-Beit was located in al-Jazīra outside of Lower Iraq and is usually referred to as Karka d-Beit Slok according to Payne (2014, 4–5). I would like to thank Philip Wood who advised me about the existence of another Karka: Karka de Ledan in Khūzistān.

40 Henanisho', “Judgments”, in Sachau 1908, II, 26–28.

*heritance*.<sup>41</sup> It also proves that there were still East Syrian landowners at that time. Timothy I begins his canonical rulings by explaining why he was late answering the demands of Jacob, the metropolitan primate of Maysān, and those of Rayy, Ḥabbībḥā and many other laymen.<sup>42</sup> The East Syrian population were asking for regulation and the answer of the catholicos fulfilled that need. As far as inheritance law is concerned, it can be assumed that the ruling answered many problems encountered by East Syrian landowners, such as keeping estates within the community after the death of a male family head. The potential loss of estates after the death of one notable may also help to understand why paragraph §57 states that when a man or a woman had no heir, their inheritance was to be given to the Church.<sup>43</sup> All these regulations may indicate changes that East Syrian landowners had to face in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and points out a concurrent decrease in non-Muslim Jewish and Christian landowners. It may also indicate an attempt by the East Syrian Church to enlarge its properties, since the question of unclaimed lands was also discussed by Muslim jurists.

Institutional ownership or ecclesiastical landholding—meaning lands belonging to the Church, including monastic property—were discussed in East Syrian legal documentation. There is no doubt that institutional ownership existed at that time; church and monastery estates were registered as early as 554 CE.<sup>44</sup> The East Syrian Church, together with its monasteries, was an important landowner. In the *Judgments* of Henanishoʿ and in the *Regulations* of Timothy I, many cases related to monasteries. Paragraph §78 of the *Regulations* of Timothy I is about lands belonging to a deserted monastery. As there was no other monastery in the city, the question was whether the church of the city or a foreign monastery inherited the property of the deserted monastery.<sup>45</sup> The rule does not apply to Lower Iraqi monasteries in particular but there were monasteries located in Lower Iraq,<sup>46</sup> such as the monastery of Gabriel of Kashkar close to Dayr Qunnā in the village of Karsa<sup>47</sup> or the monastery of Mār Sawrīshoʿ (Dayr Wāsīt).<sup>48</sup>

Some landowners within the Christian population cannot be regarded as regional landlords but rather as imperial or trans-regional landowners; Jibrīl Bukhtīshūʿ was one of them, as was the entire Bukhtīshūʿ family. Both his father

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41 Timothy I, “Regulations”, in Sachau 1908, II, 88–115.

42 Timothy I, “Regulations”, in Sachau 1908, II, 56–57.

43 Timothy I, “Regulations”, in Sachau 1908, II, 96–97.

44 Morony 1981, 145.

45 Timothy I, “Regulations”, in Sachau 1908, II, 108–109.

46 As evidenced by the *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, written by Muslim authors like al-Shābushtī (d. 988).

47 Fiey 1968, 170.

48 Fiey 1968, 171.

and his grandfather were directors of the Jundīshāpūr academy in Iran. Jibrīl was first the physician of Yaḥyā b. Barmak, then of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and finally of al-Amīn.<sup>49</sup> Thanks to Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, author of *‘Uyūn al-anmā’ fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭīb-bā’*, we know that during the fratricidal war between al-Amīn and al-Ma’mūn, the houses and farms of Jibrīl in Baghdad, al-Baṣra and al-Ahwāz were sacked.<sup>50</sup> He thus owned properties in each of these areas. He also had multiple other estates, notably in his home region of Khūzistān.

It is also necessary to ask to what extent the East Syrian Church and its officials were imperial landlords.

### The Case of the *Dahāqīn* in Lower Iraq

*Dahāqīn* have to be added to the group of regional landowners in the same way as the previously named landowners. It is complicated to classify them as a non-Muslim group owing to the fact that a large number of them converted to Islam.<sup>51</sup> However, we cannot exclude the possibility that some of them were Christian or Zoroastrian, before or after the Islamic conquest.

They represented regional landowners in the sense that they were tied to the land of this region. It is worth noting that during the Sasanian period, they could be regarded as imperial landowners because they were part of the Sasanian aristocracy—its lower caste, in charge of administration in the name of the Sasanian kings. They were also responsible for the collection of taxes and more generally were village heads. Not all of them were of Persian origin; we have found Aramaeans among them.<sup>52</sup> As these Aramaean *dahāqīn* were regional landowners and part of the Sasanian administration, they can be regarded as imperial elites as well. This again blurs the lines between specific types.

If the 7<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as a golden age for the *dahāqīn*, the 8<sup>th</sup> century was the period of their decline as landowners. Initially they took advantage of the Islamic conquest to strengthen their administrative role on the one hand and their estates on the other. Their conversion to Islam might explain this, but not exclusively. In some cases, evidence indicates that they did not only keep their lands, but also enlarged their estates by absorbing some of the former

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<sup>49</sup> Putman 1975, 98–101.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a, *‘Uyūn al-anmā’*, 255.

<sup>51</sup> Morony 1984a, 205.

<sup>52</sup> For example Ṣalūba b. Nistūnā, who was lord of Quss al-Nāṭif and of most of the lands between the two branches of the Euphrates in the *sawād* of al-Ḥīra (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 245; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, III, 367).

Sasanian crown lands.<sup>53</sup> The beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century was a turning point in their condition. As noted before, the upheaval of Ibn al-Ash‘ath in 81–82 H/700–701 CE was important to the history of Lower Iraq and especially to the *dahāqīn* who may have supported the rebellion.<sup>54</sup> During this upheaval, the register of the Sasanian crown lands, which had been recovered under Mu‘āwiya thanks to ‘Abdallāh b. Darrāj,<sup>55</sup> was burned.<sup>56</sup> People then seized lands and made them their own.

This anecdote, reported by al-Balādhurī, may be indicative of the *dahāqīn*’s desire to keep the land they had seized after the conquest—land the Umayyad state wanted to gain. The *dahāqīn* had suffered from the suppression of the upheaval, a suppression whose repercussions were far-reaching. Some dikes were destroyed, making lands uncultivable, and al-Ḥajjāj refused to fix the irrigation system, a decision which most probably ruined the *dahāqīn*.<sup>57</sup>

Once again, this obvious decline may not have applied to the entire region of al-Sawād. Al-Ya‘qūbī, who wrote his *Kitāb al-Buldān* during the 9<sup>th</sup> century, explained that Dayr ‘Aqul (not far from Nahrawān), Jarjarāyā and Mādarāya were all inhabited by Persian notables, specifying *qawm dahāqīn ashraf* in the case of Dayr ‘Aqul.<sup>58</sup> In northeast Lower Iraq, there were thus still groups of landowners with Persian origins.

We must eventually discuss the relevance of the term *dahāqīn* two centuries after the conquest, especially once the *dahāqīn* converted to Islam. Some of those belonging to this group might have become henceforth part of the Muslim regional elites, quoted in the sources under their Muslim names without any clarification of their Sasanian background.

## Muslim Landowners: Between Regional and Imperial Elites

By definition, the first Muslim landowners were originally part of the imperial elite. They did not come from Mesopotamia, but settled there in the course of the Islamic conquest and the founding of the *amṣār*. These incoming imperial elites were the ancestors of the regionally born Muslim landowners who lived during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when the heirs of conqueror families can be counted

53 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rikh*, II, 258.

54 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 293.

55 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rikh*, II, 258; Al-Qāḍī 2006, 359.

56 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 272–273; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 1, 69.

57 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 293.

58 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 1, 158.

among Muslim landowners in Lower Iraq. This was, for example, the case of the family of Abū Bakra,<sup>59</sup> one of the founders of al-Baṣra, whose relatives were known as important landowners.<sup>60</sup>

The grandson of Abū Bakra, Bashīr b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. Abī Bakra, was involved in conflicts related to land during the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>61</sup> The family of Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī,<sup>62</sup> in particular his grandson Bilāl b. Abī Burda, was also part of the group of landowners in the area.<sup>63</sup> The Banū l-Muhallab should additionally be taken into account during this period, especially Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and his close family.

By multiple means, Banū l-Muhallab and Yazīd became major landowners in Lower Iraq, but their territorial establishment was not limited to it. They forged ties in Khurāsān as well due to their government positions there.<sup>64</sup> These regional Muslim landowners, tied to Lower Iraq since the Islamic conquest, participated in the working of the larger Islamic Empire by holding offices that brought them close to the imperial administration. The relation between government function and landholding is obvious since parts of the estates of these families were acquired by grants,<sup>65</sup> so that imperial elites and regional landholding were intertwined. How regional landowners became eligible for government positions is also consistent. Thus, it was through their regional power and networks that they became imperial elites. This aspect of the explanation is strengthened by evidence proving that estates of these families were not only the result of grants but were also purchased.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, participation in government does not alter the fact that these landowners were regional ones, with regional ties.

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59 Pellat, “Abū Bakra”, *EP*, I, 14.

60 In Morony 1984b, 213, M. Morony gives, using al-Balādhurī’s *Futūh*, evidence of their estates in Lower Iraq.

61 With Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, who dug a canal in a land grant of Bashīr and then tried to pressure him into a document of title to this canal (al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 365); and also, under the governorate of Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī, with Ḥimyarī b. Hilāl when Bashīr himself tried to gain the possession of part of his land grants by digging a canal (al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 364).

62 Lecker, “Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī”, *EP*, [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezproxy.univ-paris1.fr/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-ashari-abu-musa-COM\\_24243?s.num=1&s.q=Abū+Mūsā+al-Ash‘arī](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezproxy.univ-paris1.fr/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-ashari-abu-musa-COM_24243?s.num=1&s.q=Abū+Mūsā+al-Ash‘arī) (accessed May 30, 2017).

63 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 353, 364.

64 Crone, “Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab”, *EP*, VII, 361.

65 It is, for example, known that Yazīd b. al-Muhallab received as much of the swamps as he wanted from Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 369).

66 Bilāl b. Abī Burda bought the land he then called Bilālān from ‘Abbād b. Ziyād (al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 353).

Some elites owned lands in Lower Iraq but were not specifically tied to the region at first. In the case of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf or Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī, for example, the political careers of both indicate they have to be considered trans-regional elites. Their families were not specially bonded to Lower Iraq.<sup>67</sup> Both became landowners in the area during their respective governorates.<sup>68</sup> Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī lost most of his estates to caliphal confiscation following his dismissal,<sup>69</sup> implying his landholding was linked to his government position.<sup>70</sup>

The ‘Abbāsīd takeover and the shift of the center of gravity from Syria to Iraq impacted landowners and landholding in Lower Iraq. A study of Muslim landowners in the area during the first decades of the ‘Abbāsīd rule indicates an increase in those we can refer to as imperial landowners, in the sense that they were less tied to Lower Iraq and lived in Baghdad.<sup>71</sup> This type of landlord was not entirely new, since the Umayyad family had owned large estates in Lower Iraq before.

Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik was the landlord of important parts of *al-baṭā’ih*.<sup>72</sup> The caliph Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik also acquired large estates through reclamation and development,<sup>73</sup> though to a certain extent it remains unknown whether those estates were part of the *ṣawāfī*, the private property of the caliph, or both at the same time. The ‘Abbāsīd takeover was followed by the rise of non-regional landowners, mainly the ‘Abbāsīd family. Al-Manṣūr possessed lands in Lower

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67 Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī was, according to the prosopographic work of Crone 1980, 102, the grandson of a man who settled in Syria. His father is known to have participated to the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ on the side of Ibn al-Zubayr. Khālīd was governor of Mecca before his nomination in Iraq. As for al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, he was born in al-Ṭā’if in Arabia, where he spent his youth and where he is known to have been a teacher, participated in some battles and served as governor of Tabāla. He then moved to Syria, served in the *shurṭa* and began his rise in importance (Dietrich, “al-Hadjjādī ibn Yūsuf”, *EP*<sup>2</sup>, III, 41–45).

68 Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī (see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, VII, 151–152; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 290); al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 289–90: in the course of the building of al-Wāsiṭ; Wakī’, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 92–95; Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik seized land belonging to the grandson of al-Ḥajjāj).

69 See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, VII, 152

70 That Khālīd owed his wealth to his governmental function is made quite clear in al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb al-ashraf* (IX, 31–109).

71 The question of absentee landlords is not broached here, but there is no doubt that in many cases these imperial landlords were rarely personally present. Even regional landowners may have lived in al-Baṣra or al-Kūfa and managed their estates in the countryside at a distance.

72 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294; Qudāma b. Ja’far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 1, 169–70.

73 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 293; Qudāma b. Ja’far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 240; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, VII, 142–143.

Iraq.<sup>74</sup> Al-Ṭabarī reported that the canal al-Khayzurāniyya was named after the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī’s wife al-Khayzurān, and that another’s name was derived from her secretary ‘Umar b. Mihrān.<sup>75</sup> It seems accurate to say that these were imperial, not regional, landowners.

Distinctions should be made when it comes to other members of the ‘Abbāsīd family, some of whom built links with Lower Iraq and settled there. One of the best examples is Sulaymān b. ‘Alī, who in all probability settled in al-Baṣra when he was appointed governor of the area.<sup>76</sup> He acquired a large number of estates through grants and irrigation projects and his son remained an important landlord in the area after him; they can be considered regional landowners.<sup>77</sup> As in the Marwānid period, proximity to the caliph’s family or government was a way to gain property under the ‘Abbāsīds; high officials were either granted numerous estates or purchased them. The case of Jibrīl Bukhtīshū‘ has been mentioned before, as has the Barmakids’ case. As a matter of fact, these landowners—in comparison with the Marwānid period—were no longer regional landowners but rather settled in Baghdad or in other cities where they owned houses. They were typical trans-regional landowners.

It is important not to underestimate regional landowners. They did not disappear. Non-Muslim landowners were obviously still important. Yet as far as Muslim landowners are concerned, we can legitimately ask whether or not regional landlords were as important after the takeover of the ‘Abbāsīds.

The seizing of the Umayyad estates and the suppression of their supporters may have changed the pattern of landholding. New grants were given to regional elites<sup>78</sup> like Sulaymān b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Hārith b. Nawfal,<sup>79</sup> who received land from Abū l-‘Abbās al-Saffāḥ in al-Baṣra region.<sup>80</sup> Some elites who had fallen into disfavor under the Umayyads managed to retrieve part of their lands after the ‘Abbāsīd takeover; the Muhallabī example is a striking one.<sup>81</sup> In spite of some confiscation, a certain amount of Muslim landowners remained

74 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 362, 371–372.

75 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, IX, 491; Verkinderen 2018, 519–520.

76 He was first nominated in 133 H/751 CE (Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 412).

77 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 349, 369, 370–371. His son Muḥammad, who inherited his fortune when he died in 173 H/789 CE, lost these estates when the caliph seized his fortune (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, VIII, 237).

78 Who may have been supporters of the ‘Abbāsīd cause.

79 Sulaymān was an *akhbārī*, as we may note from al-Ṭabarī, and potentially from al-Saffāḥ’s reign. His grandfather ‘Abdallāh (d. 84 H/703 CE) is said to have been a notable man settled in al-Baṣra. He was governor of the city in 64 H/684 CE.

80 Waki’, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 92–95; Tillier 2009, 592–596.

81 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 367.

on their lands, as indicated by al-Balādhurī regarding the estates named al-Masrukḥānān. These belonged to the family of Abū Bakra.<sup>82</sup> Some parts of them were confiscated by al-Manṣūr, but the rest remained their property.<sup>83</sup>

The regional landowner elite was then composed of non-Muslim (mainly Jewish and East Syrian) as well as Muslim people. Two main differences existed between these two populations. The first group was of ancient settlement. After the Islamic conquest, they continued to own land. The second group only settled in Lower Iraq for about 50 to 60 years, and may be addressed in terms of generations since the first conquerors can be seen as imperial rather than regional elites. It is different for their sons, even more so for their grandsons. Two generations after the conquest, Muslim inhabitants of Lower Iraq had become elite regional landowners; they were born there and bonded to the area individually and sometimes professionally.

The second difference between the two populations is in their relationship with the Islamic Empire. The Muslim regional elites often played a role in the working of the Empire and in that respect were regional as well as imperial elites. There was apparently a link between governing and landholding, since parts of the estates of these Muslim families were acquired by grants. To a certain extent, the imperial role taken on by regional elites might also be applied to the non-Muslim group, for example the ecclesiastical elites (particularly at the highest level of the Exilarch and catholicos).

These sample types of landowners in Lower Iraq are put forward to single out relevant categories for the study of landholding, landowners and more generally for the history of Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These types should not however be considered completely accurate without a study of the location of specific estates. Grants were often located in the al-Baṣra area or in swamps. The lands around al-Kūfa were mainly owned by Jews and those around Wāsiṭ by East Syrians. This study of estate locations is difficult to carry out at scale but it is certainly useful regionally. The interplay between the diverse groups of landowners defined here aids in grasping the changes that occurred in the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and helps the work of localization. The different modalities and interactions also help to explain the power ratios at stake at that time in Lower Iraq.

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<sup>82</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 365.

<sup>83</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 365.

## Interplays

By interactions, I do not only mean inter-group relationships; intra-group ones must also be considered. Types are inaccurate when not associated with a study of their interactions. As far as landowners are concerned, these examples of interplay may be distinguished in three ways. The first is related to the acquisition of estates, the second to the loss of properties. The last stems from conflicts over land; these were sometimes linked to the purchase of estates. These three aspects of interaction sometimes became entangled.

### Acquiring an Estate

Most people involved in purchasing land during the 8<sup>th</sup> century were Muslim landowners. Non-Muslim landowners already owned lands at the time of the conquest and in the main their heirs inherited them. The inheritance of estates may be part of the acquisition of lands, but only passively. Non-Muslim landowners were not marginalized and certainly purchased lands on occasion, but the fact remains that written sources contain more information about Muslim landowners. According to the available materials, one of the first ways to become a landowner was related to land grants. This type of acquisition did not necessarily entail an interaction between two persons or two groups, as in (for example) land reclamation.

### Land Grants

Land grants are one of the main interactions regarding land purchase, linking imperial elites—primary the caliphs—to regional elites. Those receiving land during the 8<sup>th</sup> century were mainly high officials (governors, *quḍāt*, *shurṭa* chiefs) or relatives of the caliphs and *mawālī*. Al-Balādhurī can be singled out as one of the main authors providing information regarding these grants.<sup>84</sup> Although the source is rather recent, al-Balādhurī notably<sup>85</sup> used the works of al-Qaḥdhamī as a source.<sup>86</sup> Al-Qaḥdhamī was a Baṣran *akhbārī* whose grandfather Qaḥdham was a financial secretary and/or in charge of the tax office in Iraq under al-Ḥajjāj

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<sup>84</sup> This information was found through al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān*.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Balādhurī used 35 pieces of information from this *akhbārī* in the section about al-Baṣra.

<sup>86</sup> See the article of al-Qāḍī 2010, 258–266.

b. Yūsuf, Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī and Yūsuf b. ‘Umar al-Thaqafī.<sup>87</sup> He may have transmitted information whose authority was based on some lost government archive.

Literature about these land grants shows they are an interesting matter that is worthy of discussion.<sup>88</sup> For my purposes, this is primarily in terms of the interplays that land grants broached. Thanks to the *qaṭā’i*, grantees became landlords of their estates with full ownership.<sup>89</sup> Land grants could be associated with land reclamation,<sup>90</sup> but such reclamation was also possible during the 8<sup>th</sup> century without a grant.

Land grants established an interaction between two groups: the granter and the grantee/receiver. For Islamic landowners, land grants can be seen as the primary way to acquire land, via a method implying a relationship with the caliph. Such relationships were inter-group as well as intra-group: caliphs granted land to regional officials and local notables (regional elites),<sup>91</sup> especially during the Marwānid period, but also gave estates to relatives and *mawālī* (imperial elites).<sup>92</sup> I must emphasize the continuation of grants under ‘Abbāsīd rule to members of the ‘Abbāsīd family<sup>93</sup> and ‘Abbāsīd followers,<sup>94</sup> especially important figures of the central government; that may indicate a rise of intra-group grants within imperial elites.

### Buying Land

The purchase of lands was another way to become a landowner, one that plainly implies an interaction between the buyer and the seller. This interaction adds the seller to the group of those losing land, while for the buyer the purchase is a way

<sup>87</sup> al-Qāḍī 2010, 264–265.

<sup>88</sup> For example Morony 1984b; Kennedy 2004, 2014; Verkinderen 2018.

<sup>89</sup> It is debatable, but I argue that at that time the *qaṭā’i* meant a grant of landownership. See Abū Yūsuf (*Kitāb al-kharāj*, I, 73): *إِنْ أَخَذَ الْوَالِي مِنْ يَدِ وَاحِدٍ أَرْضًا وَأَقْطَعَهَا آخَرَ فَمَنْزِلَةٌ الْعَاصِبِ غَضَبٍ وَاحِدًا وَأَعْطَى آخَرَ*.

<sup>90</sup> About land reclamation see Verkinderen 2018.

<sup>91</sup> For example, Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik granted ‘Umar b. Hubayra land seized from Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 367).

<sup>92</sup> Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik granted some of the land confiscated from Yazīd b. al-Muhallab to his son (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 369).

<sup>93</sup> This was for example the case of Sulaymān b. ‘Alī, who was granted the estate called ‘Ab-bāsān by Abū l-‘Abbās (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 369).

<sup>94</sup> Yaḳṭīn *ṣāḥīb al-da’wa*—who was certainly Yaḳṭīn b. Mūsā—received several *ḍiya’as* in al-Sawād in the early period of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate (Qudāma b. Ja’far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, I, 17; about Yaḳṭīn, see also Elad 1992, 315–316).

to join the group of those who own an estate. There is evidence of a real-estate market in the sale of land between Muslim elites. Bilāl b. Abī Burda, for example, is known to have had acquired the estate of ‘Abbād b. Ziyād in this way,<sup>95</sup> among other tracts of land.<sup>96</sup> According to Khālīd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Thaqafī, Wakī‘ also reported that Yaḥyā b. Barmak bought land close to al-Baṣra from Hārūn al-Rashīd.<sup>97</sup> In the *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’*, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, a famous singer close to Hārūn al-Rashīd, is recorded as wanting to buy the estate (*ḡay‘a*) next to his, up for sale at 100,000 dirhams.<sup>98</sup>

As far as these examples are concerned, the purchase created an intra-group relationship within the Muslim group of landowners. In the case of Bilāl b. Abī Burda and ‘Abbād b. Ziyād, the interaction was established within the regional group of Muslim landowners. In that of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī and Hārūn al-Rashīd, it happened within the imperial group. Despite this, there is nothing to preclude the purchase of lands between non-Muslim and Muslim groups, though there is no extant evidence of it over the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Lower Iraq. Legal sources composed at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century do indicate some examples of selling of lands following the Islamic conquest, and provide interesting information devoted to the question of *kharāj* lands and transactions between *ahl al-kitāb* and Muslims.<sup>99</sup> The fact that the jurists found it important to broach this theme shows that some Muslim elites must have bought land from non-Muslim elites.

The market did not represent the principal interaction between groups of landowners. Land purchase was not the main way of gaining an estate, especially from the end of the century when legal sources began to forbid (up to a point) the purchase of *kharāj* lands. This ban may be understood as a way for the ‘Abbāsīd rulers to keep control of the land market and avoid the reduction of taxes.

It may be possible to connect the normative decision formulated in these sources with another way to acquire land.

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<sup>95</sup> He was one of the four sons of Ziyād b. Abīhi.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 353: ‘Abbād b. Ziyād’s land is called *qaṭī‘ā*, indicating he received it as grant. It attests that the grantee was allowed to sell his grant.

<sup>97</sup> Wakī‘, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, I, 143.

<sup>98</sup> Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’*, 214.

<sup>99</sup> For this matter see, in their respective English translations: Ibn Sallām from tradition 194 to 230 dealt with “The purchase of lands annexed by force...”; Yaḥyā b. Ādam collected 57 traditions (136–193) about “The ban of the purchase of *kharāj* lands”.

### Talji'a and Ḥimāya: A Process of Purchasing Land?

Interactions between landowners regarding the purchase of land include what have been called *talji'a* and *ḥimāya*. These concepts refer to habits and institutions of protection more or less unknown by the *fiqh*, even though they seemed important in Islamic society. The *talji'a* indicates an interaction concerning the acquisition of land as well as its loss. It is particularly noteworthy since on the one hand it connects groups with each other but not necessarily within themselves, and on the other it contributes to the decrease in small landowners in Lower Iraq—perhaps specifically to the decrease in non-Muslim landowners.

The *talji'a* referred to a process via which an independent landed proprietor asked for protection (*ḥimāya*), or more precisely placed his land under the protection (*alja'a*) of a bigger landowner. This protector was then registered in the fiscal *dīwān*, preserving the smaller landowner from extortion. The protégée, who had secured himself and indemnified his estates, had to provide financial compensation to the protector in addition to the usual taxes.<sup>100</sup> The definition given by al-Khwārizmī in *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm* does not say anything about this compensation, though.<sup>101</sup> In the chapter devoted to secretaryship (*al-kitāba*), in the section on the technical terms used by the secretaries in the *dīwān al-kharāj*, the *talji'a* is defined as “when a weak person hands over (*yulji'a*) his property (*ḍay'a*) to a strong one so that the latter may protect it. Plurals for the word are *malāji'* and *talāji'*. The strong person usually protects the property which its owner (*ṣāhib*) has entrusted to him.”<sup>102</sup> Even if financial compensation is not mentioned, the fact that during the 10<sup>th</sup> century the *talji'a* was considered one of the technical terms a secretary of the *dīwān al-kharāj* needed to know and understand suggests that it was a custom at that time.

The process of *talji'a* was not limited to Lower Iraq. Evidence of it can be found in Fārs, Khūzistān<sup>103</sup> and even further—*Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm* may have been dedicated to a Sāmānid *wazīr* of Nishāpūr.<sup>104</sup> In Khūzistān, a landlord from al-Ahwāz asked Abū Ayyūb, a secretary of al-Manṣūr,<sup>105</sup> to register the landlord's estate under his name in order to protect him from the *'ummāl* in exchange for 100,000 dirhams every year.<sup>106</sup> As far as the south of Iraq is concerned,

100 Cahen, “Ḥimāya”, *EP*, III, 406–407; Lokkegaard 1950, 67–68.

101 Al-Khwārizmī, *Mafātīḥ al-'ulūm*, 73.

102 Translation of Bosworth 1969, 138.

103 Fārs: al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb Masālik al-mamālik*, 158; Khūzistān: al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, 118.

104 Sabra, “al-Khwārizmī”, *EP*, IV, 1100–1101.

105 Sourdel 1960, 1, 78–87.

106 Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, 118.

one of the most striking examples of the *talji'a* is recorded in al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-buldān* and concerns Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>107</sup> At the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, under the governorate of al-Ḥajjāj and the reign of al-Walīd, Maslama is known to have invested 3,000,000 dirhams in the restoration of an irrigation system and in return gained possession of certain lands.<sup>108</sup> Many landowners are said to have voluntarily turned their lands over to him.<sup>109</sup> Some evidence can also be found in the first 'Abbāsīd decades, when according to al-Tanūkhī a landowner offered al-Manṣūr 25 percent of the products of his land in addition to the usual tax provided that the caliph registered the land under his own name.<sup>110</sup> In al-Jazīra, the author of the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* explained that around 155–163 H/772–779 CE, some landowners/farmers sought protection from local chiefs.<sup>111</sup> These few examples are representative of the implicit relationship in the *talji'a*: between the one seeking protection and the protector, or between the small landowner and the larger.

These examples also make it possible to understand two of the reasons explaining the cause of the process. The *ḥimāya* of Maslama needs to be contextualized. Because of the upheaval of Ibn al-Ash'ath, damage was done to the dikes that grew worse. It is possible to link this and the demand of al-Ḥajjāj to al-Walīd.<sup>112</sup> In that case, the *talji'a* may be related to the caliphal refusal to take over upkeep and the subsequent recourse to a private investor in the person of Maslama. The small landowners seeking *ḥimāya* might have been in a difficult economic situation (perhaps with uncultivable lands).

The other two examples, plus that of Khūzistān, are quite different. They refer to the harsh tax-levy and its excesses, especially those of the tax collectors.<sup>113</sup> They are representative of the reasons behind the *talji'a*, at least at the beginning of the 'Abbāsīd period. Epistles dedicated to al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī condemn this harsh tax-levy as well as the abuses of the tax collectors. So much can be read in the *Risālat al-ṣahāba* composed by Ibn al-Muqaffa' for al-Manṣūr,<sup>114</sup> and in the *Risāla* addressed to al-Mahdī by 'Ubaydallāh b. al-Ḥasan al-'Anbarī, who was *qāḍī* of Baṣra between 156 H/773 CE and 166–167

107 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294; Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, I, 169–70.

108 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294.

109 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294; in Arabic: وعمر تلك الارضين والجا الناس اليها ضياعا كثيرة للتعزز به

110 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, VIII, 76.

111 *Chronicle of Denys of Tell Mahré*, 138.

112 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294.

113 *Chronicle of Denys of Tell Mahré*, 138, and al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār*, VIII, 76.

114 Ibn Muqaffa', *Risāla*, 117.

H/782–784 CE.<sup>115</sup> The consequences of the ‘Abbāsīd tax policy on landholding patterns<sup>116</sup> may explain why the process still went on in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and thus be part of the explanation of the lessening of small landholding after all.

In terms of interplays, the *talji’a* created interesting relationships between the groups of the typology. No indication is provided regarding those who turned their estates over to Maslama. Knowing that it took place in Lower Iraq at the beginning of the century, it can be assumed that the protégées were either from groups of non-Muslim landowners or the *dahāqīn* (whether Muslim or not). The hypothesis of the *dahāqīn* using this seems likely because of the difficulties they faced at the time.<sup>117</sup> In the Jazīran example, there is no doubt that the landowners asking for protection were Christians.<sup>118</sup> As far as the village chiefs are concerned, we can also assume that they were a part of the Christian population if we follow Chase F. Robinson’s discussion of the *shahārija*.<sup>119</sup> It corresponds to an intra-group relationship or an inter-group one. The al-Manṣūr case is more complicated but as in Maslama’s example it was an inter-group meeting between imperial and local elites.

Why can *talji’a* be added to the process of purchasing lands? Strictly speaking, the protected individual should have remained the owner of his estates. This was a subject of debate between academics who wrote about *talji’a* and *ḥimāya*.<sup>120</sup> This agreement was unstated, and the name of the original owners was removed from the tax register—meaning that it could become impossible for them to establish actual ownership. According to Claude Cahen and Ḥusām al-Sāmarrāie, what was at first joint property became, as time passed, the property of the protector. The original landowner was reduced to a share-

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115 Tillier 2006, 147–148, 162.

116 Ackerman-Lieberman 2015, online. The question of the consequences of the ‘Abbāsīd tax policy can also be related to the promotion of a new assessment system in al-Sawād, the *muqāsama*. On this question, see for example Campopiano 2011.

117 See above regarding the *dahāqīn* and the refusal of al-Ḥajjāj to fix irrigation infrastructures.

118 The *Chronicle of Zuqīn/Chronicle of Denis of Tell Mahré* deals with the Christian population.

119 According to Robinson 2000, 90–108, the name *shahārija* was given to some local notables who were part, like the *dahāqīn*, of the nobility of al-Sawād during the Sasanian period. They were however superior in rank to the *dahāqīn*.

120 Claude Cahen and Fred Lokkegaard seem to disagree, since Lokkegaard wrote that “On entering the *talji’a* the one who cedes his *ḍay’a* loses his milk in it” (1950, 68) and Cahen thought that the protégée remained the official owner of his land but lost real control of it over time (Cahen, “Ḥimāya”, *EF*, III, 406–407).

cropper.<sup>121</sup> This observation may be corroborated by the use of the term *muzā-ri'ūn*.<sup>122</sup> For the protectors, the *talji'a* was a way to gradually purchase land.

The use of *talji'a* as a way to protect property may explain the decrease in numbers of small landowners, especially among the non-Muslim groups, or rather their drop in status to estate share-croppers rather than owners. It is not a coincidence that *fiqh* literature about contracts, and especially all types of sharecropping contracts, is fairly developed even when *talji'a* is still unknown by the *fiqh*.<sup>123</sup> Since precise examples of *talji'a* are scarce, it was either not a very extensive phenomenon, or practically speaking it referred to share-cropping or a similar contract. The latter may also explain why the *talji'a* was an unstated agreement since the rules governing share-cropping were strict in *fiqh* literature. The links between *talji'a* and share-cropping need further study in order to better understand the difference between ownership and possession of an estate. The scope of the phenomenon needs to be properly reckoned since narratives give little evidence of the *talji'a* as such.

The fact remains that the *talji'a* may be regarded as part of a process leading to the loss of an estate.

### The Loss of Estates

Losing an estate is the other side of the transaction, whether via selling or the *talji'a*. Some loss of estates might also be related to inheritance. The heirs of a landowner inherited his estates. Without heirs, notably without sons, various issues emerged regardless of the concerned landowner group.<sup>124</sup> Questions of inheritance will not be tackled in the course of this paper; I will rather concentrate on the seizure of estates, which reflects an important power dynamic of the time.

The confiscation of estates occurred frequently during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It could only happen as part of an unequal relationship. The power to seize land was the exclusive preserve of the supreme authority, the caliph. Even leaving out the massive confiscation of Umayyad landed estates carried out immediately following the takeover of the 'Abbāsids, land seizure remains significant. New landlords were promoted whereas others lost their lands. Lands owned by Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik,<sup>125</sup> for example, were confiscated by the 'Abbāsids and

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121 al-Sāmarrāie 1972, 131; Cahen, "Ḥimayā", *EF*<sup>2</sup>, III, 406–407.

122 Cahen 1956, I, 273.

123 See al-Ṭabarī, *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'*, 141–170.

124 See above regarding Jewish and Christian landowners.

125 And in the course of which some farmers asked for protection.

granted to Dā'ūd b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās, a brother of Sulaymān b. 'Alī.<sup>126</sup> The seizing of Umayyad lands took place in a characteristic context. What must be remembered is the 'Abbāsīd action of confiscation was not only limited to the takeover period and to Lower Iraq. It may be regarded as an 'Abbāsīd policy, “a general process encompassing the entire caliphal domains.”<sup>127</sup>

A pattern can be seen in the cases of confiscation described during the Marwānīd and the 'Abbāsīd periods. The seizing of land points out interplays between imperial elites and regional elites as well as within imperial groups. Both instances take place within the Muslim group of landowners who work as high officials for the Islamic Empire. There are multiple cases among them, including the confiscation of the Muhallabid estates as a result of the upheaval of Yazīd and his suppression<sup>128</sup> and the seizing of the possessions of Khālid b. 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī after his dismissal.<sup>129</sup> During the 'Abbāsīd 8<sup>th</sup> century, there is the confiscation of Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī I-'Abbāsī's estates after his death ended his governorate in al-Baṣra,<sup>130</sup> and the seizing of the Barmakids' estates.<sup>131</sup> In each case, seizure took on the guise of punishment and was added to a set of other sentences.<sup>132</sup> Seizure was the most relevant because it linked caliphal policies of centralization and land control. Seizing these estates meant properties gained by the caliphal authority swung the balance of power in the state's favor. It may even be indicative of a formal state policy designed to monopolize as much land as possible in the strategic region of Lower Iraq. Land remained an essential basis of wealth.<sup>133</sup>

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126 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 294.

127 Elad 2016, 103.

128 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 369.

129 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VII, 152.

130 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VIII, 237.

131 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, VIII, 296; al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, 237–293.

132 Yazīd was accused of rebelling against the caliphate. Khālid b. 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī was accused of embezzlement or at least of the fraudulent acquisition of his fortune. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī did not comply with Hārūn al-Rashīd's orders, especially regarding the appointment of judges (Tillier 2009, 109–111). As for the Barmakids, the reasons behind their disfavor are not yet clear.

133 In this respect, the article of Albrecht Noth, “Some Remarks on the Nationalization of Conquered Lands at the Time of the Umayyads” (1984, 227–228), is inspiring since he reaches a similar conclusion from the study of *ṣulḥan*/*'anwatan* traditions in the Iraqi *sawād*. According to him, these traditions date to the period between the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus they may reflect a power struggle between the Umayyad government, which tried to claim as much *'anwatan* land as possible, and the descendants of the conquerors, who had become landowners and wanted to claim to as much *ṣulḥan* land as they could.

## Contentious Interplays

While land was a debated legal matter, as may be read in the various *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, it was also at the heart of conflicts between landowners in Lower Iraq during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. One may say that it even generated those conflicts, or at least led to contentious relationships. In line with Georg Simmel's theory about conflicts, these troubled interplays should not only be seen as creators of opposition between groups, but also perceived as an interaction forming links.

Lands could be passed down via inheritance and were an important source of wealth. For that reason competition over who inherited land was fierce following the death of the primary male householder. The *Judgments* of Henanisho' contain many typical inheritance questions and their resolutions. In Ahōnā's case,<sup>134</sup> the question asked is whether or not his second wife in al-Kūfa was allowed to inherit something when he already had a wife and children.<sup>135</sup> In other words, the sons of Ahōnā spoke out against their father's second wife. In this case, in the end the whole inheritance reverted back to the legitimate widow and the sons, but the second wife "received an estate" as a residence and source of income for her lifetime.<sup>136</sup> This story is not an isolated case. Others like it can be observed in the *Judgments* of Henanisho' and also in the *Regulations* of Timothy I.<sup>137</sup> These troubled interactions happened among East Syrian landowners but it is not hard to imagine that similar conflicts existed within the groups of Jewish or Muslim landowners. The question is, to what extent were issues of land inheritance the subjects of lawsuits or of legal resolution? The existence of troubled interactions due to inheritance issues regarding lands is highlighted in this work, and all the questions around it are still an ongoing subject for research.

Other conflicts arose from individuals who opposed each other over ownership of land or its fraudulent purchase. One example of a conflict over land in Lower Iraq in the course of the 8<sup>th</sup> century is the case of Bashīr b. 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Bakra and Ḥimyarī b. Hilāl, which occurred under Khālid b. 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī's governorate in Iraq. Ḥimyarī b. Hilāl blamed Bashīr for attempting to gain possession of some of his estates<sup>138</sup> by digging the al-Murghāb

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134 Henanisho', "Judgments", in Sachau 1908, II, 26–28.

135 Henanisho', "Judgments", in Sachau 1908, II, 2–28.

136 Henanisho', "Judgments", in Sachau 1908, II, 26–28.

137 See for example Henanisho', "Judgments", in Sachau 1908, II, 18–21 and 22–23; Timothy I, "Regulations", in Sachau 1908, II, 90–93.

138 His estates actually belonged to his father and had been granted to him by Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik.

canal.<sup>139</sup> This troubled relationship between two local landowners shows the depth of competition for the ownership of land at that time. Bashīr, who is known to have been an important landowner, sought to increase his estates. This example also shows that the building of canals and dikes was not only vital for agriculture but might also have been a way to gain possession of land.

Some conflicts are specifically linked to land grant issues. This is true of the case under al-Mahdī's reign between Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Nawfalī, whose grandfather received a land grant from Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāh, and the Banū 'Abd al-Malik, whose ancestors owned estates granted at the time of the Marwānids until Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik seized them.<sup>140</sup> During al-Mahdī's reign the Banū 'Abd al-Malik tried to reclaim the land their ancestors had lost. They resorted to being helped by the *qāḍī* and trying to charge Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Nawfalī with acquiring their land by force (*ghaṣabahum*).<sup>141</sup> Details of such troubled interplays are not necessarily useful here, but the conflict is a good illustration of the complexity and consequences of confiscation and ownership. It also points out issues that might have been raised after the 'Abbāsīd takeover and their redistribution of the Umayyad estates.

The landowner point of view offers a relevant angle to grasp the diversity of Lower Iraḳī elites. This variety can be couched in terms of religion and also in ties to the larger Islamic Empire. The distinction between regional and imperial or trans-regional landowners is inspiring but needs to be further discussed. The presentation of interactions between group types helps to understand the nature of the relationships that existed between the different groups of landowners. At the same time, it enables an understanding of the power ratio between various Lower Iraḳī landowners, and between them as a group and the caliphal state.

This attempt to describe Lower Iraḳī landowners is not only useful in gaining a better view of Lower Iraḳī society during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It also sheds a light on the multiple processes that disrupted or changed the workings of this empire and its society, such as the decreasing numbers of small landholders. The role of the imperial state in all this has now been sketched, but still needs to be studied.

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139 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 364.

140 Waki', *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 92–95; Tillier 2009, 592–596.

141 Waki', *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, II, 93–94.

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Hugh Kennedy

# The Rise and Fall of the Early ‘Abbāsīd Political and Military Elite

**Abstract:** This paper explores the composition and role of the military and political elite of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphate (750–809) whose support enabled the caliphs to maintain sovereignty over their far-flung domains. It considers the importance of different groups, including members of the ‘Abbāsīd family, military commanders from Khurāsān and members of powerful and wealthy families like the Muhallabīs and the Shaybānī tribal chiefs. The paper concludes with a discussion of the reasons for the disappearance and effective extinction of this elite in the years after the great civil war that followed Hārūn al-Rashīd’s death in 809.

**Keywords:** Caliphs; armies; political power; Syria; Khurāsān

The governance of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphate was a remarkable political and organizational achievement. For half a century, between the establishment of the dynasty in 132 H/750 CE and the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 193 H/809 CE, the area from Tunisia in the west to Sind and Central Asia in the east was governed effectively and largely peacefully from Iraq. From 145 H/762 CE, the city of Baghdad served as the administrative capital, though the distances which separated it from the far-flung provinces were enormous: it is over 2,000 kilometres from Baghdad to Merv, the political centre of the great province of Khurāsān, and 1,500 kilometres from the capital to the Holy City of Mecca.

The *barīd* postal system inherited from the Umayyads and Sasanians was surprisingly effective at communicating urgent messages over these huge distances.<sup>1</sup> When the caliph al-Rashīd died in the year 809 at Ṭūs (near Mashhad in north-east Iran) a messenger brought the news to Baghdad in twelve days, traveling 1,900 kilometres at an average speed of 150 kilometres per day. Similar

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I will not be dealing with the bureaucratic elite of the *kuttāb* or the religious elite of the *fuqahā’* and *qādīs* that would require a whole other study. For the general history of early ‘Abbāsīd caliphate, Kennedy 2016; El-Hibri 2010, 269–304; Bennison 2009. For earlier studies of the ‘Abbāsīd elite with full references to sources, Crone 1980, esp. 173–189, and Kennedy 1981/2016, 73–86.

1 On the *barīd* and the distances covered, see Silverstein 2007, 191–193.

speeds are recorded for the reporting of other crucial events. Not until the invention of the electric telegraph in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was such swiftness bettered. Information was clearly very important.

Enforcement was much slower. Even without opposition or resistance, armies could travel no more than 20 kilometres a day, and usually managed less. That left plenty of time for a provincial rebellion to gather support and momentum before the forces of central government arrived on the scene. Exercising control and authority over such enormous distances was always going to be difficult, and demands for provincial autonomy were correspondingly hard to resist.

Despite these formidable obstacles the ‘Abbāsids maintained their authority and the cohesion of their caliphate for more than half a century. No later Islamic dynasty established the same degree of authority over so wide and diverse an area. The achievement was not the result of absolutist authority, but of the development of a stable political and military elite, or rather a series of elites, which at the same time represented the caliphal government in the provinces and the provinces to the central government in Baghdad.

While this must have been true for all large pre-modern empires in the Middle East from the Achaemenids onwards, one factor that distinguishes the ‘Abbāsīd example is the wealth of information that survives in the sources about the government of the caliphate. In al-Ṭabarī’s great *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (History of the Prophets and Kings),<sup>2</sup> there are enough details to build up a detailed prosopography of the ruling elite, of their origins, connections, successes and failures. This is supplemented by universal chronicles such as al-Ya’qūbī’s *Ta’rīkh* (History),<sup>3</sup> and provincial accounts such as al-Kindī’s *Kitāb Wulāt Miṣr* (Governors of Egypt)<sup>4</sup> and al-Azdi’s *Ta’rīkh al-Mawṣil* (History of Mosul).<sup>5</sup>

Despite occasional contradictions, we can trace individual families through several generations in the evidence and get a clear idea of their influence. There is perhaps no other period in early Islamic history when so much attention was paid to the appointment of provincial governors and officials far away from the court and capital. It did not last. By the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, the caliphate was dominated by the Turkish and eastern Iranian military of Samarra. Hardly any information survives regarding provincial appointments and we cannot reliably trace the names of governors, even of really important cities such as Basra. The care

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2 Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901.

3 Al-Ya’qūbī 1883.

4 Al-Kindī 1912.

5 Al-Azdi 1967.

with which earlier annalists recorded this type of information clearly shows how important these people and the offices they held were then considered to be.

The key to these patterns of provincial power was the office of *wālī*, which is usually translated as governor. The richness of the sources means we can build up a virtually complete *fasti* of the governors of all the major provinces of the caliphate from the 'Abbāsīd revolution to the reign of al-Ma'mūn, though (as is only to be expected) there are some confusions and ambiguities. The identities of the men who held these posts are an invaluable measure of the political complexities of the caliphate. The term *'āmil* was also employed to designate this type of provincial official. The sources sometimes make a distinction between the office of *wālī*, in charge of leading prayers and the people in war, and the *'āmil*, in charge of taxation, but the terms were often used interchangeably and the distinction between the two offices blurred.<sup>6</sup>

If the annals superficially make the caliph appear as a powerful absolute ruler, further down the chain of power the governors display effective executive power over military and civil affairs in the province. These areas are often simply characterised as *ḥarb* and *ṣalāt* (war and prayer), but when sources like al-Kin-dī's history of Egypt allow us to peer below the surface, we find governors in a more complicated situation.<sup>7</sup> The governors of Egypt were the middle men between the caliph and his government in Baghdad, which was always seeking to extract more tax revenue from this rich province, and the local Muslim elites, who were determined to retain as much of the revenue as possible in the local *dīwān* to pay their salaries and those of their followers. The governors' position was made more precarious in that they were usually outsiders with few Egyptian connections; they had to cooperate with or at least not alienate the *wujūh*, the local Arab Muslim elite. The *wujūh* were led by the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*, the chief of police. Unlike the titular governor, the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* was always chosen from a small circle of prominent local families and they often served for longer than their ephemeral superiors. At one level this seems a weak system of government, ultimately dependent on the consent of local notables. In reality the system was very resilient: the local Egyptian Muslim elite, who never held office outside their province and seldom left it, were stakeholders in the 'Abbāsīd rule that assured their high status. One of the main reasons for the collapse of the caliphate in the 9<sup>th</sup> century was the breaking of bonds between Baghdad and local elites by the influx of Turks and eastern Iranians to the top ranks of central government.

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the role of provincial governors, see *EP*<sup>2</sup>, "Amir" (A. A. Duri).

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy 1981, 26–38; Kennedy 1998, 62–85; Mikhail 2014, esp. 136–159.

The provincial elite was largely formed by the political genius of the second ‘Abbāsīd caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manšūr (136–158 H/754–775 CE). This cadre governed the vast ‘Abbāsīd Empire; its broad-based nature was vital in keeping the caliphate together politically and its disappearance after the great civil war that followed the death of al-Rashīd in 193 H/809 CE was a major factor in the caliphate’s breakup.

It is sometimes easy to forget how exceptional this pre-war period was and how impressive was the political success that kept this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural state together. In what follows, I will investigate some important constituents of the elite of this time to determine the sources of its power and the dynamics of its political operation.

The ‘Abbāsīd family formed an important element in this elite.<sup>8</sup> The caliph’s numerous uncles, the Banū ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās, and his cousins were appointed to governorates in the western part of the caliphate, notably in Syria, Egypt and the prosperous and peaceful province of southern Iraq (most importantly in the city of Basra). They did not, however, serve in the Iranian provinces; al-Saffāḥ’s brief appointment of one of his uncles as governor of Fārs was abruptly terminated by Abū Muslim.<sup>9</sup> Nor did they serve in the Caucasus or North Africa, areas likely to see serious military activity and where Khurāsānī soldiers were stationed in large numbers. In some cases these ‘Abbāsīds formed sub-dynasties passing the title of governor from father to son, for example Šāliḥ b. ‘Alī (d. 152 H/769 CE) and his sons al-Faḍl (d. after 163 H/780 CE) and ‘Abd al-Malik (d. 196 H/811–12 CE) in Syria, and Sulaymān b. ‘Alī (d. 142 H/759–60 CE) and his son Muḥammad (d. 173 H/789 CE) in Basra.

The granting of these prominent roles assured the loyalty of the wider ‘Abbāsīd family to the ruling branch of the dynasty, discouraging internecine rebellion or usurpation. Governors also provided a focus of dynastic loyalty for the people of the provinces. This is especially clear in the case of Syria. Many elements in this large and potentially turbulent province found themselves excluded from positions in the army with the end of Umayyad rule, but the patronage of Šāliḥ and his sons assured the continuing loyalty of at least some of them to the ‘Abbāsīds. This was made very clear during the short reign of al-Amīn, when ‘Abd al-Malik b. Šāliḥ was able to recruit large numbers of Syrians to support the caliph against the eastern Iranian armies of his brother al-Ma’mūn.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This section expands on Kennedy 1981/2016, 73–95, where I first began to investigate the elite of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphate.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, iii, 71–72.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, iii, 841–845.

Members of the 'Abbāsīd family were also wealthy property owners; for example, Ṣāliḥ b. 'Alī, who took over most of the extensive property in northern Syria developed by Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik and other Umayyad princes. This meant that even when they held no formal government position, the 'Abbāsīds retained influence in their provinces. Although they visited the caliphal court in Baghdad, it seems that they resided in their own districts most of the time.

It is clear that al-Rashīd, or rather his Barmakid mentors, sought to undermine the power of these sub-dynasties. Upon Muḥammad b. Sulaymān's death in Basra, his house and vast fortune were confiscated by the caliph. Neither his brother Ja'far or any children he may have had were allowed to inherit his position in the city. Similarly, 'Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ spent the last six years of Hārūn's reign in prison because the caliph was apprehensive about the power he wielded in Syria. Members of the family were still property owners in comfortable circumstances but their place in the political elite was greatly diminished. After the death of 'Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ in 195 H/811 CE no 'Abbāsīd remained who could rally the Syrians to the support of the caliph as he and his father had been able to.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century H/9<sup>th</sup> century CE, the role of the 'Abbāsīd family was greatly restricted. No members of the dynasty governed provinces or commanded armies except for the caliph, those of his children designated as heirs, and occasionally a brother—as in the case of al-Muwaffaq, brother of the caliph al-Mu'tamid (r. 256–279 H/870–892 CE) and leader of the campaign against the Zanġ in southern Iraq. With these changes, the ruling dynasty became disconnected from the inhabitants of many of the provinces, for whom the 'Abbāsīd family became an absent and increasingly irrelevant group.

Some other families who had been important in Umayyad times continued to be powerful under the new regime, either because they opposed the later Umayyads or because they offered support to the new dynasty allowing their previous allegiance to the old rulers to be conveniently overlooked. The most notable of these families were the Muhallabīs.<sup>11</sup> Originally from the Azd tribes of 'Umān, the Muhallabīs rose to prominence in Umayyad service and played a major role in defeating the Khārijite rebellions that threatened the caliphate in Fārs and other areas of Iran. Al-Muhallab and his son Yazid had been major figures in Umayyad politics, but in the later decades of Umayyad rule they had been marginalised. However, they still retained power and influence in the

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11 For the general history of the family, see *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "Muhallabids" (P. Crone), and Crone 1980, 133–35. For their role in the 'Abbāsīd elite, Kennedy 1981/2016, 82–3, 190–2.

city of Basra, and on the approach of the 'Abbāsīd armies in 132 H/749 CE they brought the city over to the cause of the new dynasty. Over the coming decades, they were rewarded with important provincial governorates and military commands, notably in Egypt and North Africa and eventually in Sind as well. In North Africa they formed a minor dynasty referred to many centuries later by the local historian Ibn 'Idhārī (d. c. 712 H/1312 CE)<sup>12</sup> as the *dawlat al-muhālība*. If things had turned out differently, it might well have been the Muhallabīs rather than the Aghlabids who were remembered as the first independent rulers of Muslim Ifrīqiya (Tunisia). In the event, their rule was terminated by the caliph al-Rashīd and their evanescent *dawla* disappeared. Nonetheless, the history of the family shows clearly that the 'Abbāsīds had no qualms about making use of the talents and influence of these important supporters of the previous dynasty. The Muhallabīs brought with them influence in Basra itself and in the Basran trading networks that led from North Africa through Egypt (where there were Muhallabī governors) to Basra and the Gulf and finally to Sind (where there were also Muhallabī governors). In return for governorships, the family brought the caliph influence in areas where 'Abbāsīd armies seldom reached. It could be argued that the Muhallabīs mediated caliphal soft power in the southern fringes of the empire and among the merchant and commercial classes.

The most important source of military power for the caliphs was the group known collectively as the *quwwād*. The term *qā'id* (pl. *quwwād*) is one of a number of Arabic words for leadership used throughout Arabic historiography. In the early 'Abbāsīd period the term had an almost technical meaning, describing the cadre of military officers who formed the backbone of the contemporary 'Abbāsīd army. By tracing the careers of members of some of these families, we can establish a profile of the group and their trajectories. Among the well-known families were those of Mālik b. al-Haytham al-Khuzā'ī, Musayyib b. Zuhayr and al-Ḍabbī, 'Uthmān b. Nahik al-'Akkī, 'Īsā b. Māhān and others. Here I have chosen to concentrate on two, the families of Khuzayma b. Khāzim al-Tamīmī and Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb al-Ṭā'ī. I shall also discuss the family of Ma'n b. Zā'ida al-Shaybānī, who though their origins were different had much in common with the other *quwwād* dynasties.

Almost all the *quwwād* came from Khurāsān. The first known members of this elite joined the armies of the 'Abbāsīd revolution from 130 H/747 CE onwards. Many of them had served Abū Muslim, the leader of the revolution in Khurāsān, but changed their allegiance to the caliph al-Manṣūr after Abū Muslim's execution. They all bore Arabic names and their *nisbas* show that they

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12 Ibn 'Idhārī 1948.

claimed to be descended from well-known Arab tribes. Whether this is actually true or they were Iranian *mawālī* who wanted to claim Arab origin is impossible to ascertain. They seem to have been Arabic speaking and the language of the army was probably Arabic, though it is likely that the Arabic-Persian hybrid language we now know as New Persian was developed in their ranks at this time.<sup>13</sup> The non-Muslim populations of the Jazīra were certainly aware of their eastern origins, and describe them as Persians.<sup>14</sup>

This elite had a number of distinctive features. Firstly it was geographically mobile. Members typically served in different provinces of the caliphate, returning to Baghdad between terms of office to be given new appointments. Alternatively they might enjoy a period of office in the capital itself by serving as members of the elite military units attached to the caliphal court, the *shurṭa* (police) and the *ḥaras* (guard). When they were appointed to governorships or military commands, this was symbolised by the handing over of a *liwā'* or banner of office. They were, in fact, an elite who owed their loyalty to Baghdad and the caliphate rather than to the provinces they governed, a truly pan-imperial cadre.

The leading figures among the *quwwād* retained contacts in the Khurāsānī places where their families originated. They may well have returned on visits and almost all the major families produced at least one provincial governor. At the same time they were also given properties called *qaṭā'i'* (sing. *qaṭī'a*) in Baghdad.<sup>15</sup> Typically these included dwelling houses, a market, a square (*rah̄ba*) and sometimes a mosque. They settled their troops in these urban quarters, where the men could benefit from the commercial opportunities afforded by the expanding new capital. It is likely that the *quwwād* families recruited soldiers from their native Khurāsān and from those of Khurāsānī descent who had settled in Baghdad. They may well have been responsible directly for the payment of salaries to their men, but we have no clear information regarding this.

The composition of the military following of the first family of *quwwād* studied here repays more detailed examination. The family of Khāzīm b. Khuzayma al-Tamīmī<sup>16</sup> was closely connected with his town of origin: Marw al-Rūdh, a small city on the Murghāb river whose site now lies on the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. When he was sent to 'Umān in 751/2 to fight the Khāri-

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13 Bulliet 2009, 140–142, argues that New Persian emerged as a language used by cotton traders to do business. I would argue that it is at least as possible that it emerged among the Khurāsānī military contingents led by the 'Abbāsīd period *quwwād*.

14 The *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (1899–1910) makes this very clear.

15 For the distribution of properties in Baghdad, see al-Ya'qūbī 1892, 140–55, now available in an English translation, al-Ya'qūbī 2018, I, 73–87.

16 Crone 1980, 180–1; Kennedy 1981/2016, 81–2.

jite rebels, his forces consisted of men from his *ahl* (family), his *‘ashīra* (tribe), his *mawālī* (freedmen), the people of Marw al-Rūdh and some Tamīmīs who joined him as he passed through Basra. All these men were in some way dependent on or related to him. Four years later he was fighting Khārijite rebels again, this time in the Jazīra with 8,000 men of Marw al-Rūdh. In 758–759 he was ordered back to Khurāsān to fight the governor, who had rebelled against the caliph. On his approach the people of Marw al-Rūdh rose up against the rebels, captured their leader and handed him over to Khāzim, showing that despite some ten years absence in the west he still retained close links to his native town. When he died, his power and position passed to his son Khuzayma, who was able to raise 5,000 armed supporters in Baghdad on the night in 169 H/786 CE when the caliph al-Hādī died. The family owned a prestigious house in a central part of Baghdad, strategically placed at the east end of the city’s main bridge of boats. In 198 H/813 CE, though Khāzim himself was old and blind, this house became a meeting place for supporters of al-Amin who wished to negotiate his peaceful surrender to Ṭāhir and the supporters of al-Ma’mūn.<sup>17</sup>

We are well informed about the family of Khāzim because of the high-profile campaigns he fought in, but he was likely typical of the *qā’id* cadre. He raised the troops he commanded and he probably distributed their pay. He was in fact not a mere employee of the caliph, but (along with the rest of his family) a contractor who needed to be rewarded and respected for his services. Without the loyalty of such figures, the caliph would have been unable to maintain control over his vast empire.

Another typical family of *quwwād* were the descendants of Qaḥṭaba b. Sha-bīb al-Ṭā’i,<sup>18</sup> but the trajectory of this elite family is rather different from that of Khāzim. Qaḥṭaba came from the same Arab-Khurāsānī background as Khāzim. He had been the leader of the army Abū Muslim sent to the west to install the ‘Abbāsids as caliphs, and would certainly have enjoyed a leading position under the new regime if he had not been killed crossing the Euphrates in the final stages of the campaign. He left two adult sons, al-Ḥasan and Ḥumayd, who both enjoyed long but very different careers in the ‘Abbāsīd imperial elite. Al-Ḥasan took over his father’s command and joined the siege of the last Umayyad governor Yazīd b. Hubayra in the old Umayyad garrison city of Wāsiṭ. Here he came in contact with the caliph’s brother Abū Ja’far, later caliph himself under the title al-Manṣūr. Together they forced the surrender of this last outpost of Umayyad resistance.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, III, 916.

<sup>18</sup> For this family, see Crone 1980, 188–189; Kennedy 1981/2016, 79–80.

The bond the two men struck up was the foundation of al-Ḥasan's subsequent career. He followed the future caliph when he became governor of the Jazīra and provided him with crucial support in his final showdown with Abū Muslim in 755. He spent most of the rest of his long career on the Byzantine frontier and in Armenia. Here he worked closely with military leaders in the frontier districts (the *thughūr*), leading expeditions deep in Byzantine territory and leading projects like the rebuilding of the frontier fortress of Malatya. Like all the leading *quwwād* he was given property in Baghdad (including a street, a *raḩaḩ* and houses) on which to settle his Khurāsānī followers. He died in 181 H/797 CE at the age of 84, full of years and distinction.

By contrast, his brother Ḥumayd was in some ways the black sheep of the family. He made a number of unwise career decisions that would normally have resulted in disgrace, if not execution. The fact that he survived shows how dependent successive caliphs were on the support and loyalty of these Khurāsānī families. While al-Ḥasan attached himself to the future caliph al-Manṣūr, his younger brother took the side of the caliph's uncle 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī when he challenged al-Manṣūr for the supreme title. However, 'Abdallāh also sought the support of the Syrian military elites who had supported the Umayyads. Deep-seated tensions between them and Ḥumayd's Khurāsānī followers meant he deserted before the final battle that saw al-Manṣūr victorious.

Despite Ḥumayd's support of al-Manṣūr's rival, he was appointed governor of Egypt just five years later in 142 H/759 CE. He subsequently jeopardised his position yet again at the time of the great 'Alid rebellion led by Muḥammad the Pure Soul in 145 H/762 CE, when he fled the battlefield and almost caused a disastrous panic in the 'Abbāsīd army. Once more he was rehabilitated, serving as governor of Armenia and finally in the most powerful position open to any of the Khurāsānī military elite: as governor of Khurāsān from 151 H/768 CE until his death in 159 H/776 CE. Like his brother, he had properties in Baghdad.

Both al-Ḥasan's and Ḥumayd's sons carried on the family tradition. The third generation played an important role in supporting al-Amin against his brother al-Ma'mūn in the great 'Abbāsīd civil war after the death of al-Rashīd. Like most of these families, the descendants of Qaḩṩaba b. Shabīb lost everything during the long conflict. Their properties in Baghdad were destroyed and their connections with Khurāsān cut off. They were completely excluded from government office during the caliphates of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṩim.

Not all of the families who constituted the military elite were of Khurāsānī origin and not all had supported the 'Abbāsīd revolution. The family of Ma'n

b. Zā'ida in fact broke most of the rules that might lead to advancement.<sup>19</sup> They were the most prominent of the *ashrāf* (nobles) of the bedouin tribe of Shaybān, which dominated most of the northern Iraqi steppes. They had a substantial following among their fellow tribesmen and could bring experienced and hardy warriors to serve in the 'Abbāsīd armies—but they also had fierce and determined enemies within their own tribe. As tribal leaders, they were opposed by Khārijite groups from Shaybān and by other tribes bitterly hostile to the *ashrāf* who served both Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd caliphates.

Ma'n b. Zā'ida had been a leading supporter of the last Umayyad caliph Marwān II; he went so far as to claim that it was he who killed Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb at time of the crossing of the Euphrates. Those two facts would have made relations with the new regime strained, to put it mildly. With his record, it would seem most improbable that his family would enjoy elite status under the 'Abbāsīd caliphs. Yet that proved the case. Ma'n went perfunctorily into hiding after the fall of the Umayyads but he was clearly hovering, looking for an opportunity to ingratiate himself with al-Manṣūr. His chance came with the rebellion of the Rāw-andiyya, a group of radical Shī'ites, in Baghdad. It caught the caliph off his guard and Ma'n was present to save his life. After this al-Manṣūr recognised that Ma'n, along with his Shaybānī tribesmen, was a valuable supporter. He was sent on distant and unglamorous postings to places like Yaman and Sistān, and was killed in 152 H/772–773 CE in Bust (in the modern Helmand province of southern Afghanistan) when a group of Khārijites dug through the flat roof of his house and surprised him.

He seems to have left no sons. His position within the tribe and his feud with the Khārijites was inherited by his nephew Yazīd b. Mazyad, whom Khārijites pursued to Baghdad and attempted to murder on the city's bridge of boats. Yazīd b. Mazyad became a leading military commander in the reign of al-Mahdī but found himself on the wrong side of a major political conflict when the caliph was succeeded by his son Mūsā al-Hādī. Mūsā enjoyed strong support among military leaders and Yazīd played an important part in this. He is said to have been among those who urged the new caliph to remove his brother Hārūn from the succession and to execute his mentor and leading supporter Yaḥyā the Barmakid. In the event, the sudden death of Mūsā al-Hādī and Hārūn's accession meant that Yazīd, like other *quwwād*, was in deep disgrace and perhaps lucky to escape with his life.

Apart from a short spell as governor of Armenia, Yazīd remained in the political wilderness for almost a decade until the caliph was once more in need of

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<sup>19</sup> For this family, see Crone 1980, 169–170.

his military abilities and tribal following. The Jazīra was disturbed by a widespread Khārījite rebellion led by the charismatic and romantic figure of al-Walīd b. Ṭarīf al-Shārī, who was said to have been from the same Shaybānī tribe as Yazīd. The forces sent by the Barmakīd administration were unable to deal with these fast-moving opponents until, despite the advice of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd, the caliph called on the services of Yazīd. He led his tribal following ('*ashīra*') against the enemy, defeated the rebels and killed their leader al-Walīd, whose grief-stricken sister composed one of the greatest laments in classical Arabic literature on his death. Yazīd was now firmly back in favour with the caliph. His career prospered and he served Hārūn in Khurāsān, on the Byzantine frontier and in Armenia, where he died in 185 H/801 CE.

His son Asad inherited his tribal following and it would seem his prestige. During the great civil war, he was a vigorous supporter of al-Amīn and was known as *fāris al-'arab*, the 'knight of the Arabs'. Like his father and uncle, he was looked up to as an exemplar of the ancient bedouin virtues of courage and generosity. Unfortunately, the defeat of al-Amīn meant that Asad lost power and influence. He had no place in the new 'Abbāsīd caliphate as it was reconstructed by al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim; Arab tribal followings were not allowed to participate in the new military organization of the time, dominated as it was by eastern Iranians and Turks. However, unlike many of the other *quwwād* families under discussion here, the Shaybānī *ashrāf* reinvented themselves, survived and prospered.

In 171 H/787 CE Hārūn had appointed Yazīd b. Mazyad as governor of Azerbaijan, a province requiring a firm military hand to keep the locals peaceful whilst defending them from the Khazars to the north.<sup>20</sup> When he died in the provincial capital of Bardha'a, his son Asad was appointed to succeed him. It seems as if the family connection with the province continued. In 245 H/859–860 CE the caliph al-Mutawakkil appointed Yazīd's grandson Muḥammad b. Khālīd as governor of Bāb al-Abwāb (Derbent) and its surrounding districts. "He rebuilt the city of Ganja and was granted it and the estates (*ḍiyā'*) in the area as hereditary possessions (*irthan*)".

With the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in the next year, caliphal control over the Caucasus effectively collapsed and left the family in control. In the years to come the descendants of Ma'n b. Zā'ida changed their collective identity and with it their familial claim to leadership. Instead of being *ashrāf* of Shaybān, they took the ancient Iranian title of Shirvān Shāh and claimed descent from the

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<sup>20</sup> For the complicated events taking place in Azerbaijan in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century H/9<sup>th</sup> century CE, see Madelung 1975, 243–249.

semi-mythical Sāsānian hero Bahram Gur.<sup>21</sup> Beginning with Manucehr, who succeeded in 418 H/1028 CE, the members of the family bore Persian rather than Arab names. The dynasty survived in the eastern Caucasus in one form or another until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, coincidentally disappearing at almost the same time as the ‘Abbāsids finally lost Baghdad.

The Shaybānī elite survived when other families of *quwwād* lost their status and identity for a number of reasons. The most important was their enjoyment of tribal support that was not necessarily dependent on salaries from the *dīwān* in Baghdad or revenues from Khurāsān. Though the tribe was clearly divided between supporters of the *ashrāf* and supporters of the Khārijites, there were tribesmen who had followed their leaders and settled in Azerbaijan where the family established their power base in later generations, having an almost hereditary position in the eastern Caucasus before the death of Hārūn and the great civil war. Although they fought on the losing side that time, they had a power base beyond the reach of al-Ma’mūn and his victorious general Ṭāhir. They did not even suffer from the loss of their property in Baghdad after the civil war, because seemingly they never had any. As we have seen, the family survived, but only by adapting themselves to new circumstances in new areas and adopting an entirely new political personality: as Iranian *shahs*, not Arab *ashrāf*.

The last family I want to consider in detail is that of al-Ash’ath b. Qays al-Kindī. Their history illustrates another pattern of continuity and survival among the elite of the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd caliphates. Descended from the kings of the great south Arabian tribe of Kinda, the family of al-Ash’ath came from the highest echelons of the pre-Islamic Arab nobility. Al-Ash’ath himself had pledged allegiance to the Prophet but joined the *ridda* (apostasy) after his death. Despite this, because of their status as tribal leaders the family still remained influential among the Kindīs who settled in Iraq during the Umayyad period. Al-Ash’ath’s grandson, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, led the last great, unsuccessful rebellion of the *ashrāf* of the Iraqi tribes against the Umayyads in 82 H/701 CE. Under the early ‘Abbāsīds, the Kindī leaders enjoyed a modest revival of their power, with several of their members appointed as governors of Kufa.

Unlike the Shaybānīs, who could clearly mobilise a nomad force from their tribesmen, the influence of the Kindīs seems to have been urban and based in the city of Kufa. Though they never reached the top ranks of the ‘Abbāsīd elite, they were important in securing the loyalty of the people of Kufa to the ‘Abbāsīd cause, especially when faced with the ‘Alid rebellion of Muḥammad the Pure Soul in Medina in 145 H/762 CE. The fact that the city, so turbulent in

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<sup>21</sup> See Vacca 2017, 144–145.

Umayyad times, was peaceful throughout the first 'Abbāsīd half-century must have been in part due to their influence.

This was the family that produced the famous intellectual Ya'qūb b. al-Sibāh al-Kindī, known as the 'philosopher of the Arabs'. Like many of the leading figures in Kufa, he had moved to Baghdad as the city lost economic and political status in favour of the capital. Ya'qūb seems to have built up his famous library from the wealth he inherited from his illustrious family, but appears to have had no personal military or political ambitions himself. With his death, we lose touch with the family, but their story is an interesting one of elite survival and progressive adaptation to the Rāshidūn, to the Umayyads and to the 'Abbāsīds. They moved from tribal leaders, to defeated rebels, to functionaries of the 'Abbāsīd state, and finally to the intellectual eminence that ensured the Kindī name was the only one of the early 'Abbāsīd elite families to remain well-known in later centuries, as its reputation spread to the cathedral schools and universities of western Europe.

The dominance of this early 'Abbāsīd elite was ended by the great civil war that followed the death of the caliph al-Rashīd in 193 H/809 CE. His son al-Amīn enjoyed the support of most of the early 'Abbāsīd elite. Led by 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, the *quwwād* of the Khurāsāniyya were defeated near Rayy in northern Iran by the much smaller army of the supporters of al-Ma'mūn. Although some figures of the elite remained at al-Ma'mūn's court, the army commanders (notably Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn) came from eastern Iranian families with no previous connection with the 'Abbāsīd court. They had been thoroughly alienated from it by the harsh taxation policies of 'Alī b. 'Īsā.

This defeat, and the subsequent siege and ruin of Baghdad, destroyed the power base of much of the elite. The *quwwād* no longer enjoyed the financial support of the government to recruit and pay their followers, and they were cut off and excluded from their ancestral homes in Khurāsān. None of the *quwwād* families who had dominated the military structures of the early 'Abbāsīd caliphate played any important role in the caliphate re-established by al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim. The only member of the group known to us is Naṣr al-Khuzā'i—and not as a supporter of the caliphate, but as the man who led the rebellion in Baghdad protesting the enforcement of the doctrine of the creativeness of the Qur'ān.

It was not only the *quwwād* whose power was destroyed by the coming of the new order. The members of the 'Abbāsīd family who had played such important roles in the early 'Abbāsīd elite, representing the family (so to speak) in the great cities of Basra and Kufa, in the *sawād* of Iraq, Syria and sometimes Egypt, disappear at this time from the political stage. It is a sign of the changes in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century *hijrī* that the sources no longer tell us the names of the governors of

these great cities and provinces, except when they are involved in some disturbance or battle like the defence of Basra against the Qarāmiṭa. When we are told their names, they are always members of the Turkish and eastern Iranian military, not members of the ruling family. We are informed incidentally that the descendants of the great ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, effective ruler of much of northern Syria, still lived in the neighbourhood of Manbij where he had constructed a celebrated palace, but there is no indication they played any part in the political life of the province. The provincial elites could no longer look to the patronage and protection of ‘their’ members of the ruling family, and this connection with the dynasty was lost.

The elite of the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphate is remarkable in Islamic history because of its variety, its broad base and its many contacts. We cannot understand the history of this great dynasty unless we look beyond the narrative of the actions of the caliphs to those who supported and influenced them.

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**The East**



Jürgen Paul

## Who Were the *Mulūk Fārs*?

**Abstract:** Taking a passage in al-Iṣṭakhri as its starting point, this paper presents the Fārs rural elites called *mulūk* and *ahl al-buyūtāt*. It argues that these families were the dominant influence in the province, controlling many sources of revenue (including overseas trade routes and agricultural taxes). The main body of the paper is a study of one representative of such a family, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil al-Ḥanzālī al-Tamīmī. His pedigree can be traced for more than four centuries, from early Islamic times to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the paper discusses earlier scholarship on this figure, showing serious misrepresentations.

**Keywords:** Fārs; *malik*; *raʿīs*; *ahl al-buyūtāt*; local lordship; aristocracy; castle; taxation

### Introduction

Talking about elites in pre-Mongol Iran or in other parts of the Muslim world generally means talking about military commanders, emirs, or governors, or, on the civilian side of state administration, viziers and clerks. Of these, Muslim scholars are best documented, to the point of producing the famous quote “ulemology is a noble science—at least we have to think so, because it is almost all the Islamic social history we will ever have for this period.”<sup>1</sup> A prominent example of this state of affairs is the recent study on Baghdadi elites in the Seljuq period.<sup>2</sup> In the context of pre-Mongol Iran, but also Iraq and Syria, the urban notables tend to be ‘*ulamā*’.<sup>3</sup>

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Thanks are due to Peter Verkinderen and Hannah Hagemann, who read an earlier version of this article and gave valuable comments. Their support is gratefully acknowledged. All remaining shortcomings and errors are mine.

1 Mottahedeh 1975, 495; famously also quoted in Humphreys 1991, 187. It is worth noting the reservations about the period—Mottahedeh has in mind the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, a little later than the focus of the present contribution.

2 van Renterghem 2015, I, 57. The author distinguishes three major fields of elite activities: religious and legal *encadrement*, government service, and economic activities (which at the end are restricted to long-distance trade). Rural elites are not covered in this work.

3 The word “notables” to indicate a group of urban elite persons was first used by Albert Hourani in his “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables”, reprinted in Hourani 1981 (first published 1968). See also Gelvin 2006.

This situation is of course due to the available source material. Whereas chronicles and other narrative histories yield information about emirs and viziers (the latter group are also the subject of source monographs), Muslim scholars profit from their own literary genre, the biographical dictionary. This has two forms, general and regional, and scholars appear in both.<sup>4</sup> In certain cases, this abundant material allows complex prosopographic studies; one of the earliest was Bulliet's book on the notables—he calls them patricians—of Nishāpūr.<sup>5</sup> There have been more studies of this kind, Mottahedeh on Qazwīn for example. The vast material available for Baghdad made van Renterghem's work possible.<sup>6</sup> For other well-documented cities, a mix of sources has also allowed detailed studies for longer periods; the best example is Durand-Guédy's monograph on Iṣfahān.<sup>7</sup>

This focus means that another social group has remained largely unstudied until the present day. These are the rural aristocrats: large landowners, castellans, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> They must have been there, and must have played very important roles in their provinces and sometimes on a geographically broader level, but we rarely get more than a glimpse of who they were, what they did, where they came from, how they saw their position in society, and so forth. Mostly, they are not mentioned by name—and thus prosopographic studies are out of the question—but they appear under generic identifications like *ru'asā'*, *ahl al-buyūtāt*, and so on, or are described with older Iranian terms such as *dihqān*.<sup>9</sup> This plurality of terms confirms the situation sketched in the introduction to this volume: many somewhat fuzzy terms are in use for persons and groups of elite status.

There is no type of source that explicitly deals with rural aristocrats, though there is some overlap with the biographical dictionaries where rural lords appear if they were also Muslim scholars. We may conversely surmise that many scholars were landlords, but the sources do not often talk about such profane things as a man's position in society when they can instead give long lists of whose *ḥadīth* he heard and to whom he transmitted.<sup>10</sup>

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4 For a recent review of the state of the art, al-Qāḍī 2009.

5 Bulliet 1972. See also Mottahedeh 1975.

6 Mottahedeh 1973.

7 Durand-Guédy 2010.

8 Paul 2016, and for the *ra'īs* as a type of rural notable, Paul 2015.

9 For this stratum of the elites, see Tafazzoli and Paul 2013. Articles from the *Encyclopedia Iranica* are quoted exclusively with reference to the online edition.

10 Cohen 1970.

Despite this, since we know that the rural lords must have been a decisive part of the upper class we should endeavor to find out more about them. There are two ways to do so. First, the extant corpus of narrative and non-narrative sources must be scrutinized and the tiny bits of information available there put together. Second, the exceptional passages where rural lords are focused upon must be identified. One of these exceptional passages can be found in al-Iṣṭakhri's geography, and it concerns the *mulūk* ("kings") of his home province, Fārs.<sup>11</sup> He also writes here of the *ahl al-buyūtāt* ("noble houses"), another type of rural lord whose position probably was one step below *mulūk* status; *mulūk* commanded greater wealth and were eligible for high offices to which *ahl al-buyūtāt* apparently had no access. It is interesting to note that the *mulūk* families were all of Arab stock whereas the *ahl al-buyūtāt* descended from Iranian nobles.

Al-Iṣṭakhri knew this province very well. The people he was writing about were active within living memory, and some of their families still held very much the same positions their ancestors had. I suspect that he included this passage in order to show that important people and families came from Fārs—the enumeration of the provincial *mulūk* is part of the province's *faḍā'il*, part of his praise of it. He may be exaggerating, but only a little; at least some of the events, persons, and families he speaks of can be identified in other sources. The passage in question does not resurface in Ibn Ḥawqal, who otherwise follows al-Iṣṭakhri closely, but nevertheless some information on these elites can also be gained from his work.<sup>12</sup>

In this article, I shall first give examples of the use of the term *mulūk* in sources dealing with pre-Mongol Iran, before presenting the passage in al-Iṣṭakhri in some detail, and finally turning to a case study of one of the representatives of the *mulūk Fārs*: a man called Muḥammad b. Wāṣil b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī, whose career in Fārsī politics can be followed between ca. 255 H/869 CE and ca. 262 H/876 CE. This case study includes dealing with the image of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil found in earlier scholarship. He would not necessarily warrant the detailed examination presented here, except that he is one of the rare individuals regarding whom such a study is possible. More such individuals could be identified. Here, I regard Muḥammad b. Wāṣil as a specimen of his social group—how typical a specimen must be left to future research.

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11 Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 140–144.

12 Ibn Ḥawqal 1939 and 1964.

## **Mulūk as a Term**

Today, *malik* means “king” in Arabic. In earlier sources, the meaning is broader and the term applied to different kinds of elite persons and families. The term is used for rural secular notables (as opposed to Muslim scholars), who are large landholders, nobles, aristocrats, and/or local lords. They are more important, wealthier, and have better connections at court than the rural gentry of Iranian extraction, whom the sources more frequently call *dahāqīn*. In some ways, these noble families, the *mulūk* and the *dahāqīn*, run the province together. They are central to its administration and to a large degree manage taxation (often as tax farmers). Later, some of these families become known as the province’s *ru’asā’*.

Apart from the passage in al-Iṣṭakhrī that serves as the starting point for this contribution, a survey yields more occurrences of the term in pre-Mongol sources. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper; what follows is a cursory summary.<sup>13</sup>

For pre-Islamic times, the term is used for the Persian kings (regional as well as Great Kings), but also the rulers of Rūm, India, and China. For the Arab world, it is interesting to see which groups have *mulūk*; most prominently, Kinda, but also Ḥimyar and less frequently other groups. There is also mention of *mulūk al-Yaman*, “kings of Yemen.”<sup>14</sup> In the following passage, I will concentrate on *mulūk* from the Islamic period.

Sources from the early Islamic period have an “extensive discussion of the terms used to designate holders of authority.”<sup>15</sup> *Malik* is only one of those terms, but one that is sometimes privileged.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī includes the biography of a singer of the Umayyad period, Ibrāhīm b. Māhān. Describing his career, al-Khaṭīb notes that Ibrāhīm met caliphs and *mulūk*.<sup>16</sup> Since there were no independent regional “kings” in early Umayyad times, what is probably meant are extremely wealthy and well-connected landowners, and in this case not necessarily rural ones. In his version of the

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<sup>13</sup> I profited from Peter Verkinderen’s expertise who ran a search on my behalf in the ‘Jedli’ toolbox: <https://www.islamic-empire.uni-hamburg.de/en/publications-tools/digital-tools/downloads/jedli-toolbox.html>. The search was for *mulūk*, *mulūk al-ṭawā’if*, and *mulūk al-aṭrāf*. Peter Verkinderen’s generous help is gratefully acknowledged here.

<sup>14</sup> In the Islamic period, some Arab groups had *mulūk*. Some of the Arab dynasties of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries are called by this term, e. g. the Mazyadids at Ḥilla are presented as *mulūk al-asadiyya*. Al-Ḥilli 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Marlow 2016, 113–26.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1931, 6:175.

biography of Ya‘qūb b. Layth al-Ṣaffār (r. 861–879) which also includes ‘Amr b. al-Layth, Ya‘qūb’s brother and successor (r. 879–900), Ibn Khallikān gives some details about the ‘revolt’ of Rāfi‘ b. Harthama in Khurāsān. In May 896 CE (Rabī‘ II, 283 H) Rāfi‘ sent to the neighbouring *mulūk*, asking them to help him against ‘Amr b. al-Layth.<sup>17</sup> In this case, apart from landed properties we can suppose that these families also maintained military resources such as castles, retainers and so forth. Al-Muqaddasī has a report about the emergence of Darī (Persian) as the court language in which the main character is one of the local rulers (*mulūk Khurāsān*).<sup>18</sup> In al-‘Utbi’s history of Maḥmūd the Ghaznavid, we also meet *mulūk Khurāsān*, and he speaks of the *mulūk Khurāsān wa-aṣḥāb al-juyūsh bihā*.<sup>19</sup> However, Ibn Funduq Bayhaqī informs us that the province has not produced any *mulūk*, only military commanders. The author regrets that he cannot include a chapter on the province’s *mulūk*; such a chapter, in his words, is a standard feature in regional historiography.<sup>20</sup> He calls dynasties such as the Ṭāhirids and the Ṣaffārids *mulūk*. Ibn Khurdādhbih, on the other hand, has a list of *mulūk Khurāsān* together with their titles; probably pre-Islamic figures are meant and some may have survived into the early Islamic period.<sup>21</sup> This also is the way the anonymous Persian *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* uses the term.<sup>22</sup> In the eastern provinces in particular, the regional or vassal kings can appear as *mulūk al-aṭrāf*; some of these kings are also included in Ibn Khurdādhbih’s list. Such regional dynasties are typical of these mountainous regions (now part of Afghanistan).<sup>23</sup>

Ibn Ḥawqal offers a list of local and regional rulers in Azerbaijan and the Caucasus whom he calls collectively *mulūk al-aṭrāf*. It is interesting to note that the master of the province, Ibn Abī l-Sāj, is also called *malik*. This yields a hierarchy of local and provincial *mulūk*.<sup>24</sup> In this region, the mountainous northwest of Iran, local rulers are often called *mulūk*. This also applies also to the rulers of Daylam.<sup>25</sup>

The term *mulūk al-aṭrāf* could be used for people whose rank in pre-Islamic Iran was that of *marzbān*; this is the definition found in al-Khwārazmī’s treatise

17 Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:468.

18 Al-Muqaddasī 1906, 334–5; see Marlow 2016, 68.

19 Al-‘Utbi 1424/2004, 434. In another instance, he calls the Sāmānids the *mulūk al-sharq*, “kings of the east”, 184. For the use of the title *malik* by Sāmānid rulers, see Treadwell 2003.

20 Ibn Funduq Bayhaqī 1317/1938, 65.

21 Ibn Khurdādhbih 1889, 39.

22 *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* 1962, and Paul 1994.

23 I have discussed terms for rural notables and local ruling houses in Paul 1994, 182–183; see also Paul 2016, 113–116.

24 Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 347–348 and 354; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 341–2 and 347.

25 One example only: al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 112.

on administrative terminology. It is also employed for the regional kings who ruled Iran whenever there was no empire.<sup>26</sup> One of the most salient later narrative patterns is that of the central government sending out messengers to the *mulūk al-aṭrāf*.<sup>27</sup>

Closest to al-Iṣṭakhri in time and space is the hagiographic account of the life of Ibn Khafīf Shirāzī. It includes a report of a man of high descent who started out on the mystic's path, after which upper-class families—*mulūk wa-ru'asā'*—of Shirāz began offering him their daughters in marriage. The marriages took place, hundreds of them, but the man divorced the brides before consummation. Some of the girls were allowed to stay; one (a vizier's daughter) for over forty years.<sup>28</sup> In another context, this same source uses *mulūk* together with *salāṭīn*, saying that such people are in the habit of having soldiers run before them to drive the people out of the way as they ride through towns. The rider in question was 'Amr b. al-Layth the Ṣaffārid, and the setting Nishāpūr.<sup>29</sup>

This term is thus not always correctly translated as “king” and not even as “ruler.”<sup>30</sup> Its meaning is broader since it includes figures and families who did not rule as royalty but were aristocrats, landholders, and very wealthy and influential persons, the top families of the upper class. Later, particularly in Seljuqid contexts, the term is mostly used for subordinate rulers who are members of the dynasty; as is well known, the term *al-sulṭān al-a'zam* was reserved for the imperial overlord, *al-sulṭān al-mu'azzam* for whoever ruled over a significant part of the imperial territory, and *malik* for a ruler on the provincial level.

In the earlier periods, however, the term sometimes is paired with *tunnā'*, “landowners.” *Tunnā'* in turn comes alongside *dahāqīn* or in other cases *tujjār* (“merchants”, and particularly those in long-distance trade). Al-Iṣṭakhri himself brings together *mulūk* and *tunnā'* when he describes their apparel and other features.<sup>31</sup> Al-Muqaddasī combines *tunnā'* and *tujjār* in his description and praise of Samarqand.<sup>32</sup> For Fārs, he mentions *tunnā'* among the notables otherwise enumerated as *mashāyikh* and *wujūh*.<sup>33</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal has a very interesting passage

26 Al-Khwārazmī 1895, 114.

27 Al-Sam'ānī 1963, s.v. Bishkānī, 2:249, repeated in Yāqūt 1955, same lemma, 1:428.

28 Al-Daylamī 1955, 224.

29 Al-Daylamī 1955, 10.

30 Karev 2015, 300. Karev notes that the great landholder 'Ujayf b. 'Anbasa, a representative of the new supra-regional elite forming in Transoxiana after the conquest, is introduced as *malik* in a list of “kings” who came to submit to the caliph al-Mu'taṣim.

31 Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 138.

32 Al-Muqaddasī 1906, 278.

33 Al-Muqaddasī 1906, 430.

about fashion styles of various upper-class groups in Fārs; the *tunnā'*, he says, hold a middle course between the secretaries and the merchants *tujjār*.<sup>34</sup> This is also their place in Māfarrūkhi's ranking of social strata.<sup>35</sup>

Morony describes a hierarchy within the upper class in the conquest period in Iraq. Beneath the royal family, he places the *ahl al-buyūtāt*, people descended from the noble houses of the Parthian period.<sup>36</sup> This was presumably the group best matching the *mulūk* of later centuries. Morony continues: "At the bottom of this aristocratic hierarchy were the small landed proprietors (ar. *tunnā'*, syr. *mare qorye*)."<sup>37</sup> Whereas Morony's study is based on western—Iraqi—material, de la Vaissière has studied the eastern centers of the emerging Muslim world. He describes the transition from Sogdian nobles to "the sons of Sogdian *mulūk*" and he insists on a ranking of nobility there.<sup>38</sup> David Durand-Guédy gives some details about old Iṣfahānī families in his monograph on Iṣfahān in the Seljuq period. Quoting Ibn Ḥawqal, he observes that the *dahāqīn* of pre-Islamic times were now the great *tunnā'*. Several families, he continues, were "directly connected to the Sasanian elite."<sup>39</sup>

Returning to Fārs, al-Iṣṭakhri and Ibn Ḥawqal stress the continuity between pre-Islamic and Islamic times. They list a number of noble families (*ahl al-buyūtāt*, *buyūt*) who have held hereditary leading positions in the provincial administration for many generations; there is no doubt that these families were also large landholders.<sup>40</sup> Some had such positions still in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century, and had therefore transmitted their rank for no less than four centuries. But they are still considered separately from the *mulūk*: they occupy an elevated rank, but it is one level below the *mulūk*.

It would be interesting to follow the idea of precise social ranking within the upper class through the early Islamic centuries, but this is beyond the scope of this contribution.<sup>41</sup> It is however clear that the term *mulūk* is one of several used in marking social rank, and that invariably the *mulūk* occupy a place beneath the actual ruler, but above the rural gentry mostly known as the *dahāqīn*.

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34 Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 289; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 283.

35 Māfarrūkhi 1933, 87–8; English translation Durand-Guédy 2010, 28–9.

36 Pourshariati 2011, 58–9.

37 Morony 1984, 186–7.

38 de la Vaissière 2007, 33–6.

39 Durand-Guédy 2010, 29; Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 367.

40 Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 147–148; Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 292; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 286.

41 See Marlow 2016, 113–126 as a starting point, and also Hayes 2015.

## **Mulūk in al-Iṣṭakhrī: Leading Families of Fārs**

In al-Iṣṭakhrī's text,<sup>42</sup> various kinds of *mulūk* appear. He opens the passage stating that the province has produced many *mulūk* and first mentions (but does not enumerate) the Persian kings of pre-Islamic times. Second comes the Sasanian general Hurmuzān; he is probably included because of his major role in the early Islamic community and because he was married to a woman from the family of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.<sup>43</sup> Then al-Iṣṭakhrī names Salmān al-Fārisī,<sup>44</sup> to whom legend also ascribes noble birth (although not quite of the rank of a *malik*). All this history appears merely as an introduction, however. The main part of the passage is devoted to very real and very contemporary people. These families are of Arabic stock but have been living in Fārs since the early Islamic period; some of them could even have arrived on the northern shores of the sea in pre-Islamic times. It is beyond the scope of this contribution to go into details regarding all those families. After a brief introduction of the various *mulūk* families of Fārs, therefore, only one of them will be discussed at length.

The first family al-Iṣṭakhrī presents are the Āl 'Umāra, whom he says are identical with or part of the Āl al-Julandā. The family was well connected on both sides of the sea, with its Fārsī center on the coast. The Fārs branch derived its wealth and influence mainly from control of the sea passages of the Persian littoral. Their main base was the fortress of Dikdān.<sup>45</sup> This fortification, also known as Dākbāyāh,<sup>46</sup> was renowned as one of the most impregnable in the world;<sup>47</sup> it allowed its masters to take in the *'ushr* of all the ships that passed by. Other branches of the Āl al-Julandā were prominent on the Arab side in 'Umān, where they were for a while a ruling dynasty.<sup>48</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhrī links the Fārs branch to the story of Mūsā the Prophet on his quest for the Water of Life, and he tells us that the Qur'ānic verse "beyond them was a king who seized

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42 Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 140 ff. The passage has been noted by previous authors, including Spuler 1952, 434. Spuler's focus is on the preservation of the Iranian pre-Islamic culture rather than the significance of these families in the political sphere.

43 See Shahbazi. He was indeed born into a family who had the rank which Morony describes for the early *mulūk* (Morony 1984). His province was Khūzistān (with al-Ahwāz as a center), so he is not immediately from the Fārs area, but some of his fights against the Arab invaders took place next to Iṣṭakhr. See also Pourshariati 2011, 336–338.

44 On him, see Levi della Vida 2004; Levi della Vida notes that some versions see Salmān as coming from a *dihqān* background.

45 Pellat 2004.

46 Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 268; Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 272, also has *qal'a Ibn 'Umāra*.

47 Al-Mas'ūdī 1962, I, 181 (§ 501).

48 Wilkinson 1975.

every ship, unlawfully” refers to them.<sup>49</sup> This detail implies they held the position in question since pre-Islamic times.

We thus see a family—or rather a cluster of families or clans—of Arab descent, long resident on the Fārs coast, deriving enormous incomes from ‘taxing’ the sea trade but still able to mobilize support from inland groups as well. We are not informed of what their landholdings consisted of, but it must be supposed they were large.

Another family, the Āl Abī Zuhayr al-Madīnī, is most interesting because one of their number, Abū Sāra, ‘rebelled’ in the times of the caliph al-Ma’mūn (r. 813–833). His revolt is not dated more precisely, but it may well have been linked to the uprisings during al-Ma’mūn’s prolonged stay in the East. Abū Sāra claimed authority for himself in Fārs.<sup>50</sup> His rebellion had to be quelled by an army sent from Khurāsān and led by the Khurāsānī general Muḥammad b. Ash‘ath.<sup>51</sup> An earlier representative of the family, Ja‘far b. Abī Zuhayr, led a delegation of Fārsī rural lords—the *mulūk Fārs*—to Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809), who was extremely pleased and is quoted as having seen him as a potential vizier (unfortunately, he was prohibitively deaf). The Āl Abī Zuhayr controlled a strip of the coast like the Āl al-Julandā and were also landholders; one of their members owned an entire district. This particular family apparently controlled a fuller set of resources than the Āl al-Julandā, and they were well connected to the central government.<sup>52</sup>

The *mulūk Fārs* were thus a group of enormously wealthy families of Arab descent with two main sources of revenue: control of long-distance overseas trade and agriculture. Regarding the latter, we can assume these families actively owned vast stretches of land. They also farmed the taxes of many districts. In some cases, their economic importance translated into political influence; they were seen as representatives of their class at the caliphal court, and even some-

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49 18 (al-Kahf): 79, tr. Khalidi. *Wa-kāna warā’ahum malikun ya’khudhu kulla safīnatin ghaṣban*. “*Ghaṣban*” could also be translated by “violently”.

50 Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 141, *yad’ū ilā nafsihi*.

51 I have been unable to identify this person. He cannot be the Abū l-Sarāyā who revolted in southern Iraq (around Kūfa) in the beginning of al-Ma’mūn’s caliphate (in 199 H/814–5 CE) because as far as I can see this revolt never spread to Fārs (al-Ṭabarī 1994, 8:528–535). This revolt was ended by Harthama b. A‘yan. On the other hand, the Muḥammad b. Ash‘ath who is said to have quelled the revolt in Fārs cannot be the Muḥammad b. Ash‘ath al-Khuzā‘ī who died during a summer raid into Anatolia in 149 H/766 CE (al-Ṭabarī 1994, 8:28). Did al-Iṣṭakhri follow oral traditions here and mix up the names of both rebel and general? Other sources date Abū Sāra to the reign of al-Manṣūr (al-Balādhuri 2000, 11:31), and this would fit the context better.

52 The information that ‘Umāra and Zuhayr came to Fārs in the ‘Abbāsīd period therefore may well be mistaken, see Oberling/Hourcade.

times rebelled against the central authorities. This seems to show that they also had some military power.

None of the local persons al-Iṣṭakhri enumerates in this passage can be found in the indexes of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr. The families likewise do not appear in the general historiography with its focus on the imperial center and its Arabocentric worldview. The man to whom the case study is devoted is an exception. In his case, the narrative in al-Iṣṭakhri can be confirmed in the universal chronicles; there is also some extra information in Ibn Ḥawqal, Ibn al-Balkhī, and Ibn Khallikān.

### **Muḥammad b. Wāṣil and the Descendants of ‘Urwa b. Udayya in Fārs**

My case study concerns Muḥammad b. Wāṣil b. Ibrāhīm. He came from a prominent family of Arab stock who moved to Fārs in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century and settled around the provincial center of Iṣṭakhr. The family grew very wealthy over time (it is unclear how) and it may be supposed many members of it held leading positions in the province. It is not possible to establish a genealogical tree. Only a few members emerge from the sources, and only a couple of episodes are told in sufficient detail to gain an idea of the family’s social profile. It is clear, however, that they did not reside on the coast and were not as important in the overseas trade as other families; they were primarily landowners and tax farmers.

The family belonged to the Ḥanẓala branch of the Banū Tamīm and Ibn Wāṣil therefore is introduced as al-Ḥanẓalī al-Tamīmī. The Banū Ḥanẓala were still present in the region in later days, but further west: Ibn al-Balkhī reports them living between Ahwāz and Baṣra and from there down to the coast. In the time under discussion here, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil’s power and landholdings were centered in the region of Iṣṭakhr.<sup>53</sup>

The first members of the family whom we can trace in the sources were Khārijīs, opponents of both ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 656–661) and the Umayyad caliph Mu‘āwiya (r. 661–680) whose governor in southern Iraq, Ziyād b. Abihi, killed many out of their numbers. These included the ancestors of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, ‘Urwa b. Udayya and his brother Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya; Abū Bilāl Mirdās, a prominent man among the Khārijīs, was killed in 61 H/680–681

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53 Ibn al-Balkhī 1921, 69.

CE.<sup>54</sup> In the sources, Abū Bilāl is shown as a model of ascetic piety, a quietist for most of his life until his final ‘rebellion’ (*khurūj*). This *khurūj* (literally “leaving” or “going out”) drove him from Baṣra. He went to Ahwāz with a small group of followers, won an unexpected victory over an Umayyad detachment, and finally was defeated and killed next to Dārābjird, in Fārs.<sup>55</sup> His brother ‘Urwa does not seem to have participated in Abū Bilāl’s *khurūj*, but he was still executed in Baṣra later.

Al-Ma’mūn appointed ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm, one of this family, as leader of the maritime *ghazw* in the Persian Gulf. The target of this expedition was a group called the Qaṭariya—the real or presumed successors of a central figure in early extreme Khārijism called Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā’a, active in the last decades of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> Ibn A’tam al-Kūfī details the battles against Qaṭarī, who whilst fleeing the caliphal troops followed the same route as Abū Bilāl Mirdās via Ahwāz to Dārābjird.<sup>57</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal links the Qaṭariya to the Ṣufriya, another extremist group of Khārijites, saying that ‘Abādān (next to the mouth of the Tigris on the Persian Gulf coast) “is a stronghold where warriors live who fight the Ṣufriya and the Qaṭariya and other pirates.”<sup>58</sup>

The family thus either dropped their Khārijī sympathies in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century or followed a quietist form of Khārijism as their ancestors had done. The campaign is presented very much as a family enterprise: it was equipped (and apparently at least partly paid for) by another family member, Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. ‘Umar, son of that ‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm who led the enterprise. As this Mirdās was called by his *kunya* Abū Bilāl, the name Abū Bilāl Mirdās resurfaced; a reminder that in such genealogically conscious families, names were passed on.

The family was extremely wealthy, evident in the fact that it could muster the funds for such a campaign. Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. ‘Umar was charged a *kharāj* or annual land tax of roughly three million dirham. His relative Muḥam-

54 He even has an entry in the *El<sup>2</sup>*: Levi della Vida 1993. Levi della Vida completes the genealogy in pre-Islamic times: the Arab tribal group was Rabī’a b. Ḥanzala b. Mālik b. Zayd Manāt, also called Rabī’a al-wustā. Mirdās was descended from Ḥudayr b. ‘Amr b. ‘Abd b. Ka’b; Udayya was the name of his mother or grandmother. He was mostly known by his *kunya* Abū Bilāl.

55 Hagemann 2016, 41–42. The narrative of this *khurūj* also appears in Levi della Vida 1993. For the figure of Abū Bilāl, see also Gaiser 2014. Both Hagemann and Gaiser do not aim at reconstructing the events, but concentrate on the narrative itself.

56 Van Ess 1992, 573, 613.

57 Al-Kūfī 1392/1972, 1–41. No Ḥanzala appear in this narrative.

58 Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 48: *kāna fihi al-muḥāribūn li-l-Ṣufriya wa-l-Qaṭariya wa-ghayrihim min multaṣṣa al-baḥr*. Van Ess 1992 does not list a group called the Qaṭariya but has much information on the Ṣufriya.

mad b. Wāṣil had to pay about the same sum.<sup>59</sup> In total the family's members owed a sum of 10 million dirham to the state. (To put this in perspective, the entire province was good for about 30 million dirham.<sup>60</sup>) The sum probably means that the family was engaged in tax farming, so that the amount stated was not due merely from their own landholdings but was the sum total they had to deliver to the caliphal administration. On the other hand, al-Iṣṭakhrī explicitly says they owned many villages. For their administration, they may have employed Iranian experts, at least in earlier periods; we hear of a man of *dihqān* extraction who managed Ḥanzalī holdings in Fārs and was himself a client of the Ḥanzala.<sup>61</sup>

Another asset which made the Ḥanzalī family influential was their control of castles. Castles were a necessary feature of local lordship. As mentioned above, the Āl al-Julandā held the castle of Dikdān on the coast. Muḥammad b. Wāṣil acquired at least one castle in the region of Iṣṭakhr, next to Rāmjird, called Saʿīdābād. This was an old fortress, as Ibn Ḥawqal tells us. It had been in use in Sasanian times and in the early Islamic period it had served as a stronghold for the governor Ziyād b. Abiḥi (who killed so many Khārijites, among them the two ancestors of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil). Muḥammad b. Wāṣil ordered it demolish-

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59 Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 142.

60 Ibn Khurdādhbih 1889, 48, who adds that in pre-Islamic times the state took 40 million from the province. For the year 350 H/961 CE, Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 299 and Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 304 gives 1.5 million dinar (the exchange rate between silver dirham and gold dinar is a matter of dispute; the figures presented here would make a rate of 20 dirham to the dinar probable). Ibn Ḥawqal's figures may point to an organized financial bureaucracy; these were the times of 'Aḩud al-Dawla the Būyid (338–372 H/949–983 CE). Compare this to the 15 million dirham which Ya'qūb b. al-Layth (in 255 H/869 CE) reportedly offered to get the caliphal administration from the taxes of Fārs if he were appointed over the province; Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:447. When Ya'qūb came to Fārs again in or around 260 H/873–4 CE and was able to administer the taxes in a regular way, he got the 30 million that seem to have been the norm in this period. He had his representative in Fārs, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, send only five million on to the caliphal administration (Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:453). The same source mentions that the Ṣaffār had an appointment for a number of provinces (including Khurāsān, but also Fārs) on condition that he deliver two-thirds of the taxes he collected. In that case, the caliphal court would have expected around 20 million dirham from Fārs. Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:462. For more figures relating to the taxes due from Fārs, see Spuler 1952, 468–469.

61 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghhdādi 1931, 6:175, no. 3231. One member of the family of the singer Ibrāhīm b. Māhān is quoted as saying *kānat fī aydinā ḩiyā' li-ba'ḩ al-Ḥanzaliyīn*. There is a problem here, however. Ibn al-Nadīm puts it differently. He has the family come from Arrajān (in western Fārs, where Muḥammad b. Wāṣil's family is not attested), and says they fled from there in the Umayyad period because of unjust tax collectors. Ibn al-Nadīm also has them as clients of the Ḥanzala, *mawāliyunā [min] al-Ḥanzaliyīn, wa-kānat lahum ḩiyā' indanā*, which does not necessarily mean that the Iranian family managed these estates. Ibn al-Nadīm n.d., 157.

ed, only to later have it rebuilt.<sup>62</sup> He then kept his treasure there—we learn that because it was carried off when Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth the Ṣaffār conquered the castle. The place was later used as prison.

It is not stated which castle or castles the family had before Muḥammad b. Wāṣil took over Sa‘idābād, but we can suppose that all branches of the Ḥanẓala in Fārs had such strongholds. Al-Iṣṭakhrī speaks of 5,000 castles in Fārs, a figure Ibn Ḥawqal repeats; this figure refers to the fortresses in the mountains and similar places that were close to settlements but not an integral part of them. Citadels and urban fortifications come on top of that.<sup>63</sup> It is interesting to note that Ibn Ḥawqal quotes a man of the *tumnā*’ group as his source: evidently that is who was knowledgeable in such matters—probably because they owned such places themselves.

There can be no doubt that the Ḥanẓalī family was one of the pillars of ‘Ab-bāsīd power in Fārs, together with the other noble houses of the *mulūk* and the *ahl al-buyūtāt*.

### Muḥammad b. Wāṣil’s ‘Rebellion’

In the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, the caliphal administration weakened and troops of military slaves dominated the new capital of Sāmarrā’. The most striking single event, remembered because it ushered in a long period of ‘anarchy’ in Sāmarrā’, was the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 247 H/861 CE.<sup>64</sup>

For some time, the caliphs had been ruling large parts of Iran including Fārs through a hereditary line of super-governors, the Ṭāhirids. From the perspective of Fārs, the Ṭāhirids were overlords, but also always—at least formally—agents of the caliphal central administration. In this time of instability in Fārs, the main actors were representatives of the Ṭāhirids and Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth the Ṣaffār as external powers on the one hand, and regional figures on the other.

What was at stake was evidently the tax revenue from Fārs, money of increasing importance for Sāmarrā’: Iraq had become problematic to tax, and not much could be expected from Khurāsān any longer. To give an example: in Muḥarram 256 H/early December 9, 869 CE, ten million dirham and a half

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 268, Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 272–273.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 268, Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 272. Ibn al-Balkhī mentions more than 70 castles conquered and then destroyed by the Seljuqid governor Chawli, and he specifically enumerates only those which were not in this number. Therefore, it is not completely surprising that Sa‘idābād is not mentioned. Ibn al-Balkhī 1921, 158.

<sup>64</sup> Kennedy 2016, 147.

in tax payments arrived in Sāmarrā' from Fārs.<sup>65</sup> This money allowed a clique of military slaves to pursue an action against al-Muhtadī (r. 869–70) that they had been forced to postpone for lack of funds. Some kind of tax administration was still at work in the province.

Until 255 H/869 CE, a man called 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Quraysh intermittently controlled Fārs.<sup>66</sup> At some times he had a caliphal appointment and at others he rebelled against the official representative of Ṭāhirid and caliphal power. The exact details of the struggle in the 250s H/860s CE between the Ṭāhirids, the Ṣaffār (the rising power in the east), and local actors like 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn need not detain us here. According to al-Ṭabarī (at the beginning of the story of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil), the Ṭāhirid representative in Fārs was Ḥārith b. Simā. Muḥammad b. Wāṣil and a Kurdish emir called Aḥmad b. al-Layth rose against Ḥārith b. Simā and killed him in 256 H/870 CE.<sup>67</sup>

## Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in Power

Muḥammad b. Wāṣil controlled Fārs from 256–261 H/870–875 CE. But he always accepted an overlord's authority, either that of the caliph or Ya'qūb b. al-Layth or both. Ibn Khallikān calls him the governor of Fārs, in charge of finances and war at the same time; this may go back to an agreement between the caliph and Ya'qūb. Al-Ṭabarī also says Ibn Wāṣil submitted to the Ṣaffār; when Ya'qūb insisted that he hand over the province to a representative of the caliph, this was done in 258 H/872 CE.<sup>68</sup>

The *Tārīkh-i Sistān* has Ya'qūb come to Kirmān at the beginning of al-Mu'tamid's caliphate (r. 256–279 H/870–892 CE). Muḥammad b. Wāṣil met him with his army and offered submission and obedience together with presents and much wealth.<sup>69</sup> This presupposes that Ibn Wāṣil had been in control of Fārs for some time, so the event should probably be dated to 257 H/870–871 CE. In return, the source continues, Ya'qūb gave him Fārs. Ibn Wāṣil also sent some

<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:221.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:447–450.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:474 (III:1839 in de Goeje's edition); Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:240.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:490 (III: 1859); Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:257.

<sup>69</sup> *Tārīkh-i Sistān* 1314/1935 216; *Istoriia Sistana* 1974, 216, with note 638 which repeats Smirnova's note 543.

tax monies to the caliphal court at that time.<sup>70</sup> He had his own tax agents (*bundār*): these men were later remembered as having worked for him.<sup>71</sup>

In 258 H/871–872 CE, Ibn Wāṣil returned to the caliphal *ṭā'a* (obedience); that is, he formally submitted to the caliph—he had been obedient before, but then rebelled. At the same time, he accepted a new caliphal agent, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Fayyāḍ, as responsible for the finances (*al-kharāj wa-l-ḍiyā'*) of Fārs.<sup>72</sup> This agent is not mentioned again. There is no information regarding what his appointment meant for the holder of the corresponding military position (*al-ḥarb*): in some cases, one man held both positions, but they also sometimes devolved onto two appointees.

Some years later, in 261 H/874–875 CE, Ibn Wāṣil defeated a caliphal force sent against him. The commander of this caliphal force was 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muflīḥ and his second-in-command was Tāshtimur. In the battle, Tāshtimur was killed and 'Abd al-Raḥmān taken prisoner. Ibn Wāṣil refused to negotiate his liberation, and Ibn Muflīḥ died in captivity.<sup>73</sup> Muḥammad b. Wāṣil now was master of the province again, and he expanded into neighboring provinces such as Khūzistān. It was from there that he hastened east to meet Ya'qūb b. al-Layth, only to be defeated at al-Bayḍā' (see below).

At some point, Ibn Wāṣil had the ruined fortress of Sa'īdābād (Rāmjird, district Iṣṭakhr) repaired, and tried to put down local resistance by conquering other fortresses held by recalcitrant local lords. But he had trouble taking some of them: Al-Iṣṭakhrī (and Ibn Ḥawqal following him) specifically name the fortress of Kāriyān in the Tin mountains—he could not break the resistance of the castellan there, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdī.<sup>74</sup>

In general, however, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil seemed well established. His relationship with the caliph was troubled, but he must have been followed by a majority of the local lords and castellans. He had his own agents, including taxation specialists, working for him. He delivered some of the taxes produced to the caliphal court, if irregularly. The caliph could not remove him—an attempt to do so

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:453. The sum quoted is five million dirham; Ya'qūb had taken the (usual) thirty million at the same time. See above, note 60.

<sup>71</sup> In their list of old families who produced able administrators, al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal quote the Marzbān b. Zādbih family (judging by the name, of *dihqān* stock). Al-Ḥasan b. Marzbān worked as *bundār* for Muḥammad b. Wāṣil and later for Ya'qūb b. al-Layth; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 286; Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 292; al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 147.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:490 (III:1859); Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:257.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:513; Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:275. Both commanders participated in earlier campaigns against the Zanj.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 116; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 269/Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 272. It is not stated whether old grudges between Azd and Tamim played a role here.

had failed, and most of the caliphal military and financial resources were now directed against the Zanj who were clearly the more dangerous threat.<sup>75</sup> The geographer al-Iṣṭakhrī, a regional source, calls Ibn Wāṣil “governor” of Fārs (*wāli*), and probably he reflects local feelings.<sup>76</sup> And as we have seen, all the other sources see Ibn Wāṣil as the legitimate governor of Fārs as well, at least up to a point.

## Reasons for ‘Rebellion’

In order to understand the reasons for this movement, we turn to a story told only in al-Iṣṭakhrī. A group of Turkish military slaves, reportedly forty officers, were given land grants (*iqṭāʿ*) in Fārs, or at any rate they went there and claimed they had. Their commander-in-chief, whom al-Iṣṭakhrī calls al-Muwallad and who therefore was probably the noted slave general Muḥammad b. al-Muwallad,<sup>77</sup> tried to prevent abuse, and therefore his subordinates rebelled against him. He sought refuge with Mirdās b. ʿUmar, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil’s paternal cousin. Abū Bilāl Mirdās gave shelter and asylum to al-Muwallad and saw to it that he made his way back to Baghdad. With al-Muwallad gone, the Turkish officers elected another leader—Ibrāhīm b. Sīmā, apparently the brother of that Ḥārith b. Sīmā whom Ibn Wāṣil is reported to have killed.<sup>78</sup>

The caliphal administration now asked Mirdās to pursue and to punish the Turks, whom they wanted killed; however, Mirdās excused himself. The caliph then addressed the same request to Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, and Ibn Wāṣil indeed took action by executing almost all forty Turkish officers. Only Ibrāhīm b. Sīmā

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75 Their revolt lasted from 255–270 H/869–883 CE. Popovic 2002.

76 Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 116; Ibn Ḥawqal 1964, 269; Ibn Ḥawqal 1939, 273: *kāna Muḥammad b. Wāṣil al-Ḥanzalī wāli Fārs yalīhā ḥarban wa-kharājan*; note the explicit mention of both financial and military matters.

77 Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 142. This man led military action against the Zanj in Baṣra in late 257 H/871 CE. In Rabiʿ I, 259 H/January 873 CE, he was appointed to lead the war against the Zanj in the region of Wāsiṭ. In 261 H/874–875 CE, when Yaʿqūb defeated Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, he was not in the Fārs region either. In later years, e. g. in 264 H/877–878 CE, he was still busy fighting the Zanj as military commander of Wāsiṭ. Thus his presence in Fārs is not documented for the relevant years in al-Ṭabarī. Later, he defected to the Ṣaffārid army.

78 Ibrāhīm b. Sīmā is also a known commander. In 257 H/871 CE, he fought the Zanj west of Ahwāz, and al-Ṭabarī explains that he “retreated from Fārs where he had been together with al-Ḥārith b. Sīmā in the field/steppe known as the Arbuk steppe, this is between al-Ahwāz and the bridge” (al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:479). In the following years, Ibrāhīm was also involved in the wars against the Zanj. He was killed in the battle of Dayr ʿĀqūl (otherwise a victory for the caliphal troops) in Rajab 262 H/April 876 CE.

and a handful more escaped. Subsequently Muḥammad b. Wāṣil took over in Fārs.

If we consider that the report of the killing of Ḥārith b. Sīmā is not in al-Iṣṭakhri and the story of the killing of the Turkish officers is not in al-Ṭabarī, we may ask whether both stories could refer to the same chain of events. Al-Ṭabarī shows Ibrāhīm b. Sīma, who escaped the massacre, as coming to Ahwāz “retreating from Fārs where he had been with al-Ḥārith b. Sīmā” in 257 H/871 CE.<sup>79</sup> If the killing had taken place just a bit earlier, it can be dated to 256 H/870 CE, the year al-Ṭabarī reports the killing of al-Ḥārith and Ibn Wāṣil’s usurpation of Fārs. This date also works well with reports in other sources. Al-Iṣṭakhri’s report is biased: the killing took place on caliphal orders, so it cannot be laid at Ibn Wāṣil’s door.

The sources do not give any reason for Ibn Wāṣil’s action; they put it into the general basket of insubordination and rebellion. Clues can be obtained (with caution) from the timing of the uprising. Al-Iṣṭakhri explicitly links the killing of the military slaves in Fārs to two factors: firstly, the breakdown of central authority, and secondly, the greed (“injustice”) of the Turks who held *iqṭā’āt*. When they came to Fārs they apparently tried to seize both money and goods. This encroached on the traditional rights of the established upper rung of the landed elites in several ways. They were no longer the direct partner of the central administration. They could no longer make a profit themselves out of tax farming. They probably had to disburse taxes and tax arrears in unprecedented amounts. And they had to confront a group of people who were quite prepared to use violence to get what they wanted. Taken together, these reasons were enough to make the provincial nobility think of rebellion and therefore it is unlikely that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil acted only for his own sake.

## The End

The end came quickly. Again according to al-Iṣṭakhri,<sup>80</sup> Ya‘qūb the Ṣaffār was called in—not by the caliph, but by Mirdās, Ibn Wāṣil’s cousin, who feared for his life if Ibn Wāṣil were to continue. Ya‘qūb invaded Fārs in Shawwāl 261 H/ July 875 CE, and in the ensuing battle near Bayḍā’ in the region of Iṣṭakhri Ibn

<sup>79</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:479–480. There is no explanation of why and fearing whom Ibrāhīm should have “retreated” from Fārs.

<sup>80</sup> According to the *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, an erstwhile Ṣaffārid commander, Muḥammad b. Zaydayh, enticed Muḥammad b. Wāṣil to rise against Ya‘qūb. *Tārīkh-i Sistān* 1314/1935, 226; *Istoriia Sistana* 224.

Wāṣil was defeated. Ya‘qūb also took his fortress or fortresses. The booty was enormous—40 million dirham<sup>81</sup>—and according to al-Ṭabarī Ya‘qūb took Ibn Wāṣil’s maternal uncle Mirdās prisoner.<sup>82</sup> There is a difficulty here: al-Iṣṭakhri sees Mirdās as Ibn Wāṣil’s paternal cousin, and in an entirely different role. Ibn al-Athīr adds to the confusion over this man, whom he sees as conducting negotiations between Ya‘qūb and Ibn Wāṣil.<sup>83</sup> In his version, when Ya‘qūb entered Fārs, Ibn Wāṣil was in the region of Ahwāz west of his home country. He sent his maternal uncle (*khāl*) Abū Bilāl Mirdās to negotiate with Ya‘qūb, and as a result Abū Bilāl tendered Ibn Wāṣil’s submission. This was not what Ibn Wāṣil had intended, and when Abū Bilāl came back he had him imprisoned together with Ya‘qūb’s emissaries. Battle thus became inevitable. Ibn Wāṣil had lost many men, foot soldiers as well as cavalry, from hunger and thirst. Just as the fighting started, Ya‘qūb said to Abū Bilāl (whom the account does not previously mention as freed): “Ibn Wāṣil has betrayed us.” Ibn Wāṣil’s men then fled without doing battle.<sup>84</sup>

Besides these accounts of the war and battle between Ya‘qūb and Ibn Wāṣil, there is the material found in the *Tārīkh-i Sistān*. The *Tārīkh-i Sistān* underlines Ya‘qūb’s resourcefulness; Ya‘qūb wins because he outwits Ibn Wāṣil.<sup>85</sup> Its end sees Muḥammad b. Wāṣil locked up in a fortress and Ya‘qūb proceeding to Ahwāz accompanied by Abū Mu‘ādh Bilāl b. al-Azhar.<sup>86</sup> One would like to know whether there is any link between this Bilāl and Abū Bilāl Mirdās, but that cannot be established and would seem unlikely at first glance because of the *nasab* of Abū Mu‘ādh.<sup>87</sup>

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**81** In comparison, Ya‘qūb is said to have left at his death the fantastic sum of four million dinar (in gold, *‘ayn*) and fifty million dirham (silver, *waraq*), not counting equipment and so forth. Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:462. The rendition of the fortress is also related in the *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, and there is a much embellished story regarding how Muḥammad b. Wāṣil finally unveiled the secret of how to get into it. *Tārīkh-i Sistān* 1314/1935, 229–230; *Istoriia Sistana* 1974, 226–227.

**82** Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:514 (III:1888).

**83** This dilemma has been noted by Bosworth already, and I am unable to offer a solution. Bosworth 1994, 151.

**84** Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:276–277.

**85** The prototypical *‘ayyār*, Ya‘qūb is often shown outwitting his enemies; see Tor 2007. It is therefore no wonder that later authors relate further stories about Ya‘qūb duping Muḥammad b. Wāṣil. One of those is in al-‘Awfi 1393/2015, 195–196. In the subsequent anecdote (196–198), the lord of Dīnawar in his turn bests Muḥammad b. Wāṣil. In the India of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil was still remembered as a bit dumb and no match for the Ṣaffār (or even for ordinary local lords). My thanks to Peter Verkinderen for the reference to al-‘Awfi.

**86** *Tārīkh-i Sistān* 1314/1935, 226–230, *Istoriia Sistana* 1974, 223–227.

**87** This man’s career can be followed to some extent in the *Tārīkh-i Sistān*. (He is, however, unknown to the central chronicles.) He ruled Fārs on behalf of ‘Amr b. al-Layth in 274 H/887 CE

After the battle at Baydā', Ibn Wāṣil's troops dispersed. According to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Wāṣil escaped into the mountains. After a short while, the political wind changed again. In the question which continued to occupy policy makers at the caliphal court, namely whom to appoint over the eastern provinces, the Ṣaffār or one of the Ṭāhirids, the pendulum swung again—this time in favour of the Ṭāhirids. Ya'qūb had been beaten at Dayr 'Āqūl on Rajab 9, 262 H (April 8, 876 CE),<sup>88</sup> and though the defeat was not a catastrophic one it did much to harm Ya'qūb's reputation as a military leader. Ya'qūb was once more publicly cursed, and the caliph appointed Ibn Wāṣil to rule Fārs.<sup>89</sup> But according to the same source, in that year Ya'qūb regained control of Fārs and Ibn Wāṣil fled. The following year, in 263 H/876–877 CE, one of Ya'qūb's commanders succeeded in taking him prisoner.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps al-Iṣṭakhri's report about Ibn Wāṣil's imprisonment should be related to this second occasion: Ibn Wāṣil was taken prisoner either immediately after the battle at Baydā' or shortly after. He was brought to Sīrāf and later handed over to Ya'qūb who transferred him to Thamm, another fortress. Ibn Wāṣil spent two years in this fortress. For a short while, when Ya'qūb was in Jundayshāpūr, Ibn Wāṣil was able to get free and take over the fortification; but Ya'qūb soon sent orders to kill him.<sup>91</sup> No source gives a death date for Ibn Wāṣil.

## Later History

The end of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil did not mean that his family had lost all influence. When the Būyid 'Alī b. Būya ('Imād al-Dawla) conquered Shīrāz in 322 H/934 CE, the resulting taxes (or tax arrears) were farmed out. Three local land-

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(*Tārīkh-i Sīstān* 1314/1935, 247, *Istoriia Sistana* 1974, 239); he is said to have accomplished his task there well. He continued in Fārs but was employed also on campaigns elsewhere. At the end, perhaps in 291 H/904 CE, he was ordered to go into exile in Sīstān; he gathered "his belongings, his people, and set in march his slaves and his warriors and everyone who was beholden to him and had them depart for Sīstān" (*māl wa-ahl-i khwīsh bar girift wa-ghulāmān wa-sipāh-i khwīsh harchi khāṣṣ-i ū būd wa-rāh-i Sīstān bar girift*), *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* 1314/1935, 275, *Istoriia Sistana* 1974, 263. But he was intercepted by Ṣaffārid forces and imprisoned in Muḥammad b. Wāṣil's fortress. If by any chance he was a member of the Ḥanzālī clan, this would be ironic indeed. It seems clear that he was a Fārsī nobleman, and even if he was not Abū Bilāl Mirdās' son, he might still belong to the larger family.

<sup>88</sup> Bosworth, "Dayral-'Āqūl."

<sup>89</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:519.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:530.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 143–144.

holders are named explicitly among those who took the contracts, among them an Ibn Mirdās. There can be no doubt that this is a member of the Ḥanzālī family.<sup>92</sup>

Ibn al-Balkhī speaks of a family of *qāḍīs* in Fārs who were admired for both their knowledge in legal affairs and for their long-lasting influence. The first man whom he mentions is Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Sulaymān b. Abī Burda al-Fazārī, dated to the times of the caliph al-Rāḍī (r. 322–329 H/934–940 CE).<sup>93</sup> Abū Muḥammad’s descendants spread into Kirmān and Fārs, acquiring positions and landed property as far afield as Ghazna. At some point, his son Abū Naṣr (who apparently stayed in Fārs) got married to a girl from the Mirdāsiyān *ra’īs* (this word probably meaning wealthy landowners, well connected, with a potential for high positions in the provincial administration; as mentioned above, *ra’īs* is a term which continues an association with *malik* in some contexts).<sup>94</sup>

As a consequence, their son ‘Abdallāh held both positions: he was *qāḍī* as a legacy from his father and he inherited the *riyāsa* from his mother’s family.<sup>95</sup> It cannot be shown definitely that the Mirdāsiyān in Ibn al-Balkhī are the descendants of Abū Bilāl Mirdās—whether the early Khārijite or the later *malik*—but it is highly probable. Mirdās is not a frequent name and there is no other candidate for an eponym of any Mirdāsiyān as a *ra’īs* family in Fārs. The descendants of this ‘Abdallāh were in turn highly respected in their offices, both the *qaḍā’* and the *riyāsa*, and Ibn al-Balkhī proudly informs his readers that his grandfather had the privilege of working with one of them in the beginning of the Jalālī era (the reign of the Seljuqid sultan Malikshāh, 1072–1092).<sup>96</sup> This would give the Fazārī/Mirdāsī family of *qāḍīs* and *ru’asā’* an active timespan of over a century. If we include this period, the Ḥanzālī *mulūk* of Fārs have a historical record of four centuries and a half, ranging from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century to the reign of Malikshāh in the late 11<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Miskawayh 1916, 300. The other two were al-Nawbandajānī and a member of the Fasānjus clan.

<sup>93</sup> I have been unable to identify this person.

<sup>94</sup> This *kunya* is the only part of the name Ibn al-Balkhī quotes, and therefore it is impossible to find out more about him.

<sup>95</sup> Ibn al-Balkhī 1921, 117–118. *Pas qaḍā’-i Fārs ba-mirāth-i pidar wa riyāsat-i ān wilāyat ba-mirāth-i khānadān-i mādar badū rasīd.*

<sup>96</sup> Ibn al-Balkhī 1921, 118. It is known that Ibn al-Balkhī’s grandfather was a *mustawfī* under various rulers in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century; see Bosworth, “Ebn al-Balkī.”

## Muḥammad b. Wāṣil as One of the *Mulūk Fārs*

We have seen that al-Iṣṭakhrī's *mulūk Fārs* were the top level of the provincial landholding elite, enormously wealthy, politically influential, and eligible for high offices. The Ḥanḏalī family to whom Muḥammad b. Wāṣil belonged was one of several, but it seems that Ibn Wāṣil himself was an exceptional figure.

Even if the narratives in the various sources seem to defy attempts at reconstructing the chain of events, some points are clear on the level of social history. First, it is clear where Muḥammad b. Wāṣil got his financial resources. His entire family had huge landholdings and they were possibly also involved in tax farming, although there is no clear indication of the latter in the sources. His military resources included control over at least one castle (which he had repaired while he was in power), and probably other places too.

But military resources also mean military manpower. Here the sources are less forthcoming. In his action against the Turks from Sāmarrā' whom he had killed on caliphal orders (as al-Iṣṭakhrī claims), he relied on his personal retainers, a group of people whom al-Iṣṭakhrī introduces as *ḥāshiyatuhu wa-ahl ṭā'atihi*.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting to see that a figure like Muḥammad b. Wāṣil had men in his *ṭā'a*, his obedience, a term normally used to indicate those serving and obeying rulers. The *ḥāshiya* may have been something like household troops, people personally dependent on Muḥammad b. Wāṣil as their lord, whereas the *ahl ṭā'atihi* could correspond to a larger group of supporters and people who followed him for the time being. In the *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, it is taken for granted that Ibn Wāṣil had his own troops, though we do not learn who they were. In Ibn al-Athīr's report on the events leading to the battle at al-Bayḏā' between Ibn Wāṣil and Ya'qūb the Ṣaffār, infantry and cavalry troops are mentioned in Ibn Wāṣil's army; this might point to an ancient type of mobilization with a comparatively high proportion of drafted followers of local lords fighting on foot.

Muḥammad b. Wāṣil is also reported to have mustered Bedouin troops in Fārs, from Tamīm (the source mentions they were from his tribal group), and from 'Abd Qays in Baḥrayn. Both groups had sent ill-equipped and ragged men.<sup>98</sup> Since this information comes from a contemporary source, two points are interesting: first, it is taken for granted that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil has a military following, and second, his rule extends as far as Baḥrayn.

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<sup>97</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhrī 1870, 142. See also the description of Bilāl b. al-Azhar's following when he left Fārs for Sistān, above, note 88.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn al-Mu'tazz 1939, 407. I owe this reference to Peter Verkinderen.

Another important asset were allies, political resources that could be turned into military ones in case of need. Groups the sources identify as Kurds appear as allies of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil (and of other local lords as well). One of the relevant Kurdish lords was Aḥmad b. al-Layth (no relation of the Ṣaffārīds, of course). Whereas Ibn Khallikān shows this man as Ya‘qūb’s most important enemy and as an ally of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Quraysh in the conquest of Fārs,<sup>99</sup> he appears as Muḥammad b. Wāṣil’s accomplice in the uprising against Ḥārith b. Sīmā in al-Ṭabarī.<sup>100</sup> Apparently in both cases Kurdish fighters were seen as a necessary but problematic factor in military action in Fārs; they were always pillaging and raping, and their loyalties were shaky. Still, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil must have made use of Kurdish forces repeatedly since after his defeat Ya‘qūb cracked down on a Kurdish group, the men of Mūsā b. Mihrān, for sympathizing with Ibn Wāṣil. Probably some out of their numbers had participated in Ibn Wāṣil’s campaigns.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from the Kurdish lords, what about the Iranian or Arab local lords, including the families of the *mulūk Fārs*? Here, we have no information besides the anecdote that one of them refused to join Muḥammad b. Wāṣil who therefore laid siege to his castle—without, however, managing to take it. It is tempting to conjecture that many others did in fact join Ibn Wāṣil, but this is clearly stated nowhere.

After his initial successes, Ibn Wāṣil may have pursued the goal he achieved at the end: to be appointed as governor of Fārs. It seems that he also was Ya‘qūb’s man in that province; at any rate, he was prepared to serve the Ṣaffār as well as the caliph. The Ṭāhirīds were no longer part of the game in any practical way as far as Fārs was concerned. Ibn Wāṣil was one of those who aspired to positions of leadership in their own province. The sources are silent about who he may have had in mind as a role model (if anyone), but perhaps it is no coincidence that al-Iṣṭakhri makes some comments about the Sāmānīds immediately after his passage on Ibn Wāṣil, and that the Sāmānīds appear as *mulūk al-Furs*.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Khallikān 1367/1948, 5:448–450. Aḥmad’s Kurds were made responsible for a number of outrageous deeds, among them the raping of hundreds of noble girls. See also Tor 2007, 129.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:474, year 256 (III:1839); Ibn al-Athīr 1965, 7:240.

<sup>101</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1994, 9:514, year 261. Al-Iṣṭakhri presents Mūsā b. Mihrāb (not Mihrān) as leader of the Bādhinjān *ramm* of Kurds in Fārs, the most warlike group because of the horses they raised. The group lived closer to Iṣfahān than to Fārs, but their leaders owned many estates and villages in Fārs (al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 145).

<sup>102</sup> Al-Iṣṭakhri 1870, 144.

It is possibly in this context that his conflict with prominent family members, in particular with Abū Bilāl Mirdās, can be explained. Abū Bilāl is presented as a ‘traditional’ local lord: he was prepared to act on behalf of the caliphal authorities, but not to confront the military powers, sticking to paradigms of negotiation and mediation instead. When Ibn Wāṣil started to assert himself as head of the province, he must have felt threatened, as indeed he was. If he was a senior member of the senior branch of the family, he clearly stood in Ibn Wāṣil’s way.

## Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in Earlier Scholarship

Ibn Wāṣil is by no means an unknown figure. Since sources on his career have been readily available for a long time, it is no surprise that many earlier scholars have devoted lines or pages to him. In general, he appears as a lesser figure in the story of Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth and therefore has not been the subject of a detailed study until now.

Nöldeke gives a brief rendering of the main source narrative in his study of the Ṣaffārids. He (wrongly) claims that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil was already recognized as governor over Fārs by the caliphal administration in 256 H/861 CE during Ya‘qūb’s advance, and again Ibn Wāṣil appears as caliphal representative fighting Ya‘qūb after the Ṣaffār had been defeated. In all, Ibn Wāṣil is not a prominent figure and not described as a rebel.<sup>103</sup>

Vasmer’s study on the coinage of the Ṣaffārids and their enemies in Fārs and Khurāsān not only has basic numismatic information, but also a summary of the narrative in the main chronicles, much fuller than the one found in Nöldeke. Vasmer presents Ibn Wāṣil as a powerful provincial figure, allied at some times to the caliphal side and at others to Ya‘qūb.<sup>104</sup>

Bosworth strikes another note in his study on the armies of the Ṣaffārids. He touches briefly on the conquest of Sa‘īdābād, Ibn Wāṣil’s castle, by Ya‘qūb’s troops in 263 H/876 CE, and comments that it “belonged to the adventurer Muḥammad b. Wāṣil al-Ḥanzalī.” In a footnote, he asks whether this man was “the Muḥammad b. Wāṣil who had rebelled in Bust against the Ṭāhirid governor

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**103** Nöldeke 1892, 185–217 (193, 200, 203). Nöldeke does not quote his sources, but it is evident that his study is based on al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, and Ibn Khallikān. There is no trace of his having used al-Iṣṭakhṛī (who is not a central source for the history of the Ṣaffārids).

**104** Vasmer 1930.

there.”<sup>105</sup> This is the first time that Ibn Wāṣil is categorized: he is an adventurer, and it is possible that he is a Khārijite on top of that. One has to ask whether either of these identifications is plausible. In my view, the answer has to be negative.

Muḥammad b. Wāṣil of Bust is mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (and apparently in no other source). His rebellion is dated to approximately 222 H/837 CE, or 33 lunar years before his Fārsī namesake makes his first appearance. In Bust, in the years preceding 222 H there had been several movements the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* classifies as uprisings, all with a more or less clear Khārijite background. In 220 H/835 CE, famine broke out due to the drying up of the Helmand river and an uprising took place. Its leader was one ‘Abdallāh al-Jabalī, and many Khārijites gathered around him. After some fighting the revolt was ended, not by a massacre but by some kind of agreement: ‘Abdallāh was even given a robe of honor. Another uprising took place under Muḥammad b. Yazīd; the source says that many of those who had dispersed (probably out of the Khārijites) gathered again. This revolt was quelled by the military and many people were killed. After further actions, the Khārijites (or at least a substantial number of them) left for Kirmān. Again, the governor did not succeed in establishing his rule at Bust on behalf of the Ṭāhirids; again, there was an uprising, this time under Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, and again, those who had previously dispersed gathered around him. (This reference to people who had earlier dispersed prompts thoughts of a Khārijite background.) Muḥammad b. Wāṣil succeeded in taking the new governor prisoner for a while, but the movement was quickly subdued.<sup>106</sup> We do not hear anything more of this Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in the context of Bust or of Sīstān in general. Should the two men be identified, as Bosworth suggests?

Bust is situated in present-day Afghanistan<sup>107</sup> in the Helmand valley, and is roughly 1,500 km (by modern road) away from Iṣṭakhr in Fārs. It belonged to Sīstān, where Khārijī movements were frequent and occurred even when Khārijism was largely extinct elsewhere. And there is not the slightest hint that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil al-Ḥanzalī of Fārs ever travelled to Sīstān, let alone led an uprising there. The time difference of 33 lunar years also speaks against this identification, if it does not preclude it.

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**105** Bosworth 1968, 534–554 (551), with note 75. This note has elicited a comment by L. P. Smirnova in *Istoriia Sīstana* 1974, p. 432, note 543. Smirnova claims that al-Ṭabarī has Muḥammad b. Wāṣil as a Kurdish leader from Fārs (al-Ṭabarī has nothing of the sort). She then quotes Bosworth’s attempt to identify this person with Muḥammad b. Wāṣil of Bust without taking a clear position.

**106** *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* 1314/1935, 185–188, *Istoriia Sīstana* 1974, 192–193.

**107** Present-day Lashkargāh-i Bāzār, see Fischer / de Planhol.

Regarding the argument of Khārijism, as I have shown above the Ḥanzali family of Fārs had a prominent record of Khārijism but their ancestors were quietists. Moreover, the family may have opted out before the early 9<sup>th</sup> century. A Khārijite past is no argument for a Khārijite present in the times of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil. The Khārijite argument regarding Muḥammad b. Wāṣil of Fārs was not prominent before Shaban's *Islamic History* of 1976. In an altogether inadequate summary of events in Fārs, he states: "It is a remarkable fact that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil was of a genuine lineage of Umayyad Khārijites who had long since settled in Iṣṭakhr in the heart of Fārs."<sup>108</sup> This is correct, as we have seen, but it does not mean what Shaban apparently wants us to believe, namely that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil was a Khārijite or a crypto-Khārijite or something of the sort, and that Khārijism was a synonym for revolt and rebellion.

Shaban's statement was taken up by Bosworth in his monograph on the *History of the Ṣaffārids and the Maliks of Nimruz*. In this work, Bosworth quotes the early Khārijite connections of the family but does not claim that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil himself had Khārijite leanings, and he does not come back to the question of whether the man in Sīstān should be identified with the man in Fārs. This book's passage on Fārs during the three-cornered struggle between the caliphal forces, the Ṣaffār, and Muḥammad b. Wāṣil is otherwise an excellent summary of what the sources tell us.<sup>109</sup>

In Kennedy's textbook on the history of the caliphate, Ibn Wāṣil is briefly mentioned. Kennedy follows Bosworth: Ibn Wāṣil is "a local adventurer". He establishes a context for Ibn Wāṣil's movement and the caliphal policies in the context of the revolt of the Zanj in southern Iraq, and indeed we have seen that all the military commanders who came to Fārs to fight Ibn Wāṣil were otherwise engaged in this struggle.<sup>110</sup>

Gordon follows the general trend in his work on the military slaves (where, of course, the focus is not on Fārs). Tracing the career of the slave general Mūsā b. Bughā, he notes that Mūsā's forces (under the command of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muflīḥ) were defeated by "local rebel" Ibn Wāṣil.<sup>111</sup>

Deborah Tor has most to say on the subject: she sees the Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in Bust as the same person as the Muḥammad b. Wāṣil in Fārs, and therefore she can state that when Ibn Wāṣil usurped the province (Fārs) in 256 H/870 CE, he "had a long history of disruptive behavior." She also calls him an "erst-

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<sup>108</sup> Shaban 1976, 98–99.

<sup>109</sup> Bosworth 1994, 147–152.

<sup>110</sup> Kennedy 2016, 153.

<sup>111</sup> Gordon 2001, 145.

while Khārijite” or an “at least erstwhile Khārijite” as indeed he was if he was the rebel of Bust. She does not note his background as one of the *mulūk Fārs*, nor mention the family’s Khārijite antecedents.<sup>112</sup> When she describes Ya‘qūb’s later campaign against Ibn Wāṣil that ended with the former’s victory, she tells us that “at this juncture one of the leading magnates of Fārs appealed to Ya‘qūb to save Fārs from the arbitrary rule of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil.” She omits that this magnate, Abū Bilāl Mirdās, was a relative of Muḥammad’s, and she does not give details as to how Ibn Wāṣil’s rule was arbitrary.<sup>113</sup> Her picture of Ibn Wāṣil as a Khārijite with a long record of disruptive behavior is therefore based on an identification I think is spurious, and in order to make this dubious identification work she has to disregard all other information about Ibn Wāṣil’s background. Moreover, the identification of Khārijism with “disruptive behavior” does not do justice to the quietist (and later Ibāḍī) movement current in Khārijism.

I hope this essay has shown that Muḥammad b. Wāṣil was neither a Khārijite (if that means an irredeemable rebel) nor an adventurer. He may have been a rebel in that he ‘usurped’ power in Fārs, but at times he also was the appointed governor there on behalf of Ya‘qūb or the caliph. He was a representative of the *mulūk Fārs*, interested in safeguarding his influence, wealth, and power. Earlier research has more or less completely disregarded his family history (with only an occasional hint at its early Khārijite stages) as well as his social standing. This is a consequence of the central perspective taken by most researchers, to whom locally powerful people appear as rebels as soon as they come into conflict with the imperial center, and outright rebellion starts as soon as these local powerholders take action in defense of their own interests against the central powers. Let it be noted, however, that Bosworth came back to this question in one of his latest publications, and that in his entry “Šaffārīds” in the *Encyclopedia Iranica Online* he calls Muḥammad b. Wāṣil a “local magnate”.<sup>114</sup> This coincides with the results of the present analysis.

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112 Tor 2007, 130–131.

113 Tor 2007, 157.

114 Bosworth, “Šaffārīds.”

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Ahmad Khan

# An Empire of Elites: Mobility in the Early Islamic Empire

**Abstract:** This study uses prosopographies pertaining to political elites from Khurāsān in order to examine patterns of social mobility, professional circulation, and structures of imperial rule in the ‘Abbāsīd Empire during the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries. It suggests that the early ‘Abbāsīd Empire was dominated by informal patterns of rule that depended disproportionately on personal retainers and elite gubernatorial and military families to maintain structures of an otherwise bureaucratic centralized empire.

**Keywords:** Early Islamic Empire; elites; Khurāsān; ‘Abbāsīds; governors; mobility

## Introduction

The early Islamic Empire exhibits one of the most ambitious attempts in late antique and medieval history to maintain structures of economic, political, and administrative control over territories ranging from North Africa to the Hindu Kush. The truly labyrinthine scale of this empire and its diverse communities raises the question of how to write the history of the early Islamic Empire and its provinces. One 10<sup>th</sup>-century observer of medieval Islamic politics and society has suggested one approach to this historiographical conundrum:<sup>1</sup>

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1 [Pseudo-] al-Māwardī, 1988, ed. Khaḍar Muḥammad Khaḍar, 186 = [Pseudo-] al-Māwardī, 1988, ed. Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad, 239. On the false attribution of this text to al-Māwardī, see the pioneering contribution of Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad, “Muqaddimat al-taḥqīq wa-l-dirāsa”, in *Naṣīhat al-mulūk* (1988), 5–33; Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad, *Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī* (n.d.). The most recent and comprehensive investigation belongs to Marlow 2016a. Marlow has published some of her findings elsewhere in publications going back some ten years: Marlow 2007, 181–92; Marlow 2016b, 35–64.

In the maintenance of the empire and its great provinces, it is impossible to dispense with viziers, deputies, secretaries, commanders of armies, overseers of military affairs, directors of police, overseers or leaders, officers of the guard, gatherers of information, financial agents, governors, and judges (*lā budda fi iqāmat al-mamlaka wa-l-wilāyāt al-‘aẓīma min wuzarā’ wa-khulafā’ wa-kuttāb wa-aṣḥāb juyūsh wa-‘arīḍīn wa-aṣḥāb shuraṭ wa-nuqabā’ wa-aṣḥāb ḥaras wa-aṣḥāb akhbār wa-wulāt wa-quḍāt*).

The unknown author of *Counsel for Kings* was convinced of the indispensable contribution elite officials made to the maintenance of the empire and its imperial provinces. The study of these elite officials is as good a place as any to begin an inquiry into elites in early Islamic societies and what impact they had on the organisation, administration, and management of the early Islamic Empire.<sup>2</sup> This article uses a prosopographical approach to document and study social trends relating to the functions of elite officials in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. First, I document the mobility of elites across the various regions of the early Islamic Empire. Second, I highlight the circulation of elites within different offices and positions of authority, providing instances of social climbing among elite officials; that is to say, examples of elite officials who acquired higher offices. These social patterns are discernible based on a prosopographical analysis of the careers of state officials, and they bring into clearer focus the extent to which transregional mobility was a fundamental dimension of the early Islamic Empire’s bureaucratic, military, and gubernatorial elite.

Prosopography of elites has long been recognised as a *sine qua non* of social histories of ancient and medieval empires.<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historians of ancient Rome have worked towards a prosopography of the empire.<sup>4</sup> Theodor Mommsen began work on a prosopography of officials assuming secular and ecclesiastic offices as early as 1874.<sup>5</sup> H. I. Marrou and A. H. M. Jones made great strides in advancing Mommsen’s endeavour and by 1972 pub-

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<sup>2</sup> In a separate publication, I have studied the organisation of empire in one region of Khurāsān based on a prosopographical analysis of officials who appear in 8<sup>th</sup>-century documentary sources. See Khan (forthcoming), “The idea and practice of empire: the view from the documentary sources.”

<sup>3</sup> Olszaniec 2013; Tackett 2014; Preiser-Kapeller 2010. I would like to thank Johannes Preiser-Kapeller for discussing with me his combination of prosopographical methods and network analysis.

<sup>4</sup> For a broad overview of prosopographical studies of the Roman Empire, see Cameron 2003; Barnes 2007, 83–94, 231–40.

<sup>5</sup> In 1874, Mommsen submitted a hand-written proposal for a prosopography of the imperial period. This has been published by Eck 2003, 11–23.

lished their landmark *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*.<sup>6</sup> A decade later, Patricia Crone made an important case for early Islamic prosopographical studies in *Slaves on Horses*, her iconic study of medieval Islamic society,<sup>7</sup> which purports to offer nothing less than an explanation for the form and structure of the medieval Islamic polity. The book continues to be remembered and debated because of its erudite (though controversial) historical assertions, delightful locutions, and analogical and comparative historical writing (a form in many ways unique to Crone's oeuvre).<sup>8</sup> Still, the written prose sections of *Slaves on Horses* extend to only ninety pages. The remaining two hundred pages of the book constitute a vital prosopography of the early Islamic Empire and its imperial and provincial elites.

*Slaves on Horses* noticeably fails to integrate this valuable prosopographical data into the text,<sup>9</sup> and there seems to be no attempt to interpret these details

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6 Jones and Marrou 1951, 146–7; Marrou 1951a, 26–27; Marrou 1951b, 28–32; Jones and Martindale 1971–2.

7 Crone 1980, 16–17.

8 On this point, see Hillenbrand 1982, 116–9: “The style of the book is difficult and convoluted. Valuable and penetrating insights are often hidden behind a dense hedge of verbal pyrotechnics...In general, there is no steady exposition of a hypothesis, and only a minimum of background information. Instead, much of the book consists of staccato generalisations, couched in terms that brook no contradiction...Her weakness for the telling image permits such statements as the following: ‘Nothing less than a restoration of Adam’s faith in a post-physical world could now save the marriage between religion and power to which the Islamic polity owed its existence. And whether this polity could survive the divorce proceedings was still an open question’ (p. 85). Dr Crone’s style, moreover, makes a fetish of antithesis; this feature even pervades the footnotes. Note 649 is a typical example: “Merovingian *fainéance* meant Carolingian consolidation, just as ‘Abbāsīd *fainéance* was in due course to mean Seljuq unification.” On the book’s comparative historical method, “Another stylistic weakness of the book—indeed, one which becomes a weakness of method—is its frequent use of analogies from a wider sweep of history than any single scholar can be expected to control...Whilst it is no doubt worthwhile to avoid interpreting early Islamic history, or indeed any other kind of history, in a hermetically sealed way, analogies such as these—and many others too numerous to cite—which appear both in the text and the footnotes, and which cover such a wide geographical area and chronological time-scale, are at once facile and contrived. This is comparative historical analysis at its most superficial, and it distracts the reader from the main subject of the book.” Similar objections to this method and style can be found in Donner 1982, 367–71. Wickham describes Crone’s method as “analogical” in Wickham 1982, 106.

9 Consider the following observations: Wickham 1982, 105–7, 107: “Although *Slaves on Horses* seems long enough, at 300 pages, it is in reality rather short, and this in itself explains the dense and abbreviated nature of the writing: the main text is less than 90 pages, the remainder divided between appendices and notes...the appendices, all prosopographical...are useful, certainly, though surprisingly little-integrated into the text; yet it does not seem to me that they stand

and records.<sup>10</sup> This is all the more surprising in light of the emphatic case Crone makes for the value of prosopography to the study of early Islamic history. “Early Islamic history has to be almost exclusively prosopographical,” she states in the introduction of *Slaves on Horses*.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the prosopographical data Crone furnishes represents a remarkable achievement, not least because of the painstaking and penetrating reading it demanded in an age when digital and searchable Arabic texts were not available to scholars. It is unfortunate that her superb prosopographical appendices have received little scholarly attention.<sup>12</sup> In what follows, I build on the prosopographical research of scholars such as Crone, Amikam Elad, and Hugh Kennedy, and pursue a line of inquiry proposed by the author of *Counsel for Kings* to show how the early Islamic Empire was constituted of mobile and transregional elites.

## Mobility

In governing such a vast landscape of imperial provinces one of the immediate problems that presented itself to the early Islamic Empire was connecting disparate and demographically diverse communities. The provinces of Iraq, Egypt, Fārs, Khurāsān, Shām, Ifrīqiya, and the Jazīra were shaped by very different social and political realities. Their communities belonged to different though not incongruent confessions, each with its own ecclesiastical organisations and in-

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on their own, either, for they are confessedly incomplete, and an incomplete prosopography has much the same drawbacks as an incomplete dictionary. I leave it to Arabists, though, to determine whether these lists will be as useful as the book as a whole.” In a similar vein, Hillenbrand 1982, 116–9 writes: “Perhaps the most impressive section of the book is the corpus of prosopographical information contained in the appendices (93–200)...Generally, however, the mass of information in the appendices is not integrated into the main sweep of the book’s argument...in general her superbly documented appendices remain largely unexplained...instead of marshalling the majority of such evidence in the text itself and integrating it into the argument, Dr Crone has chosen to hide it away in the book’s 711 footnotes or to assume that such facts are simply too well-known to require any explanation.” See also Robinson 2015, 597–620, 606, fn. 44.

**10** Crone 1980, 3, where Crone herself describes the work as “simply an overextended footnote.”

**11** Crone 1980, 17.

**12** A critical work in the field of prosopographical studies in early Islamic history is Ahmed 2011. The title, perhaps too modestly, describes the work as a study of the religious elite. In fact, the book is an exceptionally detailed and lucid account of religious and political elites in early Islamic society.

stitutions.<sup>13</sup> Another layer of complexity was added by a dizzying variety of ethnicities and tribal identities in these provinces.

The 7<sup>th</sup> century represented an experimental phase in the early Islamic Empire's attempts to establish some semblance of provincial authority.<sup>14</sup> The case of Khurāsān points to the important role played by large-scale migration in the projection and practical implementation of imperial power. When the first Arab governors were appointed over the province of Khurāsān, they arrived in the province along with a substantial proportion of their tribal group.<sup>15</sup> The logic guiding this kind of mass migration was simple and pragmatic. Governors from outside the province of Khurāsān belonged to a new cadre of transregional elites. They realised that establishing their authority in any one of the imperial provinces was no straightforward task. They depended therefore on the secure power base provided by members of their own tribe. As the *Counsel for Kings* reminds us, however, the makeup of the imperial elite was not limited to governors. Commanders of armies and overseers of military affairs (*aṣḥāb juyūsh wa-ʿāriḍīn*) were perhaps the most mobile and transregional elite group.

### Elite Families: the Abū Ghānims<sup>16</sup>

The imperial elite consisted of both a military and civilian elite. Both groups were integral insofar as they were willing to be deployed anywhere in government service. Flexibility was paramount.

The career of Abū Ghānim ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Ribʿī and that of his family exemplifies the transregional mobility demanded of military elites.<sup>17</sup> Abū Ghānim first appears in the literary record as a propagandist of the ʿAbbāsīd revolution in

<sup>13</sup> See Robinson 2000, 9–108; Payne 2015; Mikhail 2014; Tannous 2010, 379–569.

<sup>14</sup> Hoyland 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* (1879–1901), ii: 1291 = XXIV, 14; ii: 49–2 = XX: 72–74.

<sup>16</sup> A genealogical table of this family is appended to this article.

<sup>17</sup> My examination analyses the transregional mobility of this family in the provinces and regions of the early Islamic Empire. Modern prosopographical summaries or mentions of Abū Ghānim and some of his descendants can be found in: Crone 1980, 174–5; Elad 2013, 245–84, 270–5; Kennedy 2001, 81 (Ḥumayd b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd), 104 (Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī), 120 (Ḥumayd b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd), 123 (Ḥumayd b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd), 124 (Ḥumayd b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd); Kennedy 1981, 165 (Ḥumayd b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd); Al-Janābī 1980, 221–45; Amabe 1995, 132–333; Agha 2003, 339. For Abū Ghānim in the medieval sources from the Damascene perspective, see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq* (1996), 34: 66–67, who also quotes from Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Rāzī's (d. 347 H/958 CE) lost history of Damascus. With respect to this lost work, see Conrad 1991.

Marv.<sup>18</sup> He served as a general and chief of police (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) under his cousin Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb al-Ṭā'ī, one of the leading army commanders of the 'Abbāsīd revolution in Khurāsān.<sup>19</sup> Abū Ghānim's role in Khurāsān seems to have come to an end with the death of Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb in 132 H/749 CE,<sup>20</sup> but he was sufficiently prominent enough to find himself in the assembly of al-Saffāḥ (r. 132-749 H/136-754 CE) during his initial coronation as caliph.<sup>21</sup> A year later, he participated in the battle of the Zāb in Iraq.<sup>22</sup> In the same year, he emerged in the province of Shām as one of the leading military commanders (*quwwād*) under 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās.<sup>23</sup> When 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī departed to attend to a rebellion in Qinnasrīn, he appointed Abū Ghānim as his deputy in Damascus. Abū Ghānim governed the city with four thousand troops, the majority of whom were Khurāsānī.<sup>24</sup>

Abū Ghānim's significance as a military leader can be gleaned from the fact that his involvement in the political life of two different provinces occurred during pivotal episodes in the history of these provinces: his service in Marv was on the eve of the 'Abbāsīd revolution, whilst his role as 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī's deputy in Damascus came in the context of the latter's claim to be al-Saffāḥ's successor in opposition to al-Manṣūr.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, men of Abū Ghānim's military pedigree were in demand in more than one province, and they were called upon in the most precarious political situations.

Despite Abū Ghānim's residence in more than one of the empire's imperial provinces, he seems to have made Khurāsān his home before 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī's defeat forced him to flee to al-Ruhā', where he was discovered and dispatched to al-Manṣūr.<sup>26</sup> Once again, his reputation came to his rescue. Firstly, a close companion of Abū Ghānim was dispatched to al-Ruhā' to restore

18 Anonymous, *Akhbār al-dawla al-'abbāsiyya* (1971), 1: 217, 220.

19 On their kinship, see: Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat an-nasab* (1966), 257; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansāb al-'arab* (1962), 404. On Abū Ghānim's military service under Qaḥṭaba, see: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), ii: 2001 = XXVII: 107–8 (as a military officer in Ṭūs); iii: 15 = XXVII: 137 (as Qaḥṭaba's *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*).

20 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 11–19 = XXVII: 134–40 (Qaḥṭaba's death); al-Ṣafadī, *Umarā'* (1983), 50, 72.

21 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 28 = XXVII: 151–2 and 36 = XXVII: 160.

22 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 38 = XXVII: 107–8.

23 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 53–54 = XXVII: 177–8.

24 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 53–54 = XXVII: 177–8; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh madīnat Dimashq* (1996), 38: 428; al-Ṣafadī, *Umarā'* (1983), 72.

25 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 93 = XXVIII: 9; al-Ṣafadī, *Umarā'* (1983), 72; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* (2010), 10: 277.

26 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (1978), 3: 109.

order, a man who could be depended on to treat him respectfully despite the circumstances. Secondly, al-Manṣūr overlooked his advocacy for the rival claimant to the caliphate. The caliph claimed that he could not bring himself to kill a member of the Qaḥṭaba family and instead pardoned him.<sup>27</sup> Some reports even suggest that he spent the rest of his life in exile on one of al-Manṣūr's ancestral estates.<sup>28</sup>

Abū Ghānim's two sons, Aṣram b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and Ḥumayd b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, were from Khurāsān.<sup>29</sup> It is likely that Aṣram was the eldest. Like their father, they pursued military careers all over the empire. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* informs us of Aṣram's appointment as governor of Sīstān in the year 170 H/786 CE, after Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170 – 193 H/786 – 809 CE) appointed al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān as the super-governor of Khurāsān and Fārs.<sup>30</sup> Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān in turn installed Aṣram in Sīstān,<sup>31</sup> where his gubernatorial reign was initially brief. It seems that he was appointed governor in 170 H/786 CE, removed, and then reappointed as governor a decade later.<sup>32</sup> In this second period, he appointed his younger brother Ḥumayd as one of his two deputy governors.<sup>33</sup> When Aṣram died in Sīstān,<sup>34</sup> Hārūn al-Rashīd promoted Ḥumayd to governor in his brother's place.<sup>35</sup>

Ḥumayd resided in Khurāsān, where he cultivated a career as a military commander, but must have spent some considerable time in Sīstān deputising for and then replacing his older brother.<sup>36</sup> When his term in Sīstān came to an end, he seems to have returned to Khurāsān, where he came to al-Ma'mūn's attention when al-Ma'mūn arrived in the province in 199 – 200 H/815 – 6 CE. In 201

27 Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* (1978), 3: 109 – 110.

28 Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* (1878), 180.

29 Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (1985), 463.

30 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168 (caliph al-Hādī's appointment of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān as governor of Khurāsān), 169 (caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd's appointment of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān as governor of Sīstān and Khurāsān (*Hārūn al-Rashīd 'ahd-i Sīstān va Khurāsān suwī Faḍl b. Sulaymān farastād*)). On al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān, see below ('II Circulation').

31 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168 (*va Faḍl b. Sulaymān Aṣram b. 'Abd al-Ḥumayd [rā] Sīstān dād*).

32 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168 – 9 (first appointment as governor), 172 (second appointment as governor).

33 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168 (*va Aṣram Ḥumayd b. 'Abd al-Ḥumayd rā barādar-i khwīsh rā bih khilāfat-i khwīsh bih Sīstān farastād*). Aṣram's other deputy governor was Hamam b. Salama: Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 172.

34 Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh* (1985), 463; Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168 (a grave illness befell Aṣram b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (*chūn Aṣram bih Sīstān āmad 'illat-i sa'b ū rā pīsh āmad*)).

35 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 169, 172.

36 Anonymous, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (1935), 168.

H/817 CE, al-Ma'mūn decided to send Ḥumayd to Iraq to take charge of its *kharāj*,<sup>37</sup> and the rest of his career was in Baghdad.

Things began well. He received instructions directly from al-Ma'mūn during the latter's epochal journey from Khurāsān to Baghdād,<sup>38</sup> and he was one of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's (d. 203 H/819 CE) leading commanders.<sup>39</sup> One can infer from the sources that he was a very effective one,<sup>40</sup> and also a man not reluctant to express his dismay at the decisions of those he served.<sup>41</sup> In the distressing circumstances of the fourth civil war, Ḥumayd corresponded with 'Īsā b. Muḥammad Abī Khālīd to secure the latter's surrender.<sup>42</sup> Above all, he led the military efforts to diminish the authority of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī.<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, it is clear that he was integral to al-Ma'mūn's success in seeing off Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's caliphal challenge.<sup>44</sup>

Ḥumayd retained his position as chief commander when al-Ma'mūn arrived in Baghdad in 204 H/819 CE; he oversaw the army and the payment of salaries<sup>45</sup> and was tasked with reorganising the military.<sup>46</sup> He owned an estate (*qaṣr*) on the Tigris river.<sup>47</sup> One 9<sup>th</sup>-century source describes him in 204 H/819 CE as seated next to al-Ma'mūn during an intimate private banquet and as participating in the caliph's assembly (*majlis*).<sup>48</sup> Al-Ma'mūn singled him out for praise on account of his practice of invocation (*tasbīḥ*),<sup>49</sup> and the caliph was even aware of panegyrics

37 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān* (1860–1861), 306.

38 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 9.

39 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1005 = XXXII: 51; Elad 2013, 245–84, 271.

40 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1005–7 = XXXII: 51–54; 1018 = XXXII: 69; 1029 = XXXII: 82; 1034 = XXXII: 90; 1034 = XXXII: 90–91; 1036 = XXXII: 92.

41 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1019 = XXXII: 71.

42 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1030–4 = XXXII: 86–89; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh* (1883), 2: 548.

43 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1034–6 = XXXII: 89–92.

44 See also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1019 = XXXII: 71.

45 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 10.

46 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 4; al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), ii: 206–8.

47 The purchase and fortification of an estate in the town of Qaṣr Ibn Hubayra by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1012 = XXXII: 60; al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (1867), 28: 106; and for other estates, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1018 = XXXII: 70. For a description of one of his fortresses, see al-Ṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (1867), 106. For more information concerning his wealth, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1019 = XXXII: 71.

48 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 13, 16.

49 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 58–59: Ḥumayd was praised for the quality of his sacred incantations, Qaḥṭaba for his prayers, Nūshjānī for his fasting, al-Marīsī for his ritual purification, Mālik b. Shāhī for building mosques, Ibrāhīm b. Barīha for his weeping at the pulpit, al-Ḥasan b. Quraysh for attending to orphans, Manjā for his story-telling, 'Alī b. Junayd for spending his wealth in the way of charity, Iṣḥāq b. Ibrāhīm for hosting travelers, and so on.

composed in Ḥumayd's praise. Ḥumayd is said to have been embarrassed by this fact and insisted on the pre-eminence of panegyrics composed in praise of the caliph.<sup>50</sup>

It appears, however, that something went terribly wrong. We only know of Ḥumayd's rapid downfall because al-Jāḥiẓ, always a contrarian, responded to a book praising officials with one condemning them.<sup>51</sup> Al-Jāḥiẓ speaks of Ḥumayd's suggestion to al-Ma'mūn that the army be reorganised to eliminate non-Khurāsānī elements and undeserving soldiers' salaries.<sup>52</sup> Ḥumayd shared the task with his secretary Maḥmūd b. 'Abd al-Karīm. Together, they made a complete and unmitigated mess of it, and in the process Ḥumayd's reputation was severely damaged.<sup>53</sup> Al-Ma'mūn eventually intervened and took matters into his own hand.<sup>54</sup> Ḥumayd's influence subsequently waned,<sup>55</sup> and in 210 H/825–6 CE he was poisoned.<sup>56</sup>

Ḥumayd's career was spent in the highest echelons of military and government service in the early Islamic Empire, from Khurāsān to Sistān and from the empire's eastern provinces to its centre. He assumed a pivotal trust by supervising the collection of the *kharāj*. Ḥumayd's loyalty to al-Ma'mūn and the stability of the empire's authority was also on display when he spearheaded the military and diplomatic efforts to quash Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī's precarious counter-caliphate. Ḥumayd's trajectory is defined by the transregional mobility characteristic of his elite family and many others: a career that began and thrived in the empire's eastern provinces, only to end in ignominy in the empire's dynastic capital whilst dining with the caliph.

The career of Ḥumayd's son Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd was scattered across the empire's regions and provinces. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr speaks of Muḥammad b.

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50 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 1153–4 = XXXII: 246–7. This was known to al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (1867), 18: 100–8. Panegyrics extolling Ḥumayd were not an isolated occurrence. See al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (1867), 3: 167 (describing the majesty of Ḥumayd's military retinue and his stature); 14: 36–37 (Ḥumayd's confrontation with Ṭāhir prior to the latter's omission of the conventional invocation for the caliph al-Ma'mūn in the Friday sermon); 16: 163 (recited whilst passing by Ḥumayd's grave and reflecting on the irony presented by Ḥumayd's impressive resting place and his wrecked body); 18: 100–113 (panegyrics and Ḥumayd's generous payment on hearing of them).

51 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), 187.

52 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), 206–7.

53 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), 207–8 (al-Jāḥiẓ is explicit about Ḥumayd's mismanagement).

54 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), 208.

55 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il* (1964), 207–8.

56 Ibn Ḥabīb, *Asmā' al-muḡhtalīn* (1975), ii: 105–278, 199–200, where Ibn Ḥabīb sets the scene for Ḥumayd's poisoning.

Ḥumayd's appointment in Mecca in 210 H/826 CE to supervise its *imām* and the rites of pilgrimage.<sup>57</sup> However, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd was most active in Mosul, where the local historian al-Azdī describes his critical role in restoring order in 212 H/827–8 CE. Al-Ma'mūn was furious when he learned that the local governor of the Jazīra, al-Sayyid b. Anas al-Talīdī, had been killed whilst trying to suppress the rebellion of Zurayq b. 'Alī b. Ṣadaqa b. Dīnār al-Azdī.<sup>58</sup> The caliph appointed Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd to lead the charge against Zurayq.<sup>59</sup> His campaign was a success, and he delivered Zurayq to the caliph.<sup>60</sup> The caliph in turn dispatched a victory letter to Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd in which he extolled him (and his father) and praised their loyalty and service.<sup>61</sup> Al-Ma'mūn turned to Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd again in order to quell Bābak's rebellion in Azerbaijan.<sup>62</sup> This time, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd was unsuccessful, and he was killed by Bābak's soldiers.<sup>63</sup>

The story of Abū Ghānim 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Rib'ī's important and well-travelled family did not end there. Abū Ghānim's grandson Mahdī b. Aṣram followed his grandfather and father into a military career, suppressing revolts against the early Islamic Empire. 10<sup>th</sup>-century cultural critics such as Abū Tammām (d. 335–6 H/946–7 CE) were well acquainted with the significance and memory of Abū Ghānim's family. Abū Tammām dedicated encomiums to Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd and another grandson of Abū Ghānim, Mahdī b. Aṣram; both were

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57 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 116 (*wajjaha Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī ilā Makka li-yaqīfa ma' al-imām fi l-mawqif karāhat al-taḥallul fīhi, fa-tawajjaha ilā Makka wa-na-fadha limā amara bihi wa-lam yakun shay' karīhahu wa-raja'a bi-l-salāma*). There are at least two possible philological interpretations for al-Ma'mūn's pretext for sending Muḥammad to Mecca: that Muḥammad was dispatched to supervise the *imām* of Mecca at the physical location where the restrictions of the state of *iḥrām* end; or alternatively that concerns had been raised concerning the *imām*'s handling of pilgrimage rites, Muḥammad was sent to investigate, and he returned to Baghdad because he observed no such irregularities. Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād* (1949), 117, informs us that Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd wrote to the governor of Mecca, Ṣāliḥ b. al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās, to give him the all clear to lead the official *hajj* procession in 210 H/826 CE.

58 Al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil* (1967), 372–81; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 5: 484.

59 Al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil* (1967), 374, 378; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 5: 484.

60 Al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil* (1967), 378–81; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḫ* (1889), 2: 564–5.

61 For the letter, its contents, and Muḥammad's response to it, see al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil* (1967), 381–2.

62 Al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil* (1967), 378, 382–4; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 1099–4 = XXXII: 176–7. See Crone 2012, 46–76, esp. 58–59 concerning the uprisings of Bābak and Zurayq.

63 While Ḥumayd was the subject of poetical encomiums, Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd was rebuked severely by poets. We are told that (unlike his father) he was a miser and fled from battle. For a particularly scathing example, see al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (1867), 12: 104–5.

killed whilst trying to put down Bābak's rebellion.<sup>64</sup> There is an astonishingly singular thread running through these four generations of the Ghānim family: senior military commanders and governors from Khurāsān, operating in multiple regions of the empire, quelling revolts and uprisings against the caliph, and defending caliphal authority.

Ghānim b. Abī Muslim b. Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī, the great-grandson of Abū Ghānim and the grandson of Ḥumayd, appears in the historical record outside the province of Khurāsān and in Mosul defending the territorial and political integrity of the early Islamic Empire and the caliph. In the year 231 H/846 CE, the persistent rebel Muḥammad b. 'Amr al-Shaybānī initiated a small revolt in Diyār Rabī'a.<sup>65</sup> Ghānim b. Abī Muslim was one of Mosul's most senior political figures, in charge of military affairs (*wa-kāna 'alā ḥarb al-Mawṣil*).<sup>66</sup> Upon learning of Muḥammad's uprising, Ghānim b. Abī Muslim and a small military entourage made their way to Diyār Rabī'a. They made very quick work of Muḥammad b. 'Amr al-Shaybānī and his rebellion. While Muḥammad b. 'Amr was taken captive and sent to Sāmarrā' before being transferred to Maṭbaq prison in Baghdad,<sup>67</sup> no such charity was shown to his fellow rebels. Their heads and banners were publically displayed at Khashabat Bābak: a truly macabre 'Abbāsīd *lieu de mémoire* signifying the fate of those who rose against the empire.

Ghānim b. Abī Muslim's brother 'Abdallāh [b. Abī Muslim] b. Ḥumayd al-Ṭūsī was not so fortunate. In 256 H/870 CE, the caliph al-Muwaffaq (r. 256–279 H/870–892 CE) was faced with the substantial uprising of the Zanj. Following the precedent of his ancestors, 'Abdallāh b. Abī Muslim b. Ḥumayd was involved in attempts to subdue the rebels, and he and his son were both killed during a skirmish with the Zanj.<sup>68</sup>

The Ghānim family represents a broader pattern of (military) elite mobility in the early Islamic Empire. Khurāsān was the ancestral home of the Ghānims, but more importantly, in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries Khurāsān was at the very centre of the empire's production and training of military commanders and elites.<sup>69</sup> It was from Khurāsān that the Ghānims established their presence in the empire's nearby and remote provinces and regions, making a name for themselves in Khurāsān; participating in battles in Iraq; quelling rebellions in Shām; assum-

64 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh* (1883), 2: 565; Sezgin 1975, II: 583 and the sources cited therein.

65 For this episode, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1351 = XXXIV: 367; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh* (1889), 2: 589; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), VI: 88.

66 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1351 = XXXIV: 367.

67 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1351 = XXXIV: 367; Le Strange 1900, 27; Lassner 1970, 243.

68 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 1837 = XXXVI: 110–1.

69 De La Vaissière 2007.

ing governorships in Sistān; serving as Chief Commanders in the dynastic centre of the empire; and putting down major revolts in north-western Iran. The case of the Ghānims serves to show how mobility was essential not only to the interests of Khurāsānī elites, but also to the preservation of the early Islamic Empire's authority in all of its major provinces. The history, people, and elites of Khurāsān were implicated in the lives and fate of the entire empire.

## Circulation

The study of the prosopography of elite officials reveals yet more important historical patterns concerning the contributions they made to the work of empire. The phenomenon of social climbing and the prospect of professional circulation within the vast imperial bureaucracy of the early Islamic Empire was reflected in the careers of a number of officials.

Such prospects were certainly brighter when one happened to be a scion of an illustrious family from Khurāsān and Transoxiana. In the case of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Ṭā'ī al-Ṭūsī, his paternal uncle was Abū l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī, known for his active participation in a number of military skirmishes in Transoxiana during the caliphal reigns of Yazīd II and Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>70</sup> On the eve of the 'Abbāsīd revolution, al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān was busy instigating the 'Abbāsīd revolution in Khurāsān and Transoxiana, and he was described as an 'Abbāsīd propagandist operating out of Abīward.<sup>71</sup> He appears to have been a close confidante of Abū Muslim, who instructed him to move between the cities and villages of Khurāsān and Transoxiana in order to communicate messages on Abū Muslim's behalf.<sup>72</sup>

In 130 H/747–8 CE, al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān was in Ṭūs under the command of Qaḥṭaba, where the former served alongside Abū Ghānim 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Rib'ī.<sup>73</sup> A few years later, al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān was in Wāsiṭ with al-Ḥasan b.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), ii: 1422 = XXIV: 152–3 (battle at the fortress of al-Bāhili at Samarqand in the year 102 H/701–2 CE); ii: 1521–2 = XXV: 59 (siege of Kamarja in the year 110 H/728–9 CE).

<sup>71</sup> Anonymous, *Akhbār al-dawla* (1971), 218, 221. His name appears alongside Abū Ghānim (again at 218) and 'Isā b. Nahik (at 218 with 'Uthmān b. Nahik).

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), ii: 1950 = XXVII: 61–2, ii: 1963 = XXVII: 73, where the same story is repeated; Anonymous, *Akhbār al-dawla* (1971), 218–9.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), ii: 2001 = XXVII: 107–8.

Qaḥṭaba,<sup>74</sup> and it seems he found himself employed in Wāsiṭ again in the service of al-Manṣūr during al-Saffāḥ's reign.<sup>75</sup>

Upon the death of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's long-time compatriot 'Uthmān b. Nahik, the position of caliph's guard passed on to the latter's son 'Īsā b. Nahik<sup>76</sup> and then to al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān (*fa-ja'ala 'alā l-ḥaras Abā l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī*).<sup>77</sup> The precise year of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's appointment is unclear. First, the year of 'Uthmān b. Nahik's death depends on the dating of the incident with the Rāwandīyya.<sup>78</sup> Al-Ṭabarī believed this occurred in 141 H/758–9 CE, though he is aware of reports that dated the event to 136–7 H/754–5 CE.<sup>79</sup> Khalifa b. Khayyāt understood the employment history for the office of the caliph's guard and seal (*'alā l-ḥaras wa-l-khātam*) to have progressed in this way from 'Uthmān b. Nahik, to his son, and then to al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān. Khalifa b. Khayyāt, however, provides no date for al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's appointment, and it is worth noting that he describes the two offices as having been passed on to al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān, whereas al-Ṭabarī speaks only of the position of the caliph's guard.<sup>80</sup> To further complicate al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's employment history we might add that al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331 H/942 CE) was of the view that al-Manṣūr appointed al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān over the caliph's seal in 153 H/770 CE.<sup>81</sup> Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān replaced Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm as commander of al-Mahdī's *ḥaras*.<sup>82</sup> He is described as being in charge of the private guard (*al-ḥaras*) in the reign of al-Mahdī, which then passed on to his son, 'Abdallāh b. Abī l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī.<sup>83</sup>

In 146 H/763–4 CE al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān was ordered by the caliph al-Manṣūr to track down Abū Zakariyyā' Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh. The latter was in charge of the accounts of Baghdad and its markets. It was discovered that he had a connection to the 'Alid rebels Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya and Ibrāhīm b. 'Abdallāh. Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān captured Abū Zakariyyā' and al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's chamberlain, Mūsā, killed him (*fa-qatalahu bi-yadihi ḥājib kāna li-Abi l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī*).<sup>84</sup>

74 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), iii: 20–21 = XXVII: 142–3 (in the year 132 H/749–50 CE).

75 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), iii: 68 = XXVII: 191.

76 On 'Īsā, see Anonymous, *Akhbār al-dawla* (1971), 218; Omar 1969, 73; Crone 1982, 189.

77 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), iii: 131 = XXVIII: 64–66.

78 'Uthmān b. Nahik and al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān served together in Ṭūs and Wāsiṭ. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), ii: 2001 = XXVII: 108 and iii: 68 = XXVII: 191.

79 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), iii: 129 = XXVIII: 62.

80 Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'riḥ* (1985), 436.

81 Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'* (1980), 124 (*qallada al-khātam al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Ṭūsī*).

82 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'riḥ* (1883), ii: 483.

83 Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'riḥ* (1985), 443.

84 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ* (1879–1901), iii: 324 = XXIX: 9.

Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's chamberlain must have acquired quite a reputation for himself by this act, for he was thereafter tasked by al-Manṣūr himself to execute certain individuals.<sup>85</sup>

There was no doubt that al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān was critical to the imperial household. In one source, he appears as al-Manṣūr's close confidante, exhibiting no reluctance whatsoever to express himself to the caliph, even in cases where his was a voice of dissent concerning significant decisions involving the caliph's son and heir-apparent.<sup>86</sup>

Al-Manṣūr had gathered al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān, along with ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī, al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad, and others from among his select advisers (*khawāṣṣiḥi*) and told them: I have decided to assign the lands of the Sawād and Kuwar Dijla to al-Mahdī. All of the advisers present agreed with the caliph's judgment except al-Ṭūsī (*fa-istaṣwaba jamī'uhum ra'yahu khalā l-Ṭūsī*). Al-Ṭūsī then requested the caliph whether he could speak with him privately (*fa-in-nahu astakhlāhu*). When they were alone, he said to the caliph: "Would it please you to know that al-Mahdī might pursue a policy different to yours and begin to run things carelessly?" "By God, no it would not please me," the caliph responded. "But, you would like to endear him to your subjects. The problem is that appointing him over these lands will make him loathed by your subjects, especially those among them who are loyal to you. Instead, you should appoint ʿĪsā b. Mūsā as governor of this province and appoint al-Mahdī to oversee peoples' complaints. And you should command him to dispense justice to them in a fair manner." Al-Manṣūr began to laugh, and he stamped his feet on the ground [acknowledging al-Ṭūsī's sagacious counsel].

Having served the caliph for many years in various provinces and in different imperial offices, al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān believed his relationship with al-Manṣūr permitted such frank exchanges of policy. Delicate matters pertaining to the caliph's son and heir-apparent could be discussed between the two men. Based on this report, it might even be argued that al-Mahdī's interest in establishing courts of complaints (*maẓālim*) originated with the idea al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān planted in al-Manṣūr's mind.<sup>87</sup>

**85** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 373 = XXIX: 68. From this source we learn that the name of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's chamberlain was Mūsā b. Dinār. Kennedy in his translation cited above (XXIX: 68, fn. 181) remarks that Mūsā is "unknown elsewhere." This is not correct.

**86** Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'* (1980), 37–38.

**87** This report places the origins of the *maẓālim* courts in a new light. To my knowledge, modern scholarship on the *maẓālim* courts has overlooked this reference: Tyan 1938, 474; Tillier 2009, 42–6; Tillier 2006; Hallaq 2005, 99–101, and others place the origins of the *maẓālim* courts with al-Mahdī, because of a dialogue preserved by Waki' in which the *qāḍī* 'Ubaydallāh speaks of being instructed by the caliph al-Mahdī to hear and investigate complaints: Waki', *Akhbār al-quḍāt* (1947–50), 2: 92.

Circumstances continued to improve for al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān. Al-Manṣūr's granting of properties to his senior commanders enabled al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān to amass a significant amount of property on the west side of Baghdad.<sup>88</sup> Al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān in turn remained a loyal and dutiful officer. Upon al-Manṣūr's death in 158 H/774–5 CE, in his capacity as keeper of the caliphal seal he had that seal sent to al-Mahdī (*ba'atha Abū l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī bi-khātam al-khilāfa*).<sup>89</sup> Even when all the imperial offices were placed under the ministerial control of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the office of the caliphal seal maintained its independence under the authority of al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān (*wa-kānat al-dawāwīn kulluhā ilā Yaḥyā b. Khālīd ma' al-wizāra siwā dīwān al-khātam fa-innahu kāna ilā Abī l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī*).<sup>90</sup> This was something that perturbed Yaḥyā b. Khālīd, who was concerned over the delay in obtaining the caliphal seal from al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān for official letters.<sup>91</sup>

Provincial troubles in Khurāsān, however, signalled al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān's return to his home province of Khurāsān. Al-Mahdī had appointed Musayyab b. Zuhayr as governor of Khurāsān in 166 H/782–3 CE. Troubles for him began immediately on account of his decision to raise the land-tax above the amount at which it had been fixed.<sup>92</sup> Within eight months, Musayyab b. Zuhayr's gubernatorial reign was over and al-Mahdī replaced him with al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān. Gardīzī provides us with the precise details of the smooth transition of power:<sup>93</sup>

Abū l-'Abbās sent out Sa'īd b. Bashīr as commander of the advance guard, and Sa'īd came to Marv in Muḥarram of the year 167 H/783 CE. He went into Musayyab's presence, greeted him, and gave him a letter instructing him to hand over his charge to Sa'īd. Musayyab had had no prior knowledge of this change of appointment. When Musayyab had read it, he rose from his place and said, "The seat of authority is now yours" (*va Sa'īd bi Marv āmad...va bi nazdik-i Musayyab shud va Musayyab hīch khabar nadāshst, va bar vay salām kard va nāmi-yi taslīm-i 'amal badū dād. Va chūn bi khwānd az jay-i khwish bar khāst va guft, "majlis turā ast"*).

The man whose career began as an agent and messenger of Abū Muslim, scurrying between the cities and villages of Khurāsān and Transoxiana to convey messages on his behalf, returned to the province as its governor, an office that in-

88 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 367 = XXIX: 59.

89 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (1879–1901), iii: 455 = XXIX: 165.

90 Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'* (1980), 177.

91 Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'* (1980), 178.

92 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār* (1968), 282–3.

93 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār* (1968), 283. For this article, I have used 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī's edition and not Raḥīm Riḡā-zāda Malik's more recent edition (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār va Mafā-khir-i Farhangī, 2005).

cluded the regions of Sīstān and Ṭabaristān.<sup>94</sup> His impact was felt across the empire's provinces and at the imperial centre, where there was even a quarter belonging to al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān.<sup>95</sup>

It is notoriously difficult to pursue the career of provincial governors beyond their gubernatorial reign. Upon being dismissed from their position, provincial governors often disappear into oblivion. In this respect, al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān is an important exception. His dismissal as governor of Khurāsān and Sīstān in 171 H/787–9 CE by the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd was apparently not prompted by improper conduct or any incompetence in his handling of provincial affairs. That he was still trusted and honoured was shown on his arrival in Baghdad in 171 H/787–8 CE, when he was given charge of the caliphal seal.<sup>96</sup>

## Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to deploy prosopography in order to document historical patterns and trends concerning the activities of elites in the early Islamic Empire. I have used this methodology to document the lives of elites who occupied leading positions in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>-century government in order to

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**94** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 517–8, 521 = XXIX: 234–5, 239; iii: 740 = XXX: 305; Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārīḫ-i Ṭabaristān* (1941), 1: 189. Abū l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī is described as one of the governors of Ṭabaristān sent from Baghdad (*dār al-khilāfa*). It is unclear to me whether this appointment occurred earlier or whether Ṭabaristān was included under his autonomy along with Khurāsān and Sīstān. When al-Dīnawarī states that al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān remained governor for two years (“*wa-'aqada li-Abī l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī 'alā Khurāsān fa-labitha 'alayhā 'ammaẓn thumma 'azalahu*”), he must intend by this two years into Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphal reign. I am reading '*aqada*' instead of the passive, '*uqida*', on account of the entire sentence's syntax: al-Dīnawarī, *Aḫbār al-ṭiwāl* (1888), 383. For his and, subsequently, his son's governorship, see Ḥamza Iṣfahānī, *Ta'riḫ sinī mulūk* (1844–1888), 222–3; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 521 = XXIX: 239; Khalifa states that Abū l-'Abbās al-Ṭūsī's gubernatorial reign continued under the caliph al-Hādī: Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Ta'riḫ* (1985), 446; al-Fasawī states that he was governor of Khurāsān from 166–170 H/783–4–787–8 CE: al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Ma'rifa* (1989), i: 154, 162 (where the end of his gubernatorial reign is noted). For a full historical reconstruction and comprehensive discussion of his governorship, see Khan (forthcoming monograph), ch. 3 ('Governing the Empire').

**95** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ* (1879–1901), iii: 274–5 = XXVIII: 242 (*al-murabba'a al-ma'rūfa bi-Abī l-'Abbās al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Ṭūsī*). See Lassner 1970, 67.

**96** See Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Ta'riḫ* (1985), 465: Abū l-'Abbās was in charge of the seal after Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath. When the latter replaced Abū l-'Abbās as governor of Khurāsān, Abū l-'Abbās commanded the seal (*al-khātam*). He kept this office until he died and was replaced by Yahyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak.

point out larger themes and developments they represent. Prosopography promises to illuminate the study of early and medieval Islamic history when it addresses larger conceptual and thematic questions.

This study has been devoted to two neglected areas in the study of the early Islamic Empire and the role of elites towards the empire's stability. It has argued that transregional mobility, especially among military commanders, was foundational to the empire's maintenance. The elites studied in this chapter were active all over the empire's regions: from Mosul to Baghdad, from Khurāsān to Sīstān, from Ṭabaristān to Tūs, from Azerbaijan to Baghdad. The circulation of elites reflects the extent to which the fate of the empire was tied to elite activity. Offices and appointments circulated among family members, going from brother to brother, father to son; and officials were ambitious and enterprising, not always content with the offices and level of employment they or their ancestors had secured. Many of them were social climbers, who began their careers as soldiers, progressed to the caliph's special military entourage, and rose to prominence as governors of provinces. There were great opportunities to rise in the imperial bureaucracy but even the highest offices were not without their risks. When loyalty was rewarded, it was rewarded generously. But when it was breached, the consequences were grave and delivered swiftly. Heads could rise one day and fall quite literally the next, only to be raised and displayed with the hallmark, macabre display of imperial triumph in the empire's capital.

This mobility and circulation points to two further dimensions of the early Islamic Empire. The first was the cultural commensurability of the imperial provinces. Subjects and administrators floated across different regions of the empire. Cultures and customs differed, but the vast territorial diversity of the empire's landscape did not prevent a high degree of inter-cultural traffic. The second and perhaps more important dimension was the early Islamic Empire's creation of a commensurate system. A trans-empire identity made it possible for elites to move easily from province to province and swiftly embed themselves in a bureaucratic system where there were similar expectations; social roles were understood; positions of power were known; privilege and education were expected and recognised; and achievements in different provinces were accorded respect.<sup>97</sup> This cultivation of a commensurable social world that enabled elite of-

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<sup>97</sup> On this point, see Ando (2000), 410, who states about the early Roman Empire: "It does not matter that most provincials probably never left the province in which they were born. Rather, their appreciation of the empire grew from the belief they shared with Orosius, that they could travel the length of the empire and still know precisely what benefits accrued from their membership in the Roman community."

officials to thrive whilst serving the interests of the early Islamic Empire was a significant achievement.<sup>98</sup>

Beyond these two hypotheses concerning the nature of the early Islamic Empire as an empire of mobile elites, this study has also advanced a less explicit, though obvious, argument about the history of Khurāsān and its relationship to the early Islamic Empire at large in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Khurāsān was a major province of the empire. In a forthcoming monograph, I study the ways in which officials from Khurāsān were instrumental in supervising the affairs of small villages and towns within the province,<sup>99</sup> as well as managing and directing the affairs of other provinces such as Egypt and Iraq.<sup>100</sup> The present study has highlighted the kinds of interventions and contributions that Khurāsān's people and resources made in the lives of other regions of the empire. The impact its residents had outside Khurāsān was both spectacular and highly consequential. The sources do not detail the motivations or rewards for imperial service. What they do allow us to deduce is how fundamental elite activity of this kind was for the stability and maintenance of the early Islamic Empire. It could not have survived for as long as it did without reproducing generations of elites, from Khurāsān in particular, to do the work of empire in the province of Khurāsān, in the empire's other key provinces, and in the imperial centre.

Elites from Khurāsān can be found all over the early Islamic empire. This study has identified precisely where some of them were and what they were doing. It has presented a picture of the early 'Abbāsīd Empire as one dominated by informal patterns of rule that depended disproportionately on personal retainers and elite gubernatorial and military families to maintain structures of an otherwise bureaucratic centralised empire. Only on the basis of a larger pool of prosopographies can we determine whether this pattern of rule characterises the nature of the early Islamic Empire more broadly.

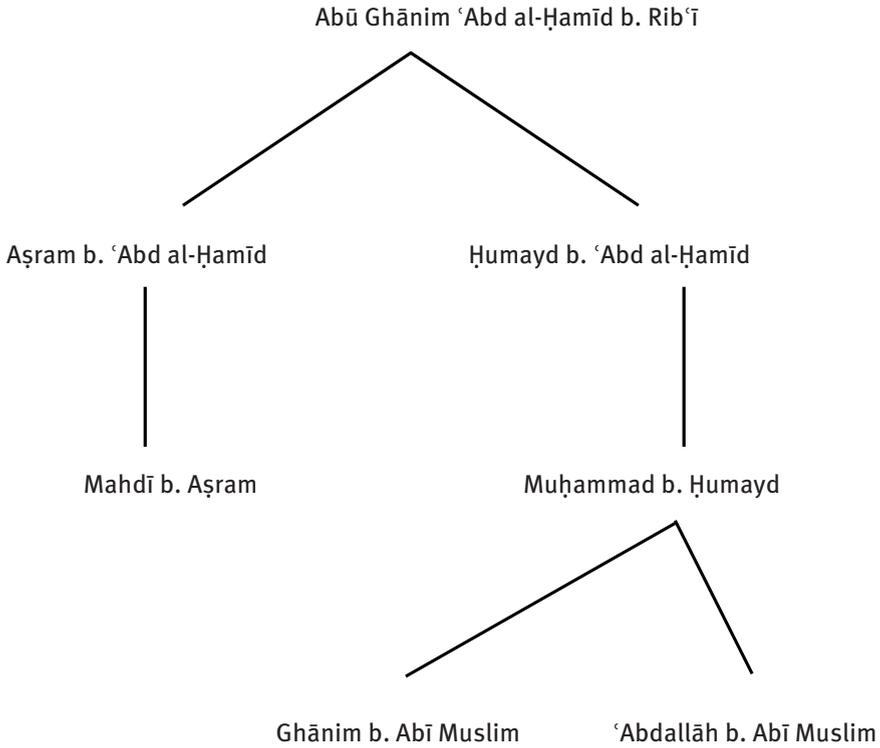
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**98** Haldon 2016, 159–92. Charles Tilly's landmark study of mobility in early modern Europe has generated new typologies of mobility in medieval societies. Unfortunately, historians of early Islamic history have a long way to go before we can propose stable typologies of this kind. For some sense of what has been achieved by historians of the early Roman Empire, see the edited volume *Migration and Mobility in the Early Roman Empire* (2016).

**99** See Khan (forthcoming journal article), "The Idea and Practice of Empire: the View from the Documentary Sources."

**100** Khan (forthcoming monograph), *The Idea and Practice of Empire in Early Islamic Society*.

## Appendix



Genealogical table of Abū Ghānim and his descendants

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Amikam Elad

# Preliminary Notes on the Term and Institution of *al-Shākiriyya* in Early Islam (ca. 14–218 H/635–36–833 CE) Mainly According to the Arabic Sources

**Abstract** The aim of this paper is to study the nature of the term and institution of *al-Shākiriyya* by re-examining the Arabic sources pertaining to the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsī caliphate. It is difficult to discern the character of the *Shākiriyya* in the service of the Arab commanders in Central Asia from the Arabic sources. They provide no information on ethnic composition, mobilization, military training or potential ties between a commander/master and his *Shākir*. This applies mainly to the Umayyad period, but also to the first 'Abbāsī period up to al-Ma'mūn's rule (813–833). It is also impossible to determine from them the possible connections between the ancient Central Asian military institutions and military institutions in the Islamic world. From evidence about the *Shākiriyya* in the Arabic sources we can usually discern a distinct military character, though it is noteworthy that in some cases the term *Shākiri* can be translated as meaning a loyal adherent, or even a servant. While relatively extensive, the evidence at hand from the Umayyad and the early 'Abbāsī periods is too limited to fully demonstrate that a) the *Shākiriyya* units denote Turks and b) that these allegedly Turkish units performed their service for the 'Abbāsī caliphs according to concepts and practices derived from the Central Asian steppe.

**Keywords:** *Shākiriyya*; Umayyads; early 'Abbāsids; early Islamic army; early Islamic history and historiography

## Introduction

During my current study of al-Ma'mūn's army in Khurāsān, I came upon several pieces of evidence relating to a corps of *Shākiriyya* at al-Ma'mūn's court in Marw. In checking the nature of the term and institution in the Arabic sources, I naturally went back in history to the Umayyad period and even earlier, to the period of

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A shorter preliminary version of this paper was read at the workshop on *The Origin and Early Nature of Military Slavery in the Islamic World* held at the Hebrew University in memory of the late Prof. David Ayalon (17–22 December 2008).

the Arab conquest. I am now in the preliminary stage of processing the material so gathered. However, the Arab sources I examined are for the most part not decisive. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the characteristics of the contemporary *Shākiriyya* from them.

### A Brief Summary of Scholarly Views Regarding *al-Shākiriyya*

Barthold commented that the *Shākiriyya* is sometimes mentioned in Arabic sources as a ruler's personal guard. He presents several examples related to Transoxania, according to which non-Arab rulers and also some tribal leaders and senior Arab commanders possessed a guard of this type.<sup>1</sup> Barthold argued that the origin of the word is the Persian *chākar* (literally, servant).<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the accepted opinion among some scholars.<sup>3</sup> From Narashakhi's description of the queen of Bukhārā's court, it seemed to Barthold that the *Shākiriyya* was a kind of honour guard. It included young noblemen sent in mutual exchange from the courts of other rulers, like the sons of European knights who served at the courts of their kings and dukes.<sup>4</sup>

Shaban described this institution as an Iranian one in its origin, agreeing that the root of the word is Persian and its meaning is servants.<sup>5</sup> He argued in a similar vein to Barthold (but without citing him) that the *Shākiriyya* performed the same military service for their leaders that European knights in the Middle Ages did for their kings. In the 'Abbāsi period, primarily in that of al-Mu'taṣim, this institution was transferred from the east to the heart of the caliphate. Many leaders and local princes from the east joined al-Mu'taṣim. Following ancient customs prevalent in the east, their loyal followers accompanied them and created the *Shākiriyya* regiments, as a way to continue to serve their leaders in the heart of the empire when those leaders became *mawālī* of the ruler. Others came individually and joined the *Shākiriyya* of the ruler himself. Shaban brings a string of references to prove his claims. However, though these references mention the *Shākiriyya*, most of them are from the period of al-Mu'taṣim and onward.

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1 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1159 [= Barthold 1928, 180]: the year 85 H/704–705 CE, the *Shākiriyya* of Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarqand, ruler of Sordia, see no. B/4, below; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1155: an Arab tribal leader of Khuzā'a, see no. B/3, below.

2 Barthold 1928, 180.

3 E.g., Beckwith 1984, 38, note 43: "the word is merely the Arabicized form of Persian *chākar*;" Yonggyu 2004, 40.

4 Barthold 1928, 180 (quoting Narshakhi, *Ta'rikh Bukhārā*, pp. 7–8 [= Frye 1954, 9]).

5 Shaban 1976, 2: 64–65, quoting the translation of al-Marwazī in Minorsky 1942, 18.

They do not provide enough information to justify Shaban's broad and detailed explanation.<sup>6</sup>

Forand argued that the *Shākiriyya* of the Iranian/Soghdian princes and rulers in Central Asia mentioned by the Arabic sources denotes "corps of slaves" and that it is "impossible to establish beyond a doubt that individuals constituting a *shākiriyya* among the Umayyads [governors and senior commanders] were of servile status."<sup>7</sup>

Beckwith argues for a Central Asian (Soghdian) origin of the institution of *al-Shākiriyya*, and this has been accepted by some scholars.<sup>8</sup> He quotes Chinese sources of the period describing the *chākars'* Turkish and Soghdian guard corps as courageous and fierce warriors.<sup>9</sup> More comprehensive studies in this vein have been carried out by Yonggyu and (recently) De La Vaissière (see below).

From a single Arabic passage where a Turkish general says: "I am the slave (*abd*) of the Khāqān from his *Shākiriyya*,"<sup>10</sup> Beckwith concludes that:

...the relationship between lord and *chākar* was extremely close indeed; al-Iskand's ally Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, speaks of his feudal relationship to his Western-Turkic liege-lord...It appears, therefore that the members of the central Asian guard corps spoke of themselves as *the slaves of their lord* [my emphasis].

We need more than one (equivocal) piece of evidence to corroborate such a social-cultural and ethnic institution, despite Beckwith's lively depiction.

Yonggyu is more cautious in his definitions. Regarding the above evidence, he believes that the word "slave" (*abd*) is used here metaphorically and does not denote "simple slaves."<sup>11</sup> *Chākars* "often labelled themselves as their lords' slaves, even if mostly metaphorically and nominally."<sup>12</sup> Yonggyu brings

6 Shaban 1976, 2: 64–65, quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 8, 928, 1373, 1427, 1605; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (ed. Tornberg), 7, 32; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 2, fol. 271a [= ed. Hyderabad, 8, 331].

7 Forand 1962, 10–11.

8 Beckwith 1984, esp. 39–40; Yonggyu 2004, chapter one, esp. 39–75; De La Vaissière 2007, esp. 59–158.

9 Beckwith 1984, 37: Chinese sources describing the *chākars* in Bukhārā and Samarqand; the word *chākar* in the Chinese sources is *che-chieh* (Beckwith 1984, 37, nn. 41 and 42); I cannot judge these pieces of evidence.

10 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1542: أنا عبد الخاقان من شاكريته; see the discussion of Yonggyu below.

11 Yonggyu 2004, 63: "Indeed they are not simple slaves, because they are also of the highest echelons of society."

12 Yonggyu 2004, 63.

several pieces of evidence from Chinese sources (some from the 7<sup>th</sup> century), where the *chākars* of the Turkish *qaghan* are called “slaves of the *qaghan*,” denoting in his view subordinates.<sup>13</sup> Regarding Forand’s assertion that “the *Shākiriyyah* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves,”<sup>14</sup> Yonggyu argues that this conclusion “is somewhat extreme...it is probable that the *chākars* in Iran and Central Asia were fully subordinate to their rulers and that they were servile elements in the service of the rulers.”<sup>15</sup> It is noteworthy that Beckwith speaks only of Central Asia while Yonggyu distinguishes between Iran and Central Asia. Yonggyu adds (following Forand’s examples) that al-Ṭabarī provides many examples showing that the Iranian ruler had the “right of life and death over the members of *shākiriyya*.” But this assertion cannot be proved from the texts he adduces.<sup>16</sup>

### Some Major Characteristics of *al-Shākiriyya* in Central Asia.

Yonggyu asserts that Chinese sources from the 7<sup>th</sup> century attest to special military forces called *chākars*.

...inner Asian historians and Sinologists have in general regarded the term as referring to the elite armed forces constituted by Central Asian Turko-Persian ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup>...Other currently available sources in Chinese also indicate that *chākars* are peoples associated to Iranian groups.<sup>18</sup>

The military skills, courage and extreme loyalty of the *chākars* are well attested to and demonstrated in the Chinese sources.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, Yonggyu adds, “The Chinese sources are not forthcoming when it comes to the question of by what mechanism such a special bond between the inner Asian ruler and his retainers was created.”<sup>20</sup> The same can be said about the Arabic sources pertaining to the Umawī and the early ‘Abbāsi caliphate.

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13 Yonggyu 2004, 63.

14 Forand 1962, 11.

15 Yonggyu 2004, 68.

16 Yonggyu 2004, 68, quoting Forand 1962, 11, citing al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 965, 1155, 1609, 1927 (nos. B/1, B/3, B/11 and B/15 in this paper).

17 Yonggyu 2004, 44–45.

18 Yonggyu 2004, 46.

19 Yonggyu 2004, 68–69.

20 Yonggyu 2004, 70.

## De La Vaissière's Conclusions

De La Vaissière devotes large parts of a recent book to a broad in-depth discussion of the *Shākiriyya*. He expands some of the conclusions of Beckwith and more especially of Yonggyu, arguing that the *Shākiriyya* was strictly a special institution within the Soghdian armies in Transoxania.<sup>21</sup> In his view the professional soldiers called *chākar* constituted “the most specific element of the military Soghdian life.”<sup>22</sup>

De La Vaissière relies mainly on two groups of Chinese and Arabic sources. The Chinese sources enable him to establish unequivocally that the *chākars* were “an elite guard restricted to a few selected companions.”<sup>23</sup>

Les *chākar* étaient les soldats d'élites des nobles et des rois, distingués par leur bravoure, entretenus, éduqués et adoptés fictivement par eux afin de s'assurer de leur fidélité. Ils les suivaient à la guerre comme dans le service quotidien. La plupart d'entre eux devaient être des gens du commun, mais des rois pouvaient avoir des *chākar* nobles.<sup>24</sup>

## Persian or Soghdian Origin?

Unlike some of the scholars that preceded him, De La Vaissière argues against the Persian-Sasanian origin of this institution via the word itself. The etymology of the word is from the Soghdian and not the Persian language; although it does not appear in known Soghdian sources (mostly religious texts), it is found in the Arabic and the Chinese sources.<sup>25</sup> All the Arabic (almost exclusively from al-Ṭabarī) and the Chinese sources that mention the *Shākiriyya* pertain to Central Asia (Transoxania). Al-Ṭabarī never mentions these units in his descriptions of the Arab conquests of the Sasanian territories.<sup>26</sup>

De La Vaissière admits that the word *chākar* does appear in 10<sup>th</sup> century Persian texts (for example, Narshakhī), but unlike Barthold<sup>27</sup> he argues that the meaning of the word is servant or apprentice and that it refers to an institution

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21 De La Vaissière 2007, 59.

22 De La Vaissière 2007, 68: “Les soldats professionnels nommés *chākar* forment l'élément le plus spécifique de la vie militaire sogdienne.”

23 De La Vaissière 2007, 69–70: “d'une garde d'élite restreinte à quelques compagnons choisis.”

24 De La Vaissière 2007, 86.

25 De La Vaissière 2007, 68.

26 De La Vaissière 2007, 72–73.

27 See above.

basically different from that of the *chākars* of Central Asia.<sup>28</sup> The main difference between the *chākars* of Transoxania and Narshakhī's *chākars* is the inferior social status of the latter. According to the Zoroastrian point of view, they are non-noble servants performing base work. The descriptions of the court of the Queen of Bukhārā by Narshakhī are completely different from the military institution of the *chākars* depicted in the Chinese sources.<sup>29</sup>

The difference between the meaning of the term *chākar* in the Persian versus the Arabic and Chinese texts explains (in De La Vaissière's opinion) the apparently single text of al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (*Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*) in which he describes the *Shākiriyya* units in the army of the Sasanian general Rustam during the battle of al-Qādisiyya in the year 15 H/636 CE.<sup>30</sup> This conclusion poses some difficulties.

A) There is a similar text recorded by al-Ṭabarī (no. 1): "The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by *Shākiri* men; and from among these sixty thousand fifteen thousand noblemen (also) were accompanied."<sup>31</sup>

B) The term *al-Shākiriyya* in different forms (e.g., *wa-Shākiriyyatuhu*) appears at least two more times in Ibn Ṭāhir's book in connection with two different periods of the 'Abbāsī caliphate 1) In the year 136 H/754 CE, the *Shākiriyya* of caliph Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāh (r. 132 H/749 CE–134 H/756 CE) is mentioned in al-Kūfa/al-Hāshimiyya.<sup>32</sup> (No. C/3 [20]) 2) The *mawālī* and the *Shākiriyya* in Sāmarrā' rebelled during the short reign of caliph al-Musta'in (Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mu'taṣim; r. 248 H/862 CE–252 H/866 CE) due to the latter's political deeds, among them the imprisonment of al-Mutawakkil's two sons al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad and the release of al-Ḥasan b. al-Afshīn from prison.<sup>33</sup>

28 De La Vaissière 2007, 88.

29 De La Vaissière 2007, 74–75.

30 De La Vaissière 2007, 73, and note 194, quoting Zakeri 1995, 184; "on peut assurer que lorsque Maqdisī décrit des *chākar* parmi les suivants de Rostam et de Yazdergerd III durant la bataille de Qadissiyya, dans son *Livre de la création et de l'histoire*, il se sert simplement d'un mot commun à Balkh au X<sup>e</sup> siècle pour décrire des serviteurs de souverains sassanides très différents des *chākar* centre-asiatiques et qui, dans l'Iran sassanide portaient certainement un autre nom."

31 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1, 2258: وكان جنده مائة وعشرين ألفاً: ستين ألف متبوع مع الرجل الشاكري, ومن الستين ألفاً خمسة: عشر ألف شريف متبوع.

32 Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad'*, 6, 76, records a tradition relating the plot by the caliph and his brother al-Manṣūr to assassinate Abū Muslim; the caliph backs down from his decision, ordering one of his *Shākiriyya* (فقال لبعض شاكريه) to tell his brother not to kill Abū Muslim.

33 Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad'*, 6, 123: وشغب الموالي والشاكرية...; according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 1533, al-Ḥasan was released from prison in 250 H/864 CE. The insurrection against al-Musta'in and the release of al-Mu'tazz from prison occurred in 251 H/865 CE (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 1545;

C) It is difficult to accept the historiographical method applied by De La Vaissière to al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir's work in general and to this specific text in particular. Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir was a native of Jerusalem, a contemporary of the famous geographer Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (known as al-Muqaddasī/al-Maqdisī, d. ca. 1000). Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir emigrated from Jerusalem to Bust in Sijistān, where he wrote his book around 355 H/966 CE (not in Balkh as De La Vaissière believes). Very little information survives regarding him; it is not known exactly when he left Jerusalem and when he settled in Bust.<sup>34</sup> His work was written in Arabic, not in Persian.

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the rebels referred to are Turks). I did not find the expression *al-mawālī wa-l-Shākiriyya* in al-Ṭabarī's work, but this phrase does appear even earlier in other sources, e.g. during al-Mutawakkil's reign (r. 232 H/847CE–247 H/861 CE), when the latter ordered the preparation of an extraordinary celebration in honour of his young son, al-Mu'tazz, who had finished learning and reciting the Qur'ān. This unprecedented celebration was held in Barkuwārā, one of al-Mutawakkil's palaces. See al-Mu'āfā b. Zakariyyā', *al-Jalīs al-Ṣāliḥ*, 3, 103–105; 105: "he [the caliph] ordered the most prominent dignitaries, the most distinguished *mawālī* and *al-Shākiriyya* to be present in Barkuwārā...": وَأَوْعَزَ إِلَى النَّاسِ مِنَ الْأَكْبَارِ وَوَجْهِ الْمَوَالِي وَالشَّكْرِيَّةِ بِحَضُورِ بَرْكُورَا: حدثنا الحسن بن القاسم الكوكبي قال حدثني أبو يوسف يعقوب بن بنان الكاتب قال حدثنا أبو العباس أحمد بن محمد بن موسى بن الفرات قال حدثنا القاسم الكوكبي قال حدثني أبو يوسف يعقوب بن بنان الكاتب قال حدثنا أبو العباس أحمد بن محمد بن موسى بن الفرات قال حدثنا أبي وجماعة من شيوخنا

to the famous Banū l-Furāt family, several of whose members held the offices of secretaries and viziers under the 'Abbāsīs (mainly from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century) and the Ikshidīs (in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century). They were pro-Shi'a. On Banū l-Furāt, see D. Sourdel, "Ibn al-Furāt", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, 3, s.v. (on Aḥmad and his father, see p. 767b.), but esp. Sourdel 1959–60 (index); for parallel sources for the tradition, see for example Ibn al-'Imrānī, *al-Inbā'*, 1, 118–119 and 281, n. 285, an exhaustive bibliography; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughya*, 8, 3764–3765; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḥ*, 18, 314–316. On Barkuwārā, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam* (Beirut ed.), 1, 410; Le Strange 1905, 52. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 1627, where we find the phrase *al-atrāk wa-l-mawālī* (in al-Musta'in's army); Gordon 2001, 224, n. 242, argues that the *mawālī* mentioned here are Turks as well: "there is good reason to think Turks are meant here as well. In other words, a distinction is made here between two groups of Turks." See also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 1582 (year 251 H/865 CE): "The *Shākiriyya* and the *Abnā'* [contingents] support[ed] al-Mu'tazz while the Turks and their supporters broke rank and fought against him": واجابه الشاكرية والأنباء واعتزل الأتراك ومن كانفهم وحواربه. It is noteworthy that there is a distinction here between the *Shākiriyya* and the Turks; for the involvement of the *Shākiriyya* corps in the civil war, see for example, Saliba 1985, index ("*Shākiriyyah*"); for a historical survey of the civil war, see Shaban 1976, 2: 80–85, but esp. Gordon 2001, 90ff., and 224, n. 238 for further bibliography.

**34** *Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-ta'riḥ* was for a long time ascribed to Abū Zayd Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī (d. 322 H/934 CE), mainly due to the assertion of Ḥāji Khalifa in *Kashf al-zunūn*, 1, 227, but see also Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīda*, 249 (mentioned by Morony 1988, 353); van Ess 1978, 322 (S. 581); Adang 1996, 49. On al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (a brief mention of the author and his book), see Goitein 1982, 192–193 (the original Hebrew version of this article appeared in 1953); Sarkis 1928–30, 1: 241–242; al-Zirikli 1980, 1: 133–134, 7: 253, 8: 285; Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 12: 294; "Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir," p. 762a; *GAL*, I, p. 337; S. I, p. 222; Sezgin 1967, 1: 337; Rosenthal 1968,

[It] recalls al-Mas‘ūdī’s *Murūj [al-Dhahab]*, but history here is envisaged from a more philosophical and certainly from a more critical point of view. The author displays a good knowledge of ancient and alien religions, whose cultural value he stresses without however ceasing to place Islam above them. He follows the usual order. Beginning with the creation of the world, he devotes the first three volumes (half of the whole work) to ancient history and to philosophical, theological, geographical, etc. considerations and does not reach a consideration of Islam until the fourth volume (cf. the parallel lay-out of al-Mas‘ūdī’s work, in which these earlier topics occupy only two volumes out of five), finally reserving a restricted place for the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsīds....Such a disdain may possibly arise precisely from the originality and free thought of a writer who seems to have maintained a certain independence and not to have been an adherent of any religious movement of the age when he lived.<sup>35</sup>

The historical parts of this work preserve many pieces of evidence of utmost importance, which are not found in other sources known to me.<sup>36</sup>

In the introduction to the historical section of his work, the author asserts that it “is based on what we have found in the books of the authors of history (في كتب أهل الأخبار).” From a cursory reading it is clear that Ibn Ṭāhir relied heavily on earlier sources, including well-known works such as al-Ṭabarī’s (or his sources; this should be established by a special study).<sup>37</sup> Many times he quotes written works or transmitters from which he accumulated his historical information. This is done according to the traditional methodology of the great historical written Arabic works. The examples are numerous and it is sufficient to cite only a few here.<sup>38</sup>

From a cursory check of Ibn Ṭāhir’s work *al-Bad’ wa-l-Ta’rikh* it is clear that he was very learned in *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, historical and other kinds of Islamic literature. The sections of pre-Islamic history that deal with *al-mabda’* and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* until the beginnings of Muḥammad’s mission, the life of the Prophet

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index, esp. 114–115; Khālīdī 1976. Khālīdī quotes the short mention of the author by Sezgin, Rosenthal and Miquel (see the bibliographical citation above in this note); Miquel 1967, 1: 212–217, and index; see also Khālīdī 1994, 153–154; Adang 1996a, esp. pp. 48–50, and index; Adang 1996b, esp. 59–60; Morony 1988.

35 “Al-Muṭaḥhar b. Ṭāhir.” But see Khālīdī 1976, who considers him a Mu‘tazilī.

36 See the short evaluation of the man and his work in this vein by Sezgin 1967, 1: 337 (quoted in Gil 1992, 421).

37 For example, compare al-Muṭaḥhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad’*, 6, 75–76, to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 85–86 (partly related by al-Ṭabarī from al-Madā’ini); see full discussion below (‘Abbāsī, no. C/3 [20])

38 E.g., II, p. 150: وفي كتابه عن وهب بن المنبه: رويناه عن وهب بن المنبه: or: وروى عبد الله بن مسلم بن قتيبة في كتاب المعارف: وفي كتاب: p. 151: ورواية محمد بن إسحاق فيما يرويه عنه يونس بن بكير: p. 153: وأصبت في كتاب أخبار زرنج: p. 152: [تأريخ ابن خردادبه] وروى وهب [ابن المنبه] وقد روى همام عن قتادة عن عكرمة عن: p. 154: ولرايت في كتب بعض أهل التنجيم ذكروا تواريخ الأنبياء وروى أبو جعفر: p. 156: وذكر ما رواه أهل الأخبار روى عبد المنعم بن إدريس عن ابن عباس: p. 155: [ابن عباس رضي الله عنه...الرازي عن أبيه عن الربيع بن أنس...وفي رواية الكلبي

and the history of the caliphate are written in the familiar tradition of the important Islamic historians of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Even an anecdote about an alleged disputation between the chief commander of the Arab force in front of Yazdajird (no. A/1.3, below), is written in accordance with the style, spirit and contents of many of the traditions of the early Arab-Muslim conquests, as found in the early Arabic *Futūḥ* literature—for example, the works of Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. 157 H/774 CE), al-Azdī (d. around 190 H/805–806 CE or 210 H/825–826 CE), al-Qudāmī (d. between 201 H/816–17 CE or 210 H/826–27 CE), Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’idh (d. 232 H/847 CE) or Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. ca. 184 H/800 CE). Ṭāhir seldom quotes his historical sources in these early sections. Although his work has long been edited and used in research, it has not been properly studied; I do not know of an in-depth study of the author or his important work.<sup>39</sup>

Though it is tempting to compare the *Shākiriyya* and the institution of knighthood in the European Middle Ages (as argued by Barthold and Beckwith<sup>40</sup>), there should be reservations regarding the equation. It is refuted, for example, and treated with great caution and reservation by De La Vaissière.<sup>41</sup> If such comparisons are made, they should be put forward in great detail and with profound caution. The regimes in the east and in the west were very different in character.<sup>42</sup>

Other researchers mention the *Shākiriyya* but do not discuss it or attempt to clarify its character.<sup>43</sup>

## The Term *Shākiri*/*Shākiriyya* in the Arabic Sources

Used to mean military contingents: marked MC

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<sup>39</sup> See Khālīdī 1976, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Beckwith 1984, 35 and note 26: comparing the *Shākiriyya* guard corps with “the system found among the Germanic peoples of late Classical and early medieval Europe,” the *comitatus*.

<sup>41</sup> De La Vaissière 2007, 83–84, argues against Beckwith but mainly against two articles by P. Golden from 2001 and 2004 (not read by A. E.).

<sup>42</sup> For example, see the reservations of Cahen and Lambton in their discussion of the *iqṭā’* regime in the east and attempts to compare this regime with European feudalism, Lambton 1965; Cahen, “Iḳṭā’”, *EF*, 3, 1088–1091.

<sup>43</sup> Pipes 1981, 137, note 215; Lassner 1980, 136 (regarding al-Mu’ṭaṣim’s period). Levy 1969, 418–419, translates the *Shākiriyya* of al-Mutawakkil (847–861) as referring to new recruits in contrast to the old regiments. He was mistaken in his *understanding* of the term. In relation to the citation (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 3, 1510) according to which *al-Abnā’ wa-l-Shākiriyya* rebelled against the Turks, he believes that *Abnā’* means “sons”, that is, new recruits. What is meant here are in fact the veteran *Abnā’* regiments.

Used to mean non-military, servant or slave: marked NM/SE/SL

### A) The Period of the Conquest of al-‘Irāq (14 H/636 CE): MC? Instead of S/: SE/NM?

These may be the earliest pieces of evidence at our disposal, recording the term *Shākiriyya/Shākiri* as in use in the year 14 H/636 CE[!], during the battle of al-Qādisiyya in al-‘Irāq. Two versions of these terms appear in the sources. Both describe the army of Rustam, the chief general of the Persian army.

#### A/1) The First Version, According to Ṭabarī

This version is recorded by al-Ṭabarī from Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. ca. 184 H /800 CE), who transmitted the following tradition from three informers: “The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by the *Shākiri* man; and from among these sixty thousand fifteen thousand noblemen (also) were accompanied.”<sup>44</sup> Friedmann renders the term *Shākiri* in this sentence as “servant:” “The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by servants (*shākiri*); from the [other] sixty thousand, fifteen thousand were noblemen accompanied [by dependents].”<sup>45</sup>

In another place, al-Ṭabarī (via Sayf b. ‘Umar) records: “Rustam set out with one hundred and twenty thousand men, all of them accompanied by dependents. Together with their dependents they numbered more than two hundred thousand. He set out from al-Madā’in with sixty thousand men, accompanied by dependents.”<sup>46</sup> In this version the *Shākiriyya* are not mentioned.

#### A/1.2) The second version, According to *Kitāb al-Bad’ wa-l-Ta’rikh*

“Rustam arrived and encamped in al-Ḥīra at the head of sixty thousand regular (paid) soldiers, besides (the accompanying units) of the supporters, the followers

<sup>44</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2258: وكان جنده مائة وعشرين ألفاً: ستين ألف متبوع مع الرجل الشاكري, ومن الستين ألفاً خمسة عشر ألف شريف متبوع.

<sup>45</sup> Friedmann 1992, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2250: وخرج رستم في عشرين ومائة الف, كلهم متبوع, وكانوا يأتياهم أكثر من مائتي الف; وخرج من المدائن في ستين ألف متبوع; the translation is that of Friedmann 1992, 46.

وجاء رستم فنزل الحيرة في ستين ألفا من المقاتلة سوى الأشياع والأتباع: "and the *Shākiriyya*:"<sup>47</sup> والشاكرية

Here, the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned not as part of the regular paid army but as one of the auxiliary units.<sup>48</sup>

### A/1.3) The *Shākiriyya* of Yazdajird: MC?/; S/NM?

Ibn Ṭāhir relates in another tradition that several senior commanders were sent to Yazdajird by Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ to persuade the king to recognize the superiority of Islam, demanding that he become a Muslim or "pay the *jizya* while being humiliated,<sup>49</sup> standing while a whip is over his head" (فالجزية تؤديها و أنت صاغر قائم و السوط على رأسك). They were received by Yazdajird's son who responded: "If you were not messengers I would have killed you." So they answered: "We shall take your land and send you to exile from it." So he asked: "What is your proof (for this)?" and they said: "Our Prophet (*ṣal'am*) informed us about this, and there was nothing that he informed us about which did not materialize." Yazdajird's son (or is it the king himself?) said something in Persian to one of his *Shākiriyya* (فراطن بعض شاكريته) and he came quickly with a date-basket which contained dust of the earth, and he said: "Take this, this is what you'll get from me..."<sup>50</sup>

This tradition is undoubtedly a *topos*, a literary convention, with many parallels in early Islamic sources on the conquests. Still, it was woven around some solid historical events, incorporating the names of real Arab commanders and places. Whoever spread this tradition was certain that the Sāsānian prince and/or king had a *Shākiriyya*. The nature of the *Shākiri* himself is not clear from this anecdote; he may have been a servant, or a soldier who belonged to a *Shākiriyya* military institution.

It is also noteworthy that this example is from a very early period, and that it deals with the Sāsānian (Persian) army in al-ʿIrāq; it does not touch on Central Asia.

47 Al-Maqdisī, *al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*, 5, 171.

48 For a different analysis and interpretation of this evidence, see De La Vaissière 2007, 73, who doubts the authenticity of this evidence (quoting only al-Maqdisī); and see the discussion above.

49 This is a paraphrase of the well-known Qur'ānic verse (9 (*al-tawba*):9), as well as an interpretation of this verse, which clearly attests to the later origin of the text.

50 Al-Maqdisī, *al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*, 5, 172.

## B) The Umawī Period

### B/1) al-‘Irāq: MC

The first time the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned is in 77 H/696–697 CE, during the fierce battles between al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf and Shabīb b. Yazīd al-Shaybānī al-Khārījī in al-‘Irāq (mainly near al-Kūfa). One of al-Ḥajjāj’s notables and commanders, Khālīd b. ‘Attāb al-Riyāḥī al-Tamīmī,<sup>51</sup> was sent from al-Kūfa at the head of his *Shākiriyya* (*fī Shākiriyyatihi*) to fight Shabīb. The tradition was recorded by al-Ṭabarī from ‘Umar b. Saḥabba through Khallād b. Yazīd from al-Ḥajjāj b. Qutayba.<sup>52</sup>

#### B/1.1) MC

Miskawayh relates that Khālīd b. ‘Attāb headed a company of soldiers of Ahl al-Kūfa together with his *mawālī* and his *Shākiriyya*.<sup>53</sup>

#### B/1.2) MC

Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd relates that Khālīd b. ‘Attāb “came out with a group of his *mawālī* and his *Shākiriyya* and his cousins:” فخرج في جمع من مواليه وشاكريته وبنى عمه.<sup>54</sup>

On the face of it, this is an exception to the geographic-social pattern established by some scholars, since its setting is not connected to the east (Khurāsān) and certainly not to Transoxania. Khālīd b. ‘Attāb was a Kūfī, who during his ca-

51 On Khālīd b. ‘Attāb, see Crone 1980, 112; al-Ziriklī 1980, 2: 297 (his entry); see also Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 227; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 12, 161–162; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 16, 172–175: his biography; 172: governor of al-Rayy; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamhara* (ed. Ḥasan), 217 and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 12, 161: governor of Iṣfahān after his father; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 7, 403: governor of al-Rayy; al-‘Askarī, *Taṣḥīfāt*, 2, 872.

52 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 965 (وجاء خالد بن عتاب في شاكريته); my emphasis); the *isnād* is on pp. 963 and 964: ‘Umar b. Saḥabba < Khallād b. Yazīd < al-Ḥajjāj b. Qutayba [b. Muslim?]. In some of the traditions, *‘iṣāba* (a company of soldiers) appears instead of the *Shākiriyya* (see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 961; al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rikh*, 5, 333), or *jamā‘a* (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 9, 24: a *jamā‘a* of 4000 soldiers). See also the next footnote.

53 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, 2, 308. The text is slightly garbled: فخرج معه بعصابة [؟=ومعه عصابة؟] من أهل الكوفة مع مواليه وشاكريته.

54 Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, 4, 271; Forand 1962, 10. His conclusions regarding this and other examples are farfetched.

reer served as the governor of al-Rayy and Iṣfahān in the Jibāl district (also far away from Transoxania). This was the heart of the Sāsānian kingdom. Did he recruit his *Shākiriyya* there?

Crone has already noted that at least two members of Khālīd b. ‘Attāb’s sub-tribe (Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘) were connected to Khurāsān. The first was Ḥabīb b. Qurra [b. Nu‘aym b. Qa‘nab...b. Hammām b. Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘], who was the governor of Balkh in 29 H/649–650 CE on behalf of ‘Uthmān.<sup>55</sup> But there is a chronological gap of about 50 years between Khālīd b. ‘Attāb’s campaign and Ḥabīb b. Qurra’s governorship. The evidence in al-Ṭabarī (from 29 H/649–650 CE) is the only mention of Ḥabīb b. Qurra in the sources. Nothing more is known of him, certainly not about any *Shākiriyya* contingents of his, nor is anything known about his relations with the family of Khālīd b. ‘Attāb.

The second person mentioned by Crone is al-Abrad b. Qurra b. Nu‘aym, the brother of Ḥabīb.<sup>56</sup> His daughter was married to Yazīd b. Qurrā‘ al-Riyāḥī or al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī, who lived in Marw.<sup>57</sup> As in the case of Ḥabīb b. Qurra, no connection is recorded between Khālīd b. ‘Attāb and al-Abrad b. Qurra or between their families. It seems that the Khurāsānī background and connections of Khālīd b. ‘Attāb with these distant relatives and with the districts of Khurāsān and Transoxania need to be established on firmer ground.<sup>58</sup>

All the other pieces of evidence from the Umawī period (except two) are connected to Khurāsān and Transoxania.

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55 Crone 1980, 113 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2831).

56 On him, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamhara*, 216; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 227; Ibn Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl*, 1, 10–11; he is only mentioned in these sources.

57 Crone 1980, 113 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1569: al-Riyāḥī); but see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1691: al-Ḥanzalī, a different sub-tribe of Tamīm.

58 De La Vaissière 2007, 72–73, note 193, mentions the evidence (according to al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rikh*) about Khālīd b. ‘Attāb’s *Shākiriyya* in al-Kūfa (al-‘Irāq), but argues, relying on Crone’s observation, that “mais Crone 1980, p. 113, souligne les forts liens de sa famille avec le Khorassan (elle compte dans ses rangs un gouverneur de Balkh).” Crone’s assertion (1980, 113) about the Khurāsānī connection of Khālīd and his father ‘Attāb to Khurāsān is not attested to by the sources she quotes. Furthermore, she confuses ‘Attāb and his son Khālīd, mistakenly arguing that it was ‘Attāb who had a *Shākiriyya* (quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 950). ‘Attāb’s different contingents are mentioned on this page, but no *Shākiriyya* contingents are listed. I am unable to trace any connection between ‘Attāb and his son Khālīd and Khurāsān.

**B/2) Khurāsān: MC**

In 82 H/701–702 CE Thābit and Ḥurayth, the sons of Quṭba, *mawālī* of Khuzā‘a and two commanders of the governor of Khurāsān al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, left al-Muhallab’s camp with “three hundred of their *Shākiriyya* and their loyal and close Arab adherents.” The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’inī (most probably from a written work) < al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad b. Ya‘lā al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 163 H/780 CE),<sup>59</sup> whose “father was one of the authorities of al-Ṭabarī on the events in the wars of the Arabs on the frontiers of Khurāsān in 30–90 H/651–709 CE.”<sup>60</sup>

**B/3) Transoxania: MC**

In 85 H/704–705 CE, Thābit and Ḥurayth, the two tribal leaders and commanders mentioned above, found a refuge in Tirmidh (in Transoxania, on the Oxus river) dominated by Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī.<sup>61</sup> At a certain stage Thābit turned against Mūsā and with the help of the princes of Transoxania fought against him. Thābit had to guard against assassination and ordered a group of his *Shākiriyya* “to guard him, to sleep in his house at night, and with them, a group of Arabs (ومعهم قوم من العرب).”<sup>62</sup>

Barthold argued for the Iranian origin of this personal guard (*Shākiriyya*), but no indication of this guard’s ethnicity is included in the source he quoted. He further argued that the phrase “and with them, a group of Arab tribes” means Thābit’s enemies in the camp of the leader of Khuzā‘a. The text is not as clear-cut as Barthold deems, and it is definitely possible to assume that the *Shākiriyya* that appears in this text also included Arabs.<sup>63</sup>

59 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1082: وفخرجا في ثلاثمائة من شاكريتهما والمنقطعين إليهما من العرب; Forand 1962, 11; the expression والمنقطعين is rendered by Hinds 1990 as: “three hundred of their *shākiriyya* and Arab adherents [my emphasis]” and by De La Vaissière 2007, 71 as “et leur *suivants* arabes [my emphasis].”

60 Lichtenstädter, “al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad....al-Ḍabbī,” *EF*, 7, 305–306.

61 On Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, index, esp. 1145ff.; Shaban 1979, index, esp. 58–49, 58–62; on al-Thābit and Ḥurayth, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, index, esp. 1145ff.; Shaban 1979, index, esp. 57–61.

62 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1155; وأمر قوما من شاكريته يحرسونه ويبيتون عنده في داره ومعهم قوم من العرب; Barthold 1928, 183; De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 181.

63 Barthold 1928, 183; Hinds 1990, 99: “they being accompanied by some Arabs.”

**B/4) Transoxania: SE/NM**

The *Shākiriyya* of Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarqand and ruler of Soghdia, is mentioned in the year 85 H/704–705 CE. He is in a military camp, leading a coalition of non-Arabs and Arabs against Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī, who has gained control over Tirmidh. Ṭarkhūn is described sitting in his tent, “and his *Shākiriyya* had lit fires before him.” They scattered when they heard the voice of one single enemy soldier who entered the tent and is killed by Ṭarkhūn. Then the *Shākiriyya* returned and Ṭarkhūn scolded them, saying “You fled from a [single] man.” Then his slave girls entered the tent and the *Shākiriyya* fled.

It seems that the *Shākiriyya* in this case are servants, not soldiers; certainly not courageous warriors since they did not even try to resist their lord’s attacker.<sup>64</sup> The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’ini].<sup>65</sup> It is unsound to conclude from this text, as Forand did, that “the *Shākiriyya* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves.”<sup>66</sup>

**B/5) Jurjān/Khurāsān: NM/SE?**

In 98 H/716–717 CE, in the course of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab’s long siege of Jurjān (located southeast of the Caspian Sea), “a non-‘Arab (soldier?) from *Khurāsān*—who was with Yazīd—went out to hunt with a *Shākiriyya* of his.” While chasing a wild mountain goat (antelope?: وعل), he discovers a small path in the mountains leading to the besieged fortress. This evidence is connected to the east via *Khurāsān* (but not Transoxania); the identity of the “hunter” is not clear. Was he a commander or an Iranian notable? The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’ini] < “the group that transmitted to him the report about Jurjān and Ṭabaristān.”<sup>67</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī records two additional conflicting versions (see below) of the identity of this soldier or commander who discovers the secret pass to the besieged city while hunting. In these versions, the “heroes of the anecdote” are Arabs.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 71: “ils veillent sur sa tente mais ne résistent pas à une attaque.”

<sup>65</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1159–1160; the beginning of the long tradition (mention of al-Madā’ini) is on 1146; Barthold 1928, 180; Forand 1962, 10; De La Vaissière, 2007, 71, note 182 (quoting al-Ṭabarī).

<sup>66</sup> Forand 1962, 11.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1330–1331: مع يزيد يتصيد ومعه شاكريّة له: إذ خرج رجل من عجم خراسان كان مع يزيد يتصيد ومعه شاكريّة له; is it possible that the phrase شاكريّة له denotes a female *Shākir*?

**B/5.1)**

The second version of this story is related by Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204 H/819 CE) from Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157 H/774 CE), who reports that the “hunter” was an Arab soldier from the Ṭayyi’ tribe (رجل من عسكره من طيء). He is accompanied by a group defined as *aṣḥāb*, which may denote close associates and in this case most probably means close commanders or soldiers who were attached to him or were part of the contingents he commanded.<sup>68</sup> The term *Shākiriyya/shākiriyyatīhi* is not mentioned in this tradition or in the next version.

**B/5.2)**

The third version is recorded by al-Ṭabarī, who does not name his source and uses the term “and it is said” (ويقال). It may have originally been part of Ibn al-Kalbī’s tradition. This third version says that the hunter’s name was al-Hayyāj b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī, from the (Arab?) inhabitants or warriors of Ṭūs (الهيلاج بن عبد الرحمن الأزدي من أهل الطوس). According to this version, he came out from Yazīd’s camp for the purpose of hunting.<sup>69</sup>

**B/5.3)**

Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī records only the last, third version of this anecdote and weaves it around al-Hayyāj b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī. No sources are recorded, but it is most probably taken from al-Madā’īni’s work. This is a long and detailed tradition, describing how during the prolonged siege of the fortress by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, “one of his close associates/commanders, from the (Arab?) contingents of al-Ṭūs, named al-Hayyāj b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī went out hunting with a dog...and there were with him a group [of soldiers] from the army camp...”<sup>70</sup>

68 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1331: وقال لمن... ويصيد... وعسكره من طيء. وقال هـشام بن محمد عن أبي مخنف فخرج رجل من عسكره من طيء يصيد... وقال لمن... معه قفوا مكانكم... حتى وصل إلى أصحابيه ثم رجع إلى العسكر.

69 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1331.

70 Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Beirut ed.), 7, 218: إذ خرج رجل من أصحابه من أهل طوس يقال له: [my emphasis]; al-Madā’īni is mentioned in Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Beirut ed.), 7, 206. Ibn A‘tham relied heavily on al-Madā’īni’s works; see Conrad 2015, 99, n. 77, 115–116, 118, 125; Lindstedt 2014, esp. 107–108, 110, 117.

It is clear that we are again faced with a *topos*, but some elements of the anecdote may have a grain of authenticity.<sup>71</sup> It is interesting (and may be of importance) that the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned in connection with an Iranian. The two other Arab commanders are not connected to a *Shākiriyya*.

Again, it is worth reminding ourselves that the term *al-Shākiriyya* was a common, well-known term in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century when al-Madā'inī lived and worked.

### B/6) Syria/Dābiq. Between 96 H/715 CE and 99 H/717 CE, the Reign of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik: NM/SE?

Yāqūt quotes an anecdote that he most plausibly copied from *Akhbār al-Naḥawiyyīn* (The History of the Grammarians),<sup>72</sup> a book by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik, Abū Bakr al-Sarrāj, known as al-Ta'rikhī (d. 291 H/903–904 CE)<sup>73</sup>: “And he related in the tradition whose *isnād* concludes with al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml/Zaml al-Saksakī, who was one of the close associates of al-Manṣūr من وكان من أصحاب المنصور),<sup>74</sup> who said:

We were together with Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik [r. 96/715–99/717] in Dābiq,<sup>75</sup> when al-Shahḥāj [b. Wadā'] al-Azdī al-Mawṣilī<sup>76</sup> rose up in his presence and said [in incorrect Ara-

71 Cf. the summary of al-Madā'inī's tradition in al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* (Beirut, 1987), 471: “[Yazīd] laid siege to the fortress for seven months, with no apparent results, then a man (a soldier?) directed and guided them towards a road to their fortress”: “فنزله عليها سبعة أشهر لا يقدر منها شيء... ثم إن رجلا...؛ De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 183 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1331), refers only to one man, “un Iranien de Ṭūs.” This combines the two versions and two different commanders rendered by al-Ṭabarī.

72 Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, 1, 27. Yāqūt copied the traditions from the book that was before him, see 1, 5 and 13; 2, 551: “ونقلت في كتاب محمد بن عبد الملك التاريخي في أخبار النحويين قال: ...; this book was already mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 95; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 46: “كتاب تاريخ النحويين see also *GAL*, S3, 157. It is not mentioned by Sezgin.

73 On him, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 151; 11, 69; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī used an autograph of the author (quoted by Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 59, 254): “قرأت في كتاب محمد بن عبد الملك التاريخي: بخطه; al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, 1, 442; Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, 1, 5–6; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 23, 278–279, who does not give the exact date of his death; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 4, 35; al-Ṭihirānī, *al-Dharī'a*, 21, 28 quotes Yāqūt and gives birth and death dates (200 H/815–816 CE to 291 H/903–904 CE).

74 For this social-political institution within the early 'Abbāsī court, see Elad 1995, 93, n. 17; al-Ḍaḥḥāk should be added to the list of the *ṣaḥāba* of al-Manṣūr: وكان من أصحاب المنصور.

75 “A locality in the 'Azāz region of northern Syria. It lies on the road from Manbij to Anṭākiya upstream from Aleppo on the river Nahr Ḳuwayḳ.” Sourdel, “Dābiq,” *ET*<sup>2</sup>, 2, 72; see also *Le Strange* 1890, 426.

76 For more on him, see below.

bic, not according to the rules of the Arabic grammar]: ‘Oh Commander of the Faithful, Our father has died and left a large sum of money but our brother took control of our father’s money and took it...’ Upon hearing the incorrect Arabic the caliph became very angry and addressed the speaker with harsh bold words and added ‘Take this man who speaks incorrect Arabic from me.’ So one of the *Shākiriyya* took his hand saying [also in incorrect Arabic]: ‘Get up for you have offended the Commander of the Faithful.’ Hearing the incorrect, faulty Arabic, the caliph cursed the *Shākiri* and ordered to drag him away by his legs.<sup>77</sup>

Yāqūt records only the last transmitter of the tradition, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml/Zaml b. ‘Amr al-Saksakī (Kinda), a well-known Umawī Arab notable who lived in Bayt Lihyā, one of the villages of Damascus.<sup>78</sup> His father was one of the closest and most senior associates of caliph Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (r. 64 H/684 CE–65 H/685 CE). He was also a minor transmitter of *ḥadīth*.<sup>79</sup> His son, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Zamal/Ziml related traditions about Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; in another tradition he gives an eyewitness description of the audience of caliph Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 101 H/720 CE–105 H/724 CE).<sup>80</sup> He was appointed by caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 125 H/743 CE–126 H/744 CE) as the governor of al-Yaman.<sup>81</sup> Yazīd b. al-Walīd (r. 126 H/744 CE) confirmed his appointment as the governor of al-Yaman and Ḥaḍramawt where he remained as governor under Marwān b. Muḥammad (r. 126 H/744 CE–132 H/750 CE) for two years and a few months.<sup>82</sup> His brother al-Ḥajjāj b. Ziml accompanied Marwān b. Muḥammad on his flight to Egypt and was killed with him in Būṣīr.<sup>83</sup> Yāqūt adds an interesting and otherwise unknown fact about him: that he continued to serve the ‘Abbāsī caliphs as well and was one of the *ṣaḥāba* of caliph al-Manṣūr.

77 Yāqūt, *Udabā’*, 1, 27; on p. 25 Yāqūt starts to quote al-Ta’rikhī’s work: وحدث فيما أسنده إلى الضحاك بن زمل السكسي، وكان من أصحاب المنصور قال: كنا مع سليمان بن عبد الملك بدياق، إذ قام إليه الشجاع الأزدي الموصل، فقال يا أمير المؤمنين: إن أبينا هلك وترك مال كثير، فوثب أختنا على مال أبينا فأخذه، فقال سليمان: فلا رحم الله أباك ولا نبيح عظام أخيك، ولا بارك الله لك فيما ورثت، أخرجوا هذا اللعان عني. فأخذ بيده بعض الشاكرية وقال: قم فقد أدبت أمير المؤمنين، فقال: وهذا العاص بظن أمه اسحبوا برجله  
78 On him see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 263–266; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 384, 432; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 4, 461; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, 4, 96.  
79 On him, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 19, 79: وكان من وجوه أصحاب مروان بن الحكم .  
80 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 264: on Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; 265: in the presence of Yazīd (= al-Azdī, *Ta’rikh al-Mawṣil*, 15: called Ibn Ramal instead of Ziml/Zaml); on the lineage of the family, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma’add*, 1, 195.  
81 Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 384.  
82 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 265; see also Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 432.  
83 Al-Azdī, *Ta’rikh al-Mawṣil*, 136–137: related by his brother al-Ḍaḥḥāk to al-Haytham b. ‘Adī; Crone 1980, 104.

Very little is known of al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ al-Azdī al-Mawṣilī, who went from al-Mawṣil to Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik in Dābiq.<sup>84</sup> In the year 101 H/719–720 CE, he was sent by caliph Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik at the head of a force of 2,000 men to fight the Khawārij near al-Kūfa. There he was killed by the Kḥārijites.<sup>85</sup>

### B/6.1)

A parallel tradition recorded by Ibn ‘Asākir gives us the complete *isnād*. It was related by al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml/Zaml to the famous scholar al-Haytham b. ‘Adī (d. 207 H/822 CE). The name of al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ is not mentioned. Instead an anonymous man (*rajul*) is mentioned: “...al-Haytham [b. ‘Adī]: It was related to me (*ḥaddathanī*) by al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml who said: ‘I witnessed Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik when he was checking (reviewing) horses in Dābiq when a man rose up to him and said ... [the same corrupted Arabic sentences about his father and brother; then the angry answer (curse) of the caliph is mentioned and instead of the *Shākiri*, the caliph calls to his slave (غلام)] : ‘Oh slave, bring the whip (or: whip him)’.”<sup>86</sup>

### B/6.2)

A parallel tradition is recorded by al-Marzubānī. The only word that is omitted is “the slave” (*al-ghulām*).<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’riḥ*, 20, 142 [= Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 9, 4187]: Saḥḥāj instead of Shaḥḥāj.

<sup>85</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1376 is the only source that mentions his father Waḍā‘; see also al-Azdī, *Ta’riḥ al-Mawṣil*, 7.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’riḥ*, 24, 264: ...نا الهيتم حدثني الضحاك بن زمل قال: شهدت سليمان بن عبد الملك وهو يعرض الخيل بدابق فقام إليه رجل فقال يا أمير المؤمنين إن... فقال [سليمان بن عبد الملك] لا رحم الله أباك... يا غلام السوط...

<sup>87</sup> Al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 3: ...وقال الضحاك بن رمل [جمل]: شهدت سليمان بن عبد الملك وهو يعرض الخيل بدابق فقام إليه رجل فقال أصلح الله الأمير إن... فقال [سليمان بن عبد الملك] فلا رحم الله أباك ولا عافى أخاك ولا رد مالك السوط...

## B/6.3)

A partially parallel tradition (again, not mentioning the *Shākiri/ghulām*) was related by al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml to another famous scholar, ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (118 or 119 H/736 or 738 CE–181 H/797 CE).<sup>88</sup>

## A Short Analysis of this Tradition

The impression one gets from reading this tradition is that it has some grain of authenticity. It was related by well-known notables and scholars (that is, real historical figures). The last link is an Umawī/‘Abbāsī notable, who was the associate of both Umawī and ‘Abbāsī caliphs and himself an eyewitness to the event. It is of importance that al-Haytham b. ‘Adī and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, two completely different famous scholars from different regions of the Islamic world, both reported this tradition from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml.

Both al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml (the last transmitter) and al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ al-Mawṣilī were contemporaries of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; al-Shaḥḥāj came to him to Dābiq, where this caliph lived for several years, and died there.<sup>89</sup>

However, some of the main features of the tradition were related about an anonymous man (رجل), who appears before Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, the governor of al-‘Irāq (d. 53 H/672–673 CE), complaining in incorrect Arabic that his brother had seized his father’s inheritance. Upon hearing his Arabic, Ziyād scolds and/or curses him. No *ghulām/shākiri* is mentioned. No *isnād* is attached to this version of the tradition; no names beside that of Ziyād are mentioned, and nor is any geographical background or name. We are facing a stereotypical literary form or *topos*. It is similar to other examples of this kind found in special chapters in the *adab* literature dealing with anecdotes about the *lahḥānūn* (those who spoke incorrect Arabic).<sup>90</sup>

88 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh*, 20, 142 [=Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 9, 4187]: سحاج instead of... قال حدثنا عبد الله بن المبارك عن الضحاك قال قام السحاج [=الشحاج] الموصلي الى سليمان ابن عبد الملك بذاك فقال يا امير المؤمنين ان ابينا هلك فوثب اخانا فاخذ مالنا فاقطعه فقال لا رحم الله اباك ولا عاقى اخاك ولا رد عليك مالك ولا حياك

89 Eisener, “Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik,” *EF*, 9, 821–822.

90 For the tradition about Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān and the man who was cheated by his brother, see for example al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*, 2, 222: وقال بعضهم: ارتفع إلى زياد رجل وأخوه في ميراث: 8:....; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍḍād*, 8: وقال رجل لزياد: إن أبينا هلك: 8:....; Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, 2, 159: دخل رجل على: 8:....; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A’shā*, 1, 206–207: زياد بن أبيه فقال إن أيونا مات وإن أيونا فأكله فقال زياد للذي أضعته من كلامك أضر عليك مما أضعته من مالك

This last section has taken me beyond my field of expertise. My aim is to understand the social-military meaning of the *Shākiriyya* institution in the early Islamic period, and I am afraid that this long discussion has brought me to a dead end. Reading version A of the tradition gives the sound impression that it is authentic. But after reading the second version (where Ziyād b. Abihi is the main figure instead of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik), that seems less clear. All that can be safely said is that the word was used in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and in this specific tradition about Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ it *can* denote a servant or a slave. In this case I prefer this meaning to a military interpretation.

### B/7) Transoxania; Soghdia: MC

In 104 H/722–723 CE, the governor of Khurāsān Sa‘īd b. ‘Amr al-Ḥarashī led the campaigns against Soghdia. Al-Ṭabarī reports the events of the conquest (as in most of the traditions relating the history of Khurāsān during the Umawī period) from the book[?] of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Madā‘inī (d. ca. 225 H/840 CE) from his authorities (*aṣḥābihi*). Al-Ḥarashī’s army conquers the city of Khujanda.<sup>91</sup> After the city’s surrender, one of the Soghdian senior commanders, Kārzanj, sends a message to his nephew that al-Ḥarashī is plotting to kill the Soghdian noble commanders; therefore the nephew “took out pieces of green silk cloth, cut it into strips and tied the strips around the heads of his *Shākiriyya*, then he came out, he and his *Shākiriyya* and attacked the (Umawī soldiers) and killed some.” The *isnād* is al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī [b. Muḥammad al-Madā‘inī] < from his authorities (*‘an aṣḥābihi*).<sup>92</sup>

### B/8) Khurāsān; Transoxania: MC

In the year 111 H/729–730 CE during Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign, two army commanders, ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr al-Ṣuraymī, al-Samarqandī, and Wāṣil b. ‘Amr al-Qaysī, are mentioned as having fought the Turks in Transoxania and commanding a *Shākiriyya* with whom they attacked the enemy. The *isnād* is as follows: al-

<sup>91</sup> On the city, see Bosworth, “*Khudjand(a)*”, *EP*, 5, 45–46.

<sup>92</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1445: أخرج فرندة خضراء فقطعها عصائب وعصبتها برؤوس شاكريته ثم خرج هو وشاكريته؛ فاعترض الناس فقتل ناسا the green colour had any significance in Transoxania/Soghdia; noteworthy is that al-Ma’mūn changed the colour of the ‘Abbāsīs from black to green.

Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’īnī] < Abū l-Dhayyāl [Zuhayr b. Hunayd al-‘Adawī].<sup>93</sup> We do not know anything about the ethnic character of the soldiers of this *Shākiriyya*.

Abū l-Dhayyāl al-Zuhayr b. Hunayd was one of al-Madā’īnī’s main informers about the battles of the Muslims in Khurāsān (especially in Transoxania) during the Umawī period, mainly during the reign of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 96 H/715 CE–99 H/717 CE). Abū l-Dhayyāl most plausibly had a work about the Muslim conquests of Transoxania. In that case the information in it was related to him by members of his family, either by his uncle al-Muhallab b. Iyās, or perhaps directly by his grandfather Iyās b. Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān b. Qamī’a, or by the latter’s two brothers ‘Ubaydallāh and ‘Abdallāh, commanders of the Arab forces in Transoxania in 96 H/714–715 CE during the governorship of Qutayba b. Muslim<sup>94</sup> and probably later on as well. Iyās’ father Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān and Iyās himself were in Khurāsān already in 65 H/684–685 CE and are mentioned among the Arab commanders in Khurāsān who took part in the tribal war in the province following the death of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya.<sup>95</sup> Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān was the leader of Banū ‘Adī (Quraysh) and carried the clan’s flag in battle.<sup>96</sup>

### B/9) Khurāsān; Transoxania: MC/?

In the year 112 H/730–731 CE, within the framework of the battles of the governor of Khurāsān al-Junayd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in Transoxania, al-Ṭabarī reports from the book[?] of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā’īnī from Abū l-Dhayyāl [Zuhayr b. al-Hunayd al-‘Adawī (on him see the preceding note)], that in one of the battles (of

<sup>93</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528: فخر ج عاصم بن عمير السمرقندي وواصل بن عمرو القيسي في شاكريّة: mentioned by De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 185; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528, note n, according to ms. BM: وحمل واصل والشاكريّة: [read: شاكريته] instead of شاكريّة; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528, lines 12–13: . على العدو .

<sup>94</sup> *Naqā’id Jarīr wa-Farazdaq*, I, p. 357 (cited by Blankinship 1989, p. 42, note 189): correct Blankinship 1989, p. 42, note 189, “al-Hunayd b. Iyās” to “Zuhayr b. Hunayd”; al-Ṭabarī records dozens of his traditions via ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’īnī. Abū l-Dhayyāl, Zuhayr b. Hunayd was also a minor *muḥaddith*, for example, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3, 305 and al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 9, 428. Is Abū l-Dhayyāl, a *rāwī* of Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, relating traditions about the battles of Abū Muslim in Khurāsān in 129 H/746–747 CE, and also about the battles between Marwān b. Muḥammad and the ‘Abbāsīs in 132 H/750 CE, Abū l-Dhayyāl al-‘Adawī? See Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (index). Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 5, 370, informs us of a commander of the governor of Khurāsān (Naṣr b. Sayyār) named Abū l-Dhayyāl fighting against the forces of Abū Muslim.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 495, ll. 7ff.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 490; 495: carrying the flag of Adī.

that year), the Muslim army was defeated. One of the Muslim commanders received a safe-conduct from Ghūrak, a Turkish prince of Samarqand, but the Khāqān of the Turks did not approve of the safe-conduct and Ghūrak consequently apologized to the Arab commander for its withdrawal saying: “I am a **slave of the Khāqān**, from his *Shākiriyya*.”<sup>97</sup>

Beckwith concludes from this passage that:

...the relationship between lord and *chākar* was extremely close indeed; al-Iskand’s ally Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, speaks of his *feudal relationship to his Western-Turkic liege-lord*...It appears therefore that the members of the central Asian guard corps spoke of themselves as the slaves of their lord. [my emphasis]

De La Vaissière also stresses the importance of this text:

C’est un texte important. Il ne s’agit pas là d’une simple alliance militaire: le roi de Sogdiane se définit comme le subordonné du qaghan dans la stricte continuité de l’histoire longue de l’Asie centrale. Un siècle et demi après Maniakh, c’est bien sur la longue durée que sont établis les liens politiques entre qaghans turcs et princes sogdiens.<sup>98</sup>

Again, we need more than one (equivocal) piece of evidence to corroborate this social-cultural and ethnic institution.

### **B/10) Transoxania: MC/?**

In 119 H/737 CE, in one of the battles in Transoxania between the Khāqān of the Turks (who was aided by al-Ḥārith b. Surayj al-Tamīmī)<sup>99</sup> and Asad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī, the governor of Khurāsān, “the Khāqān drew support from Transoxania, the inhabitants of Ṭukhārīstān and Jīghawayh [read Jabghūyah?] al-Ṭukhārī, along with their kings and their *Shākiriyya*, to the number of thirty thousand.”<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1542: أنا عبد لخاقان من شاكريته [my emphasis]; see also the discussion of Lee Yonggyu above.

<sup>98</sup> De La Vaissière 2007, 96; *ibid.*, 72 and 96: “Je suis l’esclave du Khāqān de sa *shākiriyya*: reading لـخاقان instead of لخاقان.

<sup>99</sup> On him, see Kister, “al-Ḥārith b. Surayj,” *EF*, 3, 223–224.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1604 (after the translation of Blankinship 1989, 140): no specific source is given by al-Ṭabarī (“it is said”: *wa-yuqālu*) ويقال وأقبل خاقان وقد استمد من وراء النهر وأهل الطخاري وحيغويه [=جبيغويه]؟ الطخاري بملوكهم وشاكريتهم بثلاثين ألفا طخارستان وحيغويه mentioned by Forand 1962, 10, and translated by De La Vaissière 2007, 72, note 188.

**B/11) Transoxania. The Same Year, 119 H/737 CE: MC**

Within the same framework of the battles of Asad b. ‘Abdallāh, who appointed al-Qāsim b. Bukhayt al-Maghārī al-Azdī in charge of the overall order of the army. “He put the Azd, the Banū Tamīm and al-Juzjān b. al-Juzjān and his *Shākiriyya* on the right wing.” The transmitter, ‘Amr b. Mūsā, is not otherwise identified.<sup>101</sup>

**B/12) Transoxania (al-Khuttal). The Same Year, 119 H/737 CE, Once Again within the Framework of the Battles of Asad b. ‘Abdallāh in Transoxania: SE/SL? NM?**

Asad led an army against al-Khuttal, conquered the city, captured its king and executed him. It is related that during the battles, Asad “came upon a river, while thirsty—with none of his servants around, he asked for water.” One of his commanders, al-Sughdī b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Abū Ṭu‘ma al-Jarmī, had with him a *Shākiri*, who had with him a Tibetan horn; so al-Sughdī took the horn, put *sawīq*<sup>102</sup> in it, and then poured water from the river on it, turned it and gave the drink to Asad and a small number of the senior commanders of the army.<sup>103</sup> There is no indication that this *Shākiri* was a soldier; he may have been a servant.

**101** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1609: وفجعل الأزد وبني تميم والجوزجان بن الجوزجان وشاكرته ميمته; *ibid.*, note i, in ms. B: ميمنة; the name of the transmitter is on 1608, l. 16; mentioned by Forand 1962, 11, and De La Vaissière 2007, 72.

**102** Blankinship 1989, 163: “parched barley;” for the meaning of the term, see Waines, “Sawīq,” *EI*<sup>2</sup>, 9, 93.

**103** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1631: ومضى أسد حتى انتهى إلى نهر وقد عطش ولم يكن أحد من خدمه فاستسقى وكان السغدّي بن عبد الرحمن أبو طعمة الجرمي معه شاكري له ومع الشاكري قرن تَبَّتِي فأخذ السغدّي القرن فجعل فيه سويقا وصبب عليه ماء من النهر وحركه وسقى أسدا وقوما من رؤساء الجند; Beckwith 1984, 37, note 40 (correct: 1637 to 1631); De la Vaissière 2007, 72; Beckwith 1984, 37, speaks about al-Iskand, “the displaced king of Kish and Nasaf...against whom the Arabs—including Naṣr b. Sayyār—had fought for nearly a decade. Al-Iskand was known to the Chinese as the “King of the *Chākars*.” [quoting Wang Ch’in-jo, *et al.*, ed. Li Ssu-ching, *Ts’u fu yüan kwei*, i-xx, Taipei, 1972]. “...in 737 Naṣr was with Asad in the so-called Battle of the Baggage [quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1597] against the Qaghan of the Turkish who had al-Iskand...with his *chākars* and their allies.” And on p. 38, Beckwith speaks again of al-Iskand and his *chākars* (quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1717–1718); I was unable to find al-Iskand’s *chākars* (*Shākiriyya*) in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1597, or 1717–1718, or in any other page of this work.

**B/13) Secretary/ Transoxania; Farghāna: NM**

In 121 H/739 CE, Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsān, sent Sulaymān b. Ṣūl to the ruler of Farghāna with the written pact of reconciliation between them (بكتاب الصلح بينهما). When Sulaymān reached the ruler's court, the latter asked him, "Who are you?" Sulaymān answered: "a *Shākiri*, the deputy of the (chief) secretary of the governor (شاكري, خليفة كاتب الأمير)." <sup>104</sup> Who is this Sulaymān b. Ṣūl? This is the only source that mentions him. It is highly plausible that this *Shākiri*'s father was the ancestor of the famous family of scholars and notables known by the nickname al-Ṣūlī. Ṣūl was of Turkish origin, the ruler of Dihistān (near Jurjān) and then for a short time the lord of Jurjān, who (according to one version) was converted to Islam by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab when he conquered Jurjān in 98 H/716–717 CE. According to family tradition, though, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab sent him to become a Muslim at the hands of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, and he was sent by the latter to al-Madina where he converted to Islām. <sup>105</sup> Many of his descendants are known to have had flourishing careers under the early 'Abbāsīs. His son, Muḥammad b. Ṣūl, was one of the 70 *du'āt* of the 'Abbāsī "Revolution." <sup>106</sup> If our assumption is correct, an unknown son of Ṣūl worked as a secretary at Naṣr b. Sayyār's court in Marw. In any case, he defines himself as a "*Shākiri*, the deputy of the (chief) secretary of the governor." In this case, the meaning of the term does not seem to be connected to military service.

**104** Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 2, 1695; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 4, 449; cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 72: "Je suis *shākir* et l'envoyé secrétaire de l'émir." ("I am a *shākiri*, the messenger, secretary of the Amīr.")

**105** The first version: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḥ*, 6, 115; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1, 45; the second version: al-Sahmī, *Ta'riḥ Jurjān*, 236; the tradition is recorded from the *Ta'riḥ* of al-Sal [?]*āmī* (that is, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī al-Sallāmi; lived around 350/961); his book was entitled *كتاب التاريخ في أخبار ولاية خراسان* usually mentioned as *كتاب التاريخ*. On him, see Sezgin 1967, 1: 352 (rendering his name as al-Salāmi); and esp. Rosenthal 1968, 321–322 and n. 7 (al-Sal-lāmi); for quotation from al-Sallāmi's book, see for example, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2, 521 [= al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi*, 16, 228]: *قال السلامي في أخبار ولاية خراسان*.

**106** On the family and some of its most important members, see Leder, "al-Ṣūlī," *EP*, 9, 846–848. On Muḥammad b. Ṣūl, one of the 70 *du'āt*, see *Akhbār al-'Abbās*, index; al-Ṭabarī, index. Ṣūl died in the "battle of al-'Aqr," that is, 'Aqr Bābil near Karbalā', al-'Irāq, at the side of his master Yazīd b. al-Muhallab who rebelled against Yazīd II in 101 H/720 CE. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1, 45–46; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḥ*, 6, 115; for detailed accounts of the revolt and battles, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, II, 1395ff (Ṣūl is not mentioned though); Shaban 1976, 93–95; Crone 1980, 133; Hawting 2000, 75–76.

**B/14) Khurāsān; Marw: MC? NM?**

In the year 121 H/738–739 CE the noted ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr (no. 8) served as commander of the army of the people[?] of Samarqand.<sup>107</sup> In the year 128 H/745–746 CE he came (from Samarqand?) to Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsān, and joined him along with additional Arab forces in his battle against Abū Muslim and his armies.<sup>108</sup> In the year 131 H/748–749 CE ‘Āṣim was captured and executed by Abū Muslim. The tradition tells that while yet captive and before he was killed, a *Shākiri* that he had in Khurāsān recognized him and ordered his slave [? *ghulām*] to hide him in a subterranean place (a conduit by which water enters?:*sarab*), and not to disclose this hiding place to anyone.<sup>109</sup> I do not know if what is meant is a servant or a soldier of the *Shākiriyya* army with whom he fought in Transoxania. It is noteworthy that this *Shākiri* owned a slave. Perhaps he was well-to-do and of noble Iranian (Turkish?) descent. Wellhausen, who most probably had before him a large part of the sources (though he does not cite them) explains that:

...following the example of the distinguished Iranians, the Arab gentlemen took with them into the field a personal following of servants (*Shākiriyya*). These servants also took part in the fighting and sometimes decided the struggle.<sup>110</sup>

**B/15) Khurāsān; Marw: MC**

In the year 128 H/745–746 CE, during the fierce tribal wars in Khurāsān between the coalition of governor Naṣr b. Sayyār’s Muḍarī (Qaysī) and the Azd and Rabī‘a led by Juday‘ b. ‘Alī al-Kirmānī al-Azdī, the governor’s forces in Marw were on the verge of defeat. “Tamīm b. Naṣr b. Sayyār, sent **his** *Shākiriyya*, who were stationed[?] in the Dār of Janūb bt. al-Qa‘qā‘ [b. al-A‘lam al-Azdī], but the soldiers of al-Kirmānī shot at them from the roofs, so they (the *Shākiriyya*) knew of the

107 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1690: وهو على جند أهل سمرقند

108 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1920.

109 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 8: on his *Shākiri* (mentioned by Shaban 1976, 2: 65): فلقية شاكري كان له: بخراسان فعرفه...فأدخله في سرب وقال لغلام له إحتفظ به ولا تطلعن على مكانه أحدا cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 72, with a different translation: “‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr ....est fait prisonnier par un *chākar*, qui le connaissait car il lui avait été attaché au Khorassan.” On the execution of ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1691; on him, see also *Akhbār al-‘Abbās*, index.

110 Wellhausen 1963, 496.

enemy and were on their guard against them.” The *isnād* is as follows: ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’inī] < his authorities (*ashyākhīhi*).<sup>111</sup>

### B/16) Khurāsān; Marw: NM/SE?

The same date (128 H/745–746 CE), the same *isnād*. Two commanders of al-Kirmānī unhorsed A‘yan, the *mawlā* and one of the chief clerks (in charge of the ink stand) of the governor Naṣr b. Sayyār, killed him, and killed some of his *Shākiriyya* (as well).<sup>112</sup> While the previous source references the *Shākiriyya* of a distinguished Arab tribal leader (most probably of a military nature), this evidence speaks of the *Shākiriyya* of the chief clerk of the governor, a *mawlā*. One wonders whether this *Shākiriyya* consisted of soldiers at all. Nothing is said regarding their ethnic origin or social status.

### B/17) Between 105 H/724 CE and 107 H/725–726 CE: NM/SE?

Ibn al-‘Adīm quotes from the book of Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī (flourished in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century), “The History of the Barmakis” (*Akhbār al-Barāmika*),<sup>113</sup> who heard from an eyewitness (Iṣḥāq al-Balkhī the

111 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1927, ll. 12–14: *وبعث تميم بن نصر شاكريته وهم في دار الجنوب بنت القعقاع فرماهم أصحاب الكرماني من السطوح ونذروا بهم*; [my emphasis]; Forand 1962, 11; the *Shākiriyya* were stationed in a *dār*. This must have been a huge *dār* with a large court. There are many examples of descriptions in the Arabic sources of such very big *dārs* comprising many buildings and a very large court.  
112 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1928, ll. 4–5: *فصرعوا أعين مولى نصر وقتلوه وكان صاحب دواة نصر وقتلوا نفرا من*; *شاكريته*; the *isnād* starts on 1917.

113 Very little is known about Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr [‘Umar?] b. al-Azraq al-Kinānī. He is thoroughly discussed in Bosworth 1994. He wrote a book on the history of the Barmakis, briefly discussed by Bouvat 1912, 19, who quoted Abū Ḥafṣ especially through the citations of the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century Persian work of ‘Abd al-Jalīl Yazdī, *Ta’rīkh Āl Barmak* (Bouvat 1912, 10–13); Sourdel 1959–60, 129, mainly relying on Bouvat. Both Sourdel (1959–60, 130–131) and Bouvat noticed several citations from Abū Ḥafṣ’ work, mainly in Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Wüstenfeld ed.), 4, 817 (Beirut ed., 5, 307) [= Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 232–235 (with slight changes)]. Yāqūt is the only Arabic source quoted by Bouvat and Sourdel that mentions our author by name (rendering ‘Umar instead of ‘Amr), but neither he nor Ibn al-Faqīh mention the title of the author’s book. The first to cite the title *Akhbār al-Barāmika* was Rosenthal 1968, 429, footnote 3, according to the manuscript of Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab* (Paris ms. ar. 2138, fol. 15b.). Rosenthal 1968 and Bosworth 1994 name him ‘Umar, but in all cases he is quoted by Ibn al-‘Adīm (*Bughya*, 3, 1547; 7, 3019 (ed. Sezgin, 6, 651); 10, 4706 (ed. Sezgin, 10, 451); 4753 (ed. Sezgin, 10, 484), his name is ‘Amr; but see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 10, 184; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh*, 16, 7 (the title of the

poet, of whom it is said that he lived in Ruṣāfat Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik during the latter’s reign) who saw Barmak (the ancestor of the Barmakīs), arriving at Hishām’s palace in al-Ruṣāfa *at the head of 500 Shākiri*.<sup>114</sup> This occurred at the beginning of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign (between 105 H/724 CE and 107 H/725–726 CE).<sup>115</sup>

Barmak was a Buddhist high priest of the temple of Nawbahār near al-Balkh.<sup>116</sup> According to Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī, Barmak arrived at al-Ruṣāfa with his son Khālīd, where (according to several traditions) he was converted to Islam at the hands of the caliph himself.<sup>117</sup> Even if the number

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book is rendered differently [?]: في أخبار البرامكة وفضائلهم: Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Wüstenfeld ed.), 4, 817 (Beirut ed., 5, 307): in the last three sources his name is given as ‘Umar. He transmitted directly from al-Jāhīz (d. 255 H/869 CE) (Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 7, 3020). In another tradition, transmitted by the famous poet Abū Tammām, Ḥabīb b. Aws (d. 231 or 232 H/845 or 846 CE), caliph al-Ma‘mūn (d. 218 H/833 CE) demands Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Umar [read ‘Amr] b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī to be his *wazīr* and the latter refuses politely and wittily (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādādi, *ibid.*).

**114** Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 3, 1547 [ed. Sezgin, 4, 40]: وكان...وحدثني إسحاق البلخي الشاعر: في أخبار البرامكة تأليف أبي حفص [ابن العميد] = [قرأت...حكي عن برمك أبي خالد بن برمك، برصافة هشام بن عبد الملك في أيامه أنه رأى برمك قدم على هشام بن عبد الملك في خمسمائة شاكري.... وحدثني إسحاق البلخي الشاعر: عمرو بن الأزرق الكرماني قال: منزلته وأعلى فأندرمه: قال.

**115** In 107H/725–726 CE, Barmak was appointed as governor of Balkh by Asad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1490 [= Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (Beirut ed.), 4, 378]; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 6, 118; Ibn Taghribirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 1, 261.

**116** Sourdel 1959–60, 1: 129–133; Abbas 1988; Barthold-[Sourdel], “al-Barāmika,” *EP*, 1, 1033.

**117** Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 3, 1547 [ed. Sezgin, 4, 40]; see also the long and detailed traditions of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kirmānī about Barmak and his son, Khālīd at Hishām’s court at al-Ruṣāfa. Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 7, 3019ff. Cf. the reserved and cautious remarks of Crone 1980, 76 (relying on Bouvat 1912, 32): “...a similar behavioural pattern is exemplified in the story that Barmak had gone to the caliph’s court to convert.” Sourdel 1959–60, 1: 132 casts doubt on the authenticity of the traditions about Barmak’s associations with the Umayyad caliphs ‘Abd al-Malik and Hishām, arguing against Bouvat’s assertions (“mais tout le reste paraît être pure légende...Nous n’oserons donc pas dire, après L. Bouvat, que ‘Barmak et son fils Khalid, par leurs mérites et leurs richesses, exercèrent une grande influence à la cour des khalifes umayyades).” D. Sourdel, in Barthold-[Sourdel], “al-Barāmika,” *EP*, 1, 1033: “He is a figure known to us by information which is to a large extent legendary. Thus it is that he is held to have possessed medical knowledge and to have treated among other patients [the text lists only one patient, Maslama; no other person is mentioned] on which he bases the Umayyad prince Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1181).” See also Sourdel 1959–60, 1, 132, note 2: “mais tout cela reste très hypothétique.” It seems that the information about Barmak’s skills as a physician is corroborated by the tradition recorded by Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 7, 3019. The prince was Maslama b. Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik, and not Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik as Sourdel believed (his source, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1181 mentions Maslama, with no name of the father added). The tradition was related by Sa‘īd b. Maslama b. Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik to Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī, and was read by Ibn al-‘Adīm from the former’s book on the History of the Barmakīs, describ-

of *Shākiriīs* is exaggerated, the narrator defines a big company who came with Barmak as *Shākiriīs*. In the case of Barmak the Buddhist priest, it is doubtful that they were a personal military guard and so were probably not similar to the *Shākiriyya* contingents in the service of the Soghdian noblemen in Transoxania. Nothing is said about their ethnic origin or social status.

It is noteworthy that both Bosworth and De La Vaissière interpret this text differently. Bosworth's translation reads: "[H]e saw Barmak brought before Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik in a body of 500 slaves (*shākiri*). Hishām treated him with honour..."<sup>118</sup> It seems that the sentence: أنه رأى برمك قدم على هشام بن عبد الملك في خمسمائة شاكري should be rendered: "He arrived [at Hishām's court] at the head of 500 *shākiri*." De La Vaissière translated (following Bosworth): "Barmak fut conduit devant Hishām b. 'Abd al-malik au sein d'un groupe de 500 *shākiri*...." De La Vaissière concludes in regard to this text that:

Un corps de 500 *chākar* aurait été présenté au calife omeyyade Hishām (724–743) à Damas. Ce sont sans doute des prisonniers capturés au Tokharestan, car parmi eux se trouvait l'ancêtre des Barmécides, gardien du grand monastère bouddhique, le Nawbahar de Balkh.<sup>119</sup>

This text has served as a basis for arguing for the Central Asian rather than Middle Eastern origin of the *Shākiriyya* in the early 'Abbāsī period within the elites of the 'Abbāsī court. The Barmakīs are also considered by De La Vaissière to have been military troops ("étant donnée l'origine centre-asiatique des troupes comme des Barmécides..."),<sup>120</sup> but this cannot be deduced from the Arabic text.

## Partial Conclusion

Forand argues, following some of the examples above (nos. B/4, B/10; see also n. 121 below, *al-Aghānī*), that:

...the *shākiriyyah* as it occurs in the Arabic sources refers to a corps of slaves, partly domestic and partly military, in attendance upon the person of local potentates in Iran and central

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ing how Barmak treated his father and cured him (perhaps of impotence). These traditions from the book of Abū Ḥafṣ were not known to Sourdel; Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughya* was still unprinted when Sourdel's book was published. See the detailed discussion of this matter by Bosworth 1994, 270–271.

**118** Bosworth 1994, 273–274.

**119** De La Vaissière 2007, 144; see also 155.

**120** De La Vaissière 2007, 150: argues against Gordon's view of the Middle Eastern origin of these units.

Asia...it is impossible to establish beyond a doubt that individuals constituting a *shākiriyyah* among the Umayyads were of servile status the *shākiriyyah* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves.

This unequivocal conclusion cannot be derived from the texts quoted by Forand.<sup>121</sup> He finds support for this assertion from the fact that in all the cases he checked the term *Shākiriyya* “occurs with the possessive pronominal suffix and in each case it would be rendered into English as ‘his *shākiriyyah*’, possibly indicating the master’s actual possession of the servant.”<sup>122</sup> Unfortunately, mere use of the possessive pronoun does not enable us to understand the nature of the *Shākiriyya* nor the nature of the connection between the leader and his *Shākiriyya*. Moreover, one of the decisive pieces of evidence for the slave nature of the *Shākiriyya* is the “passage in Ṭabarī (II, 1159–1160), where an incident is described in which Ṭarkhūn threatens to exercise his right of life and death over the members of his *shākiriyyah*.”<sup>123</sup> The Arabic text (al-Ṭabarī, II, 1159–1160) does not imply any such assertion. Forand’s conclusions were accepted in full by Yonggyu, so the same reservations regarding Forand’s conclusions and method can be applied to Yonggyu’s treatment of the Arabic sources regarding *al-Shākiriyya*.<sup>124</sup> In regard to the last piece of evidence adduced by Forand, Yonggyu says inaccurately that, “In fact Ṭabarī provides *many examples* [! my emphasis] that the Iranian ruler had the right of life and death over the members of the *Shākiriyya*.”<sup>125</sup>

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121 Forand 1962, 10 (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1159–1160, 1604); 11: corps of slaves. The text in al-İsfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 14, 110: فلما نظرت في وجهي سرت وجهها فأخبرني شاكري أن المرأة هي أم شارية جارية إبراهيم

122 Forand 1962, 11.

123 Forand 1962, 11.

124 Yonggyu 2004, 41–42, 68, quoting Forand’s text and sources, 10–11; 68: “The great Islamic historian Ṭabarī seems to have understood the *chākar* as someone who was possessed by the ruler.” Here Yonggyu also follows Forand’s argument about the use of “the possessive pronominal suffix with the term *Shākiriyya*” concluding “Thus, this Arabic expression...is used to indicate the master’s actual possession of the servant.” It is almost superfluous to remark that this is not al-Ṭabarī’s interpretation, but that of his early sources.

125 Yonggyu 2004, 68, quoting Forand 1962, 11; and several references from al-Ṭabarī, also after Forand, but the only citation for this matter brought by Forand, that is al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1160, is not mentioned by Yonggyu.





Ibrāhīm b. Adham is known widely in legend as the ruler of Balkh, who abdicated his throne to take up the ascetic life...[but there]...seems to be no historical basis for this belief. The first source to give him royal status is al-Sulamī (d. 412 H/1021 CE), the legendary nature of whose account is sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that it includes a description of Ibrāhīm's encounter with the immortal prophet Khidr; however, from al-Sulamī onwards this legend is found firmly rooted in the accounts of Ibrāhīm's life.<sup>134</sup>

Without going deeper into this topic which is far from my scholarly expertise, suffice it to say that even from a cursory reading of some of the relevant sources on Ibrāhīm b. Adham (e.g., the works of Abū Nu'aym, al-Qushayrī, al-Sulamī and Ibn 'Asākir), it can be argued that these authors did not invent the traditions, they relied upon earlier sources and traditions and quoted them faithfully. By checking the *isnāds* of the (relatively) late sources, it can be safely argued that Ibrāhīm's noble Iranian [?] origin was well established in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>135</sup> The imaginative, inventive, colourful and clearly biased traditions that describe his revelations and awakening from the earthly, materialistic world must have had some basis. Not every *ṣūfī* was a noble prince. Even if the traditions about the 20 or 30 *Shākiris* of Ibrāhīm b. Adham were invented, they were beautifully invented, based on a real kernel of history. The term was widely current in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and well known to the authors, who naturally assumed that a noble Khurāsānī must have had *Shākirs*. What the nature of these *Shākirs* was cannot be ascertained from these traditions.

The following examples are from the reign of Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāh (r. 132 H/750 CE–136 H/754 CE).

### C/2) [19] Khuttal, Transoxania, 133 H/750–751 CE: MC?

In this year, the governor of Balkh on behalf of Abū Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Khālīd b. Ibrāhīm al-Rabā'ī, al-Dhuhli,

set out from al-Wakhsh towards al-Khuttal and entered the city. The king of the province, Ḥ.n.sh b. al-S.b.l offered no opposition to him; a group of the *dahāqīn* of al-Khuttal came to him and entrenched themselves with him. Some of them fought in the roads, mountain passes and the fortresses. When Abū Dāwūd laid a close siege on the fortress, the king went out of the fortress at night; with him were **his** *dahāqīn* and *Shākiriyya* until they arrived at the land of Farghāna, then he left it, and through the land of the

<sup>134</sup> Jones, "Ibrāhīm b. Adham," *EF*, 3, 985–986.

<sup>135</sup> The many traditions in his biographies in Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 7, 367–395; 8, 3–58, and Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 7, 277–352, can serve as case studies.

Turks reached the king of China; Abū Dāwūd took whoever he managed to take as prisoners and brought them to Balkh, then he sent them to Abū Muslim.<sup>136</sup>

### C/3[20] al-ʿIrāq, al-Kūfa/al-Hāshimiyya (?), 136 H/754 CE: SE/SL/NM?

Al-Muṭahhār b. Ṭāhir reports that Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, under the influence of his brother al-Manṣūr, plans to kill Abū Muslim, but at the last moment when Abū Muslim enters the caliph's chamber the latter "said to one of his *Shākiriyya*: Tell Abū Jaʿfar not to do it" (فقال لبعض شاكريته قل لأبي جعفر لا يفعل ذلك)....<sup>137</sup> This affair is described at length by al-Ṭabarī, partially quoting al-Madaʿinī.<sup>138</sup> Ibn Ṭāhir combined parts of these same traditions and created one long tradition, omitting his sources. In al-Ṭabarī's tradition, the *Shākiri* turns into a eunuch (*khaṣiyy*).

It was said (*qīla*) that Abū l-ʿAbbās [al-Saffāḥ], when he gave permission to Abū Jaʿfar [al-Manṣūr, his brother] to kill Abū Muslim, the latter entered the audience of Abū l-ʿAbbās. The caliph sent one of his eunuchs ordering him: 'Go and see what Abū Jaʿfar is doing.' The eunuch came to him and found him in a sitting position, his sword put against his knees (محتبياً بسيفه). Abū Jaʿfar asked the eunuch: 'Is the Commander of the Faithful sitting (for an audience)?' The eunuch answered: 'He is getting ready for the sitting.' Then the eunuch came back to Abū l-ʿAbbās and told him what he saw; the caliph sent him back to Abū Jaʿfar telling him: 'Do not carry out what you had planned to do,' so Abū Jaʿfar withdrew from what he had planned.<sup>139</sup>

**136** Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫ*, 3, 74: وفيها توجه أبو داود خالد بن إبراهيم من الوحش إلى الختل، فدخلها ولم يمتنع عليه حنش؛ وفتحصنوا معه؛ وامتنع بعضهم في الدروب والشعاب والقلاع. فلما أتخ أبو داود على بن السبل ملكها، وأتاه ناس من دهاقين الختل، فتحصنوا معه؛ وامتنع بعضهم في الدروب والشعاب والقلاع. فلما أتخ أبو داود على حنش، خرج من الحصن ليلاً ومعه دهاقينه وشاكريته حتى انتهوا إلى أرض فرغانة؛ ثم خرج منها في أرض الترك، حتى وقع إلى [my emphasis]; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 5, 448–449 (an abridged version; the name of the king: حبش بن الشبل; Gibb 1923, 95: adding that in China the king was given the title *Jabghu* in recompense for his resistance. Abū Dāwūd was one of the 12 *nuqabāʾ* of the 'Abbāsi *daʿwa*, and one of its senior commanders; on him, see Agha 2003, Appendix One, 356, no. 237; on al-Khuttal, see Bosworth, "Khuttalān, Khuttal," *EP*, 5, 75–76. Bosworth briefly mentions this event. On Wakhsh, located in the vicinity of al-Khuttal on the Oxus, see Bosworth, "Wakhsh," *EP*, 11, 100–101; briefly mentioned by De La Vaissière 2007, 72: "le roi du Khuttal s'enfuit au Ferghana avec ses nobles et sa *shākiriyya*."

**137** Al-Muṭahhār b. Ṭāhir, *al-Badʿ*, 6, 76.

**138** Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫ*, 3, 85–86.

**139** Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫ*, 3, 86, ll. 5–11; partly translated and discussed by Ayalon 1999, 71–72: وقيل إن أبا العباس لما أذن لأبي جعفر في قتل أبي مسلم ودخل أبو مسلم على أبي العباس فبعث أبو العباس خصياً له فقال أذهب فانظر ما يصنع أبو جعفر فأتاه فرجده محتبياً بسيفه فقال للخصي أجلس أمير المؤمنين فقال له قد تهيأ للجوس ثم رجع الخصي إلى أبي العباس فأخبره بما : محتبياً بسيفه؛ برأى منه فرده إلى أبي جعفر وقال له قل له الأمر الذي عزمتم عليه لا تنفذه فكف أبو جعفر "sitting on his heels propped by his sword." For a description of this kind of sitting, see Lane, *Lexicon*, *h.b.w.*: "for the Arabs not having walls in their deserts to lean against in their assem-



word is unclear] moved on while I and he [the caliph] remained in the Qaṣr while his *Shākiriyya* [was stationed] at the gate (وبقيت أنا وهو في القصر وشاكريته بالباب)<sup>143</sup>

This is a typical conventional tradition, one of many that provides inner 'domestic' information about al-Manṣūr such as dreams, palace or court intrigues and the like, often from servants, *mawālī* or slaves/(both female and male), secretaries or chamberlains of the caliph and even from his mother.<sup>144</sup>

The following examples are from the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170 H/786 CE–193 H/809 CE).

### C/5) [22]: SE?/MC?

The *Shākiriyya* of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī, al-Rashīd's *wazīr*:

Ibn Mazrū' related from his father who said: 'While riding along with the entourage of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd [al-Barmakī, d. 190 H/805 CE], a common man carrying a letter appeared before him and said: "May God bestow his favours on the *Amīr*; sign this letter"; but the *Shākiriyya* hastened towards him, chiding him away from the sides of his cortège, but he (Yaḥyā) said: 'Leave him alone' ... and he asked him to get closer and signed the letter for him.<sup>145</sup>

Ibn Mazrū' is Naṣr b. Mazrū' al-Kalbī, one of the earliest Arab genealogists, who composed a book about the vices of the Arabs (mainly dealing with defects in, or causes of blame or reviling of, the lineage of Arab notables: (مثالب).<sup>146</sup>

**143** Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḫ*, 32, 340–341; وحنده [؟] وبنائه [؟]; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 8, 220, and Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makiyya*, 4, 546; ونوابه وحنده; the *isnād* :..... Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim < Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib < Ṭayfūr; Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim (Bashīr) was a *kātib* of Turkish origin, who held a secretarial office in Baghdād. He left it to dedicate his life to the study and transmission of *ḥadīth* and died in 235 H/850 CE; on him, see al-Bukhārī, *al-Kabīr*, 7, 349; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *al-Jarḥ*, 8, 170; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9, 173; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ*, 13, 80–82; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḫ*, 60, 304–310; 305; وكان له ديوان وتركه. I was not able to identify Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib.

**144** For example, Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'riḫ*, 32, 303; 69, 231; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ*, 1, 87: a similar *isnād* to the previously discussed tradition which ends, however, with al-Manṣūr's mother: ....Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim < Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib < Ṭayfūr *mawlā amīr al-mu'minīn* < *Salāma umm amīr al-mu'minīn*: about a dream she had while pregnant with al-Manṣūr.

**145** Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, 184: وحدث ابن مزروع عن أبيه قال: في موكب يحيى بن خالد كنت أسير: وحدث ابن مزروع عن أبيه قال: في العامة ومعه كتاب فقال فعرض له رجل من أصلح الله الأمير، اختم هذا الكتاب، فيادر إليه الشاكرية يزجرونه من حواشي موكبه، فقال: العامة ومعه كتاب فقال فعرض له رجل من استدناه فختمه له....دعوه

**146** So far I have not found a biography dedicated to him; he is not mentioned by Rosenthal, Duri (Conrad), Humphreys, Khalidi or Robinson, or by Brockelmann (*Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*) and Sezgin 1967; nevertheless he is quoted in the sources (mainly relating to the genealogy of Arab tribes and notables), e.g. al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. al-Hay'ā al-Miṣriyya), 20, 75,

**C/6) [23]: SE?/MC?**

From the second piece of evidence it is learned that Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī (d. 183 H/799–800 CE), one of Hārūn al-Rashīd's senior commanders,<sup>147</sup> sent one of his chamberlains (*aḥad ḥujjābihi*) from al-Raqqā in al-Jazīra with a gift of money to the poet Muslim b. al-Walīd (d. 208 H/823 CE).<sup>148</sup> The *ḥājib*, dressed in black clothes, a woolen head cover, and a girdle, was accompanied by a *Shākiri*.<sup>149</sup> No information is given about this *Shākiri*, who may have been a soldier, one of the *Shākiriyya* of Yazīd b. Mazyad (if he had one), or a domestic servant/slave.

**C/7) [24] al-‘Irāq. Baghdād (?): SL/SE**

Al-Mas‘ūdī records an account by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Abdī al-Khurāsānī al-Akḥbārī (d. after 332 H/943 CE),<sup>150</sup> related by him to caliph al-Qāhīr (r. 320 H/932 CE–322 H/934 CE): Zubayda, Umm Ja‘far, Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife and al-Amīn's mother, “was the first [among the caliphs' wives?], who employed the *Shākiriyya*, the eunuchs and the slave-girls in all kinds of duties and messages, performing them on (the back of) riding animals, going out to fulfil her needs with her letters and epistles.”<sup>151</sup>

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where he is mentioned among those authors that composed a book on the *mathālib* [of the Arabs] ; al-Mas‘ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, 81, l. 13; Abū l-Baqā‘, *al-Manāqib al-mazyadiyya*, 1, 302, 327–329, where he is termed Naṣr b. Mazrū‘ al-Kalbī al-Nassāba; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta‘rīkh*, 47, 348; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 5, 605.

147 On him, see Crone 1980, 169.

148 On him, see al-Ziriklī 1980, 7: 223; Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 12: 233; Sezgin 1967, 2, 528–529; I. Kratschkowsky, “Muslim b. al-Walīd,” *E.Ī*, s.v.

149 Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19, 42 (ed. Samīr Jābir, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, n.d.):

فإذا رجع عليه سواد وشائنية ومنطقة ومعه شاكري  
50; Ibn Munqidh, *Lubāb*, 138.

150 On him, see Rosenthal 1968, 52–53; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 7, 658: index prepared by Ch. Pellat, the editor.

151 Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5, 213 [= 8, 298]: وهي أول من اتخذ الشاكريّة والخدم والجواري يختفون على الدواب في جبهاتها ويذهبون في حوائجها برسائلها وكتبها mentioned by Forand (in connection with the *Shākiriyya*); partly translated with a discussion (not on the *Shākiriyya*, though) by Ayalon 1999, 129 (translation) and 130; I relied on Ayalon's translation.

I understand the expression *al-Shākiriyya* here not as a military unit, but perhaps as household attendants. They are mentioned together with other domestic servants and slaves who performed secret or discreet errands for Zubayda.<sup>152</sup>

### C/8) [25] al-‘Irāq, Baghdād: MC

Al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr records in his book *al-Zakhā‘ir wa-l-tuḥaf* (written in 463 H/1070–1071 CE) a long tradition from al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī‘ (the son of the above-mentioned al-Rabī‘), the famous *wazīr* of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amīn, in which he gives a long detailed description of the clothes, fine objects, weapons etc. that were found in Hārūn al-Rashīd’s store houses (الخزائن) upon al-Amīn’s ascendance to the caliphate. Among the weapons he mentions “50,000 swords of [for?] the *Shākiriyya* and the slaves (العلمان).”<sup>153</sup>

### C/9) [26] al-‘Irāq, Baghdād (?): SE/NM

The famous singer Mukhāriq relates that he visited the poet Abū l-‘Atāhiya alone “and I had no *ghulām* (slave) and no *shākiri* with me (وليس معي غلام ولا شاكري).”<sup>154</sup>

The following examples are from the reign of al-Amīn (r. 193 H/809 CE–197 H/813 CE).

### C/10) [27]: SE/NM

Upon ascending the caliphate al-Amīn took the famous singer ‘Arīb from her owner for himself. Her owner ‘Īsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ismā‘il, known as the *Marākibī*

152 Forand’s translation of this text (1962, 11–12): “the first (of the Abbasid house) to form a *shākiriyya* to wait upon her personally and serve as a mounted cortege when she went out in public,” is not accurate. De la Vaissière 2007, 146 translates: “la première qui organisa une troupe de *chākar*, d’eunuques et de filles esclaves, qui chevauchaient à ses côtés, exécutaient ses ordres...” I follow Ayalon’s translation of the Arabic phrase: يختلفون على الدواب في جهاتها.

153 Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Zakhā‘ir*, 214 (the beginning of the inventory), 217 (the 50,000 swords) [my emphasis]; quoted by al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, 405; al-Ghazūlī, *Maṭāli‘ al-budūr*, 2, 479 (both quote al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr); De La Vaissière 2007, 146, note 382 (quoting al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr).

154 Al-Raqīq al-Qayrawānī, *Quṭb al-surūr*, 622.

(that is, the one who is in charge of the royal stables), passed by the new caliph and wanted to kiss his hand but the caliph, who held a grudge against him,

ordered that he be held back (from him); the *Shākiri* did this, but the *Marākibi* beat him and said: ‘Do you prevent me from kissing the hand of my master?’ When the caliph dismounted, the *Shākiri* came and complained against *al-Marākibi*, so al-Amin summoned him and ordered that his head be cut off.<sup>155</sup>

One wonders if the *Shākiri* who was beaten was really a soldier and one of the caliph’s bodyguards, as asserted by Forand.<sup>156</sup>

The following examples are from the reign of al-Ma’mūn (r. 198 H/813 CE–218 H/833 CE).<sup>157</sup> There are a few instances in the early ‘Abbāsī caliphate in which a *Shākiri* or a *Shākiriyya* are in the service of a caliph. In the period of al-Ma’mūn’s rule, a military unit named “al-Shākiriyya” is mentioned in the service of the caliph. It is also recorded by the sources that some of al-Ma’mūn’s senior commanders had *Shākiriyya* contingents in their service.

#### C/11) [28]: MC

The first piece of evidence we have is from Marw, Khurāsān between the years 193 H/809 CE and 202 H/817 CE. It is related by al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣalt, one of the close associates of al-Ma’mūn’s *wazīr*, al-Faḍl b. Sahl: “I was summoned one day by him (al-Faḍl), who informed me that he wished to gather for me 4,000 [soldiers] from the *Shākiriyya* and the *jund* and appoint me as their commander, thereby turning me into one of his commanders, with conditions and rights of his commanders.” Al-Rayyān refuses this proposal.<sup>158</sup>

155 Al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Dār al-Kutub ed.), 21, 63 (Būlāq ed. XVIII, p. 180): فلما ولي الخلافة جاء المراكبي ومحمد [الأمين] راكب ليقبل يده فأمر بمنعه ودفعه ففعل ذلك الشاكري فضربه المراكبي وقال له: أتمنعني من يد سيدي أن أقبلها؟ فجاء الشاكري لما نزل محمد فشكاه فدعا محمد بالمراكبي وأمر بضرب عنقه mentioned by Forand 1962, 12; on *al-Marākibi*, see al-Zirikli 1980, 5: 105.

156 Forand 1962, 12 (quoting *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 180): “Amin himself was served by household attendants called, in the singular, *shākiri*, and who in one instance at least functioned as his bodyguards.” The text does not allow for such farfetched conclusions.

157 The following four pieces of evidence (no. 11[28]–14[31]) were also dealt with in Elad 2010, 45–48.

158 Al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj*, 2, 346: كنت في خدمة الفضل بن سهل على ما كنت عليه من نقته بي واستنابته, فدعاني في وقت من الأوقات إلى أن يضم إلي أربعة آلاف من الجند والشاكرية ويقودني عليهم, ويجريني مجرى قواده, فامتعت عليه من ذلك... the long tradition was copied by al-Tanūkhī from the lost part of al-Jahshiyārī’s *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’ wa-l-kuttāb*; al-Tanūkhī’s text was copied by ‘Awwād 1964, 31–36 (the mention of the *Shākiriyya*

In the tradition, the joining of the two expressions *al-Shākiriyya* and *al-jund* may indicate the different expressions have different meanings, though the term *al-Shākiriyya* seems to denote a unit with a military character. We do not know the relative size of each unit with any precision, as the number 4,000 also includes soldiers from the army (*al-jund*). The combination of the terms *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya* is most common during the Sāmarran period.<sup>159</sup>

### C/12) [29]: MC

The second tradition is from the year 201 H/816–817 CE, when al-Ma'mūn (still in Khurāsān), decides to nominate 'Alī l-Riḍā as Crown Prince. Therefore he summons the *wulāt*, the judges, the (senior) commanders (*al-quwwād*) and the *Shākiriyya* and the offspring of al-'Abbās, explaining “he wants this matter to be rooted in the hearts of *al-'amma*, *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya*.” In the first part of the tradition the army, *al-jund*, is not mentioned, and *al-Shākiriyya* appears by itself among groups of notables. Therefore it seems that the *Shākiriyya* also has a special high status. In the second part, the pairing (this time reversed) of *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya* appears again.<sup>160</sup>

### C/13) [30]: MC

From a tradition that describes the end of the siege of Baghdad in Muḥarram 198 H/September 813 CE, we learn that Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn also had a special unit called *Shākiriyya*. Ṭāhir writes to al-Ma'mūn describing how he plans to trap al-Amīn, who wanted to go over to Harthama b. A'yan's camp:

...and I turned with the choicest of the faithful (*khāṣṣat thiqāṭi*) and I relied on them and trusted that they would be brave and determined, and would be unsullied faithful advisors, and I already prepared war ships (*ḥarrāqāt*)<sup>161</sup> and (regular) ships (*sufun*)....And I went down to them with a group that rode with me from among my faithful and my *Shākiriyya*.

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and the *jund* is on p. 36); see also De La Vaissière 2007, 157 (according to 'Awwād 1964): with a different interpretation.

**159** See Gordon 2001, index (*jund* and *Shākiriyya*), esp. 40–42.

**160** Ibn Bābuyh al-Qummī, *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (al-Najaf ed.), 2, 148 (Beirut ed., 1, 161); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 49, 134: ودعا المأمون القواد والقضاة والشاكرية وولد العباس...إنما أريد أن يرسخ في قلوب العامة والجنود والشاكرية هذا الأمر؛ والشاكرية هذا الأمر 87, 360: the second part of the tradition, from al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣalt.

**161** Warships with installations for throwing fire at the enemy whilst at sea or on large rivers (sometimes described as a warship that contains sailors and fighters, see Elad 1986, 68, note 53).

And I sent a group of them (some of them) riding and some of them on foot between the Gate of Khurāsān and al-Mashra‘a [the watering place in the river], and along the banks of the river (*al-shaṭṭ*).<sup>162</sup>

What is mentioned in this tradition is not the *jund*, the regular army, but the *Shākiriyya*. The *Shākiriyya* is mentioned together with Ṭāhir’s closest and most loyal adherents, and it is possible that the intent here is to a kind of personal select guard, perhaps (though we have no proof of this) connected by ties of *walā’* or even servitude to Ṭāhir. Almost nothing is given regarding their origin.<sup>163</sup>

### C/14) [31]: MC

The fourth tradition in which the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned is from the year 214 H/ 829–830 CE. A number of military missions are defeated by a Khāriji rebel, Bilāl al-Ḍabābī al-Shārī in al-Jazīra. In the end, al-Ma’mūn himself leaves Baghdad, reaches al-Jazīra, camps in the village of al-‘Alath, and afterwards sends the commanders and al-*Shākirdiyya* after Bilāl al-Shārī.<sup>164</sup> From this tradition, it appears that the commanders are at the head of an army which is separate from the special military unit, called *Shākirdiyya* and not *Shākiriyya*. *Shākird* is rendered as a scholar, student, *apprentice, a disciple; a boy servant, groom*.<sup>165</sup> I do not know what the difference (if any) is between the two words.

### C/15) [32]: MC? SE?

Another senior commander of al-Ma’mūn, ‘Alī b. Hishām (d. 217 H/832 CE), had a *Shākiriyya*. We learn this from the tradition relating how he sent the poet ‘Umāra

162 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ*, 3, 928: فنزلتها في عدة ممن ركب معي من خاصة ثقاتي وشاكريتي وصيرت عدة منهم فرسانا؛ ورجالة بين باب خراسان والمشرعة وعلى الشط De La Vaissière 2007, 157.

163 Cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 157, for a different interpretation of this evidence. We know that some of these soldiers spoke Persian and were also of non-Arabic origin, but it is hard to prove that they indeed comprised the *Shākiriyya* contingents. On Ṭāhir’s army, see Elad 2010, esp. 37–40, 53–54, 61, 67f.; Elad 2013, esp. 246–264.

164 Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (ed. Hyderabad), 7, 331: mentioned in a note by Shaban 1976, 2: 65, as proof that *al-Shākiriyya* were the *mawālī* of the ruler. There is no confirmation for this in the sources quoted by him; on the revolt, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ*, 3, 1101–1102 (no mention of *al-Shākirdiyya*, though). Al-‘Alath is on the border of al-Jazīra-al-‘Irāq, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Beirut ed.), 4, 145–146.

165 Steingass 1963, 724; see also Haim 1953, 486.

b. ‘Aqīl to Tamīm b. Khuzayma [b. Khāzim] al-Nahshalī al-Tamīmī<sup>166</sup> and then to the house of Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī (Rabī‘a)<sup>167</sup> escorted by a *Shākiri* from his *Shākiriyya*.

### Al-Jāhīz’s Opinion on *al-Shākiriyya*

The *Shākiriyya*’s closeness to the regime and to the ruler is also emphasized by al-Jāhīz. As part of his discussion of the various components of the army of the caliphate he tries to diminish contradictions and differences as much as possible, and to stress what is equal and similar. As an example of this he compares *al-Shākiriyya* and the army (*al-jund*):

People think that since there is a difference in the form of the script and the pronunciation of the names of the (different) types of human race, that their character in reality and their (internal) meaning is also different in the same way. However, things are not like they think. For you will see that even if the name *al-Shākiriyya* is different in form and in pronunciation from (the word) *al-jund*, the internal meaning (*al-ma‘nā*) respecting both is close to each other, for both stem from one meaning (one source) and one action...obedience to the caliphs and support of the regime.<sup>168</sup>

Al-Jāhīz knows, of course, the *Shākiriyya*’s character; therefore he does not bother to explain it precisely to us. All he wants is to bridge the difference between this unit and the army. Through this explanation, we nevertheless understand that there is a difference and that this unit is not identical to the regular army regiments.

In another place al-Jāhīz mentions *al-Shākiriyya*, evidently in the period of al-Mu‘taṣim or al-Wāthiq, but here too he does not clarify the character of this military unit.<sup>169</sup> Relying on this text and on the previous text cited, ‘Abd al-

**166** The son of one of the most prominent commanders of *al-Abnā’*. On his father and grandfather, see Crone 1980, 180ff. Tamīm is not mentioned by Crone.

**167** Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdad*, 286–289; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 20, 186–187; *فبعثت معي شاكريا من شاكريته حتى وقف بي على باب تميم*; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 2, 344f.; on Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad, see Crone 1980, 170, to which the three sources quoted should be added.

**168** Al-Jāhīz, *Manāqib al-Turk*, 30.

**169** Al-Jāhīz, *al-Ḥayawān*, 2, 130; al-Jāhīz describes a dog that used to attack the hoofs of the horses of *al-Shākiriyya* which apparently accompanied Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Abān b. Ḥamza, known as Ibn al-Zayyāt. When this occurred is not said, but Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik was a *wazīr*, first of al-Mu‘taṣim between 219–220 H/834–835 CE, then of al-Wāthiq (r. 227 H/842 CE–232 H/847 CE), and even for a short period in the first year of al-Mutawakkil’s reign (233 H/847 CE), at the end of which he was executed. See Sourdel, “Ibn al-Zayyāt”, *EF*, 3, 974. Although

Salām Hārūn claims that the term means a mercenary army and that al-al-Jāhīz uses the word to denote an army.

## Conclusion

### The Importance of the Study of the *Shākiriyya*

In Islamic studies, controversies have emerged over the relation between the *Shākiriyya* institution and the *Mamlūk* system, the dominant military mode in medieval Islam. It has been the dominant view that the *Shākiriyya* system is uniquely Islamic and indigenous to Islamic civilization (see the references here to Ayalon, Pipes, Crone, Bosworth and most recently Gordon, and the detailed discussion above). In the last few years a group of scholars has started to test the prevailing views on the origin of the system. Noteworthy is Shaban, who as early as 1976 argued that the *chākar* system stemmed from the Persian tradition. Other scholars (Beckwith, Yonggyu, De La Vaissière) argue for the Central Asian (Soghdian) origin of the institution of *al-Shākiriyya*.

Both Shaban and Beckwith, when referring to the Samarran period from al-Mu‘taṣim’s rule on, identify the *Shākiriyya* regiments with the Turkish *Shākiriyya* units. De La Vaissière argues that the *Shākiriyya* was a distinct institution in the Soghdian army that made its way from Samarqand to Sāmarrā’.<sup>170</sup> Accepting Shaban’s main argument (although arguing for a Central Asian origin and not a Sāsānian one as suggested by Shaban), De La Vaissière dedicates a long and exhaustive discussion in his book to the view that al-Mu‘taṣim organized his new army units according to the Central Asian pattern. Gordon strongly refuted this argument:

The arguments of Shaban and Beckwith [De La Vaissière’s book was not yet published], which identify the Samarran Turkish guard with Iranian (Shaban) or Central Asian (Beckwith) use of the *chākar* institution, are to be rejected...the Turks and *Shākiriyya* of Samarra remained as entirely separate forces.<sup>171</sup> [See the discussion above.]

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it was not specifically stated that *al-Shākiriyya* rode immediately after or in front of the *wazīr* Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik, it is possible that they constituted a kind of special personal guard.

<sup>170</sup> De La Vaissière 2007, 59.

<sup>171</sup> Gordon 2001, 40.

Yonggyu and De La Vaissière argue that the Inner Asian and the 'Abbāsī institutions of the personal guard, as well as that of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), show similarities with the *Shākiriyya*. Their systems were based on a process geared to generate loyalty to the ruler within the personally attached servitor group. Thus, each system stressed the special individual relationship between the ruler and his personal servitors and guards.

As my limited study has shown, it is a difficult if not impossible task to judge where these similarities came from. Do the correlations stem from origin, or are they (as Yonggyu argued<sup>172</sup>) an indication that peoples of different regions happened to share similar political needs and consequently had similar institutions that evolved separately and indigenously? Even if the Turkish/Central Asian tradition was an influence, due to the different socio-cultural contexts we can expect that each region's system developed in a way uniquely compatible and acceptable to the pre-existing cultural norms of the host society. When we gauge the degree of possible influence coming from the steppe tradition of personal guards, it is also important to inquire to what extent and in what ways the institutions Turks carried from their life in the steppe interacted with pre-existing social norms.

I started this research when I came upon the evidence of *al-Shākiriyya* units in al-Ma'mūn's army, hoping to gain a better understanding of this term or institution. It seems that the relatively large amount of evidence available from the Umawī and the early 'Abbāsī periods are still too limited to fully demonstrate that a) the *Shākiriyya* units denote Turks and b) that these allegedly Turkish units performed their service for the 'Abbāsī caliphs according to concepts and practices from the Central Asian steppe.

As already stated above, from the little on the *Shākiriyya* in the Arabic sources we can discern a distinct military character. Its other characteristics are difficult to understand. A number of army commanders in the Umawī period are known to have had *Shākiriyya*. All of them (except two, B/1 and B/6), took part in the Transoxanian campaigns, and the *Shākiriyya* units that are mentioned are thus connected to Central Asia. We do not know the size of these units and whether they were incorporated within the Umawī army in al-'Irāq. In some cases, when the term *Shākiri* appears in the sources it does not seem to have a military connection or connotation. Sometimes it can be rendered as a loyal adherent or even a servant (B/6 and B/16); in other cases it is equivocal (B/12, B/14 and B/17).

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172 Yonggyu 2004, 34.

During the early ‘Abbāsī period (the reigns of al-Saffāḥ until al-Ma’mūn), except for two cases in which the term unequivocally denotes a military unit, the few other texts are ambiguous and equivocal (C/1, C/3, C/4, C/5 and C/6); in several cases a servant or non-military person or unit is alluded to (C/3, C/7, C/9 and C/10). As to the military units (C/2 and C/8), the last piece of evidence (C/ 8) is unique: the long and detailed description of the clothes, fine objects, weapons and so forth found in Hārūn al-Rashīd’s store houses (الخزائن) upon al-Amīn’s ascendance to the caliphate. Among the weapons he mentions “50,000 swords of (for?) the *Shākiriyya* and the slaves (الغلمان)”.

This brings us to al-Ma’mūn’s reign. From the few pieces of evidence at our disposal, it is clear that al-Ma’mūn already had military units in Khurāsān named *al-Shākiriyya*. This *Shākiriyya* had a high status in al-Ma’mūn’s court. It is most plausible that this unit consisted of non-Arabs. It seems that this caliph’s army also included *Shākiriyya* units in al-‘Irāq. The size of these *Shākiriyya* units is not attested by the sources. At least in Khurāsān, it seems that the size of this unit was not big.

Two of al-Ma’mūn’s senior commanders, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn and his relative ‘Alī b. Hishām, had *Shākiriyya* military units. Ṭāhir’s *Shākiriyya* is mentioned together with his closest and most loyal adherents, and it is possible that the intent here is to describe a kind of personal select guard, perhaps—though there is no proof of this—connected by ties of *walā’* or even servitude to Ṭāhir. The closeness of the *Shākiriyya* to the regime and its ruler is also emphasized by al-Jāḥiẓ, but even he does not provide any information regarding their ethnicity and origin. The sources checked provide no information on the ethnic composition, mobilization or military training of the *Shākiriyya*, or the possible ties between the commander/master and his *Shākīr*.

In later periods, we find *al-Shākiriyya* mentioned more frequently from 227 H/842 CE (the period of al-Wāthiq’s rule) and particularly during al-Mutawakkil’s reign (232 H/247 847 CE–861 CE) and onwards (dozens of times), until the year 266 H/880 CE (the reign of al-Mu’tamid ‘alā Allāh, d. 279 H/892 CE), when this unit is no longer mentioned by al-Ṭabarī. *Al-Shākiriyya* in this period is beyond the scope of this article. No comprehensive study has yet been made of the ‘Abbāsī army after the period of al-Ma’mūn’s reign.<sup>173</sup>

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173 The most up-to-date study, mainly based on the Arabic sources, is Gordon’s; useful comments with historical insight are rendered by Kennedy 1981; *Shākiriyya* are also mentioned (without analysis) by Amabe 1995, 141, 147, 155–161, 255; for the term *Shākiriyya* in the Sāmarrān period one should consult several volumes of al-Ṭabarī’s *History* in translation, esp. vols. 34–36 (indexes), which will enable thorough checking of the Arabic text. However, in order to conduct a broad study of the term and institution, all the possible Arabic sources must be examined. This

In my previous articles<sup>174</sup> I argued against the accepted view in research which claims that from its foundation, the ‘Abbāsī caliphate is distinguished by the decisive influence of non-Arab elements, and that this influence increases rapidly and is already obvious at the time of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158 H/775 CE–169 H/785 CE).<sup>175</sup> Al-Ma’mūn’s reign (198 H/813 CE–218 H/833 CE) is considered by all scholars to be the peak of the non-Arab (mainly Iranian) penetration of the caliphate, especially in the army. Students of the period of al-Ma’mūn’s reign are united in the opinion that the major part of his army was composed of non-Arab Khurāsānīs, mainly of Iranian origin.<sup>176</sup> However,

[s]crutiny of the political and social background in Khurāsān under al-Ma’mūn’s rule reveals... that this description of al-Ma’mūn’s armies and commanders is imprecise and one-dimensional. An examination of this army, its mobilization, consolidation and battles, from al-Ma’mūn’s arrival in Marw in 193/809 until his death in 218/833, provokes interesting conclusions that transform the accepted picture of al-Ma’mūn’s activity in Khurāsān and of the characteristics of the armies he raised in this province.<sup>177</sup>...In all probability, al-Ma’mūn’s army included non-Arab units, called ‘*Ajam* or ‘*Ajam Ahl Khurāsān*, but references to them are very few. We have not found evidence of massive mobilization of non-Arab soldiers from Khurāsān or beyond it, in Transoxania.<sup>178</sup>

Two pieces of evidence bear witness to relatively large non-Arab units in al-Ma’mūn’s army. The first refers to the non-Arab units in Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn’s army, units of Turks, Bukhārīs and Khwārizmīs.<sup>179</sup> From the second we learn of units

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is possible to a large extent due to the extensive repository of Arabic literature recorded on compact discs (such as the *al-Turāth* CDs, *Ahl al-Bayt* and *al-Maktaba al-Shāmīla*), containing many thousands of books from different genres of Arabic literature (*ḥadīth*, *adab*, *fatāwā*, *fiqh*, *sīra*, *Qur’ān*, *tafsīr*, geography, biography, poetry and more) now at our disposal for the first time.  
174 Elad 1995; Elad 2005, esp. 317–320.

175 Ayalon 1994, 2–4, 35–36 and the important information in the addenda; Crone 1980, 68 and esp. 74; Kennedy 1981, 102–103; Elad 1995, 118–119.

176 For a discussion and bibliography, see Elad 2005, 317, n. 151; Elad 2013, 279, nn. 272, 273; add De La Vaissière 2007, 151ff.

177 Elad 2005; the quotation is from 317; and see also Elad 2010 and 2013; see De La Vaissière 2007, 150ff. for a different interpretation; for two more examples cf. Elad, 2005, 295–316 (the long text in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 773–774: al-Ma’mūn’s appeal to the Arab tribes in Khurāsān) and Elad 2010, 49–50 (in regard to the recruitment of non-Arab contingents by al-Ma’mūn), mainly according to al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 430–431 (de Goeje’s ed.; ed. al-Ṭabbā’, 606): to De La Vaissière’s analysis and arguments in De La Vaissière 2007, 152.

178 Elad 2005, the quotation is from 318; and cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 152.

179 Turks: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 799; Khwārizmīs: *ibid.*, 801: at least 700 soldiers [!]; al-Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, 4, 263; al-Bukhāriyya: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 800, 802; the important and unique tradition in al-Ṭabarī is related from Aḥmad b. Hishām, who was most probably the cousin of Ṭāhir b. al-

of slave soldiers (*ghulām; atrāk*), most of whom were already purchased by al-Mu'taṣim already during his brother's reign. They numbered between 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers.<sup>180</sup> In 213 H/828 CE a slave regiment of 4,000 soldiers is mentioned in al-Mu'taṣim's army in Egypt. This is the first time that a slave military unit on such a large scale is mentioned.<sup>181</sup> The *Shākiriyya* units in al-Ma'mūn's army mentioned above most probably bear witness to additional non-Arab recruits from Khurāsān (Transoxania?).

What is the reason for this far-reaching research pattern regarding the non-Arab makeup of al-Ma'mūn's army? It seems the mere fact that al-Ma'mūn lived in Khurāsān and chose it as the centre for his governorship, was sufficient for scholars to argue in favour of this thesis. It is possible that this view developed, at least in the case of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, given the fact that the army he fielded against 'Alī b. 'Īsā included non-Arab units (this is, as noted above, a rare evidence).

Nonetheless, none of al-Ma'mūn's senior commanders can be considered as belonging to a new non-Arab Khurāsānī army. It is clear that *al-Abnā'* forces and their commanders who joined al-Ma'mūn's army cannot be included in the new non-Arab Khurāsānī army.<sup>182</sup> The picture is not one-dimensional. But the many reports that Arab political and military power had not completely disappeared in various regions of the caliphate; that al-Ma'mūn was required to take them into consideration and to use them as a military force which he mobilized for battle in the different parts of the caliphate; and that the tribal make-up of this or that area often dictated the caliph's policy<sup>183</sup> all cannot hide the clear

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Ḥusayn (see Elad 2010, 39); he was *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* of Ṭāhir's camp (see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 3, 799–802; according to al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 4, 263–265, he is one of the senior commanders (*min wujūh al-quwwād*)); he is also mentioned as one of the commanders of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim (Elad 2010, 39).

**180** Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, 256: زهاء ثلاثة آلاف غلام; al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 212: في أربعة آلاف من أتراكه; Ayalon 1994, 26; Ismā'il 1996, 14; Pipes 1981, 146–147; Lassner 1980, 113; Kennedy 1981, 167; Elad 2005, 318; De La Vaissière 2007, 155; but esp. Gordon 2001, 16ff.

**181** Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 212 (I follow the accepted rendering of the word *atrāk* as slaves); Pipes 1981, 51; Lassner 1980, 113; Kennedy 1981, 167; but cf. the careful rendering of Gordon 2001, 16: Turks.

**182** Elad 2005, 283ff. (*al-Abnā'*), but especially Elad 2010 and 2013.

**183** For examples, see 1) al-Jazīra: al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 326–327: year 196 H/811–812 CE; *ibid.*, 332–333; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 300–301: year 198 H/808–809 CE; al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 332, the same year: Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's leniency and favourism towards the southern tribes in Mosul; *ibid.*, 336–337; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 317: year 199 H; al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 343–348; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 349: year 202 H/817–818 CE; *ibid.*, 350: in the same year al-Ma'mūn bluntly interferes in the tribal feuds in Mosul; for other examples for tribal feuds in Mosul during al-Ma'mūn's reign, see al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 359–360: year 206 H/821–822

waning of Arab power in the ‘Abbāsī caliphate, which reached its highest point in the days of al-Mu‘taṣim.<sup>184</sup> They do, however, show that this process was a slow and complex one.

## Appendix

### The Term *Shākiri* in the Meaning of Servant/Attendant from the Middle to the End of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century.

- A. Two of the *imāms* of the Shī‘a (*al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyya*), are described as having a *Shākiri*. The first is Mūsā (al-Kāzīm) b. Ja‘far al-Šādiq (d. 183 H/799 CE), who is described as riding escorted by a *Shākiri* (راكب ومعه شاكري). The second is al-Ḥasan (al-‘Askari) b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jawwād (d. 260 H/874 CE). A *Shākiri* of his (شاكري لمولانا أبي محمد الحسن بن علي), called Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad *al-Shākiri*, relates some anecdotes about his master (*ustādhi*).<sup>185</sup>

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CE; 365–366: year 208 H/823–824 CE; 371: year 210/825–826; 373: year 211 H/826–827 CE; 422–423: year 219 H/834–835 CE (al-Mu‘taṣim’s reign); 378, 380–382, 386–394 (years 212–213 H/827–829 CE): the army and Arab commanders of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamid, see discussion in Elad 2013, 272–275); Diyār Bakr and the surroundings of al-Raḡqa (the rebellion of Naṣr b. Shabath), see Kennedy 1981, 169–170; al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 540; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 303–304: year 198 H/813 CE; Armenia and Ādharbayjān: al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 566; al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 384: year 212 H/827–828 CE; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1112: year 212 H/827–828 CE; 2) al-‘Irāq: al-Daskarā’s vicinity (50 miles north of Baghdād): al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 364; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 385; al-Kūfa and its vicinity: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 956, 977; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫh*, 12, 413; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1019, 1022: year 202 H/817–818 CE [= Crone 1980, 110–111]; al-Baṣra: for the Muḥallabī family in the city, see Crone 1980, 135; add al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 17, 46 (Būlāq ed.) [Dār al-Kutub ed., 18, 24] to her bibliography; correct Crone 1980, 135, Dāwūd b. Bishr to Dāwūd b. Yazid; see also, al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 557–558: Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād al-Muḥallabī, who is defined as: وكان سيد أهل البصرة في زمانه; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 369: وكان سيدا; add him to Crone’s biographies of the family; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 19–20, 60 [=Dār al-Kutub ed., 20, 99–101; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 369, 370: the poet Ibn Abī ‘Uyayna al-Muḥallabī and his strong satire against the northern tribes; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’riḫh*, 384; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1144–1145: Banū Tamīm in al-Baṣra; Baghdād: al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 29, 51, 53, 54, 60 [=Dār al-Kutub ed., 20, 120, 166–167, 170, 172, 186]; al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 239, 354; Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 286–289; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 18, 186–187; for socio-cultural examples of the period, e.g. the Arab socio-cultural supremacy and Arabism that continued well into the early ‘Abbāsī caliphate with an emphasis on al-Ma‘mūn’s reign, see Elad 2005, 118–127.

**184** Ayalon 1994, 21–22; Kennedy 1981, 165; Pipes 1981, 150.

**185** Mūsā al-Kāzīm: al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār*, 2, 735–736; al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā‘ij*, 2, 327; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 3, 43: وخلفه شاكري; al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī: al-Ṭabarī (*al-Imāmi*), *Dalā’il al-Imāma*, 429–430.

- B. In his epistle “An Answer against the Christians,” al-Jāḥiẓ remarks: We have known them (the Christians) to possess hackneys of mixed breed and excellent swift horses; they congregate in big crowds and play with the curved sticks [while on horseback]; and they feign [to be dignified Arabs] by donning *al-Madīnī* dress [وتحذفوا المدني] and are dressed in [clothes made of the kind of cloth called] *mulḥam* and in clothes inlaid with precious stones (*muṭabbaqa*); and they possess *al-Shākiriyya*, and they call themselves al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and al-‘Abbās, Faḍl and ‘Alī...<sup>186</sup>

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186 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā*, 3, 317: فقد علمنا أنهم اتخذوا البراذين الشهيرة، والخيل العتاق، واتخذوا الجوقات، ووضربوا بالصوالجة، وتحذفوا المدني، ولبسوا الملحم والمطبعة، واتخذوا الشاكرية، وتسموا بالحسن والحسين، والعباس وفضل وعلي.

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## **The Eastern Mediterranean and the North**



Alison Vacca

# Khurāsānī and Transoxanian *Ostikans* of Early ‘Abbāsīd Armenia

**Abstract:** This chapter examines the relationship between Armenia and Khurāsān in the early ‘Abbāsīd period by focusing on the Khurāsānī governors (*ostikans*) placed in the north between the rise of the ‘Abbāsīds and the Samaritan period. It argues that the presence of Khurāsānī governors and troops in Armenia challenges the idea that Armenia was separated or isolated from the broader concerns of the Caliphate.

After a brief introduction to the *ostikanate*, the chapter discusses the Khurāsānī governors chronologically along five main periods: (1) the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution; (2) the Battle of Bagrewand in 775; (3) Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amin; (4) the fourth *fitna*; (5) the rise of Transoxanian *ostikans*. This discussion demonstrates that ‘Abbāsīd rule relied heavily on Khurāsānī *ostikans* and troops in Armenia. It further establishes the caliphal north as a region where ‘Abbāsīd power and at times intra-Khurāsānī conflict played out.

**Keywords:** Armenia; Khurāsān; ‘Abbāsīd; ostikan; Bagrewand; fourth *fitna*

## Introduction

Sometime in or after the 12<sup>th</sup> century, an Anonymous Storyteller assembled a treasure trove of Armenian oral histories about the Arcruni nobles of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. His compilation patches together curious information from a number of early sources and reveals plenty of anachronisms and manifestly incorrect details, preserving tales that aimed to entertain rather than inform. In one story, Arabs from the west chase the king of Baghdad out of his capital. The king decides to flee to Khurāsān, where his relatives could provide funds and troops to retake Baghdad. Along the way, the king’s servants abandon him, so he travels to the city of Van to entreat the aid of Derēn, an Arcruni nobleman. Derēn pays a guide to escort the king safely to Khurāsān, and when the king retakes Baghdad the Armenian nobleman reaps the rewards for his loyalty.

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I’d like to extend my thanks to the organizers of the conference *Regional and Transregional Elites—Connecting the Early Islamic Empire* for all the work that went into planning and convening such a fascinating conference. I’d also like to thank Rob Haug and Amikam Elad for reading through the draft of this paper and providing useful feedback

This folktale inserts a celebrated Armenian notable into broader drama of caliphal history. While he never identifies the king by name as al-Ma'mūn, the storyteller suggests the loyalties of Armenian nobles during the fourth *fitna*, and more importantly reveals that even centuries after the war people enjoyed tales boasting of Armenian involvement in the drama of an ousted 9<sup>th</sup>-century caliph and his relatives in Khurāsān.<sup>1</sup>

This paper relies on Arabic and Armenian sources to explore the close relationship between Armenia and Khurāsān throughout the early 'Abbāsīd period, a closeness that did not exist merely in exaggerated popular tales. In particular, it examines the post of caliphal governor (*ostikan*) as evidence of Armenian-Khurāsānī relations and posits that the Arab, Iranian, and Turkish elites in the service of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate served as direct links between the two frontiers. 'Abbāsīd reliance on Khurāsānī troops extended well past the revolution throughout the period of 'Abbāsīd control over the North, not just at moments of Khurāsānī ascendancy such as the reign of al-Ma'mūn. Since most studies of the *ostikanate* center on the Jazarī *ostikans*, this serves as a reminder that 'Abbāsīd Armenia responded clearly to political and military impetuses from the broader caliphate and particularly Khurāsān. As al-Muqaddasī notes in passing, Armenians and Albanians of the 10<sup>th</sup> century spoke Persian with a Khurāsānī accent: “in Armenia, they speak Armenian and in Albania, they speak Albanian. Their Persian is comprehensible and sounds similar to Khurāsānī [Persian].”<sup>2</sup> There were direct lines of communication between the two provinces.

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**1** Anonymous Storyteller 1971, 117–121. Like many of the stories preserved in the Anonymous Storyteller's compilation, this layers several different moments. The most recognizable storyline here is the fourth *fitna*, when al-Ma'mūn gathered his powerbase in Khurāsān before taking the caliphate from his brother al-Amin. The war lasted from 195 H to al-Amin's death in 198 H. The “Arabs from the west” likely refer to the *maghāriba*, also seen in this same work as *matripikk'*. The genealogy provided in this text for the nobleman Derēn presents a number of problems. The best guess is that the Anonymous Storyteller refers to Grigor-Derenik, who ruled from 847 to 887 CE, making it unlikely he would have been old enough to aid al-Ma'mūn. The association between Derēn and Grigor-Derenik presents other chronological and genealogical inconsistencies, too. Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī more believably places Derenik (in Arabic: Dayrānī) in the campaigns of al-Muwaffaq against the Ṣaffārid Ya'qūb b. al-Layth in 262 H and 263 H; al-Ṭabarī 1893, III, 1894–1895. It is likely that the Anonymous Storyteller is conflating the famous war with the actions of a celebrated nobleman who worked in the service of the caliphate half a century later.

**2** Al-Muqaddasī 1906, 378.

## A Brief Introduction to Caliphal Armenia and the Ostikanate

Khurāsān serves as an excellent model to discuss Armenia as a caliphal province. Khurāsān and Armenia were located on the edges of both Sasanian and caliphal territory, where Islamization and Arabization stalled in the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd periods. Once bastions of Parthian society, the Khurāsānī and Armenian elite (the *dihqāns* in the East and the *naxarars* in the North) maintained some semblance of social stability, slowing the effects of regime changes. The provinces were the outskirts of the Iranian *oikoumene*, and while they were culturally distinct exhibited extensive ties to the broader Iranian world. Early Islamic texts use the imprecise and ill-defined catch-all terms *mashriq* (the East) and *jarbī* (the North), underlining problems of mapping imperial power on the edges of the empire, yet both provinces boasted specific frontier outposts (*thughūr*) that delineated Islam/Iran from the “Other.”<sup>3</sup> Sources chronicle massive gates along the edges of both provinces, built by the Sasanians to protect Iran from Tūrān and then maintained by the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsīds to safeguard the caliphate from Turkic hordes.

There is some evidence that historians writing in Arabic in the ‘Abbāsīd period also recognized the common ground between Khurāsān and Armenia. Al-Mas‘ūdī, for example, explains that Khurāsān was a model for Sasanian rule in the North:

...when Anushirwan built the town known as al-Bāb with its wall protruding into the sea, and extending over the land and mountains, he settled there various nations and kings for whom he fixed ranks and special titles and defined their frontiers, on the pattern of what Ardashir b. Bābak had done with regards to Khorasan.<sup>4</sup>

The legacy of Sasanian rule has continually informed discussions of caliphal Armenia. In his 7<sup>th</sup>-century history, Sebēos employs *ostikan* to refer to a Sasanian governor in Armenia. Modern scholars identify the word *ostikan* as an Armenicized version of the Middle Persian *ōstīgān* (trustworthy); it is used to refer to the caliphal governor over the North.

<sup>3</sup> On the North, see Ter-Łevondyan 1976b and, independently, Bates 1989; Vacca 2017b. Armenia, Albania, and Azerbaijan continued to be administered together into the ‘Abbāsīd period. The East and the North were both inherited from the quadripartite division of the Sasanian Empire; cf. the Sasanian-era geography by Širakac‘i, who identifies K‘usti Xorasan and K‘usti Kapkoh (Armenicized versions of the MP “direction of Khurāsān” and “direction of the Caucasus,” respectively). See Ter-Łevondyan 1958. The word *jarbī* appears in Arabic texts about the Sasanian North; it renders the Syriac ܝܪܒܝܝܢ, or North.

<sup>4</sup> Minorsky 1958, 144; al-Mas‘ūdī 1861, II, 3–4.

There are two problems moving the title of *ostikan* into the period of caliphal rule. First, a recent study identifies *ostikan* as a loan word from Parthian, not Middle Persian,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that the term evokes the memory of Arsacid rather than Sasanian power. Second, we have no evidence that the title was used to refer specifically to the caliphal governor until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Most medieval historians who wrote about this period in the North, and in particular Lewond, who wrote his history under the ‘Abbāsids, do not employ *ostikan* in reference to the period of caliphal rule. Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc‘i, writing in the 10<sup>th</sup> century after the collapse of ‘Abbāsīd control in the North, is the first to reclaim *ostikan* to describe caliphal governors.<sup>6</sup> Prior to this, governors appear with a number of other Armenian titles, including *hramanatar* (commander), *karcec‘eal marzpan* (the so-called *marzpan*), *zōrawar* (general), *zōraglux* (commander), *verakac‘u* (overseer), *mec hazarpet* (great chiliarch), *išxan* (prince), *marzpan*, and *hawatarim* (trustworthy); in Arabic, the governor appears as *wālī*, *‘āmil*, or *amīr*.<sup>7</sup> We cannot look to the term *ostikan* to elaborate on the connection between Sasanian and ‘Abbāsīd rule.<sup>8</sup>

The *ostikan* claimed control over two posts. He was responsible for the tax revenues of the province (*‘alā l-kharāj*) and its administration (*‘alā l-ḥarb wa-l-ṣalāt*, literally: over war and prayer).<sup>9</sup> Sources on the Marwānid and early ‘Abbāsīd periods indicate a preoccupation with the military aspects of the *ostikanate*.<sup>10</sup> *Ostikans* appear in these writings most regularly in response to unrest in the North, including the revolts of Muḥammad b. ‘Ubaydallāh al-Warḥānī or Abū Muslim al-Shāri, and threats beyond the imperial borders posed by the Byzantines, the Khazars, and the Šanāriyya/Canark‘. Quotidian administration seems to have fallen to the regional Armenian, Albanian, Georgian, Arab, or Iranian elites. To facilitate this decentralized model of rule, the *ostikan* appointed or ap-

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5 Gippert 1993, II, 217–219.

6 It is not even clear that Drasxanakertc‘i defines the word *ostikan* as “caliphal governor”. Drasxanakertc‘i 1996, 110, specifies that a certain *ostikan* was made governor of Armenia.

7 Ter-Levondyan 1962; Ghazarian 1904, 194; Hübschmann 1908, 215–216.

8 Vacca 2017b deals with the relationship between Sasanian and caliphal rule in the North in depth, including (chapter 4) the position of the *ostikan*.

9 There is only one example in ‘Abbāsīd Armenia of these two posts being separated and given to different individuals.

10 This may relate to the position of Armenia as a frontier. See Nicol 1979, 209: “The very nature of frontier provinces such as Armenia and Khurāsān required a governor with military experience.”

proved one of the primary noblemen as Prince of Armenia,<sup>11</sup> thereby freeing himself for his military duties.

‘Abbāsīd *ostikans* served in Armenia for short periods before being assigned to other provinces, usually for only one or two years though sometimes for up to five. They tended to be Arabs or *mawlās*, but there were also Iranian *ostikans*. Only one *ostikan* identified as Armenian, a Muslim named ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī. The position was frequently hereditary, as is easily evidenced by the Shaybānī and Sulamī lines. If we take a step back to view ‘Abbāsīd governors as a group instead of only considering those within Armenia, other families emerge across the caliphate to boast several generations of governors. For example, the family members of one of the more famous *ostikans*, al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba, served over many decades as the governors of Khurāsān, Sistān, Damascus, and Ṭabaristān. Other families, such as the Banū Muhallab, are perhaps better known for their governorship elsewhere, but appear occasionally in Armenia as well. This practice allowed the ‘Abbāsīds to retain power in the hands of a few trusted families, while short tenures kept governors from achieving the kind of local stability that might empower them to threaten caliphal control.<sup>12</sup>

Armenia was frequently ruled as part of a much broader swath of territory. Just as “Greater Khurāsān” or the “East” can refer to territories outside of the traditional boundaries of Khurāsān (encroaching typically over Transoxania), so too does Armenia at times expand to include Caucasian Albania (roughly, the modern Republic of Azerbaijan and eastern Georgia). It was part of a flexible “North” including Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, and frequently al-Mawṣil and/or al-Jazīra. It was also sometimes joined with Khurāsān and other eastern provinces; for example, al-Mutawakkil assigned Armenia, Azerbaijan, Rayy, Fārs, Ṭabaristān, and Khurāsān to his son al-Mu‘tazz in 234 or 235 H.<sup>13</sup> Armenia and Khurāsān were also administered in tandem under al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Bar-makī and ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān, as we will see below.

Beginning with the publication of J. H. Petermann’s 1840 *De Ostikanis Arabicis Armeniae Gubernatoribus*, modern scholars have evinced a preoccupation with the incumbents of the *ostikanate*. A number of studies list the *ostikans* chronologically, outlining the relevant primary sources and expounding on each *ostikan*’s relationship with the local nobility. The most obvious threads through the

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11 Ter-Levondyan 1964 and 1969. Interestingly, the Armenian word for “prince” (*išxan*) is etymologically derived from Sogdian, like the title *ikhshīd*; see Benveniste 1929. See De La Vaissière 2007, 27 n. 42, for the Sogdian ‘xšyδ.

12 Karev 2015, 346.

13 Al-Ṭabarī 1893, III, 1395; Laurent / Canard 1980, 445–446 n. 76; Nalbandyan 1958, 121 n. 96; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 127 n. 106.

rosters of early ‘Abbāsīd *ostikans* are the Banū Shaybān and Banū Sulaym, two Qaysī (North Arabian) tribes spread across the caliphate but located predominantly in al-Jazīra. The longevity of these family lines demonstrates their significance in Armenian history, the close political ties between al-Jazīra and Armenia, and the apparent preference in the ‘Abbāsīd period for hereditary succession within provincial positions. The Shaybānī and the Sulamī *ostikans* are also significant because they signal the initiation of efforts to Arabize Armenia. Arab tribes moved from al-Jazīra into the North to support the contested claims to power the *ostikans* made against the comparatively stronger local nobility.<sup>14</sup> In later years, the Shaybānī and the Sulamī *amīrs* emerged as the leaders of post-‘Abbāsīd Albania: the Banū Shaybān as the Sharwānshāhs and the Banū Sulaym as the *amīrs* of Bāb al-Abwāb/Darband. Most modern studies therefore understandably center on the Shaybānī and Sulamī *ostikans*, linking Armenia to neighboring al-Jazīra and avoiding the connection between Armenia and Khurāsān.

## Khurāsānī and Transoxanian Ostikans and Their Armies

In his study of early ‘Abbāsīd administration, Nicol identifies only two Khurāsānī *ostikans*: ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān and Ḥātim b. Harthama, who ruled Armenia for a combined total of just four years. The present paper challenges and explains Nicol’s conclusion to explore how Armenia integrated into much larger networks of power reaching far beyond its immediate neighbors. The prosopographical study of the early ‘Abbāsīd *ostikans* demonstrates that the political fate of Armenia, like that of the caliphate as a whole, was clearly tied to Khurāsānī generals and armies.

The ‘Abbāsīd period is here divided into subsections: (a) the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution; (b) the Khurāsāniyya at the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand; (c) the *ostikanates* of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amīn; (d) Armenia during the fourth *fitna*; and (e) the rise of Transoxanian administrators. These divisions are intended to facilitate discussion rather than impose strict periodization and should consequently be understood merely as an organizational tool.

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<sup>14</sup> Ter-Levondyan 1976a.

## a The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution

The idea that the ‘Abbāsīds relied on Khurāsānī governors and troops is certainly nothing new. Even the Armenian priest Łewond, writing at the start of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s reign, mentions that the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution relied on a Khurāsānī army: the relatives of the Lawgiver called the sons of Hešm “united the troops of the land of Xorasan and appointed generals over them, Kahat’ba [Qaḥṭaba al-Ṭā’ī] and a certain Abu Mslim [Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī], who was cunning in astrological sorcery.”<sup>15</sup>

Al-Ya‘qūbī dates the appointment of the first ‘Abbāsīd *ostikan* to either 132 or 133 H, when Abū l-‘Abbās appointed Muḥammad b. Šūl to govern Armenia.<sup>16</sup> Muḥammad b. Šūl belonged to a Persianized Turkish family in Khurāsān. His father Šūl, whose name was an Arabized version of the Turkish title Chūr, was a king of Jurjān who converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam under the Marwānīds and served as governor of the East. Al-Azdī specifies that there were Khurāsānī troops under Muḥammad when he was governor of al-Mawṣil, before he moved to Armenia. Since al-Ya‘qūbī claims that he transferred from al-Jazīra to Armenia with a large force at his command, we may surmise that Muḥammad brought these same Khurāsānī troops into Armenia as *ostikan*. However, no explicit evidence supports this.<sup>17</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī both skip over Muḥammad entirely, although al-Balādhurī claims that Abū Ja‘far (the future al-Manšūr) sent a Khurāsānī leader (*qā’idan min ahl Khurāsān*) against the Umayyad troops under Musāfir b. Kathīr.<sup>18</sup> M. Canard, while recognizing that this could refer to Muḥammad b. Šūl, points out that it could equally mean Šāliḥ b. Šubayḥ al-Kindī. Šāliḥ, who appears in Armenian as the “lawless and bloodthirsty” Calēh. He served as *ostikan* in 133 and 134 H and was apparently appointed on the orders of al-Saffāḥ, although the chain of command is again blurry. Łewond claims that “Abdla” placed Šāliḥ/Calēh over Armenia: while al-Saffāḥ and al-Manšūr share the

<sup>15</sup> Łewond 1857, 156–157. See also Asolik 1885, 131; Vardan 1927, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 357. NB: Forand 1969, 91 n. 9, claims that al-Saffāḥ appointed an Azdī governor from Banū Muhallab as the first ‘Abbāsīd governor of Armenia in 133 H based on his reading of al-Azdī, 1967, 145–146. On Muḥammad, see Amabe 1995, 45; Crone 1980, 244 n. 428; Gordon 2001, 157–158; Laurent / Canard 1980, 423–424 n. 24; Nalbandyan 1958, 111 n. 24; Nicol 1979, 89–90 n. 1; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 120 n. 24; Vasmer 1931, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Forand 1969, 91 n. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Balādhurī 1866, 209.

name ‘Abdallāh, here Lewond refers to al-Saffāh as Abdla and al-Manšūr as “the other Abdla.”<sup>19</sup>

## b The Khurāsāniyya at the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand

The reliance of the early ‘Abbāsīd state on its Khurāsānī military persists into the Armenian *ostikanate* well past the revolution. Al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba al-Ṭā’ī, the “ferocious” (*katalī*) son of the famous general of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution,<sup>20</sup> served as *ostikan* twice. His first appointment lasted from 136 to 141 H and his second from 154 to 158 H.<sup>21</sup> Ibn A’tam explains that al-Ḥasan remained in Armenia and appointed his sons to regional posts in the North, placing Qaḥṭaba b. al-Ḥasan over al-Bāb/Darband, Ibrāhīm over Tiflis/Ṭp’ilisi, and Muḥammad over Qāliqalā/Karin and Khilāt/Xlat.<sup>22</sup> Lewond further notes that al-Ḥasan’s army was composed of Khurāsānī soldiers when he entered Armenia: “When the governor Hasan son of Kahadba assaulted this land of Armenia along with a large regiment from the house of the land of Xorasan, who frequently committed lewder and disgusting acts, they also increased the miseries and woes of this land.”<sup>23</sup>

According to Lewond, two significant battles between the Khurāsāniyya and Armenian nobles took place in 158 H during al-Ḥasan’s second tenure as *ostikan*, first at Arjish/Arčēš and then at Baghrawand/Bagrewand. In her description of the *ostikanate*, N. Garsoïan claimed that the Armenian defeat at Baghrawand/Bagrewand “marked one of the darkest hours in Armenian history.”<sup>24</sup> The Mamikonean family united various Armenian houses there, with the notable exception of the Bagratunis (some of whom abstained from the battle), against the caliphal army.

19 Lewond 1857, 129. On Šālīh, see Ghazarian 1904, 187; Laurent / Canard 1980, 425 n. 26; Nalbandyan 1958, 111 n. 27; Nicol 1979, 91 n. 2(b); Ter-Levondyan 1977, 120 n. 27; Vasmer 1931, 8. 20 Vardan 1927, 56

21 On al-Ḥasan, see Amabe 1995, 72–73; Ghazarian 1904, 187; Laurent / Canard 1980, 426–427 n. 28 and 428–429 n. 30; Markwart 1903, 37; Nalbandyan 1958, 112 n. 29 and 112–113 n. 32; Nicol 1979, 91–92 n. 3; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 121 n. 29 and 121 n. 33; Vasmer 1931, 8 ff.

22 Ibn A’tam 2016, VIII, 366.

23 Lewond 1857, 131–132. Nalbandyan 1958, 112–113 n. 32, claims that these Khurāsānī troops are Arabs, but there is no explicit evidence for their ethnicity. Al-Balādhuri 1866, 187; Nicol 1979, 92 notes that al-Ḥasan was with the governor of al-Jazīra at the head of an army of Khurāsānī soldiers, but these troops were engaged in raids against Byzantium, not Armenia, in 140 H. 24 Garsoïan 2004, 132.

Łewond specifies that the caliphal army was Khurāsānī and under the command of a certain Amr, identified as the Khurāsānī general ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl al-Ĥārithī.

[Abdla, meaning al-Manšūr] gathered the best cavalrymen, some 30,000 choice riders in heavy armor from the regiment of the house of the land of Xorasan. He handed them over to a general whose name was Amr and sent him from him, from the vast and famous city that Abdla had built, fortified for safety with extremely strong and impregnable walls, called by the name Baghdad. The general rose up from the regions of Syria and arrived in the city Xlat’ [Khilāt] in this land of Armenia very cautiously and readily armed. When he arrived in the city, he was informed by the citizens there about the state of the Armenian forces...<sup>25</sup>

Łewond’s phrase “of the house of the land of Xorasan” (*i tohmē Xorasan ašxarhin*) renders the Arabic *min ahl Khurāsān* and so refers to military units (*gund* in Armenian, analogous to the Arabic *jund*) from the East. These units were comprised in large part of Arab soldiers, many of whom were *banawīs* or supporters of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and their descendants.<sup>26</sup> We might wonder if the appearance of this phrase in an Armenian history indicates familiarity with Arabic expressions and/or the oral transmission of *akhbār* across linguistic lines. One of Łewond’s sources is “the enemy himself” and the story of Baghrawand/Bagrewand may have served as a shared point of interest between Muslims and Christians in the North.

Al-Balādhurī explains that al-Manšūr sent troops under ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl, allowing al-Ĥasan to defeat Mushā‘il al-Armanī or Mušeł Mamikonean.<sup>27</sup> At first glance it seems plausible that the Arabic accounts may well confirm the reference to the Khurāsāniyya found in Łewond’s history. Yet Arabic sources in fact complicate the usual narrative of Baghrawand/Bagrewand. The first clue that there might be a problem with Łewond’s rendition is a chronological hiccup. Łewond claims that the Battle of Arjish/Arčēš occurred on a Saturday, the fourth day of the Armenian month *hrotic’*, while the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand was on a Monday, the fourteenth day of *hrotic’*. Modern scholars have identified this as April 15 and 24, 775 CE, which corresponds to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of *jumādā* II 158 H. Łewond further clarifies that al-Manšūr “received the curses of the prophet and soon died there desperately in that same year.” This confirms the year he

<sup>25</sup> Łewond 1857, 177. Vardan 1927, 108 n. 1: Muyltermans inexplicably labels these forces as Turks.

<sup>26</sup> Elad 1996, 98; Elad 2005, 281 and 318 on non-Arab elements (‘*ajam ahl Khurāsān*’); perhaps these were Iranian? See Kennedy 2001, 105.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Balādhurī 1866, 210.

is discussing, as al-Manşūr died on the 6<sup>th</sup> of *dhū l-ḥijja* 158 H, or October 7, 775 CE. However, ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl in fact died in Baghdad in 157 H. The caliph himself prayed over his body and he was buried in the ‘Abbāsīd family cemetery.<sup>28</sup> Assuming, of course, that ‘Āmir did not command forces in Armenia after his own death, we are left to either explain away ‘Āmir’s date of death as misinformation, reject Lewond’s date for the battle, and/or revisit the story in a broader context. This latter solution also requires revisiting Lewond’s claim regarding the involvement of the Khurāsāniyya.

Ibn A‘tham supplies pivotal information about the Khurāsāniyya in Armenia during the *ostikanate* of al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba that forces us to reread Lewond’s text. Al-Manşūr appointed al-Ḥasan, who immediately faced a rebellion of the Şanāriyya/Canark’, a Christian people who lived in Khākhīṭ/Kaxet’i, farther north than the Armenian heartland. Ibn A‘tham explains that al-Ḥasan moved against them with a mixed army of 50,000 *min ahl Khurāsān wa-ahl al-Shām wa-l-‘Irāq*, but he was not able to pacify them and wrote to the caliph to request reinforcements. These came in the form of ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl al-Jurjānī [al-Ḥārithī], ‘Īsā b. Mūsā al-Khurāsānī, al-Faḍl b. Dīnār, and Muqātil b. Şāliḥ, along with 30,000 cavalry.<sup>29</sup> If we follow the hypothesis above regarding this oral transmission, we may speculate that Ibn A‘tham is reporting the same *khbar* as Lewond: he describes 30,000 cavalry (*fāris*) under the command of someone named ‘Āmir, moving north on al-Manşūr’s orders. Ibn A‘tham’s account, though, has ‘Āmir defeat the Şanāriyya/Canark’ and then return to Iraq without engaging with the Armenians at all.

This campaign is also corroborated in al-Ya‘qūbī’s history. He explains that:

...the Şanāriyya rebelled in Armenia. Abū Ja‘far [al-Manşūr] sent al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba as governor (*‘amil*) over Armenia. He fought them, but he did not have their strength. So he wrote to Abū Ja‘far to inform him of them and how many of them [there were]. He [al-Manşūr] sent to him [al-Ḥasan] ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl al-Ḥārithī with 20,000 [men].

‘Āmir defeated the Şanāriyya/Canark’, killed 1,600 of them, and returned to Tiflīs/Ṭp‘ilisi.<sup>30</sup> Like Ibn A‘tham, al-Ya‘qūbī does not place ‘Āmir against the Armenians.

Ibn A‘tham continues his discussion of al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba’s *ostikanate* with the most detailed explanation of the battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand extant in medieval Arabic sources. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba (who ap-

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1893, III, 380.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn A‘tham 2016, VIII, 366.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 372.

pears in Lewond’s history as an unidentified Mahmet) was responsible for administering Qālīqalā/Karin and Khilāt/Xlat’ in his father’s name. The patrician Mūshābidh (read: Mušeł Mamikonean)<sup>31</sup> challenged his authority. Mūshābidh gathered the Armenian nobles against al-Ḥasan’s rule, inspiring Ḥamra b. Jurjīq (read: Ḥamza b. Jājīq for Hamazasp the son of Gagik Arcruni) to move against Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥasan.<sup>32</sup> Al-Ḥasan was not able to rally his forces effectively against the Armenians and so wrote again to al-Manṣūr to request aid. This arrived in the form of 10,000 soldiers *min ahl al-‘Irāq*. They met al-Ḥasan in Khilāt/Xlat’, a detail that aligns with Lewond’s account. After routing the Armenian army, al-Manṣūr’s forces looted a Mamikonean church and beheaded the leaders of the Armenians, including Mūshābidh, sending their heads to al-Manṣūr. Ibn A‘tham’s next *khobar* is the death of al-Manṣūr, which is in line with the traditional date of Baghrawand/Bagrewand.

While modern scholars have long recognized the battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand as a significant moment in the history of ‘Abbāsīd Armenia, we learn several things by bringing the Arabic sources regarding it into dialogue with the Armenian. First, and most relevantly for our present purposes, Lewond’s account showcases the significance of the Khurāsāniyya in maintaining the ‘Abbāsīd presence in the North: al-Manṣūr sent a Khurāsānī army under the supervision of several Khurāsānī generals to reinforce a Khurāsānī *ostikan*. Yet the Arabic sources do *not* allow for this. According to Ibn A‘tham, whose history offers the only detailed description of the battle in Arabic, al-Ḥasan relied on Iraqī troops at Baghrawand/Bagrewand. If we create a narrative of al-Ḥasan’s *ostikante* based on Arabic sources, then, we find that ‘Āmir b. Ismā‘īl led the Khurāsāniyya north against the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’, returned to Baghdad, and died in 157 H. In 158 H, the Armenians rebelled. Al-Manṣūr sent Iraqī soldiers north to reinforce al-Ḥasan at the Battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand and died soon thereafter.

It is striking how many common threads are shared in the Arabic and the Armenian accounts, despite a few glaring differences. Stories about the Khurāsāniyya may well have circulated orally in the North, potentially accounting for the common ground between Lewond and Ibn A‘tham. If that is the case, Lewond’s placement of the Khurāsāniyya at the Battles of Arjīsh/Arčēš and

<sup>31</sup> The corruption of Mušeł’s name here is a result of the similarity of موشابذ and موشائل in Arabic.

<sup>32</sup> Hamazasp would have been in Basfurrajān/Vasporakan, so it seems out of place that Ibn A‘tham further identifies Hamazasp as the lord of Georgia. To my knowledge, the Arcruni family did not hold positions in Georgia at this time. It is likely that the title *ṣāhib bilād Jurzān* (صاحب بلاد جرجان) is a scribal error for *ṣāhib al-Basfurrajān* (صاحب البسفرجان), the Lord of Vasporakan. Vacca 2019.

Baghrawand/Bagrewand in fact conflates the *akhbār* about two separate rebellions against the ‘Abbāsids in the North during al-Ḥasan’s *ostikanate*, one of the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’ and the other of the Armenians. Ibn A‘tham’s version reports the *akhbār* separately but back-to-back; perhaps the stories of both rebellions circulated as a pair.<sup>33</sup> Details about ‘Āmir’s arrival at the head of 30,000 Khurāsāniyya from Baghdad filtered into Lewond’s description of the battle even though the information originally referred to the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’. It is clear Lewond did not preserve the information completely correctly because (1) the rebellion of the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’ is corroborated elsewhere in al-Ya‘qūbī’s history and (2) we know from al-Ṭabarī that ‘Āmir was already dead by the date Lewond provides for Baghrawand/Bagrewand.

This reexamination of accounts about the battle of Baghrawand/Bagrewand does not imply that the Khurāsāniyya were not important in enforcing ‘Abbāsīd rule in the North. Indeed, their appearance against the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’ confirms the significance of the Khurāsānī army and its generals in upholding al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba’s authority. Yet Lewond’s claims regarding their involvement at Baghrawand/Bagrewand cannot be substantiated.

### c The *Ostikanates* of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amīn

As both heir apparent and caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed a number of Khurāsānī *ostikans*. Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī sometimes appears among the lists of *ostikans* under al-Mahdī during Hārūn al-Rashīd’s vicereignty, although there is no compelling evidence for his *ostikanate*.<sup>34</sup> However, one of the most famous and well-attested *ostikans* under Hārūn was Khuzayma b. Khāzim al-Tamīmī, whose family was from Marw al-Rūdh. Known in both the Arabic and Armenian sources as a harsh governor, Khuzayma served as *ostikan* for a year and two months in 169 and 170 H. He was associated with over-taxation and severe oppression, so much so that Lewond confirms that his name Xazm referred to his character: the Armenian adjective *xazmarar* means warlike.<sup>35</sup> Drasxanakertc’i re-

<sup>33</sup> This is reminiscent of Conrad’s study of Arwād, where *akhbār* about the conquest of one island shift to that of another; Conrad 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Laurent / Canard 1980, 429–430 n. 34, has Hārūn al-Rashīd as *ostikan* and Yaḥyā as financial administrator; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 121 n. 37; Nalbandyan 1958, 114 n. 36. The passage in question is al-Ṭabarī 1893, III, 500.

<sup>35</sup> Lewond 1857, 195–196; for more on his name, see Laurent / Canard 1980, 430–431 n. 37; on Khuzayma, see also Nalbandyan 1958, 114 n. 39; Nicol 1979, 98–99 n. 13; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 122

counts his residence in Dabil/Duin and details his plots to wrest land from the patriarchate unjustly, since he was “led astray by his wicked desires and demonic avarice.”<sup>36</sup> Al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī also served as *ostikan* under Hārūn al-Rashīd. He was in Khurāsān in 175 H, but there are Armenian coins minted in his name in the same year; written sources describe him as viceroy over Armenia, Azerbaijan, Jibāl, and Ṭabaristān in 176 H. This list was expanded in 177 H to include Khurāsān and Sīstān.<sup>37</sup>

Coins minted in Armenia and al-Bāb attest the rule of Yaḥyā al-Ḥarashī, who served as *ostikan* in 178 and 179 H. This Yaḥyā was probably Khurāsānī, but we cannot identify his ancestry or provenance with certainty.<sup>38</sup> Regardless, Yaḥyā relied on Khurāsānī troops to face two rebellions in the North. Al-Ya‘qūbī explains that when Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed the Jazarī Aḥmad b. Yazīd al-Sulamī as *ostikan* in 179 H, Aḥmad faced a rebellion of troops *min ahl Khurāsān*: “those who came with al-Ḥarashī and who were there before al-Ḥarashī” (*man kāna fī l-balad min ahl Khurāsān miman qadīma ma‘ al-Ḥarashī wa-qabla al-Ḥarashī*). The fact that he had to face not just al-Ḥarashī’s troops, but also those “who were there before al-Ḥarashī” implies that some of the Khurāsānī troops were stationed there prior to becoming part of the retinue of any particular *ostikan*. Unsurprisingly, they claimed significant political clout. To assuage the displeasure of these Khurāsānī troops in Armenia, for example, Hārūn al-Rashīd recalled Aḥmad b. Yazīd and sent Sa‘īd b. Salm al-Bāhili to serve as *ostikan* in 181 H.<sup>39</sup>

After Sa‘īd b. Salm’s *ostikanate*, Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed the governor of Khurāsān, ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān, over Armenia. Armenian sources omit the

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n. 41; Vasmer 1931, 28–29. Note that Lewond and others claim he was appointed by al-Hādī; others say Hārūn.

36 Drasxanakertc‘i 1987, 115; Drasxanakertc‘i 1996, 114.

37 On al-Faḍl, see Amabe 1995, 79; Laurent / Canard 1980, 432 n. 43; Nalbandyan 1958, 115 n. 45; Nicol 1979, 102 n. 17; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 122–123 n. 48; Vasmer 1931, 32.

38 Studies on the *ostikanate* identify him as Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd al-Ḥarashī. There are a few Sa‘īd al-Ḥarashīs who could be his father. Al-Ṭabarī 1990, 196–197 n. 637, has his full name as Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd b. Dāwūd; this Sa‘īd was a Turk deployed in Khurāsān against al-Muqanna‘ in 163 H. Amabe 1995, 79 assumes that this identification is correct, but calls him Yaḥyā b. Dāwūd, the son rather than the grandson of Dāwūd. Crone 1980, 144–145 suggests that he was a descendent of Sa‘īd b. ‘Amr, the Qaysī general from Qinnasrīn. Alternatively, he could be the son of Sa‘īd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥarashī, himself the son of a Ḥarrānī *ostikan* named in al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 426 for the year 177 H. I would like to thank Prof. Amikam Elad for sharing a draft of a paper in which he offers another suggestion: that al-Ḥarashī (الحرشي) may be a misreading of al-Khursī (الخرسي), an alternative form of Khurāsānī. He cites al-Tanūkhī re: a Sa‘īd al-Khursī as *min awlād mulūk Khurāsān* under al-Manṣūr. On Yaḥyā, see also Forand 1969, 97–98; Laurent / Canard 1980, 433 n. 48; Nalbandyan 1958, 115 n. 51; Nicol 1979, 105–106 n. 22; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 123 n. 54.

39 Al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 427.

Khurāsānī ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā’s *ostikanate* entirely, but we find Armenian and Albanian dirhams minted in his name in 183 H.<sup>40</sup> According to al-Ya‘qūbī, “when he arrived, his conduct was terrible. The people of Sharwān rose against him and the land was in disarray. And so al-Rashīd appointed Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī and he returned ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā to Khurāsān.”<sup>41</sup> When ‘Alī returned to the East, he faced more complaints of oppression and tyranny until the caliph himself started the fateful campaign to reign him in.<sup>42</sup> After the *ostikanates* of three Shaybānīs in short succession, Khuzayma b. Khāzim returned to Armenia as *ostikan* in 187 H. Al-Ya‘qūbī claims that he remained for only a short time, but there are coins minted in his name every year from 187 to 191 H.<sup>43</sup> These last two Khurāsānī *ostikans* (‘Alī b. ‘Īsā and Khuzayma b. Khāzim) served as the heart of al-Amīn’s army during the siege of Baghdad. Since Armenian coins survive minted in al-Amīn’s name during Hārūn al-Rashīd’s reign, we can assume that the North entered the fourth *fitna* on his side.

#### d Armenia During the Fourth *Fitna*

Soon after Hārūn al-Rashīd’s death, though, the North fell squarely into al-Ma‘mūn’s territory. The first *ostikan* under al-Amīn was Khurāsānī: Muḥammad b. Zuhayr b. al-Musayyab al-Ḍabbī. He was appointed *ostikan* before Hārūn’s death in 193 H, the same year that his father and brothers joined al-Ma‘mūn in Marw. We do not know when Muḥammad’s *ostikanate* officially ended, but it is reasonable to assume that he did not remain in control of Armenia long after al-Amīn took office.<sup>44</sup> In fact, Armenian sources suggest the land was en-

<sup>40</sup> Vardanyan 2011, 37 n. 52 and 64 n. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 428; Markwart 1903, 456.

<sup>42</sup> Nicol 1979, 109 n. 29: There is an Armenian coin in his name as late as 187 H. By this point, Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī was *ostikan* and ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā was back in Khurāsān. On ‘Alī, see Pellat, “‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān,” *EI*; Sourdel, “Ibn Māhān,” *EF*; Laurent / Canard 1980, 433 n. 52; Nalbandyan 1958, 116 n. 55; Nicol 1979, 107–108 n. 26; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 123 n. 59; Vasmer 1931, 39.

<sup>43</sup> On Khuzayma’s second tenure, see Laurent / Canard 1980, 433 n. 52; Nalbandyan 1958, 116 n. 55; Nicol 1979, 107–108 n. 26; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 123 n. 59; Vasmer 1931, 39.

<sup>44</sup> Vardanyan 2011, 123, 71 n. 148, 72 n. 149: There are Albanian dirhams from 194 H in his name, but Zambaur and Vasmer date his *ostikanate* only to 193 H. On Muḥammad, see Crone 1980, 186–188; Laurent / Canard 1980, 435 n. 59; Nalbandyan 1958, 116 n. 63; Nicol 1979, 112 n. 35; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 124 n. 69; Vasmer 1931, 43. On his family’s involvement with al-Ma‘mūn: Elad 2010, 56; Elad 2013, 268.

tirely independent during this time and ruled by local princes.<sup>45</sup> While al-Amīn did appoint *ostikans*, they were Jazarī or ‘Abbāsīd.

Extant coins provide evidence both for al-Ma’mūn’s contested claims over the North during the fourth *fitna* and for potential ties between Armenia and Khurāsān. There are Armenian coins minted in the name of Aḥmad b. Yazīd b. Usayd al-Sulamī during al-Amīn’s reign,<sup>46</sup> which led Ter-Ēvondyan and Nicol to conclude that Aḥmad served as *ostikan* in 195 and 196 H despite a lack of written evidence (Aḥmad did in fact serve as a *ostikan*, but earlier—from 179 to 181 H). Aḥmad would later fight alongside Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn. He may have changed loyalty over the course of the war,<sup>47</sup> but if we assume that he supported al-Ma’mūn even at the start of al-Amīn’s reign, then his Armenian coins potentially add weight to the theory that local powers in the North supported al-Ma’mūn and perhaps even confirm the hypothesis that al-Ma’mūn’s generals were recruiting Arab troops from the North to fight against al-Amīn.<sup>48</sup>

Studies on the *ostikanate* have identified Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad al-Ṣan‘ānī as al-Ma’mūn’s first *ostikan*. His earliest Armenian coins date to 196 H, two years before the death of al-Amīn.<sup>49</sup> Nicol marks this Ṭāhir as “ancestry unknown,” but Amabe instead renders al-Ya‘qūbī’s text with the *nisba* *al-Ṣaghānī* (الصغاني), meaning that Ṭāhir was from Chaghāniyān in Transoxania instead of Ṣan‘ā’ (الصنعاني).<sup>50</sup> Whether from Chaghāniyān or Ṣan‘ā’, Ṭāhir’s appointment suggests that Armenia was looking to Khurāsān, not Baghdad, as the center of the caliphate. Al-Ya‘qūbī claims that either al-Ma’mūn or Harthama b. A‘yan sent Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad to the North, where he allied with the Armenian and Albanian pat-

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45 Vardan 1927, 58.

46 Vasmer 1931, 54.

47 Elad 2013, 260: “We have no information of his activities during al-Amīn’s rule,” so it is admittedly entirely possible that he had not yet declared for al-Ma’mūn and was in al-Amīn’s service in the North.

48 Elad 2013, 267 and 273.

49 Vardanyan 2011, 72 n. 151, 73 n. 152, 73 n. 153.

50 Amabe 1995, 100 and 131. He cites both al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 461 and al-Ṭabarī, III, 802: the former clearly reads الصنعاني and the latter does not refer to either *nisba* and concerns Ṭāhir b. al-Tāji. Amabe explains that “In Hamadān Harthama sent Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad of Chaghāniyān to Armenia and Adharbayjān as governor.” This relies on his reading of al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 461. Amabe clearly reads Harthama as the subject and Ṭāhir as the direct object of the verb وجيه, meaning that [some say that] Harthama dispatched Muḥammad. Nicol 1979, 113 n. 39 cites the same passage in passive voice: “It is said that Harthama b. A‘yan was sent from Ḥamadān while Ṭāhir was headed for Iraq and then towards Warthān in the prefecture of Azerbaijan.”

ricians in 196 H to lay siege to Bardha'a/Partaw in order to take the province from al-Amīn's *ostikan*.<sup>51</sup>

The connection between the administration of Khurāsān and Armenia continued in the first days of al-Ma'mūn's reign. A few curious coins minted without the name of a governor in Ma'dan Bājunays/Apahunik' in 199 H bear the title *dhū l-riyāsatayn*, or "possessor of the two posts." Vasmer concludes that "die Dirhems von Ma'din Bāğunais 199...geben leider gar keinen Aufschluß darüber, wer um diese Zeit Statthalter war."<sup>52</sup> Yet this title is well attested and commonly refers to al-Faql b. Sahl, who at that time would have been al-Ma'mūn's governor of Khurāsān, where he served from 197 to 202 or 203 H.<sup>53</sup> While studies of the *ostikanate* do not typically include al-Faql b. Sahl, these coins suggest that his authority did indeed reach as far as the North. Al-Ṭabarī explains that al-Faql controlled the East from Tibet to the Indian Ocean and the "sea of Daylam and Jurjān."<sup>54</sup> It stands to reason that Armenia was part of al-Faql's East. The Armenian coins represent an extension of the power of the Banū Sahl, and of course al-Ma'mūn, outside Khurāsān. Furthermore, Ter-Ēvondyan mentions a comparable coin minted with that title in Albania in 197 H, even before al-Amīn's death.<sup>55</sup>

Al-Ma'mūn appointed Harthama b. A'yan's son Ḥātīm b. Harthama as *ostikan* in either 200 or 201 H.<sup>56</sup> His father, one of the main generals of the fourth *fitna* and former governor of Khurāsān, had fallen out of favor and died in a prison in Marw. When the news of Harthama's death reached Armenia, Ḥātīm wrote to the local patricians (*wa-kātaba al-baṭāriqa wa-wujūh ahl Armīniya*) to muster a

51 On Ṭāhir, see Laurent / Canard 1980, 435 n. 62; Markwart 1903, 457; Nalbandyan 1958, 117 n. 67; Nicol 1979, 113–114 n. 39; Ter-Ēvondyan 1977, 124 n. 75; Vasmer 1931, 55 (his coins read Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad, so they cannot add anything to the discussion of the correct reading of the *nisba*).

52 Vasmer 1931, 58–59; see photos in Vardanyan 2011, 97 n. 217–218.

53 Sourdel, "al-Faql b. Sahl b. Zadhānfarūkh," *EF*; Bosworth, "Faql, b. Sahl b. Zādānfarūkh," *Elr*. On al-Faql's coins with the title *dhū l-riyāsatayn*, see Karev 2015, 322; Nastich 2012, 39–40 (although his Samarqandī coin has since been corrected to Shirāzī online).

54 Al-Ṭabarī 1893, III, 841.

55 Ter-Ēvondyan 1977, 124 n. 76: he attributes this coin to Sulaymān b. Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Hāshimī, citing al-Ya'qūbī 1960, II, 462. The passage in question identifies Sulaymān as al-Ma'mūn's *ostikan*. This coin does not appear in Vardanyan.

56 On Ḥātīm, see Amabe 1995, 116; Crone 1980, 177–178; Laurent / Canard 1980, 436 n. 66; Lewis, "Ḥātīm b. Harthama," *EF*; Markwart 1903, 458; Nalbandyan 1958, 118 n. 73; Nicol 1979, 115 n. 44; Ter-Ēvondyan 1977, 125 n. 79; Vasmer 1931, 57.

rebellion,<sup>57</sup> one that did not survive his death in 203 H. Crone identifies this rebellion as in line with comparable movements in Khurāsān:

It must have been the mutual fear between the caliph and Khurāsān that triggered the surprisingly numerous revolts by apparent pillars of the regime who made sudden changes of allegiance. Ziyād b. Šāliḥ apart, Jahwar b. Marār, Zuwāra al-Bukhārī, al-Ishtākhanj, ‘Abd al-Jabbār, and Rāfi’ b. Layth are all in that category. There is a later example in Ḥātīm b. Harthama, the governor of Azerbaijan who had hitherto been a pillar of the regime along with his father, who planned to rebel when he heard that his father had been executed: he must have assumed (undoubtedly correctly) that he was next on the list. The only reasonable explanation of the behaviour of the earlier Khurāsānīs is that, like Ḥātīm, they suspected that they had fallen out of favour.<sup>58</sup>

Ḥātīm was not dragging Armenian patricians into a battle to pitch the Khurāsānīs against the caliph, but rather into an intra-Khurāsānī struggle for influence over the caliph. Harthama’s main concern was the extensive power the Banū Sahl wielded under al-Ma’mūn. In this he was perhaps similar to Rāfi’ b. al-Layth, whose rebellion against the caliph was sparked by the abuses of ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā. Harthama did not set out to challenge the caliph or even the “Abbasid-Khurāsānī axis of power.”<sup>59</sup> His fight was to determine who represented Khurāsānī power within that axis. In calling upon the Armenian elites to join his rebellion, Ḥātīm drew the North into broader political patterns, some of which were internal to Khurāsān.

## e The Rise of Transoxanian Administrators

In his passage on Ḥātīm’s rebellion, al-Ya‘qūbī explains that he wrote not only to the Armenian patricians, but also to Bābak; Crone dismisses this as “implausible.”<sup>60</sup> This does mark a shift in the *ostikanate*, though, as the administration of Armenia is certainly sidelined by the ongoing Khurramī rebellion in neighboring Azerbaijan (usually administered with Armenia and Albania as a single province). From that point, all of the *ostikans*, whether Jazarī or Khurāsānī, were generals appointed in hopes of their fighting Bābak. Khurāsānī *ostikans* of this time

<sup>57</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, II, 462.

<sup>58</sup> Crone 2012, 119.

<sup>59</sup> Daniel 1979, 157. He calls it “the supposed Abbasid-Khurāsānī axis of power.” I have dropped the “supposed” because it seems quite clear that there was a relationship between ‘Abbāsīd power and Khurāsān. Daniel’s concern is to account for Khurāsānī resistance to the said axis.

<sup>60</sup> Crone 2012, 65, though she is responding to Ibn Qutayba.

include *banawīs*<sup>61</sup> who were either Arabs or *mawlās* of Arab tribes, such as Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh b. Muslim al-Dhuhli (204–5 H),<sup>62</sup> Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh (205 H),<sup>63</sup> ‘Īsā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālid (205–208 H),<sup>64</sup> Muḥammad b. Humayd al-Ṭūsī (212–213H),<sup>65</sup> and ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir (214 H).<sup>66</sup> Al-Mu‘taṣim named al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-Bādhghīsī as *ostikan*; he was either a *mawlā* or a relative of al-Ma’mūn; he appears as Badoḷi in Armenian, where Բադոլի (Badoḷi) is a corruption of Բադլիսի (Badḷsi).<sup>67</sup>

In the wake of the fourth *fitna*, ‘Abbāsīd policy towards Transoxania shifted and the effects are visible in the *ostikanate*. According to al-Balādhurī, al-Ma’mūn and following him al-Mu‘taṣim sent envoys to Transoxania with gifts to encourage Transoxanian leaders to join the caliphal army. They recruited soldiers by entering their names into the *dīwān*:<sup>68</sup> “cette action d’al-Ma’mūn donne l’occasion à beaucoup de nobles de faire une brillante carrière au califat...mais elle arrive trop tard pour qu’ils puissent rattraper leur position politique et économique au Māwarā’annahr même.”<sup>69</sup> With the Sāmānīd takeover of Transoxania in 205 H, these generals and soldiers were sent elsewhere, including to Armenia.

Several of the *ostikans* have *nīsbas* from the East, i.e., Khurāsān itself and “Greater” Khurāsān, including Transoxania.<sup>70</sup> Al-Mu‘taṣim appointed one of the most famous *ostikans*: al-Afshīn Ḥaydār b. Kā‘ūs al-Ushrūshānī, Ap‘šin in Ar-

61 I am using this term as it commonly appears in modern scholarship, though Crone 1998, 5 points out that some of the more famous *banawī* actually do not claim that *nīsha* explicitly in our primary sources.

62 On Yaḥyā, see Crone 1980, 184; Elad 2010, 43; Laurent / Canard 1980, 436 n. 67; Nalbandyan 1958, 118 n. 74; Nicol 1979, 115 n. 46; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 125 n. 80; Vasmer 1931, 59 f.

63 On Aḥmad, see Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 125 n. 81; Vasmer 1931, 60.

64 On ‘Īsā, see Laurent / Canard 1980, 436–437 n. 68; Markwart 1903, 458; Nalbandyan 1958, 118 n. 75; Nicol 1979, 115–116 n. 47; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 125 n. 82; Vasmer 1931, 60–61.

65 On Muḥammad, see Amabe 1995, 117; Crone 1980, 175; Elad 2013, 272–275; Nalbandyan 1958, 119 n. 79; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 125 n. 88; Vasmer 1931, 64–65.

66 On ‘Abdallāh, see Bosworth, “‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāher,” *Elr*; Laurent / Canard 1980, 438 n. 70; Markwart 1903, 459; Nalbandyan 1958, 119 n. 80; Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 125 n. 89; Vasmer 1931, 65 and 71.

67 Dowsett 1957, 457 n. 1 argues convincingly that Markwart’s attempt to read Բադլիսի as Ազլի to refer to Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Azdī al-Samarqandī is incorrect; cf: Markwart 1903, 462. On al-Ḥasan, see Amabe 1995, 140; Crone 2012, 63 n. 118; Elad 2010, 41–42; Laurent / Canard 1980, 439–441 n. 72; Nalbandyan 1958, 120 n. 86; Nicol 1979, 119 n. 51(d); Ter-Łevondyan 1977, 126 n. 96; Vasmer 1931, 81.

68 Al-Balādhurī 1866, 431; Kennedy 2001, 118–119 and 124; Gordon 2001, 31; De La Vaissière 2007, 174–175.

69 Karev 2015, 350.

70 On the definition of Khurāsān, see Rante 2015.

menian, the general who finally routed Bābak and forced him to flee to the Albanian lord Sahl b. Sinbāṭ. This lord, whose name is Persianized in Armenian as Sahl-i Smbatean, offered Bābak sanctuary but then handed him over to al-Afshīn, all while disparaging the idea that caliphal governors could ever hold sway over him. Al-Mu‘taṣīm awarded al-Afshīn the governorship of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Jibāl, and Sind. From 220 to 225 H, al-Afshīn was based in Barzand and sent a number of *ostikans* to rule Armenia in his name, including Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Samarqandī<sup>71</sup> and Muḥammad b. Khālid Bukhārakhudā. This last *ostikan*’s title is corrupted in Armenian to read *Bulxar Xoyta P’atgos*; *p’atgos* is the Armenicized version of the Persian *padhospān*.<sup>72</sup> Afshīn similarly appointed his brother-in-law Mankjūr al-Farghānī over Azerbaijan in 224 H. This shifts al-Mu‘taṣīm’s *ostikans* from Arabs and *mawlās* to Turks and from Khurāsān proper to the edges: Ushrūshana, Farghāna, Samarqand, and Bukhārā.

These generals were charged with continuing the campaigns against Bābak and other upheavals in the North, but also administered Armenia and Albania. The Albanians assumed that the *ostikans* had a direct line of communication to the caliph himself, not one made via the viceroy al-Afshīn. For example, Dasxuranc’i explains that Badoḥi (al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī) was established in al-Nashawā/Naxčawan in 283 AE “at the command of the prince of the Tačiks called Amir Mumin,” where he martyred an Armenian Christian.<sup>73</sup> The same source claims that the Bukhārakhudā received the catholicos Yovhannēs, whom Dasxuranc’i identifies as “the Lord of Lords, the lord of the Armenians, Georgians, and Albanians,” and served as an intermediary between the Armenians and “the court of the Amir Momnin” in 287 AE (the same year as the sack of Amorium, 223 H).<sup>74</sup> His attention was pulled north against the Ṣanāriyya/Canark’ and Iṣḥāq b. Ismā‘īl, the independent *amīr* of Tiflis/Tp’īlisi.

Abū Sa‘īd Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, known as Apusēt’ in Armenian, was another Khurāsānī commander who fought against Bābak. He later returned to Armenia

71 On Muḥammad, see Amabe 1995, 115; Ghazarian 1904, 189; Laurent / Canard 1980, 441–443 n. 73; Nalbandyan 1958, 120 n. 88; Ter-Ēvondyan 1977, 126 n. 98; Vasmer 1931, 63.

72 Dowsett 1957, 459 n. 7 and 461 n. 2 and 3 offer manuscript variants of this title: Բուլխար Խոյտա Փատգոս, Բուլխար Խոյտա Փատգոս, and Բուլխարխոյ Տափատգոս, but Dowsett leaves P’atgos unresolved. Minorsky 1958, 57 identifies the word *p’atgos* as an abbreviation of *padhospān* in reference to another *ostikan* mentioned in Dasxuranc’i’s text: Muḥammad b. Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī. On the Bukhārakhudā, see De La Vaissière 2007, 175–176; Laurent / Canard 1980, 441–443 n. 73; Markwart 1903, 461; Nalbandyan 1958, 120 n. 89; Ter-Ēvondyan 1977, 126 n. 99; Vasmer 1931, 84.

73 Dasxuranc’i 1961, 216; Dasxuranc’i 1983, 329.

74 Dowsett 1957, 459; Dasxuranc’i 1983, 330–331: “the court of the Amir Momnin” is rendered as ամիր մոմնոյ դարապաս.

as *ostikan* for al-Mutawakkil from 234 to 236 H. Abū Saʿīd was a *mawlā* of Banū Ṭayy from Marw. Tʻovma Arcruni, the Armenian historian who offers the most extensive discussion of Abū Saʿīd’s *ostikanate*, describes him as a noble (*naxarar*) who was, interestingly, “familiar with Hebrew literature.”<sup>75</sup> The two main noble Armenian families at the time, the Bagratunis and Arcrunis, refused Abū Saʿīd entrance to their territories and so he returned to Sāmarrāʾ.<sup>76</sup> Al-Mutawakkil sent Abū Saʿīd’s son, Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Marwazī, Yovsēpʻ in Armenian, to Armenia as *ostikan* following his father’s death in 236 H. Facing the caliphal army, the Armenian families capitulated immediately. Ostensibly in revenge for the humiliation of the Bagratuni patrician, the Khuwaythiyya/Xutʻ (inhabitants of the region of Khoyt/Xoytʻ) killed Yūsuf al-Marwazī, triggering the Caucasian campaigns of Bughā al-Kabīr which devastated the North from 237 to 241 H.<sup>77</sup> This marked the end of the Khurāsānī presence in the ʻAbbāsīd administration of Armenia, if only because the backbone of the ʻAbbāsīd army had shifted. Bughā entered Armenia with an army of Turkish and Maghribī Arabs (*al-atrāk wa-l-maghāribā*).

## Conclusions

This selective narrative of the *ostikanate* demonstrates how early ʻAbbāsīd rule in Armenia relied heavily on Khurāsānī *ostikans* and troops. Nicol has come to the opposite conclusion, i.e., that very few Khurāsānīs served as *ostikan*, for a few reasons. First, he labels *mawlās* as a separate category without recognizing that most of his examples, like Muḥammad b. Šūl and Yaḥyā b. Muʻādh, were also Khurāsānī. Second, some *ostikans* such as the Barmakīs appear in his study as “Iranian” *ostikans* despite their familial ties to Khurāsān. Finally, Arab Khurāsānīs frequently appear in Nicol’s study as representatives of their tribes instead of their regions. This is particularly surprising since he also incorrectly identifies his two Khurāsānī *ostikans*, ʻAlī b. ʻĪsā and Ḥātim b. Harthama, as Arabs.<sup>78</sup> In order to conclude that Armenia rarely saw a Khurāsānī *ostikan*, we would have to take our cues from al-Jāḥiẓ and draw definitive lines between the

75 Tʻovma Arcruni 1985a, 174; Tʻovma Arcruni 1985b, 170.

76 On Abū Saʿīd, see Ghazarian 1904, 190; Laurent / Canard 1980, 446 n. 77; Nalbandyan 1958, 121–2 n. 97; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 127 n. 107; Vasmer 1931, 92.

77 On these campaigns, see Vacca 2017a. On Yūsuf, see Laurent / Canard 1980, 447 n. 78; Nalbandyan 1958, 122 n. 98; Ter-Levondyan 1977, 127 n. 108; Vasmer 1931, 93.

78 Crone 1998, 8: ʻAlī b. ʻĪsā was Iranian, the son of a *mawlā* of Banū Khuzāʾa. Crone 1980, 177: Harthama b. Aʻyan was a *mawlā* of Banū Ḍabba.

*mawlās*, the Iranians, the Khurāsānīs, and the Arabs as if these were distinct and mutually exclusive identities.<sup>79</sup>

By focusing on the Khurāsānī *ostikans*, this partial narrative of the *ostikanate* demonstrates how Armenia was integrated into caliphal politics and not just an extension of al-Jazīra or a buffer between the caliphate and Byzantium or Khazaria. Since the *ostikanate* was primarily a military position, these Khurāsānī *ostikans* came from the backbone of the ‘Abbāsīd army and accordingly were usually Arabs or affiliated with Arab tribes through *walā’*.

It is entirely possible to write wholly different narratives about the *ostikanate* than that presented here: for example, the close connection between al-Jazīra and Armenia, focusing on the Shaybānī and Sulamī *ostikans*, would offer significant insight into regional politics. But this paper has sought to make sense of the Khurāsānī element specifically because it has never been noted in the literature on the *ostikanate*. It centers the discussion of Armenia in an ‘Abbāsīd imperial setting.

Along with Islamic numismatics, the *ostikanate* is one of the few well-researched topics concerning caliphal rule in Armenia, but even studies of caliphal governors demonstrate the pervasive presumption that Armenia is separate from the caliphate. Articles on the *ostikans* seek to make sense of discrepancies in the sources, listing dates, sources, and deeds of each incumbent without reference to the broader political schemas in which they lived. Scholars have studied the *ostikans* based on what they did in Armenia and to a lesser extent how they interacted with Armenian and Albanian elites, not for their role in the caliphal administration. Yet without the broader lens of both imperial concerns and transregional elites, we cannot trace responses to political stimuli outside of Armenia such as the fourth *fitna* or the rising influence of Transoxanian administrators. Accordingly, these studies underestimate the significance of the caliphal North as a region where ‘Abbāsīd power and (as in the case of Ḥātim’s rebellion) intra-Khurāsānī conflict played out. Their assumption that Armenia differs from the rest of the caliphate also predicates modern understandings of extant sources. Armenian sources, if “othered,” appear to serve as independent corroboration for the Arabic, but the accounts of Baghrawand/Bagrewand demonstrate discourse and engagement, not isolation. Accordingly, focusing on the relationship between Armenia and Khurāsān can help us maneuver around modern expectations of ethnoreligious borders to tell a story of a far-flung but integrated caliphate.

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<sup>79</sup> Al-Jāhīz identifies the branches of the ‘Abbāsīd army as the Khurāsāniyya, *abnā’*, *mawālī*, Arabs, and Turks. Crone 1998, 5–6; Kennedy 2001, 104.

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Simon Gundelfinger & Peter Verkinderen

# The Governors of al-Shām and Fārs in the Early Islamic Empire – A Comparative Regional Perspective

**Abstract:** This paper compares patterns of gubernatorial appointments in early Islamic al-Shām and Fārs until the reign of al-Mu‘tamid. The provincial, sub-provincial and super-provincial governors it identifies are listed in the attached appendix. By examining their backgrounds, the paper locates appointment patterns. Finally, the patterns in both provinces are compared and their divergence interpreted as an indication of an imperial strategy adapted to local circumstances.

**Keywords:** Governors; administration; Fārs; al-Shām; early Islamic Empire; appointments

## Introduction

Governors were arguably the most important link between the provincial and imperial levels in the early Islamic Empire. They were the representatives of the central government in the provinces, and the contact point between the central administration and its local representatives and subjects.

Early Islamic literature gives the impression that much of what governors actually did was decided in and guided by the center (by caliphs, viziers, and so forth). However, the distances involved and the slowness of communication must have meant that if the center gave any orders regarding the province, it could provide only general guidelines, and governors must have had a large extent of autonomy.

Either way, the identification and recording of governors of the early Islamic Empire is a vital step in detecting the actual links between the administration of the distinct provinces of the empire and the authorities at the caliphal center. Most early Islamic historiography tends to focus on events and actors at that center. Our knowledge of the actual agents on the ground is thus much more limited, at least in areas with no surviving primary evidence from papyri and similar documents.

The ERC project ‘The Early Islamic Empire at Work: The View From the Regions Toward the Center’ tries to invert this focus, aiming at a closer view of the political, religious and economic elites of the provinces. We have tried to compile

comprehensive lists of governors, whom we identified in the literary sources and the numismatic record. We have further gathered information on their tribal/ethnic, religious, geographic, and family backgrounds, as well as their previous experience in civil administration, the military, and/or the religious field.

In this paper, we will limit ourselves to discussing the governors of al-Shām and Fārs during the period from the advent of the Umayyad caliphate up to al-Mu‘tamid, when the Ṭūlūnids seized power in al-Shām and the Ṣaffārīds took over Fārs. We focus on their tribal/ethnic backgrounds in order to identify patterns that point to election strategies and improve our understanding of the power dynamics between the regions and the center. A full prosopographical study on these governors, including all the above-mentioned aspects, will be the subject of future publication.

### Terminology

The term ‘governor’ does not exactly accord with any one term that we find in the primary sources. The most frequent Arabic terms that are customarily translated as ‘governor’ are *‘āmil*, *wālī*, *amīr*, and *ṣāhib*. Although some of them acquired more specific meanings over time,<sup>1</sup> they are generic terms that basically indicate the person in question was given charge of a specific area. Within these sources, the responsibilities of such a governor are usually called his *a‘māl* (sg. *‘amal*). *‘Amal* is often understood as a term that refers to the territory under a governor’s authority (and thus is often translated as “province” or “district”). It should be understood more generally as an ‘area of responsibility’ in a non-exclusively geographical sense. The most important responsibilities (*a‘māl*) of a governor were keeping a particular area under military control (*ḥarb*) and making sure that taxation money flowed towards the center (*kharāj*). Additional *a‘māl* could include providing justice, religio-political leadership and security for the Muslim community (respectively *qaḍā’*,<sup>2</sup> *ṣalāt*, *shurṭa*), minting coins (*sikka*), and producing robes of honor (*ṭirāz*).

When a governor was appointed over a province (*‘alā Fārs/‘alā l-Shām*), it is usually understood that he was responsible for all or most of these *a‘māl*. At times, though, it appears that the central government chose to split up the re-

1 E.g. *‘āmil* acquired the specific meaning of the fiscal agent in a province.

2 The *‘amal* of *qaḍā’* seems to have evolved quite quickly into a separate office, that of the *qāḍī*; nevertheless, dispensing justice (especially redress for wrongs committed by government *‘ummāl*) remained an important role of the governor. For *qāḍīs* in the Jazīra, see Hannah-Lena Hagemann’s contribution to this volume.

sponsibilities within one province over a number of persons.<sup>3</sup> Most frequently, military and civilian functions were divided and someone was appointed *‘alā ḥarb* while another person was placed *‘alā kharāj*. Over time, some of these *a‘māl* evolved into separate offices.

The exact same terminology is frequently used for varying levels of hierarchy: an *‘āmil* can be *‘alā Sābūr* (one of the five *kūras* of Fārs) or *‘alā l-Mashriq* (i.e., the entire east of the empire). For analytical purposes, we introduce three categories here. We will use the term ‘provincial governor’ in a specific sense: to refer to governors in charge of a single ‘classical’ province (e.g. al-Shām, Fārs),<sup>4</sup> even if they were only in charge of the civilian or military branch of government in that province. The term ‘sub-governor’ will refer to people responsible for one or more subunits of a province (mainly referred to as *jund* in the case of al-Shām<sup>5</sup> and *kūra* in Fārs). We refer to a governor responsible for more than one province as a ‘super-governor’ and use ‘super-province’ to indicate the territory under his control. It should be noted that the middle ‘Abbāsīd period saw the vast super-provinces of al-Maghrib and al-Mashriq, which at times contained smaller super-provinces themselves. Finally, the term ‘governor’ without any further specification is used in reference to an official belonging to any of these categories.

It has to be assumed that the hierarchy of administration was much more complex than this three-fold model suggests. Moreover, the very structure of the administrative hierarchy itself was subject to changes during the period covered by this study. The current paper does not attempt to give a full-fledged analysis of the structure of provincial government and the exact nature of the relationships between actors within this hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> It rather aims to contribute to such a discussion, by providing the most comprehensive lists of governors possible at this point and by analyzing individual governors’ backgrounds and patterns of appointment.

In many cases the sources do not tell us who appointed a particular governor. Even if they do, information on appointments remains highly problematic. First, there are a few cases in which contradictory information exists regarding

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3 The first time this is attested to in literary and documentary sources in Egypt is in the year 98 H/716–717 CE (Legendre 2014, 213, 217).

4 The word province is used here in the sense of the *buldān* of al-Iṣṭakhārī and the *aqālīm* of al-Muqaddasī.

5 Often it is difficult to make a distinction between ‘sub-governors’ of cities or of districts. This particularly applies to the central parts of al-Shām, where Dimashq and Ḥimṣ are the names of both *junds* and their corresponding main cities.

6 For comparable work on the Seljuq period, see Paul 1996.

who appointed a specific governor. Second, ‘appointment’ may refer to two different kinds of events: either the selection of a particular agent, or a higher official’s confirmation of such a selection. Particularly in cases in which a caliph is reported to have appointed governors from the lower strata, it cannot be ruled out that he may merely have confirmed the selection made by another official (super-governor, *wazīr* etc.). Third, sources may misrepresent earlier events, for example by retrojecting later practices.

As these problems can never be fully solved, this paper mostly lists appointers as they appear in the literary source material. If there are reasonable indications that a source’s account is flawed, these are indicated in the appendix footnotes.

### Corpus and Methodology

Since there were no comprehensive lists of governors available for our provinces in the secondary literature,<sup>7</sup> the first step was to find the names of as many governors as possible. The best sources available for detecting these governors are the historiographical works and biographical dictionaries of the first 10 Islamic centuries.

In order to identify the governors of our provinces and their subunits, one of our tools is Jedli, a search toolbox we developed within the framework of the project that helps us retrieve information from the vast corpus of digitized Arabic source material.<sup>8</sup> Jedli’s Context Search tool allows us to carry out a combined search of a list of place names related to a province and a list of key terms linked to the office of governor (e.g. *wālī*, ‘*āmil*, ‘*alā Fārs/al-Shām*) or likely to crop up in the context of interactions between the central government and governors as well as between governors and their subordinates (e.g. *wallā*, *qallada*, ‘*azala*, *ḍamma*).<sup>9</sup> Additional information about governors can be found in the Islamic

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<sup>7</sup> Eduard von Zambaur conducted groundbreaking work in this field in 1927. Later works, such as those of Patricia Crone, Paul Cobb, and others, provide valuable contributions to the prosopography of early Islamic governors, but there has been no further attempt to provide comprehensive lists of governors.

<sup>8</sup> Our digital corpus currently consists of 3,083 works of all genres that predate the year 1000. The bulk of these texts come from the largest corpus of digital texts available online, al-Maktaba al-Shamela, to which were added a number of missing works. Jedli and the corpus can be downloaded from our website. <https://www.islamic-empire.uni-hamburg.de/en/publications-tools/digital-tools/downloads/jedli-toolbox.html> (last accessed 24 October 2019).

<sup>9</sup> For further information on the Jedli toolbox, see Haro Peralta/Verkinderen 2016 and 2016b.

coinage,<sup>10</sup> which frequently mentions names of officials (caliphs, governors, etc.).<sup>11</sup> The names of the governors we found, their appointers, the areas under their control, and the dates of their governorships are now listed in spreadsheets, an excerpt of which is given in the appendix to this paper.<sup>12</sup>

As the next step in our research for this paper, we had to identify the people behind these names and uncover their tribal/ethnic backgrounds. If this was not clearly indicated in the primary sources, we turned to secondary literature. Here the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the appendices to Patricia Crone's *Slaves on Horses*, and the footnotes to the translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ* stood out for their usefulness. If no satisfactory information for a governor was found in the secondary material, we returned to the primary sources by using the Jedli search tools to find more occurrences of his name in the corpus.<sup>13</sup>

In the analysis, we identified several patterns in the backgrounds of these governors. While this involves counting numbers of governors who shared a particular attribute, it is of crucial importance to note that these numbers cannot be taken as reliable statistics and must be treated with utmost caution for two reasons. First, there is an indefinite number of governors whose names have simply not come down to us. Second, some of our identifications remain doubtful,<sup>14</sup> which could not be reflected in the aggregate numbers given in this paper but is specified in the appendix. The proportions provided by this paper must be seen as an approximation and cannot be statistically extrapolated.

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**10** While governors' names on any type of coins from al-Shām are rare, copper coins and pre-reform Ṣaffārid and Būyid *dirhams* from Fārs do regularly carry the governor's name. The main sources used for the numismatic part of the research were Album 2011, Diler 2009, Vasmer 1930 (with additions from Bosworth 1994), and the online coin database Zeno ([www.zeno.ru](http://www.zeno.ru)).

**11** In combination with the corresponding mint and year, coins provide a valuable check on information derived from the literary sources and may fill in gaps (e.g. the length of rule of a governor for whom only the appointment date is known). Coins sometimes also contain names of officials totally unknown in the literary sources, or not known in connection to our specific provinces. Since these officials are usually not provided with a title, it is not certain what their function was. Since the vast majority of the names on the coins are identifiable as either caliphs or governors, we consider it likely that these persons were governors of the provinces or districts in which these coins were minted.

**12** References to the distinct governors discussed in this paper will therefore not be given in footnotes but can be found in the appendix.

**13** Usually, we ran a search for the person's name in a subsection of the corpus that contains the most relevant historiographical and biographical works; if we were still not satisfied with the results, we ran another search of the entire corpus.

**14** This might relate to the tribal/ethnic background of a person, an assumed misspelling of names, or ambiguities in the source material.

## Criteria Used

Ethnicity is a highly problematic category. It is not considered as an exclusively biological category here: language, geographical extraction, genealogy, race, and group affiliation all played a role. During the Umayyad period, the most debated ethnic divide was the one between Arabs and non-Arabs (*a'jam*), with Arabs considering themselves as deserving a special place in the Islamic Empire because of their historical connection to the birth place of Islam.<sup>15</sup>

The ethnic background of a person is difficult to grasp if not stated explicitly. Arabic names (or the absence of non-Arabic names) in a family tree are no proof of Arab ethnicity. On the other hand, obviously non-Arabic names in a genealogical tree point to a likely non-Arab extraction. Tribal, ethnic, and geographic *nisbas* can provide some indication about a person's ethnic background, but are riddled with problems. *Mawālī* sometimes took over the tribal *nisbas* of their Arab patron's tribe.<sup>16</sup> Geographic *nisbas* can refer to different relationships between a person and the place in question (he could have been born there, studied there, had a grandfather who came from there, etc.). Most regions of the empire had populations of mixed ethnic backgrounds. Finally, ethnic *nisbas* like 'al-Khurāsānī', 'al-Kurdī', and 'al-Turkī' are notoriously vague.<sup>17</sup>

For our analysis, we aim at a broad categorization of non-Arabs, keeping broad labels like *khurāsānī*, *kurdī*, and *turkī* as they are used in the sources and classifying as 'Iranian' those native populations of the eastern half of the empire who do not fall under these three labels.

In the context of this paper, those from a family of known Arab pedigree are considered Arabs.<sup>18</sup> If this condition is not met but there are no other indications of a non-Arab background, those with an Arab tribal *nisba* are also tentatively considered Arabs, notwithstanding the previously discussed issue of *mawālī* tak-

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15 Peter Webb has recently argued that awareness of Arab identity only arose in this context (see Webb 2016).

16 In our corpus, one such case is Tawba b. Kaysān al-'Anbarī, governor of Sābūr in Fārs for Yūsuf b. 'Umar al-Thaqafī (120–126 H/738–744 CE). His family originated in Sijistān and his tribal *nisba* was derived from the Banū l-'Anbar of Tamīm, the tribe of his patron in Baṣra (Ibn Sa'd 1990, 7:178).

17 In particular *al-Turkī* generally refers to soldiers brought from Central Asia, whatever their ethnic background was. For further discussion of *nisbas*, see Nef 2010 and Sublet 1991.

18 Usually a personal entry in one of the great genealogical works (al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-ash-rāf*, Ibn al-Kalbī's *Jamharat al-nasab*, and so on) would count as proof. But as Crone (2003, 39) has shown in discussing the family of the prominent Umayyad general al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, even this is not watertight; Abū Ṣufra is in one source portrayed as the *ra'īs* of the Azd tribe in Baṣra and in another as an Iranian born on an island in the Persian Gulf.

ing over the tribal *nisba* of their patrons. People with Arab names but no tribal or ethnic *nisba* are categorized as ‘unidentified’.

For governors identified as Arabs, we also look into their tribal affiliations. It is important to note that, in the words of Ulrich, “tribes were not units bound by blood as they were often represented, and that groups could and did change tribal affiliations in different circumstances.”<sup>19</sup> The early Islamic period saw important changes in the tribal system, such as the creation of large tribal confederations like Muḍar and Yemen.<sup>20</sup> We will look into patterns of governors’ tribal affiliations both on the level of these overarching confederations and of smaller tribal groups.

## Analysis

### Al-Shām

#### The Province

Early Islamic al-Shām roughly covered the Roman-Byzantine provinces of Syria, Phoenicia, Palaestina, and Arabia. It had fertile soil and wealthy cities along its coast and in the mountainous interior, but also included desert-like eastern and southern areas. Arabs were based mainly in these latter fringe areas long before the advent of Islam.

Byzantine rule had not recovered from the last lengthy war against the Sasanians (602–628) when the Muslims conquered the region in the period of the Rāshidūn caliphs. After some 25 years of Arab rule over what was now called al-Shām, the region became the center of the rapidly growing empire during the Umayyad caliphate. Yet even in the heartland of this empire, Umayyad authority was challenged by ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr during the second *fitna*. Later, caliphal rule over al-Shām was challenged by inner-Umayyad rivalries rather than by outside threats, until the third *fitna* evolved into the ‘Abbāsīd revolution that put an end to Umayyad rule.

Once the revolution’s dust had cleared, the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs secured al-Shām by frequently appointing their own family members to rule over the province. Even though it led to an internal power struggle after the death of Abū l-‘Abbās al-Saffāh, this control strategy continued, which is at least partly explained by strong pro-Umayyad sentiments that led to several uprisings in

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<sup>19</sup> Ulrich 2008, 8.

<sup>20</sup> See for example Crone 2003, Crone 1993, and Ulrich 2008.

the province during the early ‘Abbāsīd period.<sup>21</sup> This pattern was followed up to the fourth *fitna*, after which ‘Abbāsīd control over al-Shām became more indirect.

From al-Ma’mūn up to the reign of al-Mutawakkil, the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs intervened directly in the province’s policy-making less frequently. From the latter’s rule onwards, though, the Central Asian military elite of the *atrāk* increasingly dominated all levels of provincial administration. The ‘Abbāsīds had thus already largely lost control over al-Shām before the Central Asian dynasty of the Ṭūlūnīds put a preliminary end to caliphal rule over the province.<sup>22</sup>

The frontier area with Byzantium (al-Thughūr/al-‘Awāšim),<sup>23</sup> a part of which was already connected to al-Shām by name (al-Thughūr al-Shāmiyya/Thughūr al-Shām), is assumed to have fallen outside of the traditional system of provincial organization.<sup>24</sup> It should also be noted that Qinnasrīn’s affiliation with al-Shām is not uncontested,<sup>25</sup> even though the late 3<sup>rd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup>-century geographical depiction of Ibn Khurradādhbih suggests that Qinnasrīn formed part of early Islamic al-Shām.<sup>26</sup> Frequent references to officials who governed Qinnasrīn in combination with al-Jazīra indicate that at certain times it was part of al-Shām’s neighboring province. This issue cannot be adequately reflected in the current paper. Subsequent analysis will thus focus on the governors of Filasṭīn, al-Urdunn, Dimashq, Ḥimṣ, and Qinnasrīn, not taking into account those of al-Thughūr, al-‘Awāšim, and al-Jazīra.<sup>27</sup> State officials who governed Qinnasrīn in combination with al-Thughūr, al-‘Awāšim, and/or al-Jazīra can hardly be referred to as ‘super-governors’ in the sense defined above. They will subsequently be referred to as ‘sub-governors’ for the sake of simplicity.

Finally, it should be noted that due to the local focus of authors such as Ibn al-‘Adīm, Ibn ‘Asākīr, al-Ṣafaḍī, and Ibn Shaddād, we are provided with extensive information on the sub-governors of Dimashq and Qinnasrīn, while Filasṭīn, al-Urdunn, and Ḥimṣ are underrepresented. Moreover, these authors provide sev-

21 The most successful uprisings took place parallel to the dynasty’s internal struggles: in 136 H/754 CE (after the death of al-Saffāh) and in 195 H/811 CE (during the fourth *fitna*). See Cobb 2001, 43–65.

22 See Cobb 2001, 34–42.

23 For the usage of the terms *al-Thughūr* and *al-‘Awāšim* as well as some administrative patterns, see Bonner 1994, 17–24.

24 See Qudāma 1981, 186–188.

25 See Ibn al-Faqīh 1996, 160.

26 Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889, 74–79.

27 Likewise, Ḥumayd b. Ma’yūf’s governorate over the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea (*sawāḥil baḥr al-Shām*), addressed by al-Ṭabarī (1967, 8: 320), Miskawayh (2000, 3:557), and al-Dhahabī (1948–9, 12:21), will not be addressed in the current paper. For this, see Borrut 1999–2000, 1–33.

eral entries that cannot be verified by any other sources. In particular al-Ṣafadī's *Umarā' Dimashq* contains some equivocal references.<sup>28</sup>

### Governors of al-Shām in the Umayyad Period

For Umayyad al-Shām (including the brief Zubayrid rule over the southern and central parts of the province in the mid-60s H/680s CE), 70 governors were identified. All fall in the 'sub-governor' category.<sup>29</sup> This seems to be explained by the fact that in the Umayyad period al-Shām was the seat of the caliphate and there was thus little need for any high-ranking governor other than the caliph himself.

For the Sufyānid period we know of seven sub-governors, two of whom ruled for three years or longer.<sup>30</sup> Among these seven we find six Yemenīs (among them two Kalbīs and two Kindīs) and one Qurashī but not a single Qaysī. This pattern of Yemenī dominance over the subunits of al-Shām did not continue after the brief Zubayrid rule over the southern and central parts of al-Shām.<sup>31</sup> Already under Marwān b. al-Ḥakam three out of four known sub-governors were Umayyad family members,<sup>32</sup> and the employment of sub-governors of their own kin appears to have been the strategy of most of his successors to secure Umayyad authority. This applies to 'Abd al-Malik (five Umayyad, one Qaysī [Tha-

**28** One striking example is al-Ṣafadī's statement that the Barmakid Ja'far b. Yaḥyā, who was executed in 187 H/803 CE, (*EF*, "Barāmika" (D. Sourdel)) became governor of Dimashq in 188 H/803–804 CE (Ṣafadī 1983, 188).

**29** While al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf in particular turned up frequently in our search results, being for example referred to as *amīr jamā'at ahl al-Shām wa-waliya al-quttāl* (al-Ṭabarī 1967, 6:348), it is assumed here who he was not the 'provincial governor' of al-Shām but a general that commanded the province's armies. It should furthermore be noted that during the Umayyad period we know of three governors in charge of Qinnasrīn and al-Jazīra who according to the above convention can be included as sub-governors of al-Shām: (1) Sa'īd b. Mālik b. Baḥdal, a Kalbī serving under Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya; (2) Muḥammad b. Marwān, an Umayyad appointed by his brother, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik; and (3) al-Kawthar b. Zufar b. al-Ḥārith, a Kilābī serving under Marwān b. Muḥammad.

**30** Ḥassān b. Mālik b. Baḥdal, a cousin of the caliph Yazīd I, governed Filasṭīn and al-Urdunn and apparently himself appointed Rawḥ b. Zinbā' over Filasṭīn in 64 H/683–684 CE. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays al-Fihri served under the first two Umayyad caliphs as governor of Dimashq but after the death of Yazīd I cast his lot with 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr.

**31** For the year 64 H/683–684 CE we hear of Zubayrid sub-governors in Filasṭīn (Nātil b. Qays), Dimashq (al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays) and Qinnasrīn (al-Nu'mān b. Bashīr).

**32** Khālīd b. Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya, Abān b. 'Uqba b. Abī Mu'ayt, and the later caliph 'Abd al-Malik.

qif], one Yemenī [Mālik], and two *mawālī*<sup>33</sup> sub-governors), al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (six Umayyad, one Qaysī [‘Abs] sub-governors), Sulaymān (one Umayyad sub-governor), al-Walīd b. Yazīd (six Umayyad, three Qaysī [two Thaqaḥis, one Fazārī], one Yemenī [Azd] sub-governors), Yazīd b. al-Walīd (four Umayyad, one Yemenī [Judhām], one Muḥāribī,<sup>34</sup> one unidentified sub-governor), and Ibrāhīm (two Umayyad sub-governors). On the other hand, several caliphs seem to have found it advisable to employ few or even no Umayyad family members as sub-governors in al-Shām. This policy might have been introduced in order not to foment inner-Umayyad tensions. It was followed by ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (two Yemenī, one unidentified sub-governors), Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (one Qurashī, one Murri<sup>35</sup> sub-governors), Hishām (three Qaysī, one Umayyad, two Yemenī, one Murri<sup>36</sup> sub-governors), and Marwān b. Muḥammad (three Umayyad, three Qaysī, five Yemenī [among whom two Kindī] sub-governors).<sup>37</sup>

In the Marwānid period the appointment of sub-governors of al-Shām appears to have been a privilege reserved for the caliph. For almost two-thirds of the Marwānids’ known sub-governors, the sources explicitly state that they were appointed by the ruler himself. For the other third, we are not provided with information on who appointed them.

For the Sufyānid period, the sources remain largely silent on who appointed the sub-governors of al-Shām. In only one case, it is known to have been the caliph Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān. In a second, it was Ḥassān b. Mālik b. Baḥdal, the sub-governor of al-Urdunn and Filasṭīn, who bequeathed the latter to Rawḥ b. Zinbā‘ during the reign of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya. All in all, the cases in which we know who appointed the sub-governors of the Sufyānid period are too few to draw conclusions.

Either way, the vast majority of sub-governors of Umayyad al-Shām were Muslim Arabs,<sup>38</sup> with the possible exception of two *mawālī*<sup>39</sup> and two unidenti-

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33 Dīnār b. Dīnār was a *mawlā* of ‘Abd al-Malik, and Sulaymān b. Sa’d appears to have been a *mawlā* of the Khushayn.

34 *Muḥārib* may refer to several tribes.

35 As in the case of *Muḥārib*, *Murra* may refer to several tribes.

36 Al-Walīd b. Talīd served under both Yazīd b. al-Walīd and Hishām.

37 Remarkably, al-Ṭabarī reports that the *ahl* of Ḥimṣ, Dimashq, al-Urdunn, and Filasṭīn were allowed to elect their own sub-governors after swearing allegiance to Marwān b. Muḥammad (al-Ṭabarī 1967, 7:312). See Cobb 2001, 73.

38 Most can be assigned to Arab tribes and there is no indication that any were not Muslim.

39 Dīnār b. Dīnār and Sulaymān b. Sa’d both appear to have been natives of al-Shām (al-Azdī 1988, 1:26; Ibn Manẓūr 1984, 10:161) and served as sub-governors under ‘Abd al-Malik. While there is no evidence that Dīnār was a non-Muslim, Sulaymān is positively defined as Muslim (Ibn Manẓūr 1984, 10:162).

fied office-holders.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned above, Yemenī tribesmen constituted the most important group among the sub-governors of al-Shām in the Sufyānid period, while the Umayyads themselves dominated these offices in the Marwānid period. Fewer in number than the Umayyads, Yemenīs and Qaysīs were almost even in their provision of sub-governors for Marwānid al-Shām: in addition to 29 Umayyad sub-governors, we find 13 Yemenīs, 11 Qaysīs, 2 non-Umayyad Qurashīs, as well as 1 Murrī and 1 Muḥāribī (names that might apply to several tribes). This basically accords with other provinces of the Umayyad Empire. The assignment of duties seems to have been cautiously balanced regarding the rivalries between northern and southern Arab tribes.<sup>41</sup> Surprisingly, we do not find a single Kalbī and only one other Quḍā'ī among the sub-governors of Marwānid al-Shām.<sup>42</sup> This is particularly striking as it is assumed that Quḍā'a provided vital support for the Umayyads in the second *fitna*.<sup>43</sup>

While the apparent total lack of Kalb and the virtual absence of Quḍā'a are both remarkable, the general balance between northern and southern Arab tribesmen among the sub-governors of Marwānid al-Shām presumably reflects some form of Umayyad policy intended to keep tribal tensions away from the heartland of the empire. The events of the second and third *fitna* proved devastatingly that this was not a successful strategy.

Be that as it may, the apparent absence of provincial and super-governors from Umayyad al-Shām indicates that the province was an exception rather than a typical example of an Umayyad province.<sup>44</sup> It does not come as much of a surprise that the seat of power shows some distinctive features separating it from the other provinces of the empire. In any case, the firm grip that the Marwānids in particular had on al-Shām (at least for most of their rule) is further reflected by the fact that we do not know of a single case in which a sub-governor of Marwānid al-Shām was appointed by anyone other than the ruling caliph

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**40** Virtually nothing is known about Hilāl b. 'Abd al-A'lā (appointed over Qinnasrīn by 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz) and Ibn al-Ḥusayn (appointed over Ḥimṣ by Yazīd b. al-Walīd).

**41** For Fārs, see below. For Iraq see Crone 2003, 129–153.

**42** Among the list of tribes attributed to al-Quḍā'a by Kister (*EP*<sup>2</sup>, “Ḳuḍā'a”) we find only one 'Udhri sub-governor: 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd who is said to have governed Dimashq under 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. However, we do find a couple of sub-governors from the tribal groups of Kinda and Ghassān, which are not attributed to the Quḍā'a but depicted as their allies (Crone 2003, 34–35; Cobb 2001, 69).

**43** See Crone 2003, 36; Cobb 2001, 69.

**44** Regarding the tribal composition of al-Shām, Patricia Crone also notes “faction was a purely provincial phenomenon down to the Third Civil War because it was only in the provinces that the generals took over as governors, Syria continuing to be ruled by old-fashioned kinsmen of the caliph and tribal nobles” (Crone 1994, 744; see Cobb 2001, 68–71).

himself. Finally, it should be noted that Umayyad influence on al-Shām continued to have an effect even after Umayyad rule itself had vanished; in the ‘Abbāsīd period, we know of several insurgents who claimed Umayyad descent hoping that would attract sympathy for their cause.<sup>45</sup>

### Governors of al-Shām in the Early ‘Abbāsīd Period

For the early ‘Abbāsīd (pre-Samarran) period—including ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī’s brief rule as a caliphal contender in the second half of the 130s H/mid-750s CE—we were able to identify 64 governors of al-Shām: 7 super-governors, 13 provincial governors, and 44 sub-governors. In contrast to the Umayyad period, we now find several Iranians (particularly Khurāsānians) among the governors of al-Shām. All appear to have been Muslims.<sup>46</sup> While throughout the Umayyads’ reign we do not know of a single governor who held more than one term of office,<sup>47</sup> a number of ‘Abbāsīd governors of al-Shām held multiple offices during their careers,<sup>48</sup> in some instances receiving promotion from sub-governor to provincial governor.

In the first years of ‘Abbāsīd rule over al-Shām the Umayyad custom of ruling the province via members of the caliphal family and a balanced proportion of northern and southern Arab tribesmen was continued. ‘Abdallāh and Šāliḥ b. ‘Alī, the two uncles of al-Manṣūr who had played an active part in the conquest of the province and were now the most influential figures in al-Shām,<sup>49</sup> appoint-

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**45** There were two main ‘post-Umayyad’ rebellions during the ‘Abbāsīd period: the first was carried out by a certain Hāshim b. Yazīd b. Khālīd, who after the death of al-Saffāḥ in 136 H/754 CE tried to win over the ‘Abbāsīd ‘Abdallāh b. Šāliḥ (see below) and some of his followers (see al-Šafadī 1983, 108). The case of Abū l-‘Amayṭar is better known. He tried to restore the old Umayyad authority (without, however, claiming the disputed title ‘al-Sufyānī’) during the civil war between al-Amin and al-Ma’mūn in 195 H/811 CE (see *EF*<sup>2</sup>, “al-Sufyānī” (W. Madelung)). For a detailed discussion on post-Umayyad claims to power in al-Shām see Cobb 2001, 43–65.

**46** The Barmakids were accused of unbelief (Bouvat 1912, 82–83). This accusation might be explained by the malevolence of other courtiers.

**47** Notably, the Yemenī al-Nu’mān b. Bashīr b. Sa’d and the Qurashī al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays served under both a Suyānid caliph and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr.

**48** In particular, the ‘Abbāsīd Ibrāhīm b. Šāliḥ b. ‘Alī is reported to have served four times as sub-governor of Filasṭīn and Dimashq (sometimes including al-Urdunn, and Cyprus) under al-Mahdī, al-Hādī, and al-Rashīd.

**49** According to several literary sources al-Saffāḥ appointed ‘Abdallāh as provincial governor of al-Shām, while Šāliḥ became sub-governor of Filasṭīn. Al-Ṭabarī, however, states the pair ruled the subunits of al-Shām together (Ṭabarī 1967, 7:459). This seems likely, as according to al-Šafadī it was Šāliḥ who appointed Riyāḥ b. ‘Uthmān over Dimashq (al-Šafadī 1983, 186).

ed sub-governors on their own behalf. When al-Saffāḥ died in 136 H/754 CE, ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī claimed the caliphate for himself.<sup>50</sup> During his brief rule over al-Shām as a caliphal contender, he appointed one Qaysī and four Yemenī sub-governors. One was already mentioned as sub-governor of Dimashq under the Umayyad al-Walīd b. Yazīd.<sup>51</sup>

In order to rid himself of the claims of his uncle, al-Manṣūr successfully sent Abū Muslim against ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī, appointing the spearhead of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution over a super-province comprising al-Shām and Egypt. Despite this it appears al-Manṣūr never really meant to install Abū Muslim as super-governor; in 137 H/755 CE, soon after the defeat of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī, the caliph had Abū Muslim killed.<sup>52</sup> During the long reign of al-Manṣūr, al-Shām was even more closely controlled by members of the ‘Abbāsīd family (eight ‘Abbāsīd, two other Hāshimid, two Khurāsānian, one Arab-Bajāli governors on all levels). Notably, this included close family members of the caliphal contender ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī. In particular, his brother Ṣāliḥ and the latter’s descendants continued to play a crucial role in early ‘Abbāsīd al-Shām and beyond.<sup>53</sup> While non-Hāshimid Arabs virtually lost their previous importance as governors of al-Shām, Khurāsānians now gradually filled the gap. However, al-Manṣūr supposedly sought to limit the authority of the high-ranking governing officials of al-Shām. At any rate, it seems to be no coincidence that we find no less than five provincial governors during his reign (four ‘Abbāsīds, one other Qurashī) who apparently lost their privilege to appoint sub-governors themselves, two of whom were appointed provincial governors only after having served as sub-governors in the province.<sup>54</sup> Al-Mahdī followed this policy of his father (one ‘Abbāsīd provincial governor, four ‘Abbāsīd, and two Khurāsānian sub-governors). Al-Hādī appears not to have made any changes regarding the administration of al-Shām during his brief rule.

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50 It is in exactly this context that the above-mentioned ‘post-Umayyad’ insurgent Hāshim b. Yazīd b. Khālīd tried to win him and some of his followers over.

51 In addition to this ‘Uthmān b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā b. Surāqa, we hear of Yazīd b. Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh who is mentioned as sub-governor of Dimashq during the reign of both Marwān b. Muḥammad and al-Manṣūr. In his case, it is not clear whether he was loyal to the last Umayyad caliph or simply grasped his opportunity during the third *fitna*.

52 While the details of Abū Muslim’s death need some further investigation, it seems certain al-Manṣūr ordered his execution (*EP*<sup>3</sup>, “Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī” (S. S. Agha)).

53 For a detailed discussion see Cobb 2001, 21–31. Besides the Ṣāliḥīd branch of the ‘Abbāsīds, the family of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (the figurehead of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution known as ‘Ibrāhīm al-Imām’) produced numerous sub-governors of al-Shām in the early ‘Abbāsīd period.

54 This applies to the two ‘Abbāsīds, Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ibrāhīm al-Imām.

During the first years of his reign, Hārūn al-Rashīd likewise continued the policies of his predecessors regarding the administrative structures of al-Shām.<sup>55</sup> In 175 H/791–792 CE, two years after appointing his infant son al-Amīn first successor to the throne, he put him in charge over a super-province including al-Shām and Iraq. Al-Rashīd's succession plans were subsequently readjusted a couple of times, and it was only in 186 H/802 CE that the well-known Meccan protocols were decreed. Even though al-Amīn was evidently now confirmed as first successor to the throne (his brother al-Ma'mūn being second in line of succession), the area covered by his super-governorate becomes much less clear. While secondary literature largely accepts the idea that the empire was essentially divided between al-Amīn (governing the Maghrib) and al-Ma'mūn (ruling the Mashriq), sources prior to the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century do not mention al-Amīn as super-governor of the Maghrib but only of al-Shām and Iraq.<sup>56</sup> One year later, al-Rashīd appointed a third son, al-Qāsim, over al-Shām,<sup>57</sup> and there is no indication that al-Qāsim was subordinate to al-Amīn in this office.<sup>58</sup>

Either way, unlike al-Rashīd, who himself had been appointed governor of al-Shām by his father and took part in several expeditions against the Byzantines, neither al-Amīn nor al-Qāsim are known to have played any role in the policy-making of al-Shām during the reign of al-Rashīd.<sup>59</sup> The actual provincial duties were carried out by others: among the additional provincial governors in al-Rashīd's reign we know of only one 'Abbāsīd, two (Barmakid) Khurāsānians, and two office-holders who seem to have been non-Hashimid Arabs.<sup>60</sup> Before the dramatic fall of the Barmakid family in 187 H/803 CE, Mūsā and Ja'far b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid were apparently not only the first non-Arab provincial governors of al-

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55 In fact, he even reappointed the 'Abbāsīd sub-governors Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Imām and Ibrāhīm b. Šāliḥ b. 'Alī, both of whom had already held multiple governing positions in al-Shām.

56 The earliest source to add *ākhir al-maghrib* to al-Amīn's super-governorate of al-Shām and Iraq is Ibn al-Athīr (Ibn al-Athīr 1997, 5:344).

57 Remarkably, al-Qāsim is partly said to have been appointed over "al-Shām, Qinnasrīn, al-'Awāšīm, and al-Thughūr" (al-Ṭabarī 1967, 8:347), which indicates that Qinnasrīn was not considered an integral part of al-Shām at that time.

58 Ibn al-'Umrānī even reports that al-Qāsim had originally been meant to become super-governor of al-Shām, al-Jazīra, Egypt, and the Maghrib after al-Rashīd's (?) death (Ibn al-'Umrānī 2001, 1:79).

59 The same applies to al-Ma'mūn's role in Khurāsān before he accompanied his father to the eastern provinces shortly before al-Rashīd's death in 193 H/809 CE.

60 'Isā b. al-'Akkī, who was appointed by Ja'far b. Yaḥyā and appears to have been a close confidant of the Barmakids, can be connected to the Arab tribe of 'Akk only by his name and might thus have also been a *mawlā*. Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, who was appointed by the caliph himself, appears to have belonged to the Bakr b. Wā'il.

Shām in early Islamic history, but also the first ones since the days of al-Saffāh who enjoyed the privilege of appointing both sub-governors and their own successors.<sup>61</sup> Despite this the sub-governor level remained clearly dominated by twelve ‘Abbāsīd family members (in particular the descendants of Šāliḥ b. ‘Alī<sup>62</sup>). In addition to them we only find two non-Hāshimid Arabs<sup>63</sup> and two *mawālī*<sup>64</sup> serving as sub-governors of al-Shām.

Al-Amīn appears to have deviated from his father’s personnel policy regarding the province, mainly in order to buttress his position. As early as 194 H/809 – 810 CE, he dismissed his brother al-Qāsim as provincial governor of al-Shām, replacing him with Khuzayma b. Khāzim. Later, as the conflict with al-Ma’mūn turned into open war, al-Amīn appointed the ‘Abbāsīd ‘Abd al-Malik b. Šāliḥ b. ‘Alī over al-Shām. Notably, Khuzayma and ‘Abd al-Malik were experienced administrators of al-Shām: both had already held sub-governorships under al-Rashīd.<sup>65</sup> Among the sub-governors of al-Amīn’s reign, however, three ‘Abbāsīds were now outnumbered by four non-Hāshimid Arabs (among them two Qaysī

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61 Mūsā is said to have appointed Sindī b. Shāhak, a former *mawlā* of al-Manšūr, over Dimashq. Ja’far, who himself governed al-Shām only for a brief period of time, appointed his successor ‘Isā b. al-‘Akkī to this office.

62 In addition to them and the descendants of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad we also find an increasing number of sons of former caliphs such as Ibrāhīm and Manšūr b. al-Mahdī, as well as Sulaymān b. al-Manšūr.

63 Rawḥ b. Ḥātīm b. Qabiṣa, who is said to have governed Filasṭīn, is attributed to the Azd/Yemen. In the case of Shu’ayb b. Ḥāzim b. Khuzayma, *Ḥāzim* seems to be a misspelling for *Khāzim*. This would strongly indicate that Shu’ayb was a brother of the better-known Khuzayma b. Khāzim b. Khuzayma, a Tamīmī tribesman who governed Qinnasrīn for al-Rashīd and the whole of al-Shām for al-Amīn.

64 The first, (al-)Sindī b. Shāhak, was appointed over Dimashq by the Barmakid Mūsā b. Yaḥyā. He was a *mawlā* of al-Manšūr and appears to have been of Indian origin (see *EP*<sup>2</sup>, “Ibrāhīm b. al-Sindī” (C. Pellat)). The second, Harthama b. A’yan, was a governor/major military leader for al-Rashīd and al-Ma’mūn and is said to have governed Filasṭīn for the former. While he appears to have been a Khurāsānian of northern Arab background, he is mentioned as both a *mawlā* of the Ḍabba (Ibn al-Athīr 1997, 5:179) and *mawlā amīr al-mu’minīn* (of al-Ma’mūn?; al-Ṭabarī 1967, 8:490; see also *EP*<sup>3</sup>, “Harthama b. A’yan” (J. P. Turner)).

65 Khuzayma had already governed Qinnasrīn and al-‘Awāšīm shortly before al-Rashīd’s death and was appointed provincial governor of al-Shām in 194 H/809 – 810 CE. He continued to serve al-Amīn as sub-governor of Qinnasrīn and al-‘Awāšīm until the caliph’s death in 198 H/813 CE. ‘Abd al-Malik had served as sub-governor of Qinnasrīn and slightly later of Dimashq (during the first years of al-Rashīd’s reign), but for unknown reasons he was disgraced and imprisoned afterwards. Under al-Amīn, ‘Abd al-Malik was released (*EP*<sup>2</sup>, “‘Abd al-Malik b. Šāliḥ” (P. Cobb)) and appointed super-governor of al-Shām and al-Jazīra in 196 H/811 – 812 CE. ‘Abd al-Malik did not live to see the outcome of the rivalry of al-Rashīd’s sons; he died the following year.

tribesmen<sup>66</sup>). In the final stages of the succession war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, al-Shām was heavily affected. This political instability partly allowed non-governmental actors to resume power.<sup>67</sup>

Spending almost a third of his reign in Khurāsān, al-Ma'mūn seems to have had no particular interest in organizing the administration of al-Shām.<sup>68</sup> Instead he contented himself with appointing as super-governors his most important military commander Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, the latter's son 'Abdallāh, and his own brother Abū Ishāq (the future caliph al-Mu'taṣim). While Abū Ishāq governed al-Shām in combination with Egypt, the super-province ruled by both Ṭāhir and his son encompassed al-Shām, al-Jazīra, Egypt, and al-Maghrib. Given the above-mentioned ambiguity of the super-province al-Amīn governed under al-Rashīd, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn appears to have been the first super-governor to govern the western section of the caliphate as one entity. The lack of references to any provincial governors in the literary sources and the fact that both 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir and Abū Ishāq appointed (either Arab or Khurāsānian) sub-governors on their own behalf strongly indicates that during the reign of al-Ma'mūn there simply were no provincial governors of al-Shām.<sup>69</sup>

### Governors of al-Shām in the Middle 'Abbāsīd Period

In the middle 'Abbāsīd (the Samarran) period, the practice of not appointing any provincial governor over al-Shām but instead administering the province exclusively via super-governors and sub-governors was continued. With regard to the composition of the personnel, the tables clearly turned. While the new Central Asian troops introduced by the caliph al-Mu'taṣim had already played an impor-

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**66** Aḥmad and 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī appear to have been the first Qaysis to govern sub-units of al-Shām since 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī's claim to the caliphal throne. Their employment might have been an expression of al-Amīn's desperate search for support.

**67** While the second 'post-Umayyad' uprising led by Abū l-'Amayṭar is well known (see Cobb 2001, 55–62), Ibn al-'Adīm provides further information on several strongmen of unknown loyalty who controlled Qinnasrīn during this period (Ibn al-'Adīm 1996, 39).

**68** Even though he devoted the last years of his life to campaigns against Byzantium, al-Ma'mūn appears to have been more interested in prestigious military campaigns than the province of al-Shām itself (where he spent comparatively little time). An interesting example of this is the case of Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Bayhas, a strongman of the fourth *fitna*. It seems that al-Ma'mūn simply left him in charge of Dimashq for several years, which underlines the assumption that the caliph did not take a particular interest in al-Shām (see Cobb 2001, 95–96).

**69** This appears to be a part of al-Ma'mūn's widely recognized break with 'Abbāsīd administrative practices (see for instance Kennedy 1981, 28–29, or Cobb 2001, 34).

tant role in al-Ma'mūn's military campaigns against Byzantium, it was during the caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim and afterwards that these *atrāk* became increasingly influential in governorships on all levels. Therefore, among the 43 governors we could identify from this period (4 super-governors<sup>70</sup> and 39 sub-governors), only a little more than a third could be identified as Arabs (the majority of whom remained 'Abbāsids). Almost another third were *atrāk* and the ethnic background of the majority of the last third remains unidentified. Khurāsānians and other Iranians were, however, largely marginalized.

In the early years of al-Mu'taṣim's reign the caliph left the administrative structures of al-Shām mainly unmodified. At an unknown point in time he appointed his son al-Wāthiq over a super-province consisting of al-Shām, al-Jazīra, and Egypt. The actual administrative duties appear to have been carried out by Ashinās,<sup>71</sup> whom the caliph appointed over the same provinces and who was the first Central Asian officer to rule al-Shām as a whole. On the sub-governor level, we do not yet find any *atrāk* in al-Shām.<sup>72</sup> It is unknown whether al-Wāthiq or Ashinās appointed any of the seven known sub-governors of the province.

When al-Wāthiq himself became caliph, he does not seem to have introduced any great innovation into the administration of al-Shām. After the death of Ashinās in 230 H/844 CE he is said to have appointed 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Malik, who was seemingly a descendant of Šāliḥ b. 'Alī, over a super-province including al-Shām and al-Jazīra. Other than that we are informed of five sub-governors during his reign. Two had already served under al-Wāthiq's predecessors.

Much like Hārūn al-Rashīd, al-Mutawakkil devised a plan for succession. It proved fatal: while it is reported<sup>73</sup> that in 235 H/850 CE the empire was essential-

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**70** A notable instance is the case of the later caliph al-Muntaṣir. During the reign of his father al-Mutawakkil, he is reported to have governed vast parts of the empire, including Qinnasrīn, al-'Awāsim, and al-Thughūr. While he is thus said to have ruled only a part of what is considered al-Shām (see introductory remarks above), his domains were too widely stretched to label him 'sub-governor'. Therefore al-Muntaṣir is the only case considered in this paper in which an official is referred to as 'super-governor' without having ruled al-Shām as a whole.

**71** While the name Ashinās points to a particular *turki* tribe (see de la Vaissière 2007, 92–94, 194–200), al-Ṭabarī (1967, 8:558) connects the name of the governor/military leader in question to a particularly (supposedly Persian) expression.

**72** While the ethnic backgrounds of Rajā' b. Abī l-Ḍaḥḥāk and Muslim b. Muḥammad, both of whom are mentioned as sub-governors of Dimashq, could not be identified, their names provide no clear evidence of a Central Asian background.

**73** It should be noted that the numismatic evidence clearly challenges the common version of al-Mutawakkil's plan for succession. While a corresponding discussion would go beyond the

ly divided between his sons al-Muntaṣir<sup>74</sup> and al-Muʿazz, it was, again, a third son, al-Muʿayyad, who was supposed to govern most of al-Shām.<sup>75</sup> Even though al-Muʿayyad appears to have been involved in the policy-making of al-Shām as little as al-Qāsim b. Hārūn al-Rashīd had been some 50 years earlier, we are not informed of any agent carrying out his responsibilities on the ground. Al-Muntaṣir on the other hand is reported to have appointed Bughā al-Kabīr sub-governor of Qinnasrīn (part of his vast domains). Further sub-governors, namely al-Shārbāmiyān and al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān,<sup>76</sup> likewise enjoyed the privilege of appointing their successors or deputies. As these names already indicate, it is during the reign of al-Mutawakkil that for the first time we find *atrāk* among the sub-governors of al-Shām. In fact, almost half of the identified sub-governors of al-Shām in al-Mutawakkil's reign were of Central Asian origin. In 244 H/858 CE al-Mutawakkil decided to take residence in Dimashq for a couple of months. His reason for this is not entirely clear.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to Bughā al-Kabīr, who remained in office, we are informed of only one super-governor and one sub-governor of al-Shām during the brief rule of al-Muntaṣir. It remains unknown whether or not the caliph appointed them. Al-Mustaʿīn, on the other hand, is reported to have appointed one super-governor and three out of four sub-governors of al-Shām on his own behalf. In any case, Central Asian officers now ultimately gained the upper

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scope of this paper, a close examination of these events and comparison with the succession plans of Hārūn al-Rashīd should be the subject of a future publication.

74 Among the vast domains al-Muntaṣir is reported to have been appointed over, al-Ṭabarī mentions the whole Maghrib (including Egypt), al-Jazīra, parts of northern Iraq and of Fārs, Mecca, Medina, the Yemen, Baḥrayn, as well as Qinnasrīn, al-ʿAwāṣim, al-Thughūr, and more (see al-Ṭabarī 1967, 9:176). For further details on al-Muntaṣir's office, see note 70 above.

75 As al-Muʿayyad is said to have been in charge of Filasṭīn, al-Urdunn, Dimashq, and Ḥimṣ, while Qinnasrīn was within the sphere of influence of al-Muntaṣir. Al-Muʿayyad must be considered a sub-governor of al-Shām given the convention above. Still, Qinnasrīn might have been considered part of al-Jazīra at that time.

76 While the name al-Shārbāmiyān points to a manorial background from the eastern Hindu Kush region, al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān is well known to have been a close confidant of al-Mutawakkil. As the latter held several prestigious offices, such as superintendent of work in Sāmarrāʾ and provincial governor of Egypt, it is quite unexpected to find him as sub-governor of Dimashq. Taking into account the apparently complete absence of provincial governors of al-Shām since the reign of al-Amīn, it is possible that during at least some points of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate sub-governors of Dimashq had authority over large parts (if not all) of al-Shām.

77 While the transfer of royal *dīwāns* to Dimashq mentioned in several sources indeed indicates a removal of the capital, Paul Cobb has argued that al-Mutawakkil planned a large-scale campaign against Byzantium which for unknown reasons was never carried out (Cobb 1999, 241–257).

hand. Arabs were reduced to a clear minority among the governors of al-Shām on all levels.

Since at least the reign of al-Mu‘tazz, the caliph was too busy struggling to stay in power in Sāmarrā’ to actively intervene in the policy-making of al-Shām.<sup>78</sup> Notably, in 254 H/868 CE the privilege of appointing sub-governors was apparently gained by Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, a Central Asian military leader of the second generation who is not known to have held any office in al-Shām.<sup>79</sup> It is from that point at the latest that the loyalty of the governors on the ground must be questioned. The best example of this is the case of ‘Īsā b. al-Shaykh, who is mentioned as sub-governor for Filasṭīn (al-Urdunn and Dimashq) a couple of times during the Samarran period<sup>80</sup> but managed to forge allegiances which eventually allowed him to become the de facto ruler of large parts of the province.<sup>81</sup> In fact, it turns out that direct ‘Abbāsīd rule over al-Shām came to a preliminary end already before the province was taken over by the Central Asian dynasty of the Ṭūlūnids.<sup>82</sup>

## Fārs

### The Province

Fārs remained the heartland of the Sasanid dynasty, even after they had moved their capital to Iraq. The main importance of Fārs for the early Islamic Empire lay in the agricultural richness of the large irrigated valleys lying between its mountain ridges and the resulting high tax income derived from the province, which was second only to that gained from al-Sawād (Lower Iraq).<sup>83</sup>

Sasanian Fārs consisted of six subunits (*shahr*), each centered around one of the main cities of the province. These *shahrs* survived into the Islamic period as the *kūras* of Fārs and were reduced to five at an undefined point (probably

**78** Among the seven sub-governors of al-Shām known to have taken office during the reigns of al-Mu‘tazz and al-Muhtadī, only one is reported as appointed by the reigning caliph.

**79** It appears that Ṣāliḥ entered the political stage by taking part in the assassination of al-Mu-tawakkil in 247 H/861 CE (al-Ṭabarī 1967, 9.:227).

**80** Ibn al-Athīr 1997, 6:240, 290; Ibn Shaddād 2010, 1:82, 159–160.

**81** Cobb 2001, 37–41; *EF*, “‘Īsā b. al-Shaykh” (M. Canard).

**82** For the desolate state of al-Shām at the dawn of Ṭūlūnid rule see Gordon 2017, 326–329; Cobb 2001, 41.

**83** See the *kharāj* lists of Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ (el-‘Alī 1971: 337–338), Ibn al-Faqīh (1996, 381–382, 390, 411), al-Jahshiyārī (1938, 319–326), al-Ya‘qūbī (1960, 2:202).

around the end of the Sasanian or the beginning of the Islamic period): Iṣṭakhr, Ardashīr Khurra, Arrajān, Sābūr, and Darābjird.<sup>84</sup>

The first Muslim invasions into Fārs were carried out by tribesmen from al-Baḥrayn and ‘Umān who crossed the Persian Gulf by boat and set up a *miṣr* at Tawwaj around the year 19 H/640 CE.<sup>85</sup> During the next decade, the combined forces of Baṣra and Tawwaj conquered the coastal plains and valleys closest to them. In 29 H/649–650 CE, the new governor of Baṣra ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir was put in charge of all armies in Fārs and conquered areas still in Sasanian hands.<sup>86</sup> However, Muslim rule remained shaky over the next 15 years, with uprisings by the “people of Fārs” and the *akrād* reported in 29 H/649–650 CE,<sup>87</sup> 38–39 H/658–660 CE,<sup>88</sup> and 43 H/663–664 CE.<sup>89</sup>

During most of the Umayyad period, Fārs remained a region highly contested by several actors: during the second *fitna* (ca. 64–71 H/683–691 CE), the Umayyads had already lost control of the province to ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr. Regarding the 60s H/680s CE and 70s H/690s CE, our information about Fārs is dominated by the struggle of the central authorities (both the Zubayrids and the Umayyads) against Khārijites in Fārs and neighboring areas. The rebels were finally defeated by al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra in 77 H/696–697 CE. Not even five years later, the army commander Ibn al-Ash‘ath rebelled in Sīstān against the super-governor of Iraq and the East, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. On the way to Iraq, Ibn al-Ash‘ath took control of Fārs for two years. The *akrād*, who had already fought al-Ḥajjāj’s army at Ibn al-Ash‘ath’s side in 83 H/702–3 CE, took control of all of Fārs again in the year 90 H/708–9 CE. After the death of ‘Umar II, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab rebelled in Baṣra and took control of Fārs (from 101 H/719 CE until 102 H/722 CE).

During the third *fitna*, the ‘Alīd rebel ‘Abdallāh b. Mu‘āwiya overran Fārs and adjacent areas. He attracted a wide following that included Khārijites, local *akrād*, and ‘Abbāsīd family members; the Umayyads managed to quell this rebellion shortly before they were ousted themselves by the ‘Abbāsīd revolution.

The beginning of the ‘Abbāsīd period saw another uprising by *akrād* in Fārs in the year 137 H/754–755 CE. Supporters of Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abdallāh, the brother of

<sup>84</sup> See Daryaei 2003, and al-Iṣṭakhrī 1927, 125.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Umān and al-Baḥrayn refer here to the Persian Gulf coast of the Arabian Peninsula rather than the modern states.

<sup>86</sup> Hinds 1984.

<sup>87</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1967–1968, 1:2831; al-Balādhurī 1996, 10:142; al-Ya‘qūbī 1960, 1:172.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Balādhurī 2003, 2:364–372; al-Ṭabarī 1967–1968, 1:3429–3435, 3449–3450.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Ṭabarī 1967–1968, 2:54.

al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who had rebelled in Baṣra, controlled at least part of Fārs between 141 H/758 CE and 145 H/763 CE. During the next century or so, very little is heard about Fārs (except for one more uprising by *akrād* in 231 H/845–846 CE). This suggests that the province was firmly under ‘Abbāsīd control until the year 250 H/864–865 CE, when it first succumbed to a mutiny of *turkī* commanders in the ‘Abbāsīd army,<sup>90</sup> subsequently fell into the hands of a local magnate named Muḥammad b. Wāṣil,<sup>91</sup> and was finally conquered by Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār in 255 H/868–869 CE. The Ṣaffārīds’ control over Fārs, although not uncontested,<sup>92</sup> lasted until the Būyīds conquered the province.<sup>93</sup>

### Governors of Fārs in the Umayyad Period

In the Umayyad period, the area to the east of Iraq was divided into three large clusters: those regions conquered by Kūfan armies, those conquered by Baṣran armies, and Khurāsān. As a result of its conquest history, Fārs thus remained part of the territory under control of the super-governor of Baṣra for the entire Umayyad period. It seems to hold generally true that the caliph directly appointed the super-governor of Baṣra, and the governor of Fārs was subordinate to and appointed by the super-governor of Baṣra. However, the latter’s freedom to appoint a provincial governor of his own choice over Fārs was not unlimited: the sources preserve accounts of at least two cases in which the caliph forced his choice upon the super-governor.<sup>94</sup>

From the year 50 H/670–671 CE until the end of the Umayyad period, the super-provinces of Baṣra and Kūfa were usually held by a single super-governor of Iraq,<sup>95</sup> who consequently also controlled the territories conquered by the Baṣran and Kūfan armies and appointed his own governors to rule over these areas. At times, Khurāsān was also added to this super-governor’s responsibili-

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī 1883, 2:608–609.

<sup>91</sup> See Jürgen Paul’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>92</sup> For an historical overview of Ṣaffārīd rule in Fārs, see Bosworth 1994.

<sup>93</sup> There is to date no comprehensive overview of the early Islamic history of Fārs. The brief overview above of the main uprisings in Fārs was mainly put together from the works of al-Ya‘qūbī, Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Iṣṭakhri, Miskawayh, and Ibn al-Athīr.

<sup>94</sup> In the first case ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ordered his super-governor of Baṣra Ibn ‘Abbās to appoint Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān over Fārs; in the second, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān forced his brother Bishr to re-appoint al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra.

<sup>95</sup> Exceptions include the years 53–60 H/672–680 CE, 64–75 H/683–695 CE, and 99–102 H/717–721 CE.

ties, making him in effect super-governor of the entire eastern half of the empire. These super-governors of Iraq were directly appointed by the caliph.

Our search turned up 82 governors on all levels for Umayyad Fārs: 29 super-governors, 19 provincial governors, 26 sub-governors, and eight officials where it is unclear whether they were active on the provincial or the sub-provincial level.

All super-governors of Baṣra and all provincial governors of Fārs found in the sources seem to have been Arab Muslims.<sup>96</sup> On the lower levels, those known by name can usually be identified as Arabs; of the others, three are identified as Iranians,<sup>97</sup> two are not mentioned by name,<sup>98</sup> and two have Arabic names but are not identifiable. Arab governors on all levels are often explicitly identified by their tribal *nisbas* in the sources, and it is thus likely that their tribal identity was an important factor in their selection.

We have an exhaustive list of the super-governors of Baṣra/Iraq for the 22 years of Sufyānid rule (41–64 H/661–683 CE). In all but three years of this period, this position was given to Qurashīs. The first of these was not an Umayyad: ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir of the ‘Abd Shams clan (governed 42–45 H/662–664 CE), who had been governor of Baṣra before under ‘Uthmān (29–35 H/644–655 CE). After three years, Mu‘āwiya seems to have tried to get closer control of Baṣra and southern Iran by appointing an Azdī from al-Shām (someone without local loyalties) as super-governor of Baṣra,<sup>99</sup> The caliph had to retract his decision within months after protest by the Baṣrans, and installed Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (governed 45–53 H/665–673 CE), whom he had recently recognized as his half-brother, as a replacement.<sup>100</sup> After the latter’s death and two unsuccessful short-term Qaysī

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**96** At least two had Christian mothers: al-Qubā’ al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abdallāh al-Makhzūmī (governed Baṣra and dependencies in 64–67 H/684–686 CE for Ibn al-Zubayr), and Khālid al-Qasrī (governed Iraq and the East in 105–120 H/724–738 CE). One was probably a recent Muslim convert (Yazīd b. Abī Muslim, al-Ḥajjāj’s *kātib*).

**97** Dādhbeh al-Muqaḥfa’, Farrūkhzād Gushn-anūshān, and Khālid al-Qasrī’s unnamed ‘*amil* of Dārābjird, a *dihqān*.

**98** They are only referred to as ‘*amil* ‘*Adī b. Arṭāt* and ‘*amil* ‘*Abdallāh b. ‘Umar*.

**99** Al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abdallāh/‘Amr al-Azdī.

**100** Ziyād was born out of wedlock; his father was unknown and he was called Ziyād b. Abīhi (“son of his father”) by his detractors. His mother may have been a slave girl. He was adopted by a Thaqaḥī and became a half-brother of Abū Bakra, who would become a famous magnate in Baṣra. Later (al-Ṭabarī 1967–1968, 2:70 mentions this event in passing in his entry on the year 44 H), Mu‘āwiya adopted him as his half-brother, confirming him as the son of Abū Sufyān (much to the dislike of other Umayyads). See *EF*, “Ziyād b. Abīhi” (I. Hasson), “al-Ḥārith b. Kalada” (C. Pellat), and “Abū ‘Ubayda” (H.A.R. Gibb); and Wellhausen 1927, 119–122.

super-governors,<sup>101</sup> Ziyād's son 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād (governed 55–64 H/674–684 CE) ruled Baṣra until the Zubayrid takeover.

This pattern—Qurashī super-governors exercising control over Baṣra and its conquered territories on behalf of the caliph—continued under the Zubayrids (64–71 H/683–691 CE) and in the first years of Marwānid rule. 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr's four super-governors of Baṣra all belonged to his own family or other (non-Umayyad) Qurashī clans;<sup>102</sup> 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (up to 75 H/694 CE), appointed his own brother Bishr and another Umayyad who was not a close family member.<sup>103</sup>

On the lower levels, the pattern is not as clear, partly because there are more gaps in our data. Under the Sufyānid super-governors of Baṣra/Iraq, we know the names of only two provincial governors of Fārs and two sub-governors.<sup>104</sup> This is not enough to draw wide-ranging conclusions. One sub-governor belonged to the Bakr b. Wā'il tribe, and the other was an Azdī *sharīf*; the latter was later appointed provincial governor twice,<sup>105</sup> and the other provincial governor was an Umayyad. Finally, on *dirhams* minted in Iṣṭakhr we find a governor whose name has not been definitively read and who has not been identified.<sup>106</sup> The Sufyānids seem to have tried to divide the lower-level governorships among the different tribes. This is suggested by the few appointments known from textual sources and also by a *khabar* reported by al-Balādhurī, according to which Mu'āwiya was worried that the Banū l-Ḥārith b. Ka'b/Azd were becoming too powerful because Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān had appointed too many of them.<sup>107</sup>

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**101** Ziyād's deputy in Baṣra, Samura b. Jundab of Fazāra/Qays, was confirmed as super-governor of Baṣra for six or 18 months and then replaced by a former *shurṭa* commander of Baṣra, 'Abdallāh b. Ghaylān of Thaqīf/Qays; the latter was dismissed within six months after complaints by the Baṣrans.

**102** The Zubayrids belonged to the Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā clan themselves. In addition to Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr and Ḥamza b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, 'Abdallāh also employed 'Umar b. 'Ubaydallāh b. Ma'mar of the Taym (the clan of the caliph Abū Bakr, who was 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr's grandfather; see *EF*, "Taym b. Murra" (M. Lecker)) and al-Qubā' b. al-Ḥārith of Makhzūm/Quraysh.

**103** Khālid b. 'Abdallāh b. Khālid b. Asīd (appointed twice, in 71 H/690–691 CE or 72 H/691–92 CE, and 74 H/693–94 CE) belonged to the Abū l-'Iṣ clan of Umayya.

**104** Their dates of appointment remain unknown.

**105** Sharīk b. al-A'war; he is mentioned as provincial governor under Ziyād and 'Ubaydallāh b. Ziyād. He had already been sub-governor of Iṣṭakhr for 'Abdallāh b. 'Āmir in Mu'āwiya's reign.

**106** 'Abd al-'Azīz b. MDWR, see Album 2011, 25.

**107** These included his provincial governor of Fārs (at that point apparently including Kirmān), Sharīk b. al-A'war. According to al-Balādhurī 1979, 159–160, Mu'āwiya sent a letter to Ziyād reproaching him, and Ziyād replied he had selected them only for their merits; even if he had found Zanj (black Africans) with these merits, he would have hired them.

Under the Zubayrids, we know of only two provincial governors of Fārs and two sub-governors. Because the Azraqī Khārijites had overrun Fārs, famous generals were appointed provincial governors at the time.<sup>108</sup> Of the sub-governors, one belonged to Quraysh, the other to Rabī'a.

For the provincial governors and sub-governors of Fārs in the first years after 'Abd al-Malik regained control over Baṣra for the Umayyads, we have an exceptional amount of information: we have 10 names of governors in Fārs serving under his super-governor Khālid b. 'Abdallāh b. Khālid b. Asīd. Khālid seemingly did not appoint any provincial governor over Fārs, but divided authority over the *kūras* of Fārs between two of his sons. He appointed a sub-governor over each *kūra*, all of whom were taken from two families: that of top general al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra of the Azd,<sup>109</sup> and that of 'Āmir b. Misma', the Baṣran chief of the Bakr b. Wā'il/Rabī'a.<sup>110</sup> A story in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ* may serve to explain the appointment of four members of the latter family: Mālik b. Miṣma' had reportedly hidden Khālid in Baṣra when Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr wanted to have him arrested.<sup>111</sup> On the other hand, the importance of tribal identity in these appointments is underlined by the fact that one of these Bakrīs, Muqātil b. Misma', minted coins in Bīshāpūr with the inscription 'Bakriyya': the first (and only) reference to Arab tribes on Islamic coins.<sup>112</sup>

To sum up, almost all of the governors of Baṣra/Iraq and Fārs (on all levels) appointed by Sufyānids, Zubayrids, and in the first years of 'Abd al-Malik's reign had strong links with Baṣra and its conquest armies, the one exception to this rule being Mu'āwiya's ill-fated appointment of a super-governor from al-Shām. All of them seem to have had previous experience in government, having served before as governors, deputy governors, or *shurṭa* chiefs. Many of them were military commanders, and those who were not Umayyads often belonged to leading families in their tribes and/or had marriage ties with the Umayyads.

Two years after forcing the Zubayrids out of Iraq, 'Abd al-Malik appears to have changed tactics. Instead of appointing more Umayyads or *sharīfs* of other tribes, he relied on al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf to head the Iraqi super-province (governed 75–95 H/694–714 CE). In contrast to most of the previous super-governors (though not unlike Ziyād), al-Ḥajjāj had very humble origins and worked his

108 Al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra/Azd and 'Umar b. 'Ubaydallāh b. Ma'mar/Umayya.

109 Al-Mughīra b. al-Muhallab (twice) and Sa'īd b. al-Muhallab.

110 'Āmir b. Misma' himself, his sons Misma' and Numayra, and his brother Muqātil.

111 Al-Ṭabarī 1967, 6:152.

112 See Album 2011, 25.

way up through different military and administrative positions.<sup>113</sup> His clan, the Aḥlāf of Thaḳīf, was not very prominent either.<sup>114</sup> His appointments in Fārs were varied. He kept the Azdī general al-Muhallab in charge of the battle against the Azāriqa. This brought al-Muhallab back to Fārs, where he remained in office until his final victory in 77 H/696 CE.

After al-Muhallab was moved to Khurāsān, al-Ḥajjāj appointed one of his own relatives<sup>115</sup> and another Qaysī<sup>116</sup> provincial governor of Fārs. All of his sub-governors known from the textual sources carried Arabic names, and all but one (still unidentified) came from northern Arab tribes (Tamīm, Bakr b. Wā'il, Fazāra). However, early in al-Ḥajjāj's super-governorship we find the name of one Iranian official, Farrūkhzād Gushn-anūshān,<sup>117</sup> on dirhams and copper coins from mints in Fārs. Nothing is known about him from the texts.

After al-Ḥajjāj's death, tribal tension reached new heights in Iraq. Yemenīs and Qaysīs took turns as super-governors of Baṣra, each appointing fellow tribesmen over Fārs.<sup>118</sup> Vindictiveness between the two parties was high and led to a vicious cycle in which a new super-governor would arrest and torture his predecessor and the latter's *ummāl*.<sup>119</sup> Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik's appointment of the Bajalī Khālīd b. 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī (governed 105–120 H/724–738 CE) has been seen as an attempt to temper the tribal tension in Baṣra, because Bajīla was not closely related to any of the rival confederations.<sup>120</sup> Khālīd still employed the

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**113** He is said to have come from a poor family of stone carriers and started his career as a schoolmaster in Ṭā'if. He was subsequently governor of Tabāla (in the Tihāma), head of the *shurṭa* of Damascus, commander of the successful expeditions against Muṣ'ab and 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, governor of the Ḥijāz, Yemen, and Yamāma in 73 H, and leader of the *hajj* in 74 H. See *EP*, "al-Ḥadjdjād b. Yūsuf" (A. Dietrich).

**114** See *EP*, "Thaḳīf" (M. Lecker).

**115** Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim b. Abī 'Aqīl al-Thaqaḳī, whom al-Iṣṭakhrī (124) calls al-Ḥajjāj's paternal cousin; according to Ibn al-Balkhī (132, 157, 170), al-Ḥajjāj appointed his own brother Muḥammad b. Yūsuf. It cannot be ruled out that they were both sent to govern Fārs at different times.

**116** Qaṭan b. Qabīṣa al-Hilālī, of the 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a/Qays. The exact dates of his governorship are unknown.

**117** The patronymic is mentioned only on copper coins from mint DShT; the other coins all have only *farrūkhzād*. See the discussion in the appendix.

**118** Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (Azd/Yemen; 96–99 H/715–717 CE); 'Adī b. Artāt (Fazāra/Qays; 99–101 H/717–719 CE); rebellion by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (Azd/Yemen, 101–102 H/719–720 CE); 'Umar b. Hubayra (Fazāra/Qays; 102–105 H/720–724 CE); Khālīd b. 'Abdallāh al-Qasrī (Bajīla, 105–120 H/723–738 CE); Yūsuf b. 'Umar (Thaḳīf/Qays; 120–126 H/738–744 CE); Manṣūr b. Jumhūr (Kalb/Yemen; 126 H/744 CE).

**119** See also Crone 2003, 44.

**120** *EP*, "Khālīd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī" (G. R. Hawting).

same policies as the Yemenī and Qaysī super-governors: he appointed a member of his own tribe provincial governor of Fārs, and tortured at least one of the *‘ummāl* of his predecessor.<sup>121</sup> This pattern was only broken at the very end of the Umayyad period, when the first super-governor of Umayyad stock in more than 50 years was appointed over Bašra.<sup>122</sup>

Very few sub-governors in Fārs were found in the sources for the period between 80 H/699 CE and 126 H/744 CE: only four Tamīmīs<sup>123</sup> and two *dihqāns* could be identified. This is the first time that textual sources explicitly mention sub-governors of Iranian stock in Fārs. We do not have enough data to say whether appointing *dihqāns* as sub-governors was a common practice in this period, but there is reason to assume that this practice was particular to the appointer of these two specific *dihqāns*, Khālīd b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī. For instance, the Khārijite Bahlūl reportedly intended to have Khālīd al-Qasrī killed at least partly because Khālīd put Zoroastrians in positions of power over Muslims.<sup>124</sup>

### Governors of Fārs in the ‘Abbāsīd Period

All in all, our search turned up 45 governors for the ‘Abbāsīd period (until the takeover by the Ṣaffārīds): 14 super-governors, 20 provincial governors, and 11 sub-governors.

Immediately after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution, the struggle for power within the ‘Abbāsīd movement played out in Fārs as well. Abū Salama, Abū Muslim’s rival in the ‘Abbāsīd movement, had appointed *‘ummāl* over Fārs (we do not know who they were), but Abū Muslim sent his own *‘āmil*, Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath,<sup>125</sup> to Fārs and had Abū Salama’s *‘ummāl* killed. Al-Ṣaffāḥ tried twice to replace Ibn al-Ash‘ath with a paternal uncle,<sup>126</sup> but to no avail: al-Manṣūr was the first ‘Abbāsīd caliph to successfully install his own governors in Fārs, perhaps only after Abū Muslim’s death in 137 H/755 CE.

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**121** He tortured Hāshim/Hushaym b. Ṣafwān al-Fazārī (of Qays), ‘Umar b. Hubayra’s provincial governor of Fārs. See al-Balādhurī 1996, 9:85.

**122** ‘Abdallāh, a son of caliph ‘Umar II (governed 126–128? H/744–746? CE).

**123** Naṣr b. Ḥassān [al-‘Anbarī] for Khālīd al-Qasrī, and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Māzinī, ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāriq al-‘Anbarī, Tawba b. Kaysān al-‘Anbarī (the latter a *mawlā* of Sijistānī origin) for Yūsuf b. ‘Umar.

**124** Al-Ṭabarī 1967, 7:131; see also *EF*<sup>2</sup>, “Khālīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḳasrī” (G. R. Hawting) for Khālīd’s alleged preference for non-Muslims.

**125** This is not the famous ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath of Kinda, but a man of the tribe Khuzā’a/Azd.

**126** ‘Īsā and Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh b. al-‘Abbās.

Among al-Manṣūr's early provincial governors of Fārs were his brother, his uncle,<sup>127</sup> and Khālid b. Barmak, who had been al-Saffāḥ's secretary. Khālid was the first non-Arab to be appointed to this position.<sup>128</sup> It thus appears that close personal relations trumped religious pedigree and tribal considerations under the first two 'Abbāsīd caliphs. This may have been part of a wider strategy used by al-Saffāḥ and al-Manṣūr to keep Fārs (and other provinces) under strict caliphal control. Probably for the same reason, they seem to have done away with the system of super-governors; they appointed their provincial governors of Fārs directly, and these were independent from Baṣra. The sources suggest that al-Manṣūr even directly appointed two sub-governors in Fārs.<sup>129</sup>

At the end of his caliphate al-Manṣūr seems to have taken steps toward larger governing units; in 156, he appointed his *mawlā* 'Ummāra b. Ḥamza over Kuwar Dijla,<sup>130</sup> al-Ahwāz, and Fārs (but from all we know, not over Baṣra itself). In the same period, he also appointed a number of Tamīmīs and an Asadī tribesman to Fārs and its *kuwar*.<sup>131</sup>

Starting with al-Mahdī, the 'Abbāsīds seem to have gradually relaxed their direct grip on the province. Al-Mahdī brought the super-province of Baṣra back, but its composition had changed: from now on, the super-province was no longer defined as all areas conquered by the Baṣran armies. Baṣra had lost its special position, and it became just another component in an ever-changing conglomerate of provinces, of which it formed the core along with Kuwar Dijla, al-Ahwāz, and Fārs. At times, Kirmān, the Arabian Peninsula (especially its Persian Gulf provinces), and the Jibāl were added to these.

Hārūn al-Rashīd kept the system of the super-governorship of Baṣra that included Fārs in place at least until the year 173 H/789 CE, when the super-governor of Baṣra Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī died. In the same year, he appointed his infant son Muḥammad al-Amīn heir apparent, and in 175 H/791–792 CE he put him in charge over al-Shām and Iraq. A decade later, al-Ma'mūn was appointed second successor to the throne and put in charge of (greater) Khurāsān, which is described in the reports on this event as the area stretching from the

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127 Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī and Ismā'il b. 'Alī.

128 According to Ibn al-'Adīm (7:3023), the appointment of Khālid was the result of machinations by al-Manṣūr's *kātib* al-Mūriyānī, who wanted to get his rival far away from the court.

129 Wāṣil b. 'Ulaym over Iṣṭakhr and Naṣr b. Ḥarb al-Tamīmī over the frontier (? *thaghr*) of Fārs.

130 The agricultural districts along the lower Tigris.

131 Wāṣil b. 'Ulaym (Tamīm – Iṣṭakhr), Yazīd b. Iqbal (Tamīm – Fārs), Naṣr b. Ḥarb (Tamīm – Thaghr Fārs), Shaykh b. 'Umayra (Asad – Fārs).

limits of Hamadhān to the furthest part of al-Mashriq.<sup>132</sup> Since Fārs (and the rest of southern Iran) are not mentioned in these arrangements, it is not clear to whose sphere of influence it belonged. In any case, there is no indication that either of the two heirs apparent had any direct influence on policies and appointments in Fārs before al-Ma'mūn's reign.<sup>133</sup>

Under al-Mahdī and Hārūn al-Rashīd, an unbroken succession of super-governors governed the provinces along the Persian Gulf in the years 160–173 H/776–789 CE; three out of four appointees were close family members, the other a *mawlā* of the caliph.<sup>134</sup> When the last of this chain of super-governors, Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī, died in the year 173 H/789 CE, al-Rashīd confiscated the enormous wealth he had amassed during his nine-year governorship. For the later years of al-Rashīd's reign (173–193 H/789–809 CE), the sources mention several governors of Baṣra (all 'Abbāsīd family members except for one caliphal *mawlā*)<sup>135</sup> but it is not clear whether or not these ruled Baṣra as a super-province. Only one of them, al-Manṣūr's grandson 'Isā b. Ja'far, is explicitly said to have had authority over multiple provinces, including Fārs. There is no evidence any of them were actively involved in the administration of Fārs. This lack of evidence may be related to the general dearth of information about events in Fārs during this period, rather than the limitation of the power of Baṣra's governor.

The textual sources provide only scant references to one sub-governor<sup>136</sup> and four provincial governors of Fārs under al-Mahdī<sup>137</sup> and al-Rashīd.<sup>138</sup> Copper and lead coins further suggest that Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī may have served as provincial governor of Fārs<sup>139</sup> and provide the names of three more officials

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132 Al-Ṭabarī 1967, 8:269 (*Khurāsān wa-mā yattaṣilu bihā ilā Hamadhān*), 8:275 (*min ḥadd Hamadhān ilā ākhir al-Mashriq*).

133 A number of officials are mentioned on copper coins from this period. One of them was likely a provincial governor of Fārs, since he appears on coins from all *kuwar*; the others may have been sub-governors. In any case, the coins do not provide information on who appointed them.

134 Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī (160–163 H/776–780 CE), Ṣāliḥ b. Dāwud b. 'Alī (164 H/780–781 CE), Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. 'Alī (167–173 H/783–789 CE), and al-Mu'allā *mawlā amīr al-mu'minīn* (165–167 H/781–783 CE).

135 Khalifa 1977, 461–462; al-Ṭabarī 1967, 8:346.

136 'Ammār b. 'Alī served as sub-governor in Fasā, the de facto capital of the *kūra* Darābjird, under al-Rashīd.

137 Shaykh b. 'Umayra al-Asadī, who was already governor of Fārs under al-Manṣūr (perhaps his governorship was simply extended by al-Mahdī), and Khālid b. Barmak.

138 Al-Mahdī's *mawlā* Ḥamawayh, and the Ḍabbī *sharīf* 'Abdallāh b. al-Musayyib.

139 His name is on copper coins from all *kūra* capitals of Fārs in the years 182 H/798–799 CE and 183 H/799–800 CE.

who may have served as sub-governors. They cannot be further identified and it is not clear who appointed them.<sup>140</sup> The provincial governors who can be identified show that al-Mahdī and al-Rashid used both *mawālī* and Arabs in this position. However, since we do not have dates of service or appointment information for most of them, we cannot draw more pointed conclusions.

For most of the caliphate of al-Amīn, we have no information regarding the administration of Fārs. Under al-Ma'mūn, Fārs became part of the dominions of the former protégés of the Barmakids, al-Faḍl and al-Ḥasan b. Sahl. The latter's father had been a Zoroastrian landowner in Iraq with Iranian roots. In 196 H/812 CE, al-Ma'mūn, already hailed as caliph by his own troops even before the death of al-Amīn, appointed al-Faḍl b. Sahl over the super-province of al-Mashriq, which is now said to stretch from Hamadhān to Tibet and from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea.<sup>141</sup> Al-Faḍl then appointed his brother over the western part of his territory (including Fārs) in 198 H/814 CE, and al-Ḥasan in turn appointed Wahb b. Sa'īd b. 'Amr, a *kātib* from a Christian family of *kuttāb*, over Fārs and Kirmān.<sup>142</sup> Therefore it seems that al-Ma'mūn installed a more cascaded form of hierarchy, in a departure from the attempts of the first two 'Abbāsids to appoint provincial governors directly.

For the next thirty years, the textual sources do not provide any information about governors of Fārs on any level. After the assassination of al-Faḍl b. Sahl in 202 H/818 CE and the subsequent retirement of his brother al-Ḥasan, control over Fārs probably went to the Ṭāhirids. However, Fārs is not explicitly mentioned as part of their territories until the early 230s H/mid-840s CE, when the Ṭāhirid Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muṣ'ab was appointed provincial governor of Fārs during the reign of al-Wāthiq. Nor is Fārs mentioned as part of a super-province of Baṣra. We only know of three (unidentified) officials in Fārs over this thirty-year period from copper coins.<sup>143</sup>

In the year 235 H, al-Mutawakkil divided the empire among his sons.<sup>144</sup> Fārs became part of the lot of al-Mu'tazz. Interestingly, additional super-provinces were created that were not contained within the territory of one heir; for in-

**140** Al-Rabī' b. Khaṭīr (Iṣṭakhr 159 H/775–776 CE and 167 H/783–784 CE; Arrajān, Ardashīr Khurra and Jūr 167 H; but not mentioned on coins from Sābūr and Fasā from the same year), Muhalhil b. Ṣafwān (Arrajān 182 H/798–799 CE), al-Amīr Manṣūr ([Sirāf] 188 H/804 CE).

**141** Al-Ṭabarī 1967, 8:424.

**142** Wahb b. Sa'īd b. 'Amr hailed from a family of *kuttāb* that had been in the service of the Umayyads since Mu'āwiya, then that of the 'Abbāsids and the Barmakids.

**143** Al-Qāsim b. Naṣr (mint: Fārs, dates: 214 H/829–830 CE and 220 H/835 CE); al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad and Yaḥyā b. Salaf (Fasā, 220s H/835–845 CE).

**144** See note 73.

stance, the Ṭāhirid Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm was put in charge of a super-province consisting of a *‘māl* that belonged to both the territory of al-Mu‘tazz and that of al-Muntaṣir. In addition, he also held the command over the *shurṭa* of Baghdad, which was awarded to him by al-Mutawakkil himself. Ibn Ishāq then appointed his cousin as governor of Fārs (see Fig. 1).

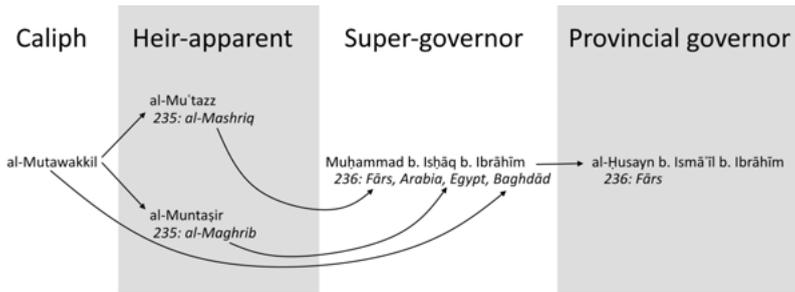


Fig. 1: Graphical representation of the appointment of Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Ṭāhirī

The only name of a non-Ṭāhirid governor of Fārs we have for al-Mutawakkil's reign is that of al-Ḥasan b. Rajā', who died while in charge of Fārs and al-Ahwāz in 244 H/858–859 CE. Like Wahb b. Sa'īd b. 'Amr under al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, he belonged to an Iraqi family with a long-standing tradition in the *dīwāns*.

During the period of unrest in Sāmarrā' after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 247 H/861 CE, caliphal control over Fārs was lost after two uprisings by the *jund* of Fārs and *shākiriyya* troops<sup>145</sup> against consecutive Ṭāhirid governors.<sup>146</sup> In the complex struggle that followed between various factions of the 'Abbāsīd army, *akrād*, and Ya'qūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, the caliph al-Mu'tamid and his regent al-Muwaffaq for the first time appointed *atrāk* commanders over a super-province including Fārs.<sup>147</sup> In a desperate attempt to stop the Ṣaffārīds and keep the taxes of Fārs flowing to Iraq, al-Mu'tamid bestowed the governorship of Fārs on a powerful local man of Arab (Tamīmī) stock, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil.<sup>148</sup> This is, as far as is known, the first time someone from the local elite was appointed governor of Fārs.

145 For the *shākiriyya*, see Amikam Elad's contribution to this volume.

146 Al-Ḥusayn b. Khālid, appointed by Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir; and 'Abdallāh b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm.

147 Mūsā b. Bughā (256–261 H/870–875 CE) and Masrūr al-Balkhī (261–262 H/875–876 CE).

148 See Jürgen Paul's contribution to this volume.

The profile of the governors under ‘Abbāsīd rule is thus markedly different from that of the governors of Umayyad Fārs. Whereas none of the Umayyad provincial governors or super-governors we found could be identified as a non-Arab or a non-Muslim, almost half of their ‘Abbāsīd counterparts could be positively identified as (mostly Khurāsānian) Iranians. In addition to these, a number were *mawālī* of unknown background. Almost all of these ‘Abbāsīd governors presumably were Muslims; only one was likely a Christian,<sup>149</sup> and none was positively identified as Zoroastrian. There does not seem to have been an aversion to employ recent converts.<sup>150</sup> For the sub-governors, however, we do not have enough data for meaningful analysis.

## Summary and Conclusion

The above discussion shows that the patterns of governor appointments clearly differed in Fārs and al-Shām. Moreover, these patterns changed over time. These shifts occurred at different times in the two provinces, and did not always follow the classical periodization (into Sufyānid, Zubayrid, and Marwānid, or pre-Samarran and Samarran). In fact, the only classical watershed clearly detectable in the structures and appointments in both provinces was the ‘Abbāsīd revolution.

Apart from the fact that the vast majority of all governors of the Umayyad period in al-Shām and Fārs were Arab Muslims, there are very few parallels between both provinces in the appointments of governors. We assume that as the heartland of the Umayyad Empire, al-Shām had a special significance that set it apart from other provinces. As not a single provincial governor or super-governor could be identified for Umayyad al-Shām, it seems likely that essential administrative functions of the province were carried out directly at the caliphal court. Fārs, on the other hand, was part of the territory under control of the super-governor of Baṣra/Iraq, who appointed provincial governors over Fārs and sub-governors over its *kūras*.

For al-Shām, two different phases can be identified during the Umayyad period. For the first phase, which covers the Sufyānid and the Zubayrid periods, little information is available on the sub-governors of al-Shām. From what we know, Yemenis played a crucial role, while we hardly find any Qurashī or

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149 Wahb b. Sa‘īd b. ‘Amr, governor of Kirmān and Fārs in the 180s–190s H/796–815 CE.  
 150 E. g. Ṣā‘īd b. Makhlad, a recently converted Christian from the Jazīra (*EP*<sup>2</sup>, “Ibn Makhlad” (D. Sourdel)), and al-Faḍl and al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, who converted at the beginning of their careers (*EP*<sup>2</sup>, “al-Faḍl b. Sahl b. Zadhānfarūkh” and “al-Ḥasan b. Sahl” (D. Sourdel)).

Qaysī. Furthermore, we hear of only one sub-governor appointed by an official other than the caliph.

In the Marwānid period, all sub-governors appear to have been appointed by the caliph himself, and the province was to a large extent governed by Umayyad family members. As for non-Umayyad sub-governors, balance was carefully maintained between Qaysīs and Yemenīs. While Kalbīs were the dominant group within the Yemenī faction and a main pillar of early Marwānid power,<sup>151</sup> it is striking that we do not find a single Kalbī and only few of their Quḍā‘a allies among the sub-governors of al-Shām.

For Fārs, we identified three distinct phases that do not accord with the classical periodization of the Umayyad period into a Sufyānid, Zubayrid, and Marwānid phase. The first phase covers the period from Mu‘āwiya until the first years of ‘Abd al-Malik’s rule, including the Zubayrid period. With a few short-lived exceptions, all of the super-governors of this phase belonged to Quraysh. However, the tribal affiliation of the provincial governors and sub-governors of Fārs was more mixed and does not follow a detectable pattern. What the super-governors and the provincial governors of Fārs do have in common is a strong connection with Baṣra and its conquest armies.

The second phase apparently represents a shift after the first years of ‘Abd al-Malik’s rule. By appointing al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the caliph introduced a twofold innovation: instead of relying on super-governors from Quraysh who were closely connected to Baṣra, he now appointed a strongman from a minor Muḍarī tribe with no connections to Baṣra. Al-Ḥajjāj’s provincial governors and sub-governors were mainly of Muḍarī background. Under his rule we also encounter the first Iranian official who appears to have served as sub-governor.

The third phase spans the period between al-Ḥajjāj’s death (95 H/714 CE) and the end of Umayyad rule. In this phase, Qaysī and Yemenī super-governors alternated, each appointing mainly members of his own tribe over Fārs and its *kūras*. In this period we also find the first explicit mentions of two Iranian sub-governors in Fārs.

In the beginning of the ‘Abbāsīd period, the caliphs secured their control over both provinces by appointing senior family members as provincial governors over al-Shām and Fārs. Apart from the caliphal family, Arabs lost their quasi-monopoly on governorships and tribal affiliation lost much of its rele-

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<sup>151</sup> See Crone 2003, 36; Cobb 2001, 69.

vance. Muslim faith, on the other hand, remained a precondition for governorships above the sub-governor level.<sup>152</sup>

These broad similarities aside, the patterns of appointments identified for al-Shām and Fārs are again very different. As in the Umayyad period, changes in the appointment patterns occurred at different times in the two provinces.

We divide the governorships in 'Abbāsīd al-Shām into four phases, which cross the classical lines distinguishing the pre-Samarran and Samarran period. The first phase covers the period from the 'Abbāsīd revolution up to the appointment of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn as heirs apparent. Even though the custom of appointing close family members as super-governors or provincial governors led to an internal power struggle after the death of al-Saffāḥ, this practice was continued under the subsequent caliphs—the one exception being the ambiguous case of Abū Muslim. From the reign of al-Manṣūr onwards, it appears that these governors were deprived of their privilege to appoint sub-governors, most of whom were also now members of the 'Abbāsīd family.

The second brief phase stretches from the later part of al-Rashīd's reign until the death of al-Amīn. These two caliphs relied less heavily on their own kin to govern al-Shām. Even though al-Amīn was made heir apparent and super-governor of al-Shām and Iraq by his father, it appears to have been the Barmakids who were exercising actual control and appointing governors on their own behalf. In fact they were the first non-Arabs to govern al-Shām. When, after their fall in 187 H/803 CE, governorships on all levels were dominated by Arabs again, non-Hāshimid Arabs can also be found serving as provincial governors. In the caliphate of al-Amīn, there even appears to have been a slight preponderance of non-Hāshimid Arabs on the sub-governor level.

Starting with al-Ma'mūn's reign, which marks the beginning of the third phase, the caliphs seem to have had a comparatively low interest in policy-making in al-Shām. As far as we can tell, no more provincial governors were appointed over the province but al-Shām was ruled as part of different super-provinces. While the first *turkī* super-governor is found in this period, there were no *atrāk* among the known contemporary sub-governors. These sub-governorates were almost evenly divided among 'Abbāsīds, non-Hāshimid Arabs, and Iranians/Khurāsānians. While in the majority of known cases sub-governors were appointed by the caliphs themselves, one 'Abbāsīd and one Ṭāhirīd super-governor are reported to have also enjoyed this privilege.

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152 One possible exception is Wahb b. Sa'īd b. 'Amr, who governed Fārs and Kirmān in the 180s–190s H and may have been Christian.

From the reign of al-Mutawakkil onwards we find an increasing number of *atrāk* among the sub-governors of al-Shām, rapidly challenging the role that ‘Abbāsīd family members played on this level. In parallel, the caliphs gradually lost control over al-Shām. By the reign of al-Mu‘tazz, they had largely forfeited their authority over the province, which is demonstrated by two events: Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, a *turkī* general who is not known to have held any office in al-Shām, is reported to have appointed a sub-governor on his own behalf; and ‘Īsā b. al-Shaykh, a Shaybānī tribesman, managed to forge alliances which allowed him to exercise actual power over large parts of the province. It thus becomes obvious that ‘Abbāsīd authority over the province had vanished even before the Ṭūlūnids took over in 264 H/878 CE.

For ‘Abbāsīd Fārs, we can distinguish three broad phases. It should be noted that due to the lack of meaningful data, sub-governors are left out of the equation here. The first short phase covers the time from the ‘Abbāsīd takeover until the end of al-Manṣūr’s reign. During this period, provincial governors of Fārs were either family members of the caliph or confidants closely connected to the court, and were directly appointed by the caliph. Fārs was at this time not part of a super-province.

The second phase starts with al-Mahdī’s reintroduction of a super-province of Baṣra, which stayed in place at least until 173 H/789 CE.<sup>153</sup> Only ‘Abbāsīd family members and personal *mawālī* of the caliph were appointed over Baṣra in this period. Below the super-governor level, no provincial governors of Fārs are known from this time, but the scarcity of the available material does not allow us to conclude whether this means that the office was abolished as a result of the reorganization.

During the third phase, we can detect an additional layer of super-governorships above the previously found super-governorships; these are commonly known as the governorships of al-Mashriq and al-Maghrib and are first mentioned in the context of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s succession plan. However, the exact extent of the heirs’ territories and their actual involvement in the super-provincial administration is never clearly defined in the sources. The ‘super-governorship of the East’ was exclusively held by heirs apparent and members of the important governor dynasties of the Sahlids and the Ṭāhirids. While we do not find ‘Abbāsīd family members below the level of the super-governorship of al-Mash-

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<sup>153</sup> In this year, al-Rashīd dismissed Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, who had been in charge of the super-province of Baṣra, including Fārs. For the later years of al-Rashīd’s reign, the sources mention a large amount of governors of Baṣra, but it is not clear whether or not these governors ruled Baṣra as a super-province. Only one of them is explicitly said to have ruled Baṣra as a super-province, including Fārs.

riq, Sahlids and Ṭāhirids did hold both the super-governorship of al-Mashriq and the super-governorship of Baṣra. On the provincial level, we find the offspring of classical *kuttāb* families in addition to a small number of Ṭāhirids. During the anarchy in Sāmarrāʾ, *shākiriyya* troops rose up against the Ṭāhirid provincial governor of Fārs in 249 H/863–4 CE, leading to a power vacuum eventually filled by the Ṣaffārids and bringing continuous, direct caliphal rule over the province to an end.

To conclude: for most of the period considered in this paper, the primary sources' references to governors and their appointments in both al-Shām and Fārs draw only a fragmentary picture, one that becomes even more patchy when dealing with the lower levels of authority.

Our analysis of these references revealed patterns of appointments that were clearly different in Fārs and al-Shām. Moreover, both provinces faced changes in the appointment patterns at different points in time. This divergence in the patterns of appointments is assumed to reflect a divergence in the imperial strategies for both provinces. As, however, the sources remain largely silent in this regard, these imperial strategies can only be deduced from their (imperfect) implementations.

In the Umayyad period this divergence might be explained by the fact that al-Shām held a special position as the seat of the caliphate. But even in the 'Abbāsīd period, it appears that caliphs introduced a uniform strategy for provincial government only in two instances: at the beginning of 'Abbāsīd rule, senior members of the caliphal family were appointed directly by the caliph over both al-Shām and Fārs, and in al-Ma'mūn's reign the absence of provincial governors suggests that this office lost its relevance and was perhaps even abolished, perhaps as part of an attempt to further centralize the imperial administration. In both cases, these uniform strategies were short-lived and soon abandoned in favor of policies tailored to the specific situation in each province. In fact, it appears that a good part of the decision-making process was trial and error, reacting to the current situation in the province and at the caliphal court.

This study is based on data collected exclusively from al-Shām and Fārs. In order to test the above hypotheses, similar work on additional provinces has to be added to the discussion. Ultimately, this approach, if applied to a wider range of provinces, has the potential to answer bigger questions related to the functioning and evolution of the hierarchical structure of government in the early Islamic Empire, and the putative delegation of power through a chain of command linking caliphal authority directly to the sub-provincial level.

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## Appendix : Governors of al-Shām and Fārs

### Introductory notes to the appendix:

- The appendix contains lists of governors of al-Shām and Fārs for the period from Mu‘āwiya (41 H/661 CE) until the year 255 H/869 CE.
- Table columns: 1 = dynasty served, 2 = date, 3 = governor’s name, 4 = area under governor’s control, 5 = governor type, 6 = appointer’s name, 7 = appointer’s function, 8 = governor’s ethnicity
- The references refer only to the period of the governors’ employment in our provinces; a full prosopographical study of the governors will be the subject of future publications.
- For reasons of space, dates in the appendix are limited to *hijrī* dating
- Time spans that cannot be narrowed down more exactly are between brackets. E. g., (41–60)–64 means the governor was appointed at some unknown time between 41 and 60 H, and served until 64 H.
- If the exact beginning or end of a term is not known, this may be indicated by a trailing hyphen. E. g., 145–152– means the governor was appointed in 145 H, and was in office until an unknown date after 152 H.
- Governor type abbreviations: cal.cont. = caliphal contender, gov = governor, reb = rebel, sub = sub-governor, sup = super-governor
- Ethnicity abbreviations: Ar-Y = Arab – Yemen, Ar-M = Arab – Muḍar, Ar-Q = Arab – Qays, Ar-R = Arab – Rabī‘a



## Governors of al-Shām

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	(41–60)	<sup>1</sup> (1) النعمان بن بشير بن سعد	Ḥimṣ	sub	Mu'āwiya I	caliph	Ar-Y
U	(41–60)	ملك بن هبيرة <sup>2</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-Y – Kinda – Sakūn
U	(41–60)–64	حسان بن مالك بن بحدل <sup>3</sup>	Filasṭīn, Urdunn	sub			Ar-Y – Kalb
U	59–64	الضحاك بن قيس الفهري <sup>4</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh
U	(60–64)	سعيد بن مالك بن بحدل <sup>5</sup>	Qinnasrīn, Jazīra	sub			Ar-Y – Kalb
U	(60–64)	حصين بن نمير بن نائل <sup>6</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-Y – Kinda
U	(64–65)	روح بن زنباع <sup>7</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	حسان بن مالك بن بحدل	sub	Ar-Y – Judhām
	64	زفر بن الحارث <sup>8</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub			Ar-Q – Hawāzīn – 'Āmir?
Z	64	<sup>9</sup> (2) النعمان بن بشير بن سعد	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-Y
Z	64	نائل بن قيس بن زيد <sup>10</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	Ibn al-Zubayr	cal. cont.	Ar-Y – Judhām
U	(64–65)	يزيد بن أبي النمير <sup>11</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y – Azd – Ghassān

1 'Adīm B 10.4625; Dhah 5.158–159. Al-Nu'mān became governor of Ḥimṣ a second time during the rule of Ibn al-Zubayr (see below).

2 Dhah 5.137.

3 Bal A 6.258–259, 264; Athīr K 3.238; 'Adīm B 5.2236; 'Asāk 12.449.

4 Dhah 4.86, 5.81, 261; 'Asāk 2.364; Bal A 5.350; 6.275, 278; 11.46; Mas 1.266; Ṭab 5.531; Athīr K 3.241. After the death of Yazīd I al-Ḍaḥḥāk threw in his lot with 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr for whom he claimed all of al-Shām.

5 Dhah 5.75, see also 'Adīm B 8.3801.

6 'Asāk 14.382; 'Adīm B 6.2818.

7 Bal A 6.264, 286; Athīr K 3.238, 242; 'Adīm B 5.2236; Ṭab 5.531. In 64 Rawḥ was expelled from Filasṭīn by the Zubayrid governor Nātil b. Qays but soon afterwards reinstated by Marwān I.

8 Bal A 6.266; Ṭab 5.535; Athīr K 3.241; Dhah 5.81. While in the year 64 Zufar is said to have temporarily acknowledged Ibn al-Zubayr (Dhah 5.81), he appears to have been originally appointed by some (?) Umayyad caliph.

9 Ṭab 5.535, 539; Ya'q 2.256; Athīr K 3.241; see also Bal A 6.266. Al-Nu'mān had already served as governor of Ḥimṣ under Mu'āwiya I (see above).

10 Ṭab 5.531, 540; Bal A 6.258; Ya'q 2.255.

11 Bal A 6.269. Yazīd expelled al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays from Dimashq but (according to Balādhurī) soon afterwards passed the command on to 'Abd al-Malik.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	65	عبد الملك <sup>12</sup>	Dimashq	sub	Marwān I	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(64 – 65)– 65	خالد بن يزيد بن معاوية <sup>13</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	65 – 71	أبان بن عقبة بن أبي معيط <sup>14</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	69	عبد الرحمن بن عبد الله <sup>15</sup>	Dimashq	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-Q – Thaqīf
U	71 –	محمد بن مروان <sup>16</sup>	Qinnasrīn, Jazīra	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	75	دينار بن دينار <sup>17</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub			<i>mawlā</i> of the caliph
U	81	سليمان بن سعد <sup>18</sup>	Urdunn	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	<i>mawlā</i> of Arab – Khushayn?
U	(65 – 86)	أبان بن مروان <sup>19</sup>	Filasṭīn <sup>20</sup>	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(65 – 86)	عبد الله بن يزيد بن أسد <sup>21</sup>	Dimashq	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-Y – Mālik
U	(65 – 86)	الوليد بن عبد الملك <sup>22</sup>	Dimashq	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(65 – 86)	أبان بن الوليد بن عقبة <sup>23</sup>	Ḥimṣ, Qinnasrīn	sub	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(65 – 86)	يحيى بن الحكم بن أبي العاص <sup>24</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya

12 Bal A 6.285.

13 Dhah 5.159; Bal A 5.363–364. Supposedly, Abān b. ‘Uqba was his deputy on the ground.

14 Bal A 7.52; Athīr K 3.388. Supposedly, Abān was subordinate to Khālid b. Yazīd.

15 Ṭab 6.140; Bal A 7.42; Athīr K 3.356.

16 Bal A 8.74; Shadd 1.114.

17 Bal F 1.188. Dīnār appears to have been born a slave (Qut Sh 1.337) in Ḥimṣ (Azd 1.26).

18 Bal F 1.193; Māw 1.301. Sulaymān appears to have been born in al-Urdunn and is mainly known for the prominent role he held in the organization of the *dīwān* (Manṣ 10.161; see also Ṭab 6.181; Khal Trkh 1.299, 312, 319).

19 Bal A 6.310.

20 According to Ibn ‘Asākir, Abān was only in charge of al-Balqā’ (‘Asāk 6.158, 9.217).

21 Bal A 7.42.

22 Bal A 7.43.

23 Bal A 9.349.

24 Dhah 5.315. Elsewhere Yaḥyā is only mentioned as governor of Medina (Bal A 7.136, 219; Ṭab 6.202).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	(86–96)	عبد العزيز بن الوليد <sup>25</sup>	Dimashq, Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Walīd I	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(86–96)	سعيد بن عبد الملك <sup>26</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(86–96)	سليمان بن عبد الملك <sup>27</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	al-Walīd I	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(86–96)	خالد بن برز العيسي <sup>28</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Walīd I	caliph	Ar-Q – Ghaṭafān – 'Abs
U	(86–96)	عبد الله بن عبد الملك <sup>29</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Walīd I	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(86–96)	العباس بن الوليد <sup>30</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Walīd I	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(86–96)	بشر بن الوليد <sup>31</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	96	محمد بن سويد بن كلثوم <sup>32</sup>	Dimashq	sub	Sulaymān	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh
U	(99–101)	الضحك بن عبد الرحمان بن عزب <sup>33</sup>	Dimashq	sub	'Umar II	caliph	Ar-Y – Ash'ar
U	(99–101)	عثمان بن سعيد <sup>34</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y – Ḥimyar – 'Udhra
U	(99–101)	هلال بن عبد الأعلى <sup>35</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	'Umar II	caliph	
U	(101–05)	عبد الله بن عبد الرحمن بن عتبة <sup>36</sup>	Dimashq	sub	Yazīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh
U	(101–25)	الوليد بن تليد <sup>37</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Arab – Murra?

25 Şaf 1.185; Dhah 7.92; Bal A 8.73–74.

26 Ṭab 7.266; Misk 3.197; Athīr K 4.310.

27 Bal F 1.145; Bal A 8.99; Mas 1.311.

28 Bal A 13.194; 'Asāk 16.5.

29 Bal A 7.196; Khal T 1.298.

30 Bal A 8.71; Dhah 8.88.

31 Bal A 8.71; Athīr K 4.331; 'Adīm Z 1.28; 'Adīm B 6.2888.

32 Şaf 1.85; Dhah 7.145.

33 Şaf 1.65, 85; Dhah 7.63.

34 Şaf 1.75, 185.

35 'Adīm Z 1.27.

36 Şaf 1.70, 185. While virtually nothing is known about 'Abdallāh, his father is said to have governed Egypt for Ibn al-Zubayr (Bal A 6.259).

37 Şaf 1.185. Elsewhere al-Walid is mainly known as governor of al-Mawṣil (Ṭab 7.260; Bal A 9.107, 13.134).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	121–23 <sup>38</sup>	كلثوم بن عياض بن جوح <sup>39</sup>	Dimashq	sub	Hishām	caliph	Ar-Q – Hawāzin – ‘Āmir – Ka’b
U	(105–25)	عبد الملك بن القعقاع بن خليد <sup>40</sup>	Ḥimṣ (or Qinnasrīn?)	sub	Hishām	caliph	Ar-Q – Ghaṭafān – ‘Abs
U	(105–25)	الوليد بن القعقاع بن خليد <sup>41</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	Hishām	caliph	Ar-Q – Ghaṭafān – ‘Abs
U	(105–25)	عمرو بن قيس بن ثور <sup>42</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ar-Y – Kinda – Sakūn
U	(105–25)	سعيد بن هشام <sup>43</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	Hishām	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(105–25)	إسحاق بن قبيصة بن ذؤيب <sup>44</sup>	Urdunn	sub			Ar-Y – Azd – Khuzā’a?
U	126	عبد الملك بن محمد بن الحجاج بن يوسف <sup>45</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-Q – Thaḳīf
U	126	عبد العزيز بن الحجاج بن عبد الملك <sup>46</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(125–26)	عمر بن عبد الملك بن مروان <sup>47</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(125–26)	عثمان بن عبد الأعلى بن سراقه <sup>48(1)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y – Azd
U	(125–26)	مروان بن عبد الله بن عبد الملك <sup>49</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya

**38** According to Ibn al-Athīr (Athīr K 4.296), however, Kulthūm governed Dimashq in the year 126.

**39** Ṣaf 1.90, 185; Bal A 9.103; Dhah 8.5.

**40** Ṭab 7.237; ‘Adīm Z 1.27–28. As Ibn al-‘Adīm (‘Adīm Z 1.28) notes that ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd, the two sons of al-Qa’qā’, might have been mixed up, it seems reasonable to follow al-Ṭabarī here.

**41** Ṭab 7.237; ‘Adīm Z 1.27–28. Al-Walīd was the maternal uncle of Hishām’s brother Sulaymān.

**42** Bal A 8.404.

**43** Bal A 8.406.

**44** ‘Asāk 8.270, 272.

**45** Ṣaf 1.186; Ṭab 7.233, 240; Bal A 9.172; Athīr K 4.302.

**46** Ṭab 7.249; Bal A 9.180; Athīr K 4.303–304. In fact, it appears that ‘Abd al-‘Azīz never accepted the governorate offered to him by al-Walīd II but continued to support Yazīd III.

**47** Ṣaf 1.79, 186

**48** Ṣaf 1.186. Notably, ‘Uthmān is said to have been reinstated as governor of Dimashq by ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī (see below).

**49** Ṭab 7.262; Bal A 9.203.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	(125–26)	الحكم بن الوليد <sup>50</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(125–26)	يزيد بن الوليد <sup>51</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(125–26)	عثمان بن الوليد <sup>52</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(125–26)	يزيد بن عمر بن هبيرة <sup>53</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Walīd II	caliph	Ar-Q – Fazāra
U	(125–26)–126	عبد الصمد بن محمد بن الحجاج بن يوسف <sup>54</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Q – Thaqīf
U	126	ضبيعان بن روح <sup>55</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-Y – Judhām
U	126	الأسود بن بلال <sup>56</sup>	Urdunn	sub			Arab – Muḥārib?
U	126	إبراهيم بن الوليد بن عبد الملك <sup>57</sup>	Urdunn	sub	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	126	سعيد بن عبد الملك <sup>58</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	126	ابن الحصين <sup>59</sup>	Ḥimṣ	sub	Yazīd III	caliph	
U	126	مسرور بن الوليد <sup>60</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	126–27	بشر بن الوليد بن عبد الملك <sup>61</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(126–27)–127	عبد العزيز بن الحجاج بن عبد الملك <sup>62</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	127	الرماحس بن عبد العزيز <sup>63</sup>	Filasṭīn <sup>64</sup>	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-M – Kināna

50 Bal A 9.151; Ya‘q 2.331; ‘Adīm B 6.2891; ‘Asāk 15.80.

51 Bal A 9.182; ‘Adīm B 9.3930–3931.

52 Bal A 9.151; Ya‘q 2.331; ‘Adīm B 6.2891; ‘Asāk 15.80.

53 Dhah 8.384; ‘Adīm Z 1.28.

54 Şaf 1.186; Misk 3.183.

55 Ṭab 7.268; Misk 3.199; Athīr K 4.311.

56 ‘Asāk 9.67; Ṭab 7.268.

57 Ṭab 7.268; Athīr K 4.311; Misk 3.199.

58 Misk 3.197; Ṭab 7.266; Athīr K 4.310.

59 Ṭab 7.268; Misk 3.199.

60 Ṭab 7.268; Misk 3.199; ‘Adīm Z 1.28.

61 Ṭab 7.300; Athīr K 4.331; see also ‘Adīm Z 1.28; ‘Adīm B 6.2888.

62 Şaf 1.186; Ya‘q 2.338.

63 Ṭab 7.314; Athīr K 4.338; Misk 3.228.

64 According to al-Balādhurī (Bal A 9.320), al-Ramāḥis governed al-Urdunn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	132	65 الوليد بن معاوية بن مروان	Dimashq	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	– 132	66 ثعلبة بن سلامة العاملي	Urdunn	sub			Ar-Y
U	(127 – 32)	67 كوثر بن عبد الله الأسود الغنوي	Dimashq	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Q
U	(127 – 32)	68 الكوثر بن زفر بن الحارث	Qinnasrīn, Jazīra	sub			Ar-Q – Kilāb
U	(127 – 32)	69 ثابت بن نعيم بن زرععة	Filasṭīn (, Urdunn)	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Y – Judhām
U	(127 – 32)	70 معاوية بن يزيد بن حصين	Ḥimṣ	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Y – Kinda – Sakūn
U	(127 – 32)	71 عبد الله بن شجرة	Ḥimṣ	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Y – Kinda
U	(127 – 32)	72 عبد الملك بن الكوثر الغنوي	Qinnasrīn	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Q
U	(127 – 32)	73 زامل بن عمرو السكسكي	Dimashq (, Ḥimṣ)	sub	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Y – Ḥimyar
	(127 – 32)	74 يزيد بن خالد بن عبد الله (1)	Dimashq	sub			Arab – Bajīla

**65** Ṭab 7.438; Ṣaf 1.111, 186; Bal A 4.121, 6.309, 11.12; Athīr K 5.18. He appears to be identical with al-Walid b. Mu'āwiya b. 'Abd al-Malik (see Misk 3.279 / Ṭab 7.370) and Mu'āwiya b. al-Walid b. 'Abd al-Malik (see Dīn 1.357). According to an additional passage in al-Ṭabarī's *Tarīkh* (Ṭab 7.312), al-Walid was elected governor by the *ahl al-Urdunn* after swearing allegiance to Marwān II in 127.

**66** Ṭab 7.438; Bal A 9.320.

**67** Ṣaf 1.90, 186, 222.

**68** Bal F 1.189; 'Adīm B 1.236.

**69** Bal A 9.224–225; 'Asāk 11.143–144. According to al-Ṭabarī (Ṭab 7.312), Thābit was elected governor by the *ahl Filasṭīn* after swearing allegiance to Marwān II in 127. At a later point, however, Thābit appears to have rebelled against Marwān II (see *EF*<sup>2</sup>, “Marwan II” (G.R. Hawting)).

**70** Bal A 9.224; see also Ṭab 7.263.

**71** Bal A 9.224, 228; 'Asāk 15.83. According to al-Ṭabarī (Ṭab 7.312), 'Abdallāh was elected governor by the *ahl Ḥimṣ* after swearing allegiance to Marwān II in 127.

**72** Bal A 9.224–225; 'Adīm Z 1.29.

**73** Ṣaf 1.55, 186; 'Adīm B 8.3731–3732; 'Asāk 16.316. According to al-Ṭabarī (Ṭab 7.312), Zāmil was elected governor by the *ahl Dimashq* after swearing allegiance to Marwān II in 127.

**74** Ṣaf 1.113, 186. Yazid came to power over Dimashq after Marwān II's governor Zāmil was forced out. While Yazid is said to have been made governor of Dimashq again under al-Manṣūr (see below), it is not known whether he acknowledged 'Abbāsīd suzerainty already at this early point.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	132–34	عبد الله بن علي <sup>75</sup>	Shām	gov	al-Saffāḥ	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	132	عبد الحميد بن ربعي <sup>76</sup>	Dimashq	Sub	عبد الله بن علي	gov	Ar-Y – Qahtān – Kahlān – Ṭayyi’
A	(131–36)	رياح بن عثمان <sup>77</sup>	Dimashq	sub	صالح بن علي	gov	Arab – Murra?
A	133–34	صالح بن علي (1) <sup>78</sup>	Filasṭīn (, Dimashq)	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(131–36)	عبيد الله بن العباس بن يزيد <sup>79</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Saffāḥ	caliph	Ar-Y – Kinda
A	(131–36)	عبد الصمد بن علي (1) <sup>80</sup>	Qinnasrīn	Sub	عبد الله بن علي	gov	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(136–37)	الحكم بن ضبعان بن روح <sup>81</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī	cal. cont.	Ar-Y – Judhām
A	(136–37)	عثمان بن عبد الأعلى بن سراقه (2) <sup>82</sup>	Dimashq	sub	‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī	cal. cont.	Ar-Y – Azd
A	(136–37)	عمر بن شريح الحضرمي <sup>83</sup>	Dimashq	sub	‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī	cal. cont.	Ar-Y?
A	(136–37)	زفر بن عاصم <sup>84</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī	cal. cont.	Ar-Q – Khasafa – Hawāzin – Hilāl
A	137	حميد بن قحطية <sup>85</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī	cal. cont.	Ar-Y – Ṭayyi’?

**75** Athīr K 5.35, 44; Dhah 8.235; Dīn 1.378. Al-Ṭabarī (Ṭab 7.459, see also 460, 467) states for the year 133 that it was both ‘Abdallāh and Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī who were in charge of the *ajnad al-Shām*. **76** Ṣaf 1.186; Ṭab 7.444.

**77** Ṣaf 1.186. Elsewhere Riyāḥ is mainly known to have governed Medina for al-Manṣūr (Khal T 1.420–421; Bal A 3.115, 13.132; Ṭab 7.517; Athīr K 5.97, 107; Dhah 9.9).

**78** Ṭab 7.460, 465, 467; Athīr K 5.44; Ṣaf 1.63, 186; Dhah 9.291. Despite the insurrection of his brother ‘Abdallāh against al-Manṣūr, Ṣāliḥ continued to hold several governorates under the latter’s rule (see below).

**79** Bal A 8.234.

**80** ‘Adīm Z 1.31. Some forty years later, when ‘Abd al-Ṣamad must have been an elderly man, he is mentioned again as governor of Dimashq under al-Rashīd (see below).

**81** Bal A 4.106, 9.323.

**82** Bal A 4.106; Dhah 8.325. According to al-Ṣafādī (Ṣaf 1.186), ‘Uthmān had already been governor of Dimashq under Walīd II (see above).

**83** Ṣaf 1.79, 186.

**84** Bal A 4.106.

**85** Bal A 4.106.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	136?	عبد الوهاب بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>86(1)</sup>	Dimashq (, Filasṭīn)	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	137	أبو مسلم <sup>87</sup>	Shām, Miṣr <sup>88</sup>	sup	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Khurāsānian?
A	138	يزيد بن خالد بن عبد الله <sup>89(2)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Arab – Bajīla
A	140	محمد بن أشعث بن يحيى <sup>90</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Khurāsānian
A	(140 – 58)	العباس بن محمد بن علي <sup>91</sup>	Shām	gov			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	137 – 41	صالح بن علي <sup>92(2)</sup>	Qinnasrīn (, ‘Awāṣim, Ḥimṣ, Dimashq)	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	141 – 42	صالح بن علي <sup>93(3)</sup>	Shām	gov			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	145	موسى بن عبد الله <sup>94</sup>	Shām	gov			Ar-M – Quraysh – Hāshim?
A	145 – 52 –	الفضل بن صالح بن علي <sup>95(1)</sup>	Qinnasrīn <sup>96</sup>	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(136 – 58)	عمرو بن محمد بن عبد المطلب <sup>97</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – Hāshim

**86** Ṣaf 1.75, 187; Dhah 9.342; ‘Asāk 15.10. Later in al-Manṣūr’s reign, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was appointed over al-Shām as a whole (see below).

**87** Ṭab 7.482; Bal A 4.202; Dhah 8.238. In fact, it appears that Abū Muslim was never meant to become governor of al-Shām but his appointment was part of al-Manṣūr’s plan to get rid of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī and subsequently Abū Muslim himself.

**88** Other texts mention Abū Muslim as governor of al-Shām and al-Jazīra (Bal A 4.107) or simply of al-Shām (‘Adīm B 8.3803; ‘Adīm Z 1.34; Misk 3.351).

**89** Ṣaf 1.113, 187. Yazīd had already governed Dimashq during the ‘Abbāsīd revolution (see above).

**90** Ṣaf 1.187; Dhah 9.164.

**91** Ṣaf 1.69, 187; Dhah 12.109.

**92** Ṭab 7.511; ‘Adīm Z 1.34; Ya‘q 2.383 – 284, 390; see also Dhah 9.291. Ṣālīḥ had already governed Filasṭīn (and Dimashq) under al-Saffāḥ (see above).

**93** Athīr K 5.90; ‘Adīm B 1.467; Dhah 9.5.

**94** Athīr K 5.120; Ṭab 7.561.

**95** Ṭab 7.623; ‘Adīm Z 1.35. While according to al-Ṭabarī, al-Faḍl governed Qinnasrīn already in 145, Ibn al-‘Adīm states that he became governor only after the death of his father in 151 or 152.

**96** Al-Dhahabī refers to al-Faḍl as the governor of al-Shām as a whole (Dhah 9.291).

**97** Ṣaf 1.187.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	(136–58)	عبد الوهاب بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>98(2)</sup>	Shām	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(136–58)	محمد بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>99(1)</sup>	Shām	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(136–58)	سليمان بن أبي جعفر المنصور <sup>100</sup>	al-Sham, Jazīra, Baṣra	sup	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	157–158	إبراهيم بن عبد الوهاب بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>101</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	158	موسى بن سليمان <sup>102</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Khurāsānian
A	(136–58)/ (158–69) <sup>103</sup>	الفضل بن صالح بن علي <sup>104(2)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	159	محمد بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>105(2)</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	–163	إبراهيم بن صالح بن علي <sup>106(1)</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(158–69)	نصر بن محمد بن الأشعث <sup>107</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub			Khurāsānian?
A	(158–69)	هارون الرشيد <sup>108</sup>	Shām	gov	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(158–69)– 169	علي بن سليمان بن علي <sup>109</sup>	Qinnasrīn, Jazīra	sub	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	169–70–	إبراهيم بن صالح بن علي <sup>110(2)</sup>	Dimashq (, Urdunn, Cy- prus)	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd

**98** Bal A 4.127; ‘Asāk 7.45. Earlier in al-Manṣūr’s reign, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb had already governed Dimashq (and Filasṭīn) (see above).

**99** Bal A 4.127. Muḥammad already governed Mecca, Medina and al-Yaman when his brother ‘Abd al-Wahhāb died and he additionally became governor of al-Shām

**100** Bal A 4.276.

**101** Ṣaf 1.95, 187; ‘Asāk 7.44.

**102** ‘Adīm Z 1.35.

**103** While according to al-Ṣafaḍī, al-Faḍl governed Dimashq under al-Manṣūr (Ṣaf 1.74), al-Dhabī states that this was the case under al-Mahdī (Dhah 11.161).

**104** Ṣaf 1.74, 187; Dhah 11.161.

**105** Ṣaf 1.95, 187; Dhah 12.197; ‘Asāk 7.44.

**106** Ṭab 8.148; Athīr K 5.233.

**107** Ṭab 7.438; Athīr K 5.20.

**108** ‘Adīm Z 1.37.

**109** ‘Adīm Z 1.36; Bal F 1.190.

**110** Ṣaf 1.187; Dhah 11.13; ‘Asāk 6.445.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	- 172	<sup>111</sup> محمد بن إبراهيم الإمام (3)	Dimashq, Urdunn	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	172 – 75	إبراهيم بن صالح بن علي <sup>112</sup> (3)	Dimashq	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	175	<sup>113</sup> الأمين	Shām, Iraq (Maghrib)	sup	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	175 – 76	<sup>114</sup> موسى بن عيسى بن موسى	Shām	gov			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(175 – 93)	إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن صالح <sup>115</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	- 176	<sup>116</sup> عبد الصمد بن علي (2)	Dimashq	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	175 – 77	عبد الملك بن صالح بن علي <sup>117</sup> (1)	Qinnasrīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	176 – <sup>118</sup>	<sup>119</sup> موسى بن يحيى بن خالد	Shām <sup>120</sup>	gov	al-Rashīd	caliph	Khurāsānian – Barmakīd
A	178	<sup>121</sup> هرثمة بن أعين	Filasṭīn	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Khurāsānian – <i>mawlā</i> of the caliph

**111** Şaf 1.95, 187; ‘Asāk 6.445.

**112** Şaf 1.187; Athīr K 5.294; ‘Asāk 6.445. According to Ibn ‘Asākīr, Ibrāhīm ruled Dimashq three times during the caliphate of Hārūn al-Rashīd.

**113** Ṭab 8.275; Athīr K 5.344.

**114** Ṭab 8.251; Dhah 7.11; see also Şaf 1.106, 187. While al-Şafaḍī addresses him as Mūsā b. ‘Īsā b. Muḥammad, his actual name appears to have been Mūsā b. ‘Īsā b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad.

**115** Şaf 1.187; ‘Adīm B 3.1375; Athīr K 5.294.

**116** Athīr K 5.293 – 294; Dhah 12.150; ‘Asāk 6.445 – 446. ‘Abd al-Şamad is mentioned as governor of Qinnasrīn already under al-Saffāḥ (see above). Either this is a mistake or he was quite old by the reign of al-Rashīd.

**117** ‘Adīm Z 1.36 – 37. Slightly later ‘Abd al-Malik became governor of Dimashq and even of the whole of al-Shām under al-Amīn (see below).

**118** Al-Dhahabī dates Mūsā’s appointment to the year 175 (Dhah 11.7).

**119** Ṭab 8.251; Misk 3.518; Dhah 13.225; ‘Adīm Z 1.37.

**120** Al-Şafaḍī mentions Mūsā as governor of Dimashq only (Şaf 1.187).

**121** Ṭab 8.256; Athīr K 5.304.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	178/ 180? <sup>122</sup>	جعفر بن يحيى بن خالد <sup>123</sup>	Shām (, Jazīra)	gov	al-Rashīd	caliph	Khurāsānian – Barmakid
A	179	إسحاق بن عيسى بن علي <sup>124</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	179	إسحاق بن صالح بن علي <sup>125</sup>	Dimashq <sup>126</sup>	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	177 – 79	عبد الملك بن صالح بن علي <sup>127</sup> (2)	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	180	إبراهيم بن صالح بن علي <sup>128</sup> (4)	Filasṭīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	180	عيسى بن العكي <sup>129</sup>	Shām	gov	جعفر بن يحيى	gov	Arab – ‘Akk?
A	182 –	إسماعيل بن صالح بن علي <sup>130</sup>	Qinnasrīn (, ‘Awāšim, Dimashq)	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	– 187	إبراهيم بن المهدي <sup>131</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	187	سليمان بن المنصور <sup>132</sup> (1)	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	187 – 88	شعيب بن حازم بن خزيمه <sup>133</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Tamīm?
A	190	سليمان بن المنصور <sup>134</sup> (2)	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd

**122** Al-Ṣafāḍī states that Ja‘far was made governor of Dimashq in 188 (Ṣaf 1.188), which seems impossible, as he is known to have been executed in 187 (*EP*<sup>2</sup>, “al-Barāmika” (D. Sourdel)).

**123** Misk 3.524; ‘Adīm Z 1.37; Ya‘q 2.410; see also Dhah 12.53. Ja‘far was made “interim governor” to put an end to the *aṣabiyya* turmoil and soon afterwards appointed ‘Isā l-‘Akkī over al-Shām.

**124** Ṣaf 1.187; Dhah 14.29; ‘Asāk 8.268.

**125** ‘Asāk 8.106, 226.

**126** According to Ibn al-‘Adīm, Iṣḥāq even became governor of al-Shām as a whole (‘Adīm B 3.1467).

**127** ‘Asāk 8.268; see also Ṣaf 1.187; Ya‘q 2.410. According to al-Ṣafāḍī, ‘Abd al-Malik was dismissed already in 178.

**128** Dhah 11.14.

**129** Ṭab 8.263; Misk 3.524; Dhah 12.53; ‘Adīm Z 1.37.

**130** ‘Adīm B 4.1648–1649; ‘Adīm Z 1.37; Dhah 12.36.

**131** Ṣaf 1.188; ‘Asāk 7.115.

**132** Ṣaf 1.188; see also Ya‘q 2.409; Dhah 13.114, 16.39.

**133** Dhah 12.18, 99. It is assumed here that Ḥāzim is a defective spelling of Khāzim and Shu‘ayb was the brother of Khuzayma (see below).

**134** Ṣaf 1.188; see also Ya‘q 2.409; Dhah 13.114, 16.39.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	191	يحيى بن معاذ <sup>135</sup>	Shām	gov	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il – Dhuhl
A	193	خزيمة بن خازم بن خزيمة 136(1)	Qinnasrīn, 'Awāšīm	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Tamīm
A	(170–87)	سندي بن شاهك <sup>137</sup>	Dimashq	sub	موسى بن يحيى بن خالد	gov	<i>mawlā</i> of al-Manšūr
A	(170–93)	منصور بن المهدي (1) <sup>138</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	(170–93)	روح بن حاتم بن قبيصة <sup>139</sup>	Filasṭīn	sub			Ar-Y – Azd / Iranian?
A	(170–93)	أحمد بن إسحاق بن إسماعيل <sup>140</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	(170–93)	إبراهيم بن محمد بن إبراهيم الإمام <sup>141</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	187–94	القاسم بن الرشيد <sup>142</sup>	Shām, Qinnasrīn, Thughūr	gov	al-Rashīd	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	192–93	علي بن الحسن بن قحطبة <sup>143</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y – Ṭayyī'?
A	193, >1y	منصور بن المهدي (2) <sup>144</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	194–	خزيمة بن خازم بن خزيمة 145 (2)	Shām, Qinnasrīn, 'Awāšīm, Thughūr	gov	al-Amīn	caliph	Ar-M – Tamīm?
A	194	أحمد بن سعيد الخرشني/ الخرشي <sup>146</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Q

135 Ṭab 8.323; Athīr K 5.379.

136 'Adīm B 7.3256; 'Adīm Z 1.38.

137 Ṣaf 1.187; Dhah 14.94.

138 Bal A 4.278.

139 Athīr K 5.279.

140 'Adīm Z 1.37.

141 'Asāk 7.113.

142 Din 1.391; Dhah 13.10; 'Adīm Z 1.37–38; Ṭab 8.373, 374; Athīr K 5.399; 'Adīm B 7.3256, 3258; Misk 4.31; Shadd 1.115.

143 Ṣaf 1.188. Elsewhere 'Alī is mainly mentioned as governor of Khurāsān (Khal T 1.462–463; Ṭab 8.347; Athīr K 5.391).

144 Ṣaf 1.188; Dhah 17.182.

145 Ṭab 8.374; Misk 4.31; Dhah 13.10; 'Adīm B 7.3256, 3258; 'Adīm Z 1.38; Shadd 1.115.

146 Ṣaf 1.188.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	194, >1y	147 عبد الله بن سعيد الحرشي	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Amīn	caliph	Ar-Q
A	–194	148 إسحاق بن سليمان بن علي	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Amīn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	195, >1y	149(3) سليمان بن المنصور	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	196 – 97	150(3) عبد الملك بن صالح بن علي	Shām, Jazīra	sup	al-Amīn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	197 – 98	151(3) خزيمه بن خازم بن خزيمه	Qinnasrīn, ‘Awāṣim	sub	al-Amīn	caliph	Ar-M – Tamīm
A	(197 – 98)	152 يزيد بن مزيد	Qinnasrīn	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā’il – Shaybān
	(197 – 98)	153 وراق عبد الملك	Qinnasrīn	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā’il – Shaybān?
A	198/9 –	154 طاهر بن الحسين	Shām, Jazīra, Miṣr and Maghrib	sup	al-Ma’mūn	caliph	Khurāsānīan – Ṭāhirid
A	206/7 – 213	155 عبد الله بن طاهر	Shām, Jazīra, Miṣr and Maghrib	sup	al-Ma’mūn	caliph	Khurāsānīan – Ṭāhirid
A	(207 – 13)	156 صدقة بن عثمان	Dimashq	sub	عبد الله بن طاهر	sup	Arab – Murra?
A	213 – 18	157 المعتصم	Shām, Miṣr	sup	al-Ma’mūn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	213 – 14	158(1) العباس بن المأمون	Qinnasrīn (, Jazīra),	sub	al-Ma’mūn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd

147 Ṭab 8.388.

148 Ṭab 8.374, 388; ‘Adīm B 3.1467.

149 Ṣaf 1.188; Ṭab 8.415; Athīr K 5.419; Dhah 13.114.

150 Ṭab 8.424 – 425; Athīr K 5.425 – 426; Ya’q 2.434, 440; ‘Adīm B 7.3256; Misk 3.547, 4.73; Dhah 12.16 – 17, 13.156; ‘Adīm Z 1.38; Shadd 1.115.

151 ‘Adīm B 7.3256; ‘Adīm Z 1.38 – 39.

152 ‘Adīm Z 1.39. Elsewhere Mazyad is mainly addressed as governor of Armenia for al-Rashīd (Dīn 1.390; Ṭab 8.236, 270; Misk 3.526; ‘Asāk 5.331; Dhah 4.11, 5.12).

153 (sic) ‘Adīm Z 1.39. This account bears no information on Warqā’s loyalties.

154 Ṭab 8.527; Athīr K 5.460; Ya’q 2.454 – 455; Misk 4.113; Jawz 10.52; Dhah 13.22, 42; ‘Adīm Z 1.39; Shadd 1.115 – 116.

155 Ṭab 8.595; Athīr K 5.550; Ya’q 2.456; ‘Adīm Z 1.39, 40; see also Ṣaf 1.70, 188.

156 Ṣaf 1.64, 188.

157 Ṭab 8.620; Athīr K 5.557; Misk 4.165; Dhah 15.5; see also Ṣaf 1.188.

158 ‘Adīm Z 1.40; Athīr K 5.557.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			‘Awāṣīm, Thughūr				
A	214, >1y	إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن مصعب <sup>159</sup>	Qinnasrīn, ‘Awāṣīm, al- Thughūr	sub	al-Ma’ mūn	caliph	Khurāsānian – Tāhirid
A	218	إسحاق بن يحيى بن معاذ <sup>160(1)</sup>	Dimashq	sub	المعتصم	sup	Khurāsānian – Khuttalī
A	(214 – 15)– 218–	العباس بن المأمون <sup>161(2)</sup>	Qinnasrīn, Jazīra (, ‘Awāṣīm, Thughūr)	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(198 – 218)	معيوف بن يحيى بن معيوف <sup>162</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y?
A	(198 – 218)	حميد بن معيوف بن يحيى <sup>163</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-Y?
A	(198 – 218)	نصر بن حمزة بن مالك <sup>164</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Khurāsānian
A	225, >1y	دينار بن عبد الله بن زاد <sup>165</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Mu’taṣīm	caliph	Iranian – Sahlid
A	225 –	محمد بن الجهم السامي/ السامي <sup>166</sup>	Dimashq	sub	al-Mu’taṣīm	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh?
A	(218 – 27)	الوائقي <sup>167</sup>	Shām, Jazīra, Miṣr	sup	al-Mu’taṣīm	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(218 – 27)	رجاء بن أبي الضحاك <sup>168</sup>	Dimashq	sub			
A	(218 – 27)	القاسم بن عيسى بن إدريس <sup>169</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā’il – ‘Ijl
A	(218 – 27)	مسلم بن محمد <sup>170(1)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			

159 ‘Adīm Z 1.40.

160 Ṣaf 1.188; Ṭab 8.646; Dhah 17.51, 18.32; ‘Asāk 8.302.

161 Ṭab 8.631; ‘Adīm Z 1.40 – 41.

162 Ṣaf 1.103, 188. Elsewhere Ma’yūf is mainly known to have led several military campaigns against Byzantium (Khal T 1.427, 429, 445; Ṭab 8.43, 57, 203–204; Athīr K 5.179, 208, 263).

163 Ṣaf 1.188. Ḥumayd had earlier governed the coast of al-Shām under al-Rashīd (Ṭab 8.320; Misk 3.557; Dhah 12.21).

164 Ṣaf 1.188. Elsewhere Naṣr is mainly known to have governed the eastern part of Baghdad (Ṭab 8.546; Misk 4.126; Athīr K 5.480).

165 Ṣaf 1.51, 188; Dhah 16.13; ‘Asāk 17.319.

166 Ṣaf 1.96, 188; ‘Asāk 17.319.

167 Dhah 19.62.

168 ‘Asāk 13.84.

169 Ṣaf 1.188; Dhah 16.194

170 Ṣaf 1.188.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	225 – 30	أشinas <sup>171</sup>	Shām, Jazīra (and/or Miṣr) <sup>172</sup>	sup	al-Mu'taṣim	caliph	Turkī
A	227, >1y	أبو المغيث موسى بن إبراهيم <sup>173</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ifriqī?
A	(218 – 32)	عبيد الله بن عبد العزيز بن الفضل <sup>174</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Mu'taṣim	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	230	عبيد الله بن عبد العزيز بن عبد الملك <sup>175</sup>	Shām, Jazīra	sup	al-Wāthiq	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd?
A	(227 – 32)	إسحاق بن يحيى بن معاذ <sup>176(2)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Khurāsānīan – Khuttalī
A	(227 – 32)	مسلم بن محمد <sup>177(2)</sup>	Dimashq	sub			
A	(227 – 32)	عبد الرحمن بن حبيب <sup>178</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh
A	(227 – 32)	محمد بن صالح بن عبد الله بن صالح <sup>179</sup>	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Wāthiq	caliph	
A	232 – (232 – 47)	مالك بن طوق <sup>180</sup>	Dimashq (, Urdunn)	sub			Ar-R – Taghlib
A	235 – 47	المنتصر <sup>181</sup>	Qinnasrīn, 'Awāṣim, Thughūr, Jazīra, ... <sup>182</sup>	sup	al-Mutawakkil	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	235	المؤيد بن المتوكل <sup>183</sup>	Dimashq, Ḥimṣ, Ur- dunn, Filasṭīn	sub/ gov?	al-Mutawakkil	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd

171 'Adīm B 4.1919; Dhah 16.13; Shadd 1.116; see also 'Asāk 9.163; Ṣaf 1.189.

172 Ibn 'Asākīr and al-Ṣafāḍī mention Ashinās not as super-governor but as governor of Dimashq under al-Wāthiq ('Asāk 9.163; Ṣaf 1.189).

173 Ṣaf 1.115, 188 – 189; Dhah 16.15 – 16.

174 'Adīm Z 1.42.

175 Shadd 1.116. This entry might actually refer to 'Ubaydallāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. al-Faḍl b. Ṣāliḥ.

176 Ṣaf 1.189; 'Asāk 8.302.

177 Ṣaf 1.189.

178 Ṣaf 1.189.

179 'Adīm Z 1.42.

180 Ṣaf 1.94, 189; Dhah 19.251.

181 'Adīm Z 1.44; Ṭab 9.175 – 176.

182 According to Ibn Shaddād al-Muntaṣir was put in charge of all of al-Shām and al-Jazīra (Shadd 1.116).

183 Ṭab 9.176.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	241	<sup>184</sup> (1) صالح العباسي	Dimashq	sub			Turkī / <i>mawlā</i> of Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	-244	<sup>185</sup> إفريدون	Dimashq	sub			Turkī
A	244	<sup>186</sup> الفتح بن خاقان	Dimashq	sub			Turkī
A	(244 – 47)	<sup>187</sup> كليباتكين	Dimashq	sub		الفتح بن خاقان	sub Turkī
A	(232 – 47)	<sup>188</sup> سالم بن حامد	Dimashq	sub			
A	(232 – 47)	أحمد بن محمد بن عبيد الله بن المدير <sup>189</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Iranian?
A	247	<sup>190</sup> يونس بن طارحة	Dimashq	sub			
A	232	<sup>191</sup> الشارباميان	Qīnnasrīn, ‘Awāšīm	sub	al-Mutawakkil	caliph	Turkī?
A	(232 – 47)	<sup>192</sup> علي بن إسماعيل بن صالح	Qīnnasrīn, ‘Awāšīm	sub		الشارباميان	sub Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Alīd
A	(232 – 47)	<sup>193</sup> محمد بن علي بن إسماعيل	Qīnnasrīn	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Alīd
A	(232 – 47)	عيسى بن عبيد الله بن الفضل <sup>194</sup>	Qīnnasrīn, ‘Awāšīm	sub		الشارباميان	sub? Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	235 – (247 – 48)	<sup>195</sup> يغا الكبير	Qīnnasrīn <sup>196</sup>	sub		المنتصر	sup Turkī
A	(247 – 48)-250	<sup>197</sup> وصيف	Shām, Jazīra	sup			Turkī

**184** Şaf 1.64, 189; Ṭab 9.199.

**185** Şaf 1.189; Dhah 17.8.

**186** Şaf 1.189. Elsewhere al-Faṭḥ is mainly addressed as a close confidant of al-Mutawakkil and is said to have been in charge of the *akhbār* (Ṭab 9.184; Misk 4.298).

**187** Şaf 1.189.

**188** Şaf 1.189; Dhah 17.81.

**189** Şaf 1.189; see also Dhah 20.37.

**190** Şaf 1.189.

**191** ‘Adīm Z 1.43.

**192** ‘Adīm Z 1.43.

**193** ‘Adīm Z 1.44.

**194** ‘Adīm Z 1.44.

**195** ‘Adīm Z 1.44.

**196** According to Ibn Shaddād, Bughā was al-Muntaṣir’s deputy over al-Shām and al-Jazīra as a whole (Shadd 1.116).

**197** Shadd 1.116.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	247 – (248 – 52)	<sup>198</sup> عيسى بن محمد النوشري	Dimashq	sub			Turkī / Khurāsānī-an?
A	248	<sup>199</sup> كيدر بن عبيد الله	Ḥimṣ	sub			Ushrūsānī
A	249	<sup>200</sup> بغا الصغير	Filasṭīn	sub	al-Mustaʿīn	caliph	Turkī
A	– 250	<sup>201</sup> الفضل بن قارن	Ḥimṣ	sub			Iranian
A	250	<sup>202</sup> موسى بن بغا	Ḥimṣ, Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Mustaʿīn	caliph	Turkī
A	250 – 52	<sup>203(1)</sup> أحمد المولد	Shām, Jazīra	sup	al-Mustaʿīn	caliph	
A	(248 – 52)	<sup>204</sup> عبد الرحمن بن حبيب	Ḥimṣ	sub	al-Mustaʿīn	caliph	Ar-Y – Azd
A	(248 – 52)	<sup>205(2)</sup> صالح العباسي	Dimashq	sub			Turkī / <i>mawlā</i> of Ar-M – Quraysh – ʿAbbāsīd
A	249 – (252 – 255)	<sup>206</sup> نوشرى بن طاجيل	Dimashq	sub			Turkī
A	252	<sup>207(2)</sup> أحمد المولد	Qinnasrīn	sub	al-Muʿtazz	caliph	
A	252 –	<sup>208</sup> عيسى بن الشيخ	Filasṭīn (, Urdunn)	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wāʿil – Shaybān

**198** Ṣaf 1.81; Athīr K 6.182. Notably, the table given by al-Ṣafaḍī (Ṣaf 1.189) does not provide any information on the reign of al-Mustaʿīn.

**199** Ṭab 9.259; Yaʿq 2.495.

**200** Ṭab 9.264; Athīr K 6.195; ʿAsāk 10.327.

**201** Ṭab 9.276; Dhah 18.15; Yaʿq 2.495.

**202** ʿAdīm Z 1.45.

**203** Shadd 1.116.

**204** Yaʿq 2.495.

**205** Ṣaf 1.64. Notably, the table given by al-Ṣafaḍī (Ṣaf 1.189) does not provide any information on the reign of al-Mustaʿīn.

**206** Yaʿq 2.496, 500. He might be identical with ʿĪsā b. Muḥammad al-Nūsharī.

**207** ʿAdīm B 3.1296, 6.2753; ʿAdīm Z 1.45.

**208** ʿĪsā appears to have been appointed over Filasṭīn (and al-Urdunn) (Athīr K 6.240; Shadd 1.82; see also Yaʿq 2.508) and only later seceded from ʿAbbāsīd suzerainty. While he is sometimes mentioned as (legitimate?) governor of Dimashq (Athīr K 6.290; Shadd 1.159 – 160; Ṣaf 1.190) or even al-Shām as a whole (Athīr K 6.290), he took over the central and northern parts of the province by force (Athīr K 6.240; Shadd 1.82, 116; Ṣaf 1.80; Dhah 20.101). Due to the extremely involute references to his governorate(s), the exact stages of his political career remain notoriously vague (see Cobb 2001, 37–41; *EF*, “ʿĪsā b. al-Shaykh” (M. Canard)).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	254	أبو الساج داوداد / ديوداد <sup>209</sup>	Qinnasrīn, 'Awāšīm, Diyār Muḍar <sup>210</sup>	sub	صالح بن وصيف	general	Ushrūsānī
A	(252–255)	أحمد بن خالد بن يزيد <sup>211</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il – Shaybān
A	(252–255)	صالح بن عبيد الله بن عبد العزيز <sup>212</sup>	Qinnasrīn, 'Awāšīm	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	(252–255)	أبو ميمون بن سليمان بن عبد الملك <sup>213</sup>	Qinnasrīn, 'Awāšīm	sub			Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abbāsīd
A	(252–256)	يمكجور <sup>214</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Turkī
A	(252–55)/ (255–56)?	أصرم <sup>215</sup>	Dimashq	sub			Turkī

**209** 'Adīm B 7.3477; 'Adīm Z 1.45–46.

**210** According to Ibn Shaddād, al-Mu'tazz appointed Abū l-Sāj Diwdād over al-Shām and al-Jazīra, which he ruled at least until 255 (Shadd 1.116).

**211** Şaf 1.25, 189.

**212** 'Adīm Z 1.45.

**213** 'Adīm Z 1.45.

**214** Şaf 1.116, 189–190.

**215** 'Asāk 9.174; Şaf 1.30. Both Ibn 'Asākīr and al-Şafādī note that it is not entirely clear whether Aşram was appointed under al-Mu'tazz or under al-Muhtadī.

## Governors of Fārs

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	38/39–42	زيد بن أبيه (= زياد بن أبي سفيان) <sup>216</sup>	Fārs	gov	عبد الله بن عباس بن عبد المطلب	sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	42–45	عبد الله بن عامر <sup>217</sup>	Bašra, Fārs, Sijjstān, Khurāsān	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abd Shams
U	42–45	شريك بن الأعور <sup>218</sup>	Iṣṭakhr	sub	عبد الله بن عامر	sup	Ar-Y – Azd – al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b
U	45	الحارث بن عبد الله / عمرو الأزدي <sup>219</sup>	Bašra, Fārs, Sijjstān, Khurāsān?	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-Y – Azd
U	45–53	زيد بن أبي سفيان <sup>220</sup>	Bašra, Kūfa, Ḥijāz	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(45–53)	أمير بن أحمر <sup>221</sup>	Sābūr	sub	زيد بن أبي سفيان	sup	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il – Dhuhl b. Shaybān / Yashkur
U	(45–53)	عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد <sup>222</sup>	Fārs	gov	زيد بن أبي سفيان	sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	(45–53)	شريك بن الأعور <sup>223</sup>	Fārs, Kirmān	gov	زيد بن أبي سفيان	sup	Ar-Y – Azd – al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b
U	53–54	سمرة بن جندب الفزاري <sup>224</sup>	Bašra	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-Q – Fazāra

**216** Bal A 2.188, 2.435, 3.47, 5.189–190; Ṭab 5.122, 5.137, 5.155, 5.170, 5.177, 5.178–180. Ziyād's father was unknown, but shortly before Ziyād's appointment over Bašra, Mu'āwiya recognized Ziyād as his own half-brother, and he was henceforth referred to as Ibn Abī Sufyān.

**217** Khal Trkh 161; dirhams: Album 2011: 24 no. 6, 7.

**218** Ṭab 6.301; Athir K 2.439.

**219** Khal Trkh 207; Ṭab 5.215.

**220** Khal Trkh 207, 210; Ya'q 1.196, 200; Bal A 5.161; Ṭab 5.217, 234; dirhams: Album 2011: 24 no. 8. Kūfa was added to his responsibilities in the year 50, and the Ḥijāz shortly before his death.

**221** Kalbī M 1.81; Khal Trkh 164, 180; Bal F 382, 390, 396; Bal A 5.199; Ṭab 5.224–226.

**222** Kalbī J 1.8; Zub 1.188; Ḥazm 1.113–114; Bal A 5.280, 458.

**223** Kalbī M 1.281; Bal F 380, 391–392; Bal A 2.78–79, 2.271, 2.295, 5.112, 5.159, 5.170, 5.242, 7.391; Dīn 232; Ṭab 4.301, 5.193, 5.321; Iṣf A 18.437, 441; Iṣf M 99–101; Qud Khar 402; Māk 3.400. Undated Byzantine-style copper coins minted in the name of Sharīk b. al-Ḥārith, which have Sharīk's name in Arabic and which Album tentatively dated to the 90s most probably belong to Sharīk b. al-A'war, whose father's real name was الحارث بن عبد الله بن يغوث (see, e.g., Bal A 2.79).

**224** Ibn Sa'd 6.108–109, 7.35; Khal Ṭbq 1.97; Khal Trkh 219; Bal A 1.249, 1.496, 1.527, 5.210–12, 240–241, 6.440, 6.443, 10.385–386, 13.33, 13.185; Bal F 104, 367, 374; Ṭab 5.234, 5.236–38,

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	54 – 55	عبد الله بن عمرو بن غيلان <sup>225</sup>	Bašra	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-Q – Thaḡif <sup>226</sup>
U	55 – 64	عبيد الله بن زياد <sup>227</sup>	Khurāsān, Bašra, Kūfa <sup>228</sup>	sup	Mu'āwiya	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	– 59/60	شريك بن الأعور <sup>229</sup>	Kirmān (, Fārs?)	gov	عبيد الله بن زياد	sup	Ar-Y – Azd – al-Ḥāriḥ b. Ka'b
	61	'Abd al-'Azīz b. MDWR <sup>230</sup>	Iṣṭakhr only?	?			?
Z	64	عمر بن عبيد الله بن معمر التيمي <sup>231</sup>	Bašra	sup	'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr	cal. cont.	Ar-M – Quraysh – Taym
Z	64 – 67	القباج <sup>232</sup>	Bašra	sup	'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr	cal. cont.	Ar-M – Quraysh – Makhzūm
Z	66 – 67	قفيز <sup>233</sup>	“Part of Fārs” (incl. Bīshāpūr)	sub		القباج sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – 'Abd Shams
Z	67 – 71	مصعب بن الزبير <sup>234</sup>	Bašra	sup	'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr	cal.cont.	Ar-M – Quraysh – Asad

5.291, 5.295, 6.66, 6.107, 6.112; Dīn 1.225, 1.309; Waki' 296. Dirhams in his name only at Darābjird mints (DA, DAP), with frozen date 43, see Album 2011: 24 no. 9.

**225** Khal Trkh 1.223; Ṭab 5.215, 5.295, 298 – 299; Bal A 5.161, 5.241.

**226** Or: Ar-M – Hudhayl.

**227** Khal Trkh 1.223; Bal F 339; Dīn 225; Ṭab 5.299 – 300, 5.304, 5.308, 5.314, 5.315, 5.321, 5.338, 5.348, 5.399, 5.474, 5.477, 5.503, 5.524, 5.528. Dirhams, from nearly 30 mints: see Album 2011: 24 no. 12 (in addition to *fulūs* from Iṣṭakhr and Ardashīr Khurra: *ibid.* no. A13).

**228** Ibn Ziyād combined governorships of Khurāsān (from 53/54) with Bašra and dependencies (from 55) and Kūfa and dependencies (from 60).

**229** Kalbi M 281; Dīn 232 – 34; Bal F 380, 391 – 392; Bal A 2.78 – 79, 2.271, 2.295, 5.159, 5.170, 5.242; Ṭab 2.44, 2.51 – 52, 2.53 – 54, 2.195 – 196, 2.244 – 249; Iṣf M 99 – 101; Iṣf A 18.450; Māk 3.400.

**230** Only known from a dirham of which only two specimens are extant (Sears 2002). The governor's name is written in Pahlavi: APDWLACYC Y MDWRAN. Still unidentified.

**231** Zub 1.288 – 289; Kalbi J 1.15; Bal A 1.503, 5.465, 6.342, 6.433; Ṭab 5.582.

**232** His *ism* was الحارث بن عبد الله بن أبي ربيعة القرشي المخزومي. Kalbi J 1.17, 32; Ibn Sa'd 5.21; Zub 1.318; Bal A 5.400, 6.382, 6.382, 6.433 – 434, 6.452, 7.11 – 14, 7.86, 7.115, 7.157, 7.165, 13.313; Tab 6.93; Iṣf A 1.109, 4.530.

**233** His *ism* was عبد الملك بن عبد الله بن عامر. Bal A 9.363; on dirhams from Bīshāpūr: Album 2011: 25 no. 20.

**234** Zub 1.240; Khal Trkh 1.269, 296; Ya'q 1.215; Bal A 1.500, 5.464 – 465, 6.293, 6.398, 6.433 – 434, 6.452 – 453, 7.8 – 23, 7.163 – 165, 7.178, 10.143 – 144; Dīn Akhbār 274, 307; Ṭab 5.619, 6.93, 6.117 – 119, 6.127, 6.139, 6.152, 6.160; Maqd 6.22. Dirhams in his name are known (Album 2011: 25 no. 17), but not from mints in Fārs.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Z	(67–71)	<sup>235</sup> حمزة بن عبد الله بن الزبير	Başra	sup	‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr	cal.cont.	Ar-M – Quraysh – Asad
Z	(67–71)	<sup>236</sup> عبد الله بن أذينة بن سلمة	Fasā wa-Darābjird	sub			Ar-R – ‘Abd al-Qays
Z	67	<sup>237</sup> المهلب بن أبي صفرة	Fārs	gov	مصعب بن الزبير	sup	Ar-Y – Azd
Z	67–71	عمر بن عبد الله بن معمر التيمي <sup>238</sup>	Fārs	gov	مصعب بن الزبير	sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – Taym
Z	(67–71)	<sup>239</sup> مجاعة بن سعر	<i>kharāj</i> Iṣṭakhr?	sub?			Ar-M – Tamīm
U	71/72	<sup>240</sup> حمران بن أبان	Başra	sup	(people of al-Başra)		Ar-R – Nimr b. Qāsiṭ
U	71/72–73?	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد <sup>241</sup>	Başra	sup	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	71/72–73?	(2 sons of Khālid b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khālid b. Asīd) <sup>242</sup>	Fārs	gov	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya

**235** Zub 1.240; Khal Trkh 1.436; Zub Jamh 40, 47; Ya‘q 1.215; Qut M 1.226; Bal A 6.434, 6.444, 6.453, 7.9–11, 7.18, 7.86–88, 7.165; Bal F 372; Ṭab 6.117–118.

**236** Only known as governor of Fasā wa-Darābjird from al-Wazīr al-Maghribī’s *al-Īnās* (p. 15), where he is mentioned in the context of his more famous brother, who was al-Ḥajjāj’s *qādī* of al-Başra.

**237** Al-Muhallab was in the first place the leader of the military operations against the Khārijites; that he was also formally governor of Fārs is only stated in a couple of sources: Bal A 6.428–429, 7.8; Ṭab 6.94, 6.301.

**238** Zub 1.288–289; Bal A 6.434, 6.436, 7.8–9, 7.99, 7.164–165, 7.189–190; Ṭab 6.119, 6.158; Ḥazm 1.140. Dirhams from mints in Fārs from 67–72, see Album 2011: 25 no. 21 (also very rare copper coins, only from Iṣṭakhr: *ibid.* no. 21E).

**239** According to a *khbar* in al-Balādhuri’s *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* (Bal A 7.165), Mujā‘a saved ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaydallāh b. Mi‘mar’s life in a battle against the Khārijites, and ‘Umar rewarded him by letting him keep 700.000 dirhams he (Mujā‘a) had levied from the *kharāj* of Iṣṭakhr. In al-Mubarrad’s version of the events (Mub 3.242), Mujā‘a is given the right to levy the *kharāj* after the battle, which does not necessarily imply that he had any official position in Iṣṭakhr.

**240** Bal A 3.52, 5.472, 5.555; Ṭab 5.167, 6.165. Dirhams from the mint of Ardashīr Khurra only (ART, year 72): see Album 2011: 25 (no. 23).

**241** Khal Trkh 1.268, 1.293, 1.296; Bal A 1.500, 5.464, 5.473–474, 6.313, 6.316, 6.327, 7.101, 7.107, 7.111, 7.273, 7.299, 7.379, 7.411, 7.422, 7.450, 9.48; Ṭab 6.165, 6.169, 6.172, 6.178; Mas M 3.105, 3.110; Ḥazm 218. Dirhams from mints Başra, Bishāpūr and Arrajān: see Album 2011: 25 (no. 24).

**242** Bal A 7.411.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	71/72 –73?	<sup>243</sup> عامر بن مسمع	Sābūr	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il
U	71/72 –73?	<sup>244</sup> مقاتل بن مسمع	Ardashīr Khurra (, Bīshāpūr?)	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il
U	71/72 –73?	<sup>245</sup> مسمع بن مالك بن مسمع	Fasā wa- Darābjird	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il
U	73	Numayla b. Mālik <sup>246</sup>	Arrajān?	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد ؟	sup	Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il
U	71/72 –73?	<sup>247</sup> المغيرة بن المهلب	Iṣṭakhr	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-Y – Azd
U	72 –	<sup>248</sup> المغيرة بن المهلب	Fasā wa- Darābjird	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-Y – Azd
U	72 –	<sup>249</sup> سعيد بن المهلب	Arrajān wa- Sābūr	sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-Y – Azd
U	72	<sup>250</sup> حمران بن أبيان	Fārs/Ardashīr Khurra only?	gov/ sub	?		Ar-R – Nimr b. Qāsiṭ
U	73 – 74	<sup>251</sup> بشر بن مروان	Bašra, Kūfa <sup>252</sup>	sup	'Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya

**243** Ṭab 6.196.

**244** Ṭab 6.196; dirhams from mint Bīshāpūr (BYSh, years 72 and 73): Album 2011: 25 no. 22.

**245** Ṭab 6.196.

**246** Only known from coins: see Album 2011: 26 no. A32. DeShazo (2000) read the Pahlavi name of this subgovernor xxx b. Mālik, and identified him as the son of Mālik b. Misma', which makes sense, because we know from the historical sources that two brothers and (another) son of Mālik b. Misma' were in charge of districts of Fārs in these years. In a later article (DeShazo 2004), he read the name as Numayla b. Mālik, and identified him as Numayla b. Mālik b. Sāriya of the Banū Numayr, whom he found in al-Ṭabarī. Given the context, I think his first identification is more likely, even though Numayla b. Mālik b. Misma' is not found in the historical sources.

**247** Ṭab 6.169, 6.320.

**248** Khal 268; Ṭab 6. 169.

**249** Khal 268.

**250** His governorship of Fārs/Ardashīr Khurra is not known from historical sources; dirhams in his name are known from Ardashīr Khurra only, from the year 72: Album 2011: 25 no. 23. It is not impossible that the dirhams were struck in his name in his position as governor of al-Bašra, even after he was fired.

**251** Khal 249; Fas 37; Bal A 6.316, 7.273, 7.421; Ṭab 6.194, 6.197. Dirhams known only from Bašra, Kūfa and Jāyy, see Album 2011: 26 no. 27.

**252** He had been governor of Kūfa since 71; al-Bašra and its dependencies were added to his responsibilities in 73.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	73–75	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد <sup>253</sup>	Baṣra	sup	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	74(ca.)	عبد العزيز بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد <sup>254</sup>	Fārs / Ardashīr Khurra	gov/ sub	خالد بن عبد الله بن خالد بن أسيد	sup	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	75–95	الحجاج بن يوسف <sup>255</sup>	Iraq, Mashriq	sup	‘Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-Q – Thaqif
U	75–78–	المهلب بن أبي صفر <sup>256</sup>	Fārs	gov	الحجاج	sup	Ar-Y – Azd
U	75–79	Farrūkhzād-ī Gushn-Anūshān <sup>257</sup>	Ardashīr Khurra and Sābūr?	sub?			Iranian

**253** Bal A 7.273; Ṭab 6.194, 6.197, 6.209.

**254** His governorship is only suggested by dirhams struck in mints ART (Ardashīr Khurra) and TART (Tawwaj of Ardashīr Khurra) in 74 (Album 2011: 25 (no. 25K)); in the historical sources, he is said to have been appointed by his brother Khālid to fight the Khārijite Qaṭarī in Fārs: Bal A 7.411, 7.417, 12.352.

**255** Khal T 293–294; Ya‘q T 219, 227; Ṭab 6.202, 6.493; etc. On dirhams from Bishāpūr, Ardashīr Khurra, Tawwaj, Iṣṭakhr, Yazd, Darābjird and Fasā: see Album 2011: 26–27 (nos. 35, 36, 37).

**256** Bal A 7.423–428, 431; Ṭab 6.301. Al-Muhallab was put in charge of Fārs by al-Ḥajjāj to defeat the Khārijites there; as soon as he had expelled them from Fārs, he was made governor of Khurāsān. Dirhams from Bishāpūr, Ardashīr Khurra, Tawwaj and other mints in Fārs (75–79): see Album 2011: 26 no. 31.

**257** Known only from coins dating 75–79. The patronymic is mentioned only on copper coins from mint DShT, the dating of which is debated (see Album 2001, 68 for an overview of the discussion), the other coins have only *farrūkhzād*, which Gyselen (2009, 71–73) thinks may be an epithet (“born with glory”) for the governor, rather than the personal name of another official. I agree with Album (Album-Goodwin 2002, 68) that all attestations of *farrūkhzād* on coins from Fārs probably refer to the same person, Farrūkhzād son of Gushn-anūsh. His name appears on dirhams from Ardashīr Khurra, together with al-Muhallab’s (75–76); with al-Ḥajjāj’s on dirhams struck in mints in the *kūras* Ardashīr Khurra (ART and TART, 77–79) and Sābūr (BYSh, 77–79); and solo on copper coins from cities in Ardashīr Khurra (Jūr and Tanbūk/Shirāz (undated), and Dasht (76?)), see Album 2011, 26–28. On the copper coins, Farrūkhzād’s name takes the position traditionally assigned to the issuer of the coin (to the right of the bust on the obverse of the coin). On the dirhams, al-Ḥajjāj’s and al-Muhallab’s names take this position, while Farrūkhzād’s name is in the lower left margin of the obverse of the coin (ObQ3), where usually no official’s name is mentioned; until then, only a few governors had used this place to put a second mention of their own name (Album 2011, 25 nos. 17, 23, 25, 35.2), in addition to the main mention to the right of the bust. On one dirham type from Jayy in the year 74, we also have another name in ObQ3, in addition to the governor’s name next to the bust (Album 2011, 26 no. 27.2), but since this name is also unidentified, it does not help us to determine what Farrūkhzād’s function was.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	77	Abū Sa'īd b. Numayla? <sup>258</sup>	Arrajān only?	sub			Ar-R – Bakr b. Wā'il?
U	77	الحكم بن نهيك <sup>259</sup>	Fārs/Arrajān	gov/ sub			Ar-M – Tamīm – al-Hujaym b. 'Amr
U	(78–95)	قطن بن قبيصة بن المخارق الهلالي <sup>260</sup>	Fārs, Kirmān	gov		الحجاج sup	Ar-Q – 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a – Hilāl
U	(78–95)	محمد بن يوسف الثقفي <sup>261</sup>	Fārs	gov		الحجاج sup	Ar-Q – Thaqīf
U	83–(90)	محمد بن القاسم بن أبي عقيل <sup>262</sup>	Fārs	gov		الحجاج sup	Ar-Q – Thaqīf
U	(75–95)	خرشة <sup>263</sup>	Jahrom / Fasā wa-Darābjird	sub		محمد بن يوسف الثقفي gov	Arab – undefined
U	78?	كردم بن مرثد الفزاري <sup>264</sup>	Fārs ( <i>kharāj</i> )	gov/ sub		الحجاج sup	Ar-Q – Fazāra
	ca. 80	Khālīd b. 'Abbād <sup>265</sup>	Sābūr?	sub	?		?
U	80–84?	عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن الأشعث <sup>266</sup>	Fārs, Kirmān, Sijjstān	sup/ reb		الحجاج sup	Ar-Y – Kinda
	81/82	خرشة بن عمرو التميمي <sup>267</sup>	Fārs	gov		عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن الأشعث rebel	Ar-M – Tamīm

**258** Known only from a single dirham, minted in Arrajān (Zeno #96408). Son of Numayla b. Mālik, known from the Arrajān dirhams of 73?

**259** Al-Balādhurī (F 380) says he was governor of Fārs for al-Ḥajjāj, but also that he built the mosque and the *dār al-imāra* of Arrajān; and coins in his name are only known from Arrajān (Zeno #8141); so perhaps he was only in charge of Arrajān rather than all of Fārs. Later, he was governor of Kirmān for al-Ḥajjāj (Bal A 13.60–61).

**260** Khal Ṭbq 56, 184; Qud 3991; Bal F 380. Also governor of Sijjstān (Sa'd 622) and Iṣbahān (N'm 2.122).

**261** Balkhī 132, 157, 170. Al-Ḥajjāj's brother; perhaps mistake by Ibn al-Balkhī, for Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim b. Abi 'Aqīl?

**262** Khal Trkh 1.288; Ya'q 1.226; Bal F 420; Ṭab XI 641; Iṣṭ 124. In the year 90 or 92, al-Ḥajjāj appointed him over al-Sind and al-Hind.

**263** Bal A 12.12; Balkhī 157.

**264** Bal A 7.431, 7.268.

**265** Only known from undated copper coins from mints Bishāpūr and Tanbūk (Album 2011: 28 thinks they date from about 80).

**266** Was appointed governor of Sijjstān by al-Ḥajjāj but fell out with him and conquered Fārs on his way to confront al-Ḥajjāj in al-'Irāq; Bal A 7.317, 7.389, 8.326, 12.12; Ṭab 6.338. Coins in his name from Fārs mints in the years 82–84 (Album 2011: 27) prove he was in actual control of the province.

**267** Appointed by Ibn al-Ash'ath while the latter was on his way to confront al-Ḥajjāj in al-'Irāq; Bal A 12.12; Jawz VI 225.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	(75–95)	<sup>268</sup> هلال بن هرمي	Fārs?	gov?	الحجاج	sup	Ar-M – Ḍabba
U	95	يزيد بن أبي كبشة السكسكي <sup>269</sup>	<i>ḥarb</i> and <i>ṣalāt</i> of Baṣra and Kūfa	sup	al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-Y – Kīnda
U	95	<sup>270</sup> يزيد بن أبي مسلم	<i>kharāj</i> of Baṣra and Kūfa	sup	al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik	caliph	<i>mawlā</i> of Ar-Q – Thaqif
U	96–99	<sup>271</sup> يزيد بن المهلب	Iraq and Khurāsān [incl. Fārs?]	sup	Sulaymān	caliph	Ar-Y – Azd
U	99–101	<sup>272</sup> عدي بن أرطاة الفزاري	Baṣra	sup	'Umar II	caliph	Ar-Q – Fazāra
U	99–101	<sup>273</sup> (عمال عدي بن أرطاة)	Fārs	sub	عدي بن أرطاة	sup	?
U	99–100	الجراح بن عبد الملك / عبد الله الحكمي <sup>274</sup>	Ahwāz, Fārs, Kirmān, Khurāsān	sup			Ar-Y <sup>275</sup>
–	101–02	<sup>276</sup> محمد بن المهلب	Fārs	gov	يزيد بن المهلب	rebel	Ar-Y – Azd
–	101–02	المهلب بن أبي عيينة بن المهلب <sup>277</sup>	Jazīrat b. Kāwān	sub	يزيد بن المهلب	rebel	Ar-Y – Azd
U	102	<sup>278</sup> مسلمة بن عبد الملك	Iraq, Khurāsān [incl. Fārs]	sup	Yazīd II b. 'Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	102–05	<sup>279</sup> عمر بن هبيرة الفزاري	Iraq, Mashriq	sup	Yazīd II b. 'Abd al-Malik	caliph	Ar-Q – Fazāra

**268** Bal A 11.391. Sent by al-Ḥajjāj to raid the *qala'as* of Fārs; it is uncertain if he was really appointed governor.

**269** Bal A 8.289; Ṭab 6.493.

**270** Ṭab 6.493.

**271** Tab 6.585.

**272** Khal Trkh 320, 322; Bal A 8.149, 8.245, 8.295, 11.103, 12.199; Bal F 84, 340, 359; Ṭab 6.554, 6.556, 6.578–579.

**273** Bal A 8.194–196.

**274** Ṭab 6.585. Not entirely clear if Khurāsān was included in his responsibilities.

**275** Or, if Ḥakami refers to al-Ḥajjāj's grandfather al-Ḥakam b. Abī 'Aqil: Arab – Qays – Thaqif.

**276** Bal A 8.310.

**277** Bal A 8.310.

**278** Khal Trkh 1.325, 1.327, 1.333; Ya'q 236; Fas 2.265; Bal A 6.302; Bal F 412; Din 334; Ṭab 6.604, 6.615.

**279** Khal Trkh 1.328, 1.332, 336; Ya'q 236–237, 240; Din 365; Fas 2.265; Bal A 8.252–253, 8.268, 8.275; Bal F 412, 450; Jah 48; Ṭab 6.620, 7.17, 7.26; Mas M 3.201; Maqd 6.49.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	102?–05–	هاشم / هشيم بن صفوان الفزاري <sup>280</sup>	Fārs	gov	عمر بن هبيرة	sup	Ar-Q – Fazāra
U	105/6– 120	خالد بن عبد الله القسري <sup>281</sup>	Iraq, Mashriq	sup	Hishām (or Yazid II)	caliph	Arab – Bajīla (neither Yemen nor Muḍar)
U	–120	أبان بن الوليد بن عبيد الله بن ملك الجلي <sup>282</sup>	Fārs	gov	خالد بن عبد الله القسري	sup	Arab – Bajīla (neither Yemen nor Muḍar)
U	–120	طارق بن أبي زياد <sup>283</sup>	Fārs	gov	خالد بن عبد الله القسري	sup	?
U	(105–20)	(unnamed ‘āmil of Khālid al-Qasrī) <sup>284</sup>	Darābjird	sub	خالد بن عبد الله القسري	sup	Iranian – dihqān
U	–120	داهيه / دانويه المققع <sup>285</sup>	Kharāj of Fārs	sub/ gov	خالد بن عبد الله القسري / الحجاج بن يوسف	sup	Iranian – dihqān
U	(105–20)	عبيد الله بن العباس الكندي <sup>286</sup>	Fārs	gov	خالد بن عبد الله القسري	sup	Ar-Y – Kinda
U	(105–20)	نصر بن حسان التيمي <sup>287</sup>	Iṣṭakhr	sub	خالد بن عبد الله القسري	sup	Ar-M – Tamīm – ‘Anbar
U	120–26	يوسف بن عمر الثقفي <sup>288</sup>	Iraq, Mashriq	sup	Hishām	caliph	Ar-Q – Thaqīf
U	(120–26)	عبد الكريم المازني <sup>289</sup>	Fasā wa- Darābjird	sub			Ar-M – Tamīm – Māzin?

**280** Bal A 9.86, 13.181.

**281** Zub 1.9; Khal Trkh 336, 350, 358; Ya‘q 237; Qut M 365, 398; Bal A 8.277, 8.379, 8.386, 9.39, 9.79, 9.98, 12.101; Bal F 413; Jah 51; Ṭab 7.26–28, 7.39, 7.138; etc.

**282** Ya‘q T 241; Bal A 9.86–87, 12.93.

**283** Ya‘q T 241.

**284** Bal A 9 89.

**285** Father of Ibn al-Muqaffa‘; Bal A 4.218; Waf 2.155.

**286** Kalbi M 1.155; Ḥazm 1.427: Crone (2003, 152–153) doubts the stories about all his governorships are true, and sees him only as *shurṭa* chief in Kūfa and governor for Ibn Jumhūr.

**287** Dhah 13.397. Since this Naṣr was the grandfather of the Baṣran *qādī* Mu‘ādh b. Mu‘ādh al-‘Anbarī, it is likely that Naṣr’s nisba was al-Tamīmī rather than al-Taymī (see Bal A 13.25 for Mu‘ādh’s pedigree).

**288** Khal Trkh 350, 358–359; Ya‘q T 243; Qut M 365, 507; Bal A 3.233, 4.118, 9.58, 9.96, 9.100; Dīn 337; Ṭab 7.159, 7.179, 7.254. 7.270.

**289** Bal A 9.114.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	(120–26)	<sup>290</sup> عبد الله بن طارق العنبري	Fasā wa-Darābjird	sub?	يوسف بن عمر الثقفي	sup	Ar-M – Tamīm – ‘Anbar
U	(120–26)	<sup>291</sup> توبة بن كيسان العنبري	Sābūr	sub	يوسف بن عمر الثقفي	sup	<i>mawlā</i> of Ar-M – Tamīm – ‘Anbar
U	126	<sup>292</sup> منصور بن جمهور الكلابي	Iraq	sup?	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-Y – Kalb
U	126–27/8	عبد الله بن عمر بن عبد العزيز <sup>293</sup>	Iraq	sup	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – Umayya
U	126–27/8	<sup>294</sup> النضر بن سعيد الحرشي	Iraq	sup	Yazīd III	caliph	Ar-M
U	–127/8	(unnamed ‘āmil of ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Umar) <sup>295</sup>	Iṣṭakhr	Sub	عبد الله بن عمر	sup	?
U	–128	<sup>296</sup> مسلم / سلم بن المسيب	Shīrāz	gov/ sub	عبد الله بن عمر	sup	Arab – Bajila
–	128/9–	<sup>297</sup> يزيد بن معاوية	Fārs	gov	إبراهيم بن معاوية	rebel	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Alid
–	130	<sup>298</sup> عبد الله بن معاوية	Fārs? Iṣṭakhr?	gov/ sub?	إبراهيم بن معاوية	rebel	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Alid
–	(129–30)	<sup>299</sup> الحسن بن معاوية	Iṣṭakhr	sub	إبراهيم بن معاوية	rebel	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Alid
U	–128/9	<sup>300</sup> المسيح بن الحواري	Ardashīr Khurra and/ or Sābūr	Sub	عبد الله بن عمر	sup	Ar-Y – Azd – Atik

**290** Bal A 9.114. ‘Abdallāh is said to have been sent by Yūsuf b. ‘Umar to deal with the *akrād* of Fasā wa-Darābjird; it is uncertain if this means he was also appointed governor of this subdistrict.

**291** Sa‘d 7.179.

**292** Khal Trkh 369, 370; Ya‘q T 247; Qut M 367; Bal A 9.193–196; Jah 61; Ṭab 7.270, 7.277, 7.280, 7.284.

**293** Khal Trkh 370, 382; Ya‘q 246; Qut M 363, 369; Bal A 2.63, 8.235, 9.195, 9.196; Ṭab 7.284, 7.299, 7.304, 7.318, 7.319.

**294** Bal A 8.299; Ṭab 7.318, 7.329.

**295** Ṭab 7.371.

**296** Ṭab 7.372; undated copper coins by Salm b. al-Musayyib from Iṣṭakhr: see Album 2011: 46 (#A201).

**297** Ṭab 7.372.

**298** Kalbī M 157; Bal A 2.64–66; Ṭab 7.371; copper coins in his name from Iṣṭakhr, dated 130: see Album 2011: 47.

**299** Iṣf Ṭ 1.157. According to al-Ṭabarī (Ṭab 7.371), Ibn ‘Umar’s (unnamed) ‘āmil of Iṣṭakhr was expelled by Ibn Mu‘āwiya’s supporters in 129.

**300** Bal A 8.221; Tab 7.372.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
U	129–32	يزيد بن عمر بن هبيرة <sup>301</sup>	Iraq <sup>302</sup>	gov/ sup	Marwān II	caliph	Ar-Q – Fazāra
A	–132	(‘ummāl of Abū Salama) <sup>303</sup>	Fārs	sub	أبو سلمة	‘Abbāsīd <i>dā’ī</i>	?
A	132–33	محمد بن الأشعث بن عقبة الخرزاعي <sup>304</sup>	Fārs, Kirmān	gov/ sup	أبو مسلم	‘Abbāsīd <i>dā’ī</i>	Ar-Y – Azd – Khuzā’a
A	132	عيسى بن علي بن عبد الله بن العباس <sup>305</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Saffāḥ	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	132	إسماعيل بن علي بن عبد الله بن العباس <sup>306</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Saffāḥ	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	135?	يحيى بن محمد بن علي بن عبد الله بن العباس <sup>307</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	137–38?	خالد بن برمك <sup>308</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Khurāsānian – Barmakīd
A	–145	إسماعيل بن علي بن عبد الله بن العباس <sup>309</sup> (2)	Fārs	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
–	145	عمرو بن شداد <sup>310</sup>	Fārs	gov	إبراهيم بن عبد الله	rebel	<i>mawlā</i> of Ar-M – Quraysh – Jumaḥ
	149	هارون بن حامد <sup>311</sup>	only Iṣṭakhr?	sub?			?
A	(137–49)	واصل بن عليم <sup>312</sup>	Iṣṭakhr	sub	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M -Tamīm – al- Hujaym b. ‘Amr

**301** Khal Trkh 382, 409; Ya‘q 246–247; Qut M 369; Bal A 8.232, 9.197, 9.277, 9.309; Din 350; Ṭab 7.327, 7.411; Mas M 3.241.

**302** Including its dependencies, but not Khurāsān.

**303** Ṭab 7.458. Their identities are not specified.

**304** Bal A 4.89, 6.428; Ṭab 7.458, 7.460.

**305** Bal A 4.89; Ṭab 7.458. The caliph’s uncle. Appointed by al-Saffāḥ, he was not able to carry out his functions due to threats by Abū Muslim’s governor.

**306** Ṭab 7.458, 7.460. Idem.

**307** Qut M 377; Bal A 4.281; Athīr K 5.46. The caliph’s brother. According to Ibn al-Athīr, he died while in office in Fārs in the year 135, but al-Manṣūr came to power only at the end of 136.

**308** Jah 97; Dhah T 10.160.

**309** Ya‘q T 263, 266; Qut M 374; Fas 126; copper coins from Darābjird, Shīrāz and Jūr of the year 145: see Shamma 1998: 259, 265, 280.

**310** Ṭab 7.636, 8.50.

**311** Only known from copper coins in his name from mint Iṣṭakhr, year 149 (Zeno #77517).

**312** Bal A 13.61; Dur 209; Ḥazm 209.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	(137–49)	يزيد بن عقāl <sup>313</sup>	Fārs	gov			Ar-M – Tamīm – Ḥanzāla
	154 – (158–69)	نصير <sup>314</sup>	Fasā	sub?			
A	156 – 58	عمارة بن حمزة <sup>315</sup>	Kuwar Dijla, Ahwāz, Fārs	sup	al-Manṣūr	caliph	<i>mawlā</i> of the caliph
A	158 – 159	نصر بن حرب التميمي <sup>316</sup>	<i>Thaḡhr Fārs</i>	sub?	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Tamīm
A	(135–158)	شيخ بن عميرة بن حيان الأسدي <sup>317</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Manṣūr	caliph	Ar-M – Asad
A	(158–69)	شيخ بن عميرة بن حيان (2) <sup>318</sup> الأسدي	Fārs	gov	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Asad
A	159 – 60?	خالد بن برمك <sup>319</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Mahdī	caliph	Khurāsānian – Barmakid
	159 – 67	الربيع بن خظير <sup>320</sup>	Iṣṭakhr, Ardashīr Khurra, Arrajān	sub?			

**313** Al-Iṣṭakhrī (141) says Yazīd was governor of Fārs at the time of the rebellion of Abū Sāra, and al-Ma'mūn (r. 198–218) sent Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath from Khurāsān to fight Abū Sāra. Al-Iṣṭakhrī's story is fishy, because other sources (Bal A 11.31; Ḥab 487; Māk 2.506) put the rebellion of Abū Sāra in the days of al-Manṣūr (r. 137–158), and Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath (al-Khuzā'i; g. Fārs 130–133) died already in 149. The most likely interpretation is that al-Iṣṭakhrī mixed up al-Ma'mūn and al-Manṣūr.

**314** Known only from a copper coin in Tübingen from Fasā 154 and Fasā n.d. (but mentioning al-Mahdī and "Manṣūr" (Shamma 1998: 272).

**315** Jah 141; Ṭab 8.51, 8.53.

**316** Ṭab 8.201; Bal A 13.12; Jawz 8.201. Military commander of al-Manṣūr, and part of his guard (Bal A 13.12; Ṭab 8.79). It is not clear what the hapax *thaḡhr Fārs* (border of Fārs) refers to exactly. Ibn al-Athīr (K 5.207) and Ibn Khaldūn (Khld 3.255) simplify the text, making Naṣr governor of Fārs.

**317** Bal A 11.165. Crucified the rebel Abū Sāra (Bal A 11.31; Ḥab 487), whose rebellion started under Yazīd b. 'Iqāl.

**318** Bal A 11.165. Perhaps continuation of his governorship under al-Manṣūr?

**319** Jah 97; Dhah T 10.160.

**320** Only known from copper coins in his name. He appears alone, with his patronymic, on copper coins from the year 159 (mint Iṣṭakhr); and simply as Rabī', together with caliph al-Mahdī, on copper coins with date 167 from Iṣṭakhr, Ardashīr Khurra, Jūr (the capital of Ardashīr Khurra) and Arrajān. See Shamma 1998, 167, 259, 269–270.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	160–63	<sup>321</sup> محمد بن سليمان بن علي	Başra, other Gulf provinces <sup>322</sup>	sup	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	164	<sup>323</sup> صالح بن داوود بن علي	Başra, other Gulf provinces <sup>324</sup>	sup	al-Mahdī	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	165–67	<sup>325</sup> المعلى	Kuwar Dijla, Baḥrayn, ‘Umān, Kas-kar, Ahwāz, Fārs, Kirmān	sup	al-Mahdī	caliph	<i>mawlā</i> of the caliph
A	169	<sup>326</sup> عمار بن علي	Fasā	sub	?		?
A	167–73	<sup>327</sup> محمد بن سليمان بن علي	Başra, other Gulf provinces <sup>328</sup>	sup	Hārūn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(173–191)	<sup>329</sup> عيسى بن جعفر بن أبي جعفر	Başra, other Gulf provinces <sup>330</sup>	sup	Hārūn	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	(173–91)	<sup>331</sup> حمويه	<i>Ḥarb</i> and <i>kharāj</i> of Fārs	gov	Hārūn	caliph	<i>mawlā</i> of al-Mahdī

**321** Khal Trkh 447, 448, 461; Bal A 3.129; Ṭab 7.655.

**322** Al-Başra and it’s *a‘māl*, the Kuwar Dijla, al-Baḥrayn, ‘Umān, the harbours (*al-furaḍ*), Kuwar al-Ahwāz and Kuwar Fārs.

**323** Khal Trkh 438, 440; Ṭab 8.150, 8.162; copper coin from Iṣṭakhr: Shamma 1998: 280–281.

**324** The *ṣalāt* and *aḥdāth* of al-Başra, the Kuwar Dijla, al-Baḥrayn, ‘Umān, *al-furaḍ*, Kuwar al-Ahwāz, and Fārs.

**325** Ṭab 8.153, 8.163, 8.166.

**326** Fas 159.

**327** Khal Trkh 447, 448, 461; Bal A 3.129; Ṭab 7.655.

**328** Al-Başra, al-Baḥrayn, *al-furaḍ*, ‘Umān, al-Yamāma, Kuwar al-Ahwāz, and Fārs.

**329** Grandson of the caliph Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr; Qut M 379; Khal Trkh 461–62; Bal A 4.275; Ṭab 8.346. He figures three times in Khalifa’s and al-Ṭabarī’s lists of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s governors of al-Başra after the death of Muḥammad b. Sulaymān in 173; it is not clear whether all three times, he was appointed as super-governor.

**330** According to Ibn Qutayba (Qut M 379), he was in charge of “al-Başra and its *kuwar*, and Fārs, al-Ahwāz, al-Yamāma and al-Sind”; al-Balādhurī leaves out Fārs but adds al-Baḥrayn: “*a‘māl* al-Başra, Kuwar Dijla, al-Ahwāz, al-Yamāma, al-Baḥrayn and al-Sind” (Bal A 4.275). The other sources only mention him as governor of Başra.

**331** His governorship of Fārs is only known from a story in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Iṣf A 16.497) that alleges Ḥammawayh received the governorship of Fārs for a period of seven years because his singing girl, one of al-Rashīd’s favourites, had asked for this favour. In the year 191, Ḥamma-

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	181 – 83 – ?	محمد بن يحيى البرمكي <sup>332</sup>	Fārs?	gov?			Khurāsānian – Barmakid
	182	مهلهل بن صفوان <sup>333</sup>	Arrajān?	sub?	?		
	188	الامير منصور <sup>334</sup>	[Sīrāf]	sub?			
A	– 192 –	عبد الله بن المسيب بن زهير <sup>335</sup>	Fārs	gov			Ar-M – Ḍabba
A	196 – 202?	الفضل بن سهل بن زاذانفروع <sup>336</sup>	al-Mashriq <sup>337</sup>	sup	al-Ma'mūn	caliph	Iranian – Sahlid
A	198 – 202?	الحسن بن سهل بن زاذانفروع <sup>338</sup>	Jibāl, Fārs, Ahwāz, Baṣra, Kūfa, Ḥijāz, Yaman	sup	al-Ma'mūn	caliph	Iranian – Sahlid
A	(198 – 202)	وهب بن سعيد بن عمرو <sup>339</sup>	Kirmān, Fārs	gov/ sup	الحسن بن سهل		Christian?

wayh was put in charge of the *barīd* of Khurāsān, and he was the one who sent the news of al-Rashīd's death to Baghdād in the year 193 (Ṭab 8.323, 365).

**332** Copper coins in his name from all *kūra* capitals in Fārs in 182 and 183: Zeno # 81269, 83227, 83479, 81297, 63155; Shamma 1998: 263, 266, 270, 271, 282.

**333** Only known from copper coins from Arrajān, 182 (Shamma 1998: 264).

**334** Lowick 1985: 27–28. Only known from 32 lead coins found in the Sīrāf excavations, on which Maṣṣūr is mentioned in the obverse marginal formula as the issuer of the coins (*amara al-amīr Maṣṣūr bi-al-'adl*). Lowick tentatively identified this Maṣṣūr as either Maṣṣūr b. al-Mahdī (g. Baṣra 196–200), or – perhaps more likely – Maṣṣūr b. Ziyād, a Barmakid protégé “who held the position of Secretary for the Army under al-Rashīd and who deputized for al-Faḍl”. A subordinate official, Bū Ḥasan (sic), is also mentioned on the coins. The coins carry no mint name, but since they were found in relatively large numbers at Sīrāf, and lead coins did usually not circulate outside of their city of origin, it is assumed here the coins were minted at Sīrāf.

**335** Qut M 413 (without date or appointer). Copper coins in the name of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mu-sayyib from Shīrāz, dated 192: see Album 2011: 62–63, Shamma 1998: 262. From the noblest family of the Banū Ḍabba, the Banū Ḍirār, he held governorships in Fārs, Egypt and al-Jazīra. His father had been governor of Khurāsān for al-Mahdī (Qut M 413).

**336** Ṭab 8.424; Maq 6.108. Al-Faḍl and his brother al-Ḥasan were Zoroastrians from a village in Iraq, and converted to Islam at the start of their careers (Jahsh 255–256). Their grandfather's name points to their Iranian background.

**337** “From the mountains of Hamadhān to the mountains of Siqīnān (?) and Tibet in length, and from the sea of Fārs and al-Hind to the sea of Daylam and Jurjān in width” (Ṭab 8.424).

**338** Ṭab 8.527.

**339** Waf 2.415. Al-Ḥasan b. Sahl retired in 202, after the assassination of his brother, so Wahb must have been in Fārs and Kirmān sometime between 198 and 202.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	214–20	القاسم بن نصر <sup>340</sup>	Fārs/Shīrāz?	gov	?		?
				/			
				sub			
	(220–29)	الحسن بن محمد + يحيى بن سلف <sup>341</sup>	Fasā?	sub?			
A	232–36	محمد بن إبراهيم بن الحسين بن مصعب <sup>342</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Wāthiq?		Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	235	أبو عبد الله المعترف بالله <sup>343</sup>	Khurāsān, Ṭabaristān, Rayy, Armenia, Ādharbayjān, Fārs	sup	al-Mutawakkil	caliph	Ar-M – Quraysh – ‘Abbāsīd
A	236	محمد بن إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن الحسين بن مصعب <sup>344</sup>	Fārs	gov	al-Mu‘tazz	sup, heir	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	236	محمد بن إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن الحسين بن مصعب <sup>345</sup>	Yamāma, Baḥrayn, Ṭarīq Makka, Egypt, Fārs	sup	al-Muntaṣir	sup, heir	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	236	محمد بن إسحاق بن إبراهيم بن الحسين بن مصعب <sup>346</sup>	all his father’s responsibilities [governor and <i>ṣāhib al-shurṭa</i> of Baghdād] added	sup	al-Mutawakkil	caliph	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	236	الحسين بن إسماعيل بن إبراهيم بن مصعب <sup>347</sup>	Fārs	gov	محمد بن إسحاق بن إبراهيم	sup	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	–244	الحسن بن رجاء بن أبي الضحاك <sup>348</sup>	<i>kharāj</i> and <i>ḥarb</i> of Fārs and Ahwāz	gov	?	?	?

**340** Copper coins in his name from mint Fārs, dated 214 and 220: Album 2011: 62–63.

**341** Known only from a copper coin in Tübingen, from Fasā 22x (Shamma 1998: 273).

**342** Ya‘q T 310; Ṭab 9.150, 9.183–184. Killed in Fārs by his nephew Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm.

**343** Ṭab 9.176, 9.180, 9.183.

**344** Ṭab 9.183–184.

**345** Ṭab 9.183–184.

**346** Ṭab 9.183–184.

**347** Ya‘q T 310; Ṭab 9.184.

**348** Mas M 3.480; Ṣaf 12.8; Ṣāb 47. His father had been in charge of the *dīwān al-kharāj* under al-Ma‘mūn and the *kharāj* of Damascus; al-Ḥasan himself had started his career as a young boy in

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A	248	محمد بن عبد الله بن طاهر <sup>349</sup>	Iraq, al-Ḥaramayn, <i>shurṭa</i> , Fārs	sup	al-Mustaʿīn	caliph	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
A	– 249	الحسين بن خالد <sup>350</sup>	Fārs?	gov?	محمد بن عبد الله بن طاهر	sup	
A	248/ 249 – 50	عبد الله بن إسحاق بن إبراهيم <sup>351</sup>	Fārs	gov	محمد بن عبد الله بن طاهر	sup	Khurāsānian – Ṭāhirid
–	250 – 55	علي بن الحسين بن قريش بن شبيل <sup>352</sup>	Fārs	gov	mutinous army of Fārs		Khurāsānian

the *dīwān* of al-Maʿmūn, and before becoming governor of Fārs and Ahwāz had been governor of the Kuwar al-Jabal and Isfahan (Ibn ʿAsākir 1995–2001, 13.84, 13.88, 18.122).

**349** Yaʿq T 315; Ṭab 9.258.

**350** Yaʿq T 315. Killed in an uprising by the *jund* in Fārs.

**351** Yaʿq T 315; Ṭab 9.277. Brought Fārs back under control, but was killed in the next year during a new uprising by the *jund* and the *shākiriyya* troops.

**352** Yaʿq T 315; Iṣṭ 144; Ṭab 9.409; Waf 6.405–407.



Hannah-Lena Hagemann

# Muslim Elites in the Early Islamic Jazīra: The *Qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, and al-Mawṣil

**Abstract:** This paper investigates local and regional networks of power in the province of al-Jazīra during the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd period. Using a prosopographical approach, it focuses on the office of the *qāḍī* as an intersection of imperial and provincial authority, using the cities of Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, and al-Mawṣil as case studies. A comparative analysis of the individuals appointed to the *qāḍī*ship reveals some commonalities in their backgrounds, particularly regarding *ḥadīth* transmission, but also clear differences in the appointment patterns identified for each city. For example, the office of the *qāḍī* of Ḥarrān seems to have been a predominantly local affair, while Raqqan *qāḍīs* frequently held transregional elite status. The judges of al-Mawṣil, on the other hand, feature local, regional, and transregional representatives. This variance is likely due to political and administrative factors and emphasizes the complex dynamics and hierarchies of governance in the early Islamic period.

**Keywords:** *qāḍīs*; Raqqā; al-Mawṣil; Ḥarrān; Islamic history; early Islamic Empire; prosopography

## Introduction

The ‘Islamic Empire at Work’ project seeks to re-assess the way the early caliphate (c. 661–940) established, maintained, and negotiated its authority in the day-to-day running of the empire. Early Muslim historical writing in particular frequently gives a predominantly imperial view by focusing on the caliphal court and capitals. This can oversimplify our understanding of imperial administration and elite interactions: much modern scholarship has followed the primary sources in presenting a caliph-centered image of the early Islamic Empire that often neglects the importance of regional power brokers. We aim to reverse the direction of study from a ‘top-down’ to a ‘bottom-up’ approach by investigating lower levels of administration like the city, and from a ‘center-focused’ to a ‘province-focused’ view through the analysis of regional and local office holders and networks of power. To that end, the project builds on scholarship on other

provinces<sup>1</sup> and pursues the in-depth study of five key regions in the early Islamic period. Among them is the Jazīra.

The Jazīra, or Northern Mesopotamia, was one of the most diverse regions of the early Islamic Empire. In the pre-Islamic period, it was divided between the Sasanian and the Byzantine Empires. Its eastern part mostly fell under the Iranian sphere of influence until the collapse of the Sasanian Empire in the wake of the Arab-Muslim conquests of the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, while the western part was more or less controlled by Byzantium. The two empires' centuries-long rivalry led to the frequent reassignment of 'Jazīran' territory to the domain of one or another player,<sup>2</sup> with no clearly defined border between Byzantine and Sasanian lands.<sup>3</sup>

The region was inhabited by a great variety of religious, ethnic, tribal, linguistic, and political communities, some of whom enjoyed significant autonomy in both pre-Islamic times and the early Islamic period – perhaps one of the reasons the Jazīra was plagued by frequent revolts. Some of these were quite successful and led to the establishment of local and regional elite families who governed the region with various degrees of independence from (and not infrequently in opposition to) the caliphal courts.<sup>4</sup> The region's heterogeneity, evidenced also in its geographical features and the resulting range of settlement types and economic strategies,<sup>5</sup> was already present in Late Antiquity<sup>6</sup>: Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, 'Sabaeans' (and later Muslims of various denominations); nomads, pastoralists, and settled people of different tribes;<sup>7</sup> Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Greeks, and others all inhabited the 'Jazīra'.

Throughout the early Islamic period, Muslims remained a minority within the region, which housed a large (but not uniform) Christian population. Jazīran Christianity was mainly divided into two factions: the Syrian Orthodox Church (the 'Jacobites'), whose center was al-Ruhā (Edessa) and whose adherents were predominant in the province's western subdivision (Diyār Muḍar) and the

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1 Egypt, for instance, the study of which is blessed with an enormous reservoir of papyrus from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onward. See Sijpesteijn 2009 and 2013.

2 See e.g. Decker 2007, 220; Hirt 2008, *passim*; Schmitt 2001, 201–204.

3 Lilie 2005, 13.

4 The most famous example of this in the early Islamic period are the Ḥamdānids, who controlled large parts of the Jazīra in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. See Canard 1953; Bikhazi 1981.

5 Robinson, C. 2017, 21–23; Robinson, C. 2000, 34.

6 See e.g. Hirt 2008, 58–59; Posner 1988, 43; Robinson, C. 2000, 34–35.

7 The main Jazīran tribes on the eve of the Muslim conquest were the Banū Taghlib, the Iyād, and al-Namir. The Taghlib in particular continued to play an important role in the region; the Ḥamdānids belonged to that tribe. See Schmitt 2001, 223–224.

northern mountain range of the Ṭūr ‘Abdīn;<sup>8</sup> and the Church of the East (the ‘Nestorians’), which was particularly active in the eastern subdivision (Diyār Rabī‘a), especially along the Tigris, in al-Mawṣil, and in Naṣībīn.<sup>9</sup> Communities of Chalcedonian Christians (‘Melkites’) were also dispersed throughout the Jazīra, mostly in the Diyār Muḍar because of its proximity to (formerly) Byzantine territory. The Arab conquerors left existing church structures mostly undisturbed;<sup>10</sup> the Church of the East, for instance, continued to be an influential player under Muslim rule, serving as an administrative body and mediator of local interests and imperial demands, especially after the move of the seat of its patriarchate to Baghdād in 775.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, both the Syrian Orthodox and the Church of the East benefited from the Islamic conquests, as they were able to extend their influence—and their rivalry—beyond the old Byzantine-Sasanian frontiers.<sup>12</sup>

The province of al-Jazīra was situated between the two imperial core regions of the early Islamic Empire, al-Shām and al-‘Irāq, making it a major communication line and key transit region of its own.<sup>13</sup> The region’s fertility, anchored in the great river systems of the Euphrates and the Tigris, turned it into the caliphal capital’s bread-basket, especially in the early ‘Abbāsīd period.<sup>14</sup> It was also the seat of government of at least two caliphs, the Umayyad Marwān II (r. 744–749/50; based at Ḥarrān) and the ‘Abbāsīd Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809; based at al-Raqqa in 796–808).

Despite the region’s relative significance, we know little about the internal workings of the Jazīra—its administration, the interplay of the various religious and political groups, or the day-to-day processes of governing the province. High-ranking members of both the Umayyad and the ‘Abbāsīd family were connected to the region through governorships and/or as (major) landowners, but even here the extant sources record comparatively little of their activities. Both

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**8** Hage 1966, 11, 12, 16. See also his map of Syrian Orthodox bishoprics.

**9** Wilmshurst 2011.

**10** Hage 1966, 68.

**11** Wilmshurst 2011, 115.

**12** See e.g. Wilmshurst 2011, 466–469, for the expansion of the Church of the East from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

**13** Pace C. Robinson, who considers the Jazīra a “peripheral area” at least in the period of the Rāshīdūn and Umayyads; Robinson, C. 2000, viii. For evidence of the Jazīra’s prosperity in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century, see e.g. Eger 2015, 155–156 (specifically challenging Robinson’s assertions); Bartl 1993–1994.

**14** Robinson, C. 2017, 24, 26, 27–28; Kennedy 2011, 196, 197; Heidemann 2011, 48–55. This also meant that the Jazīra declined when these centers were no longer as prosperous and their demand for foodstuffs and other goods diminished, on which see Heidemann 2011, 55–56.

in the primary sources and in scholarship, the history of the province is largely overshadowed by that of al-Shām, al-‘Irāq, Egypt, and Khurāsān.

This lack of information is partly due to the fact that non-Muslims are often invisible in the Islamic sources. For a Christian-majority province like the Jazīra, this causes a noticeable problem. Christians (like other non-Muslims) were clearly involved in administration and tax collection, trade, education, and even policing, but the Islamic tradition remains mostly silent on their activities. Only al-Raqqā and al-Mawṣil have been the subject of more detailed study,<sup>15</sup> but there is a dearth of primary information compared to what is available for some of the cities of al-Shām, al-‘Irāq, or Khurāsān. The great cities of pre-Islamic Northern Mesopotamia, like Edessa (al-Ruhā) or Nisibis (Naṣībīn), are mostly absent from the Islamic sources and thus from scholarship. The study of the early Islamic Jazīra is therefore fraught with difficulty: “writing a history of the Jazīra is writing almost *ex nihilo*.”<sup>16</sup>

How, then, to proceed, especially regarding issues such as the interactions of regional elites with the imperial government that are difficult to trace in the Islamic source material for the Jazīra? Non-Muslim sources are one promising avenue of research. Many can be dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century, before the bulk of early Islamic sources was put down in written form. They offer insight into aspects of local daily life barely covered elsewhere, such as landownership and non-Muslim jurisdiction,<sup>17</sup> and unlike the early Islamic tradition, a substantial portion of the Christian scholarship produced in the Jazīra is extant today.<sup>18</sup> This survival provides an insight into conditions within this province otherwise difficult to attain.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in some ways it would be easier to write a history of the Christian Jazīra in the early Islamic period.<sup>20</sup> There are also cases in which the Christian tradition preserves snippets of the Jazīra’s Muslim history that

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**15** On al-Mawṣil, see al-Dawaykhi 1982 and Robinson, C. 2000. On al-Raqqā, see Becker / Heidemann 2003; Ḥabbāb 2010. Western scholarship on al-Raqqā has mostly focused on archaeology and material culture.

**16** Robinson, C. 2000, ix.

**17** See e.g. Sachau 1907–1914.

**18** See e.g. the *Book of Governors* by Thomas of Marga in Budge 1893; a fragment of John bar Penkāyē’s work in Brock 1987; the *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* in Harak 1999; the partial reconstruction of the work of Theophilus of Edessa in Hoyland 2011.

**19** Of course, non-Muslim sources are neither unquestionably reliable nor entirely independent from the Arab-Islamic tradition, and as with every piece of (historical) writing, their authors pursue their own agendas.

**20** See e.g. Fiey 1977; Ishaq 1992; Drijvers 1992; Debié 2016; and Philip Wood’s contribution to this volume.

has all but disappeared from the written Islamic tradition (although sometimes these fragments are still visible in the numismatic record).<sup>21</sup>

Prosopography is another promising approach to studying the changing composition of early Islamic elites,<sup>22</sup> and the one adopted here. As it is the objective of this paper and indeed this project as a whole to break down the grand narratives of center and province, I will focus on city officials. Originally, this contribution was meant to look at the governors of Naṣībīn in an attempt to broaden our knowledge of the city's early Islamic history. However, a detailed and prolonged search unearthed only a handful of figures, too far apart chronologically and with backgrounds and careers too unclear to detect patterns and allow for meaningful conclusions. Similar problems exist for other Jazīran cities in the early Islamic period, even al-Raqqā, with the exception of al-Mawṣil whose governors have already been investigated.<sup>23</sup> While it is certainly possible to expand upon the existing studies, this paper will instead examine an important but hitherto neglected category of early Islamic Jazīran officials: the *qāḍīs* of the region.

Within the scope of this paper, I will focus on the judges of three major cities: al-Raqqā, al-Mawṣil, and Ḥarrān. Partial lists of these cities' *qāḍīs* already exist,<sup>24</sup> but with very few exceptions the individuals in question have not been examined further.<sup>25</sup> These lists were expanded using the digital search tool Jedli, which was developed within the framework of the 'Islamic Empire at Work' project and allows for a much more comprehensive and rapid investigation of Arabic texts compared to a manual search.<sup>26</sup> The present paper thus constitutes a step towards narrowing the gap in our knowledge of Jazīran history by bringing to light those who made up the fabric of Muslim provincial society in the early Islamic period.

In what follows, I will provide an overview of the *qāḍīs* of the individual cities. The emphasis here is not primarily on their religious teachings or professional responsibilities,<sup>27</sup> but rather on questions of background, career, social and

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21 For instance, Bar Hebraeus and Elias of Nisibis transmit relatively detailed reports on a number of Arab notables that held Naṣībīn, Ra's al-ʿAyn, Kafartūthā, and other Jazīran settlements in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century following Hārūn's death. See Ilisch 1986.

22 On the importance of prosopography for early Islamic history, see e.g. Crone 1980, 16–17; Cooperson 2000; Jaques 2007; Robinson, M. 2013.

23 See e.g. Forand 1969; Kennedy 1981; Robinson, C. 2000, *passim*.

24 See Forand 1969, 102; Juynboll 1983, appendix III; Tsafirir 2004, 81, 86.

25 See e.g. on the *qāḍī* of al-Raqqā, Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 805), Khadduri 1966; Bonner 2001; Sadeghi 2010. On the *qāḍīs* of al-Mawṣil, see the brief remarks in Kennedy 1981, 29–30.

26 On Jedli, see Haro Peralta/Verkinderen 2016 and 2016b.

27 For the office of the *qāḍī* in the early Islamic period, see e.g. Tillier 2009 and 2015.

professional mobility, and interaction with other regional or imperial officials (appointments, dismissals, and so forth).<sup>28</sup> The evidence for *qāḍīs* in the early Islamic period is rather limited both due to the modest survival of early source material in general and because biographies of *qāḍīs* only began to be compiled in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>29</sup> This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the available evidence regarding early Islamic judges focuses on regions other than the Jazīra. The survival of biographical dictionaries featuring the *qāḍīs* of the Arabian Peninsula, al-‘Irāq, and Egypt has caused the latter two provinces in particular to dominate the scholarly discourse on early Islamic legal history.<sup>30</sup> While understandable, this has led to generalizations concerning the office of the *qāḍī* in the early Islamic period that potentially distort our understanding of it. For instance, it has been argued that the presence of *mawālī* among *qāḍīs* of the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd period was exceptional.<sup>31</sup> As we shall see, this does not hold true for the three Jazīran cities considered here.

This paper will focus primarily on the (admittedly scarce) material dealing with judges within the Jazīra. Via the comparative analysis of Ḥarrān, al-Raqqā, and al-Mawṣil, it seeks to discern similarities and differences in the local power structures and elite composition of these cities that will improve upon our understanding of early Islamic administration and the Jazīra’s position as one node in the imperial network of the early caliphate.

## The *Qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān

Ḥarrān (Roman Carrhae) was a major settlement in the Diyār Muḍar, the westernmost part of the Jazīra. Located in the fertile plain watered by the Jullāb, a tributary of the Balikh that joined that river at Ḥarrān, it was close to Edessa/al-Ruhā as well as al-Raqqā, the great city in the Balikh delta. Ḥarrān was the center of the Sabian community, who lived there relatively undisturbed until the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. The city served as a seat of the governor of the Jazīra. It was the capital of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II, and thus briefly the capital of the early Islamic Empire in the 740s, the period in which Ḥarrān’s first mosque may have been built. Over time Ḥarrān developed into a Ḥanbalī stronghold, and it was one of the centers of the translation movement during the early ‘Abbāsīd

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<sup>28</sup> See Tillier 2011 for a similar approach to the *qāḍīs* of Egypt.

<sup>29</sup> Tillier 2014, 119–120; Judd 2015, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Al-‘Irāq and Arabia: Wakī‘ 1947; Egypt: al-Kindī 2003.

<sup>31</sup> Bligh-Abramski 1992, 54.

period.<sup>32</sup> Until the construction of al-Rāfiqa in 772, Ḥarrān's political importance and economic prosperity probably surpassed that of al-Raqqā.<sup>33</sup> Even after changing settlement patterns reduced the city's status, Ḥarrān might have retained some of its economic and military significance into the early 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup>

Information on the *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān is rather sketchy compared to the other two cities investigated in this paper. This is not entirely surprising: the history of the city in general is relatively poorly documented in the extant written sources. While Ḥarrān was Marwān II's capital, it never attained the size and significance of al-Raqqā and al-Mawṣil in their heydays. Moreover, much of the information on city *qāḍīs* provided by the Arabic sources deals with the period of 'Abbāsīd prime from the caliphate of al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775) until the death of al-Ma'mūn in 833, when Ḥarrān began to lose importance.

My search produced twelve individuals who apparently served as *qāḍīs* of the city, although it is likely that only nine were actually judges of Ḥarrān. Juynboll names a set of three brothers who flourished in the late Umayyad/early 'Abbāsīd period as *qāḍīs* of the city,<sup>35</sup> but the primary sources in fact only mention one brother, Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh b. 'Ulātha (d. 750/51), in that capacity.<sup>36</sup> His brothers Muḥammad and Ziyād are exclusively listed as judges of 'Askar al-Mahdī (referring either to al-Ruṣāfa or east Baghdād) for the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mahdī; uncommonly, Muḥammad seems to have shared the office with another *qāḍī*.<sup>37</sup> The family was of Ḥarrānī origin and thus represents a good—albeit, for the *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān, unusual—example of the mobility of early Muslim elites. As the focus here is on those individuals who were judges of Ḥarrān itself, only Sulaymān is included in the following analysis. Another uncertain case is that of Hārūn b. Ibrāhīm (d. 939/40)—while he is relatively well-known as *qāḍī* of Egypt

32 For the history of Ḥarrān, see Mez 1892; Lloyd/Brice 1951; *EF*, “Ḥarrān” (G. Fehérvári).

33 Heidemann 2011, 49.

34 Heidemann 2003, 41–46.

35 Juynboll 1983, appendix III, ‘Ḥarrān.’

36 See e.g. Ibn Sa'd 1990, 7:335; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 4:126; Waki' 1947, 1:217–219; Ibn al-Athīr 1972, 2:365.

37 The *EF* entry on the “Ḳāḍī” (E. Tyan/Gy. Káldy Nagy) states that jurisdiction was exclusively “exercised by a single Ḳāḍī.” See also Tillier 2017, 124. For Muḥammad b. 'Ulātha, see e.g. Ibn Sa'd 1990, 7:234; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 7:302; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 3:7–9; Waki' 1947, 3:251–253; for Ziyād b. 'Ulātha, see e.g. Ibn Sa'd 1990, 7:335; Waki' 1947, 3:252; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 3:437; al-Mizzī 1980, 9:490–492.

and Baghdād, only Ibn al-Nadīm mentions him as judge of Ḥarrān,<sup>38</sup> so he will also not be considered in what follows.

As already indicated, most of the evidence pertains to the late Umayyad/early 'Abbāsīd period. Of the nine remaining judges, three were in office during the late Umayyad and possibly into the early 'Abbāsīd period. Three *qāḍīs* served in early 'Abbāsīd times; two individuals, among them the eminent Ḥarrānī *ḥadīth* scholar Abū 'Arūba (d. 930), held the office in the middle 'Abbāsīd period. The last judge is unidentified, but we can assume that he was *qāḍī* of Ḥarrān, probably before the death of Waki' (d. 917/18) whose *Akhbār al-Quḍāt* is the only source to mention him.<sup>39</sup>

There is a large gap between the *qāḍīs* of the late Umayyad/early 'Abbāsīd and those of the middle 'Abbāsīd period. No judges are mentioned between the deaths of al-Mughīra b. Siqlāb in 817/18 and Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-Qarduwānī<sup>40</sup> in 881. Only one *qāḍī* is explicitly mentioned as an appointee of a member of the ruling house: Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh was reportedly appointed over Ḥarrān and the cities of the Jazīra by 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān II b. Muḥammad, who held the Jazīra for his father after the murder of al-Walīd II.<sup>41</sup> The 'Abbāsīd-era *qāḍīs* were in all likelihood appointed by the caliph or (later) his chief judge, but the sources do not tell us this directly.

Statistics aside, what can we learn about the composition and careers of Ḥarrān's juridical elite? To begin with, the *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān generally appear to have been part of a well-integrated local network of religious scholars with few ties beyond the city and even fewer outside the Jazīra.<sup>42</sup> All of them seem to have come from Ḥarrānī families and from various Arab tribes or were connected to the latter as *mawālī*.<sup>43</sup> There is no explicit evidence that they held positions within the imperial administration outside Ḥarrān.

**38** Ibn al-Nadīm 1997, 1:398. For Hārūn as *qāḍī* of Egypt and Baghdād, see e.g. al-Kindī 2003, 1:344–345; al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ 1965–1983, 5:362–363; Ibn Ḥajar 1998, 1:127.

**39** Waki' 1947, 3:216.

**40** Or al-Qurdawānī. On him, see e.g. al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 20:121; Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 9:325; Ibn Abī Ya'īlā 1952, 1:302–304.

**41** Al-Ṭabarī 1967, 7:296. The wording does not clarify whether he was appointed as judge or governor of Ḥarrān and the Jazīra, although the former is at least likely in the case of Ḥarrān.

**42** As already mentioned, Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh's brothers were *qāḍīs* of 'Askar al-Mahdī, but he died about 30 years before them (unless the date is a copyist's error perpetuated by later sources) so the extent to which he was connected outside Ḥarrān and the Jazīra is questionable.

**43** Four of them were *mawālī*, although it is not clear whether the term refers to the *qāḍīs* themselves or to their ancestors: 'Uthmān (b. 'Amr) b. Sāj al-Ḥarrānī (fl. 757; *mawlā* Quraysh or B. Umayya); al-Jarrāḥ b. al-Mīnhāl al-Jazarī (d. 784; *mawlā* B. 'Āmir); Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-Qarduwānī (d. 881; *mawlā* Shaybān); Abū 'Arūba (d. 930; *mawlā* B. Sulaym).

Most of the city's *qāḍīs* were known as reliable *ḥadīth* transmitters.<sup>44</sup> The local Ḥarrānī and Jazīran factor is noticeable: many of the authorities from and to whom our judges transmitted *ḥadīth* carry Jazīran *nisbas* (al-Ruhāwī, al-Ḥarrānī, al-Mawṣilī, al-Raqqī, al-Jazarī, and the like). There is a lot of overlap between the *qāḍīs* regarding these authorities.<sup>45</sup> Many judges are specifically mentioned as having received and passed on traditions within their families,<sup>46</sup> and it is not unexpected that some *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān served as *ḥadīth* authorities for their successors in office.<sup>47</sup> There is little evidence of educational or professional mobility: Abū 'Arūba al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad (d. 930), chronologically the last judge considered here, is the only one said to have engaged in *ṭalab al-'ilm*.<sup>48</sup> He apparently studied with many eminent scholars in al-Shām, the Thughūr, the Ḥijāz, and al-'Irāq; his erudition attracted many students, who visited him in Ḥarrān.<sup>49</sup>

There seems to have been little imperial involvement in the judgeship of Ḥarrān beyond the acts of appointment and dismissal. The relevant entries in the biographical dictionaries and other sources are often basic and provide few details on the date or length of an appointment, the *qāḍī*'s responsibilities and rulings, or his communication and interaction (or lack thereof) with impe-

**44** The one exception is al-Jarrāḥ b. al-Minhāl al-Jazarī, who reportedly lied in *ḥadīth* and was rather partial to both *khamr* and *nabīdh*. See Ibn Ḥibbān 1976, 1:218–219; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 2:523; al-Subkī 1992, 3:234. Other *qāḍīs* nevertheless transmitted from him.

**45** Compare e.g. the transmitters mentioned in the entries on al-Khaṭṭāb b. Qāsim (al-Bukhārī 1941–1959, 3:201; al-Mizzī 1980, 8:258; al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 12:77); Yūnus b. Rāshid al-Ḥarrānī (al-Bukhārī 1941–1959, 8:412; Ibn Ḥibbān 1973, 9:289; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 9:239); and Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh al-Qarduwānī (Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 9:325; Ibn Abī Ya'lā 1952, 1:302–304).

**46** See e.g. 'Uthmān (b. 'Amr) b. Sāj al-Ḥarrānī (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 6:162; Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 7:144–145) and Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh (Ibn al-Athīr 1972, 2:365; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 4:126, 9:269–271; al-Sam'ānī 1952–1982, 9:410; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 8:479–481 [on Sulaymān's brothers and father]). The transmission of *ḥadīth* between family members was a very common feature of early Islamic learning, but it also intensified the local 'flavor' of Ḥarrānī networks.

**47** E.g., al-Mughira b. Siqlāb (d. 817/18) transmitted from al-Jarrāḥ b. al-Minhāl al-Jazarī (d. 784); see Ibn 'Adī 1997, 2:406–408. Abū 'Arūba (d. 930) transmitted from al-Qarduwānī (d. 881); see Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 9:325.

**48** A second example might be case of al-Jarrāḥ b. al-Minhāl (d. 784), but the evidence is sketchy. See Ibn Ḥibbān 1976, 1:218–219; Ibn 'Adī 1997, 2:406–408.

**49** See e.g. Abū Ya'lā al-Khalīlī 1989, 1:458–459; Ibn al-'Adīm 1988, 6:2780–2781; al-Dhahabī 1948–1949, 23:409–410.

rial officials.<sup>50</sup> The small number of judges mentioned for Ḥarrān might indicate that they tended to remain in office for extended periods of time, but that is conjecture. However, the judges' comprehensive entrenchment in the city will have allowed them to build up lasting networks of loyalty and support that would protect them in the event of conflict with the imperial order. As far as we can tell, the *qādīs* of Ḥarrān were thus a decidedly local elite whose power and influence were primarily founded on the city and its hinterland. The composition of this elite group probably did not undergo any significant changes from the late Umayyad to the middle 'Abbāsīd period. Ḥarrānī origins, membership in an Arab tribe, and affiliation with a local and regional (Jazīra) network of transmitters were the defining features of these officials. Their power, security, and effectiveness were primarily guaranteed by their fellow Ḥarrānīs rather than caliphal patronage or a transregional economic power base, although a combination of regional and transregional factors was certainly possible—as we will see below.

### The *Qādīs* of al-Raqqa

The city of al-Raqqa is situated in the Balikh delta at the river's confluence with the Euphrates. It was the capital of the Diyār Muḍar, the western subdivision of the Jazīra.<sup>51</sup> While al-Raqqa was an important stronghold in the Umayyad period, the city reached the pinnacle of its prosperity and political importance under the early 'Abbāsīds, who used the city as a base from which to counter the perpetual strife in al-Shām.<sup>52</sup> The period witnessed extensive building activities in al-Raqqa. Its companion city al-Rāfiqa was built from 771–772 onwards on the orders of al-Manṣūr, apparently to further secure al-Raqqa by stationing a Khurasānī garrison there.<sup>53</sup> Together, the twin cities constituted the largest urban complex in Northern Mesopotamia and al-Shām, probably second only to Baghdād. Al-Raqqa's prime culminated with Hārūn al-Rashīd's choice to relocate the imperial capital there in 796 and the caliph's concomitant investments in an extensive construction program. Al-Raqqa remained Hārūn's seat of power until his death in 809, upon which the court was moved back to Baghdād. Thereafter, al-Raqqa was the seat of the governor of the Jazīra, a position that had in the

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<sup>50</sup> One exception is again Sulaymān b. 'Abdallāh: Wakī' (1947, 1:217–219) preserves some of his alleged rulings, mostly on the subject of slaves.

<sup>51</sup> For the history of al-Raqqa, see *EF*<sup>2</sup>, "al-Raqqa" (M. Meinecke) in addition to the references noted above.

<sup>52</sup> Tsafirir 2004, 82.

<sup>53</sup> Tsafirir 2004, 82.

past been occupied by Ḥarrān. The city gradually lost its political significance over the course of the 9<sup>th</sup> century but remained famous for its religious scholars, some of whom will be discussed below. Al-Raqqā retained an active Christian and Jewish population well into the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the Muslim presence in the city increased significantly with the city's flowering in the early 'Abbāsīd period. It appears that it was home to a sizeable number of 'Alīd sympathizers, with many of the proto-Sunnīs leaning towards the teachings of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in the late 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> Ḥanafism also came to play a role in al-Raqqā, as we will see shortly.

Turning to the *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā, the volume of evidence is on a very different scale compared to what survives for Ḥarrān. The sources preserve the names of 24 judges of the city, although four cannot be securely identified as *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā.<sup>55</sup> Further research did not reveal any additional information about these individuals, so they were excluded from the following analysis. Another four judges are essentially unknown other than by their service as *qāḍī*,<sup>56</sup> leaving us with 16 better-known (and in some cases eminent) individuals over a period of roughly 200 years, from the reign of 'Umar II (the earliest point of reference) until the death of the *qāḍī* Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan in 926–927. As in the case of Ḥarrān, most of the available information pertains to *qāḍīs* of the early 'Abbāsīd period. Half of the 14 cases that explicitly mention the caliph under whom a judge served can be matched to the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809), who not only made al-Raqqā his capital but whose reign also saw administrative reforms that contributed to the gradual formalization of the office of (chief) *qāḍī*,<sup>57</sup> and to the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–833). Only two judges are listed for the Umayyad period; one reportedly served under 'Umar II (r. 717–720).<sup>58</sup>

The composition of the juridical elite of al-Raqqā differs from that of its Ḥarrānī counterpart in some respects. While the judges of al-Raqqā also all ap-

54 Tsafirir 2004, 84.

55 These four either carry the *nisba* al-Qāḍī and are in some way connected with al-Raqqā without being mentioned explicitly as judges of the city, or the evidence concerning them is ambiguous (e. g., they are described as *al-qāḍī bi-l-Raqqā* but there are no other details available on the individuals in question and their potential *qāḍīship* in al-Raqqā).

56 These are Dāwūd b. 'Abd al-Ḥamid, Muḥammad b. Bulbul, Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī (fl. 922–923), and Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad.

57 Bligh-Abramski 1992, 41, 56–59.

58 Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 735–36) and Sābiq b. 'Abdallāh. The latter was *qāḍī* of al-Raqqā at an unspecified date, but as he met 'Umar II in person and took part in campaigns during the reign of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 715–717), his time in office can be dated to the mid- to late-Umayyad period. See Ibn al-'Adīm 1988, 9:4063–4076; al-Qushayrī 1998, 144–146.

pear to stem from or be connected to Arab tribes, with seven *mawālī* among the group, only four can securely be identified as Raqqīs. Five individuals hail from al-‘Irāq, one from Mecca, and one from Ḥarrān.<sup>59</sup> Three out of the four *qāḍīs* with a Raqqī origin belong to the same family: ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥarb (d. 837) and his two sons al-Ḥasan (d. 914) and Muḥammad (d. 926–927), members of a prominent and long-established Ḥanafī family whose ancestor al-Ḥasan b. Ḥarb had been sent by his Christian father to study with the famous Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 805, also *qāḍī* of al-Raqqā).<sup>60</sup> For reasons due at least in part to imperial politics, al-Raqqā’s juridical elite cannot be considered a largely closed system of local notables like that of Ḥarrān. This is confirmed by a closer look at the scholarly networks of Raqqan judges as well as their professional and educational mobility.

As in the case of Ḥarrān, most of the judges of al-Raqqā were known as *ḥadīth* transmitters and scholars of *fiqh*. However, a number of them had mixed or bad reputations.<sup>61</sup> Transmission within families was widespread,<sup>62</sup> which is again not surprising as education was largely a family affair. However, unlike the Ḥarrānī *qāḍīs*, only three of the 16 individuals about whom we are relatively well informed are mentioned as part of a Jazīran network of transmitters, and even they are also said to have studied with authorities beyond the Jazīra.<sup>63</sup> Several *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā also studied with eminent personalities such as al-Zuhri, Sufyān al-Thawri, or Abū Ḥanīfa.<sup>64</sup> Of course, as already mentioned almost a third of the known judges were from non-Raqqī and even non-Jazīran

<sup>59</sup> No information is available on the origin of the remaining *qāḍīs*.

<sup>60</sup> On this family and the confusion over ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan’s name, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 3:285–286; Ibn ‘Asākir 1995–2000, 8:354; Tsafrir 2004, 83 (and the references assembled there). ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣakhr and his son ‘Abd al-Salām (d. 861 or 863) are another example of the *qāḍī* office being passed down in the same family.

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. ‘Abdallāh b. al-Muḥarrar or al-Muḥarrir (d. 767/77; al-Qushayrī 1998, 134; Ibn ‘Adī 1997, 5:213–220); ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Iṣḥāq (d. 846/47; Waki’ 1947, 3:283); or Zakariyyā’ b. Manẓūr (Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 8:3816–3826).

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣakhr (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 11:52–54; Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 5:246); Aḥmad b. al-‘Ālā’ (d. 887/88 or 889/90; Ibn ‘Asākir 1995–2000, 5:120–126); or Zakariyyā’ b. Manẓūr (Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 8:3816–3826).

<sup>63</sup> For the Umayyad period, see the information on Sābiq b. ‘Abdallāh al-Raqqī in al-Qushayrī 1998, 144–146, and the reports in Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 9:4063–4076. For the ‘Abbāsīd period, see Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan (d. 926/27; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 3:285–286) and Zakariyyā’ b. Manẓūr (Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 8:3816–3826).

<sup>64</sup> For instance, the *qāḍīs* Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 805; Ibn Sa’d 1990, 7:242; al-Ṣaymarī 1985, 1:125–133), ‘Abdallāh b. Bishr (Ibn Abī Ḥātim 1952–1953, 5:14; al-Dhahabī 1963, 2:397–398), Sābiq b. ‘Abdallāh al-Raqqī (al-Qushayrī 1998, 144–146; Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 9:4063–4076), and Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād b. Abī Ḥanīfa (d. 827).

families. On that basis alone it is already a certainty that their profiles were more diverse than those of the Ḥarrānīs. There is some evidence for Raqqan judges transmitting *ḥadīth* from each other,<sup>65</sup> but little in the way of overlap between them regarding local *ḥadīth* authorities from al-Raqqā or the Jazīra.

In total, 13 out of the 16 better-known *qāḍīs* are examples of the mobility of some early Islamic elites. Not only did most of them study with non-Jazīran authorities, but six *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā were also judges elsewhere. Four held one of the *qāḍī*ships of Baghdād, emphasizing the connection between the two imperial centers of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate, while two also served in neighbouring al-Shām. Abū Ḥanīfa’s grandson, Ismā‘īl b. Ḥammād (d. 827), served as *qāḍī* of east Baghdād, al-Baṣra, and al-Raqqā.<sup>66</sup> Hārūn b. ‘Abdallāh al-Zuhrī l-Qurashī (d. 846/47 in Sāmarrā’), from a Meccan family, held the judgeship of no less than four cities and provinces—al-Maṣṣīṣa, al-Raqqā, east Baghdād, and finally Egypt—during the reign of al-Ma’mūn, who had appointed him in person. Hārūn’s son ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was *qāḍī* of Mecca for al-Mu’taḍīd, as was Hārūn’s grandson Yaḥyā b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in the caliphate of al-Muqtadir.<sup>67</sup>

The example of Hārūn b. ‘Abdallāh points to another difference between these *qāḍīs* and those of Ḥarrān (with the exception of Abū ‘Arūba): some of al-Raqqā’s judges were of eminent stature and influential well beyond the Jazīra. This applies to both judges known from the Umayyad period, Sābiq b. ‘Abdallāh al-Raqqī and Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 735/36). Sābiq, who hailed from Ḥarrān and whose reputation as an authority of *ḥadīth* was still alive and well within the city’s scholarly networks in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>68</sup> was a transmitter and poet; he was acquainted with ‘Umar II and apparently recited his poems in the caliph’s presence. He led (or accompanied) a military campaign in the time of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik and spent a lot of time in al-Shām, where he was renowned as a *ḥadīth* scholar. He was perhaps a *mawlā* of the Umayyad house, either of ‘Umar II or of al-Walīd (presumably al-Walīd I).<sup>69</sup>

65 Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 735/36) transmitted from Sābiq b. ‘Abdallāh; as stated above, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan (d. 837) had studied with al-Shaybānī.

66 See the editor’s note in al-Mizzī 1980, 3:68, which also lists the available primary sources on Ismā‘īl.

67 Ibn Ḥazm 1983, 135–136; Ibn Ḥajar 1998, 447–455; al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ 1965–1983, 3:353–356.

68 Al-Qushayrī 1998, 145. The father of the Ḥarrānī *qāḍī* al-Qarduwānī (d. 881) was among those who transmitted from Sābiq as well as from ‘Uthmān (b. ‘Amr) b. Sāj (fl. 757), another judge of Ḥarrān, again emphasizing the enduring close-knit nature of Ḥarrānī networks. See *ibid.*; al-‘Aynī 2006, 2:287.

69 Ibn al-‘Adīm 1988, 9:4063–4076; al-Qushayrī 1998, 144–146.

Maymūn b. Mihrān grew up in al-Kūfa and relocated to the Jazīra in 701, becoming one of al-Raqqā's leading scholars and the most influential jurist of the Jazīra in his time—his students, who came from all over the empire, carried the *nisba* al-Maymūnī. He was an administrator for the Umayyads and allegedly had a close relationship with 'Umar II. The two praised each other's piety and wisdom, and Maymūn was put in charge over jurisdiction and tax collection in the Jazīra by 'Umar II, who also appointed him as *qāḍī* of al-Raqqā.<sup>70</sup> He remained in office during Yazīd II's reign. Maymūn also administered the treasury of Ḥarrān for Muḥammad b. Marwān, 'Abd al-Malik's brother and governor of the Jazīra (692–709/10), and he was still one of the notables of Ḥarrān in the caliphate of Hishām; he led (or accompanied) an army to Cyprus in 724/25 (or a year later), reportedly in the company of Hishām's son Mu'āwiya.<sup>71</sup> Maymūn's son 'Amr (d. 762) ran the *dīwān* for 'Umar II.<sup>72</sup>

From the 'Abbāsīd period, we have similar examples. The families of 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan, whose son al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī was also deputy *qāḍī* of al-Baṣra at one point, and Hārūn b. 'Abdallāh have already been mentioned. The most prominent judge of al-Raqqā in the early 'Abbāsīd period, however, was Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 805), the great jurist who studied with Abū Ḥanīfa and Hārūn al-Rashīd's chief judge Abū Yūsuf. He too grew up in al-Kūfa and settled in Baghdād, where he studied and taught *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. We cannot go into detail here regarding his illustrious career and prominence in the classical juridical tradition,<sup>73</sup> but it is important for our purposes to note that Hārūn al-Rashīd called al-Shaybānī to al-Raqqā in 796, the year in which the caliph made the city his imperial capital.<sup>74</sup> There Hārūn appointed him as *qāḍī*,<sup>75</sup> a position subordinate probably only to the chief judgeship and one that al-Shaybānī retained until 803. While the relationship between the caliph and the *qāḍī* was not always cordial, al-Shaybānī was an important source of counsel for Hārūn.<sup>76</sup> When al-

<sup>70</sup> Until at least the early 'Abbāsīd period, the office of the *qāḍī* was not formalized. Incumbents often served different functions that did not need to be judicial in character, as in the case of Maymūn. See Bligh-Abramski 1992, 41, 44, and *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> Reports of involvement in military activity are restricted to the two *qāḍīs* from the Umayyad period, perhaps indicating a change regarding the office or the office holder's profile.

<sup>72</sup> The primary sources on Maymūn are conveniently collected and summarized in *EF*, "Maymūn b. Mihrān" (F. Donner). See also Tsafirir 2004, 84.

<sup>73</sup> See *EF*, "al-Shaybānī" (E. Chaumont) in addition to the references at note 25.

<sup>74</sup> Tsafirir 2004, 82.

<sup>75</sup> Other reports state that al-Shaybānī was instead appointed by the chief *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf, but it is clear that in any case his appointment was mandated by the highest authority. See Tsafirir 2004, 83.

<sup>76</sup> Tsafirir 2004, 82.

Shaybānī died in al-Rayy while accompanying Hārūn on his first journey there, apparently on the same day as the grammarian al-Kasā'ī who had also made the journey with them, the caliph is said to have exclaimed in sorrow, “today I laid to rest both language and law.”<sup>77</sup>

We have seen that the juridical elite of al-Raqqā differed substantially from its Ḥarrānī equivalent. The sources contain plenty of accounts of imperial involvement with the city’s judges both in the Umayyad and the ‘Abbāsīd period. The close ties between some judges and caliphs are apparent in the frequent mentions of caliphs and/or chief *qāḍīs* appointing, dismissing, consulting, and occasionally interfering with the judges of the city. This difference is undoubtedly connected to the status of al-Raqqā as an important imperial center, particularly under the early ‘Abbāsīds. The sources generally preserve a good amount of material for al-Raqqā, but the *qāḍī*ship of the city also seems to have required incumbents of a certain caliber.

Tsafir has argued that the ‘Abbāsīds had a predilection for the teachings of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767) that influenced their choice of several of his adherents as judges of al-Raqqā. The appointment of al-Shaybānī either by Hārūn al-Rashīd or his chief *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf (d. 798) has been understood as an imperial project aimed at spreading Ḥanafism, especially as al-Shaybānī was succeeded by a number of fellow Ḥanafīs (most of them from Baghdād).<sup>78</sup> However, Ḥanafism, like the other *madhāhib*, was not yet fully formed as a ‘school’ of law; this did not occur until the 10<sup>th</sup> century as the result of a complex process.<sup>79</sup> This makes it difficult to speak of a concerted imperial effort to spread the *legal doctrines* associated with Ḥanafism in its later, classic form. However, the appointment of proto-Ḥanafīs to an important judgeship such as al-Raqqā seems to confirm Tillier’s view that the caliphs from al-Manṣūr onwards sought to increase their influence on both the office of the *qāḍī* and the office holders themselves as against the established practice of leaving the decision up to local elites.<sup>80</sup> The attempt to impose proto-Ḥanafīs as *qāḍīs* on the part of the early ‘Abbāsīds frequently met with resistance,<sup>81</sup> and it is probably no coincidence that al-Raqqā

<sup>77</sup> Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 2:178.

<sup>78</sup> Tsafir 2004, 82–83.

<sup>79</sup> See e.g. Melchert 2004; Hurvitz 2000.

<sup>80</sup> Tillier 2013, 189–190, 192, 193–196. This could also have the effect of weakening the provincial and city governors, who had hitherto mainly appointed the judges, as well as the local elites by undermining their ties with each other and their influence on the office of the *qāḍī*. See *ibid.* 193, 201–203.

<sup>81</sup> Tillier 2013, 198–200.

only saw the appointment of such individuals to the judgeship following its elevation to imperial capital by Hārūn al-Rashīd.

The selection of individuals from outside al-Raqqā or the Jazīra as *qāḍīs* of the city also points to a different dynamic in the interaction between city notables and the caliphal court. Many of the judges will not have been able to fall back on the same kind of local network of support and loyalty as their colleagues in Ḥarrān and were thus more dependent on caliphal authority to maintain their standing in office. Unfortunately, we usually do not know how long the *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā remained in office,<sup>82</sup> but even those who served longer terms probably relied on the caliph more than was necessary for Ḥarrān's *qāḍīs*. This granted the early 'Abbāsids more control over an important elite segment within the empire's second center and a stronger position during potential regional conflicts. The judges of al-Raqqā hence represent a largely transregional elite that had strong ties to the empire's other core regions, in particular al-'Irāq. The Raqqī *qāḍī* family of 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥarb is an important exception to this pattern that illustrates the overlapping of different categories of elite status in both individuals and groups.

## The *Qāḍīs* of al-Mawṣil

Al-Mawṣil occupies a special place in the history of the early Islamic Jazīra.<sup>83</sup> The city was an important settlement throughout the period investigated here: it “inherited Nineveh's enviable position astride the Tigris, became an administrative and military center early on, and, by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, had established itself as an entrepôt for riverine trade to the heart of the empire.”<sup>84</sup> Al-Mawṣil sometimes served as the capital of Diyār Rabī'a, the eastern subdivision of the province, but at times it also operated independently from the Jazīra and constituted a province of its own. The numismatic record indicates that after 693, al-Mawṣil was part of a separate administrative sphere also comprising the distinct provinces al-Jazīra, Armīniya, Arrān, and Adharbayjān. This formation, which has been termed the “Umayyad North”, continued largely uninterrupted until the end of the Umayyad period.<sup>85</sup> The relationship between al-Jazīra and al-

<sup>82</sup> Al-Shaybānī was in office for seven years, and 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 861 or 863) served two terms of undetermined length.

<sup>83</sup> On the early Islamic history of al-Mawṣil, see Robinson, C. 2000; Forand 1969; *EP*<sup>2</sup>, “al-Mawṣil” (E. Honigmann/C. E. Bosworth).

<sup>84</sup> Robinson, C. 2000, ix.

<sup>85</sup> Spellberg 1988; Bates 1989.

Mawṣil in the ‘Abbāsīd period is not entirely clear, especially after the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 809 and the weakening of the imperial order in the city and elsewhere. The earliest partially extant history of al-Mawṣil, composed by the city’s *qāḍī* Abū Zakariyyā’ Yazīd b. Muḥammad al-Azdī (d. 944/45), is ambiguous on that point.<sup>86</sup>

Most of the Mosuli tribal elite apparently belonged to Yaman; there was continuous conflict between the Yamanī groups of Azd and Hamdān over the city’s leadership, and the situation deteriorated further after Hārūn’s death.<sup>87</sup> Al-Mawṣil also had a reputation for its rebellious inhabitants and sympathies with the ‘Khārijite’ rebels who roamed the towns and countryside of the eastern Jazīra.<sup>88</sup> Several governors sent by the caliphs were denied entrance to the city, and on a number of occasions both Umayyads and ‘Abbāsīds had to dispatch troops to deal—not always successfully—with Mosuli opposition. The massacre carried out in al-Mawṣil just after the takeover of the ‘Abbāsīds, apparently caused by the pro-Umayyad stance expressed by a segment of the city’s population, did not endear the new ruling house to the Mosulis either. However, both Umayyads and ‘Abbāsīds also invested heavily in the city, building palaces, paving streets, and paying for irrigation; the often fragile nature of al-Mawṣil’s relationship with the imperial court was at times offset by caliphal policies aimed at courting the Mosuli elites. It appears, for instance, that al-Manṣūr invested the office of the *qāḍī* in al-Mawṣil with certain privileges in an effort to strengthen ties between city and capital.<sup>89</sup>

Thanks to al-Azdī, we know quite a bit more about the *qāḍīs* of the city than about most of their counterparts in Ḥarrān and even al-Raqqā. The extant part of his *Ta’rikh al-Mawṣil* covers the period 719/20 – 838/39 and mentions 14 *qāḍīs* of the city; an extended search brought up an additional seven names. Of these 21 judges, only one cannot be securely identified as *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil.<sup>90</sup> 19 of the remaining 20 judges served in the ‘Abbāsīd period; the sole office holder from the Umayyad period, Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī (d. 751 or 753), was apparently

<sup>86</sup> Al-Azdī 1967, 226. See on this issue in general Forand 1969; Rotter 1974, 167, 189; Blankinship 1994, 50 – 57.

<sup>87</sup> Tsafir 2004, 80.

<sup>88</sup> In many cases, however, it is not entirely clear what the Khārijism of these ‘rebels’ actually entailed. It was likely not (primarily) related to questions of faith or doctrine in many of the reported cases. See e.g. Robinson, C. 2016. For the need to reassess the established understanding of Khārijism, see Hagemann/Verkinderen (forthcoming).

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, C. 2000, 158.

<sup>90</sup> Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Juzū’ī (?) is called *qāḍī l-Mawṣil bi-Baghdād*. See Ibn al-Athīr 1997, 6:542. Perhaps he was appointed as judge of al-Mawṣil but chose to remain in Baghdād, sending a deputy in his place. I could find no further information on him.

appointed by ‘Umar II, whose reign is once again the earliest point of reference for the *qāḍī*ship of a Jazīran city.<sup>91</sup> As in the case of Ḥarrān and especially al-Raqqā, the evidence is best for the early ‘Abbāsīd period; the last two *qāḍīs* listed by al-Azdī served under al-Ma’mūn, but he provides almost no information on the last one. We do not even know how long this last *qāḍī* was in office. Five of the seven judges retrieved from the extended search served in the period after al-Ma’mūn’s death and thus do not appear in the extant fragment of *Ta’rīkh al-Mawṣil*, but the two who seem to have been in office under the early ‘Abbāsīds are not mentioned by al-Azdī. The last *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil considered here is al-Azdī himself, who died in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century.

The composition of the juridical elite of al-Mawṣil displays similarities and differences with both Ḥarrān and al-Raqqā, combining aspects of both to illustrate a third variant of early Islamic elite structure. The *qāḍīs* of al-Mawṣil were of Arab tribal backgrounds, with three *mawālī* among them—a relatively lower number compared to the other two cities. As seems to have been common, most of the *qāḍīs* were *ḥadīth* transmitters and sometimes also scholars of *fiqh*. Echoing the case of Ḥarrān, we can observe the existence of a tight network of local authorities.<sup>92</sup> Family transmission was commonplace, and occasionally judges served as authorities for their future successors. At least two of al-Mawṣil’s *qāḍīs* belonged to local elite families.<sup>93</sup> Descendants of several of the city’s *qāḍīs* remained in al-Mawṣil as scholars and transmitters, some of them serving as authorities for al-Azdī;<sup>94</sup> the sons of ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm, who served as *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil during the reign of al-Mutawakkil,<sup>95</sup> appear in a cluster of several Mosuli/Jazīran transmitters, along with al-Qāsim b. Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Ashyab, whose grandfather held the judgeship of al-Mawṣil under al-Ma’mūn.<sup>96</sup>

However, contrary to what the sources preserve regarding the *qāḍīs* of Ḥarrān, the judges of al-Mawṣil were also well connected to the empire at large. Many of them transmitted from non-Mosuli *ḥadīth* scholars, and in several

91 There is a variant report according to which Yaḥyā was already appointed by Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik and only confirmed by ‘Umar II (Ibn Ḥibbān 1993, 2:76), but most other sources state that the latter appointed Yaḥyā himself. See e.g. al-Nawawī 1977, 2:160; al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 8:380; Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 11:299–300.

92 See e.g. the entries on Ma’mar (or Mu‘ammār) b. Muḥammad (d. 762; al-Azdī 1967, 173); ‘Alī b. Mushir (d. 805; al-Azdī 1967, 148); ‘Amr b. Mīhrān (al-Azdī 1967, 324).

93 Robinson, C. 2000, 88–89, 131.

94 E.g., the descendants of Bakkār b. Shurayḥ, *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil in the caliphates of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī. See Robinson, C. 2000, 131.

95 Al-Shābushtī 1951, 1:44.

96 Al-Mizzi 1980, 15:236; al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 23:127.

cases educational and professional mobility can be observed. Our sources explicitly state that six judges came from outside al-Mawṣil: four were from al-‘Irāq, one hailed from Damascus, and one was of Khurāsānī origins.<sup>97</sup> While we can probably assume that most of the remaining *qāḍīs* were from al-Mawṣil, we are told this directly only in four cases. *Qāḍīs* of al-Mawṣil travelled to study with eminent authorities, mostly in al-‘Irāq, or they relocated to the city to take up office. Two were also *qāḍīs* elsewhere, neither of them from the native Mosuli elite: ‘Alī b. Mushir al-Qurashī l-Kūfi (d. 805) was also judge of Armīniya after serving in al-Mawṣil, and he returned to his hometown al-Kūfa after his term in Armīniya; al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Ashyab (d. 824) had Khurāsānī roots and served as *qāḍī* of Ḥimṣ before being appointed over al-Mawṣil by Hārūn or al-Ma’mūn. Afterwards, he was appointed *qāḍī* of Ṭabaristān, but apparently died on his way there in al-Rayy.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to ‘Alī b. Mushir and al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā, a number of al-Mawṣil’s other judges were well-known personalities both within and outside the city’s boundaries, a feature they share with some of their colleagues in al-Raḡqa. For instance, Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī (d. 751 or 753), whose family came from Damascus, was renowned as a Qur’ān reciter and transmitter. He travelled widely to collect *ḥadīth*, heard directly from ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr and Makḥūl, and was considered the foremost scholar of al-Shām.<sup>99</sup> Al-‘Abbās b. al-Faḍl (d. 802), a poet and scholar of the Qur’ān, studied with Nāfi‘ *mawlā* Ibn ‘Umar as a child and was among the Mosuli nobles who rode out to meet with the chief *qāḍī* Abū Yūsuf (who had accompanied Hārūn al-Rashīd on his punitive expedition to al-Mawṣil).<sup>100</sup> Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Ammār (d. 856/57) was one of

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**97** Pace Robinson, C. 2000, 160, who suggested the *qāḍī*ship was held exclusively by locals. Kennedy 1981, 30, speaks of only 11 judges extracted from al-Azdī, and there is some confusion regarding the name of a *qāḍī* of apparently non-Mosuli origin, who is identified by Kennedy as ‘Abdallāh b. Khālīd al-Kūfi. However, Ḥabība’s 1967 edition renders his name as ‘Abdallāh b. al-Khalīl al-Karkhī or al-Karjī, and as far as I can see the *nisba* is the only indication of possible non-Mosuli origin. See al-Azdī 1967, 288, 302 (and note 2), 312. It should be noted that al-Azdī’s *Ta’rīkh al-Mawṣil* is largely silent on the judges’ non-Mosuli origin, which was determined on the basis of other sources. Compare e.g. the entries on Ismā‘īl b. Abi Ziyād al-Du‘alī (fl. 796/97) in al-Azdī 1967, 274–276, 279–283, 288, with al-Mizzī 1980, 3:96–97, and al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 11:19–20.

**98** On ‘Alī b. Mushir, see Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 7:383–384; al-Dhahabī 1948–49, 12:172–173. On al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā, see e.g. Ibn Sa’d 1990, 7:243; al-Azdī 1967, 335, 360–361; al-Mizzī 1980, 6:328–333.

**99** See e.g. Ibn Sa’d 1990, 7:323; Ibn Ḥibbān 1993, 2:76; al-Nawawī 1977, 2:160; Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 11:299–300.

**100** Al-Azdī 1967, 285; Ibn al-Jazarī 1933–1937, 1:353–354; Ibn Ḥajar 1907–1909, 5:126–127.

the city's great transmitters and scholars; he was a merchant whose business trips took him to Baghdād, where he studied with the city's learned authorities. According to one report, he went to Sāmarrā' to complain about al-Zubayrī, the otherwise unidentified *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil at the time. Because of his erudition, the people flocked to him, prompting the caliph to inquire about him. When he was told about al-Zubayrī's misconduct, the caliph dismissed him in favor of Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh.<sup>101</sup>

Again thanks to al-Azdī, we also know the (approximate) length of term of each *qāḍī* appearing in his work. Nine of the 14 judges he mentions were in office for more than two years, some for extended periods of time. This no doubt reinforced their status as local and regional authorities in law and administration. The caliphal government seems to have made only limited attempts to impose its own choice of judge on the city's population despite, or perhaps because of, the recalcitrance of the Mosuli notables. Contrary to the situation in al-Raqqā, there was also only one proto-Ḥanafī *qāḍī* who could be identified in al-Mawṣil: the above-mentioned 'Alī b. Mushir al-Qurashī l-Kūfī (d. 805) who served as judge of Arminiya after his term in the city.<sup>102</sup> According to Tsafrir, this indicates that al-Mawṣil's *qāḍīs* "were apparently mainly local non-Hanafis who enjoyed the support of the leading families of Mosul"<sup>103</sup> rather than proto-Ḥanafī outsiders dependent on caliphal backing. Tsafrir emphasizes this repeatedly and quite forcefully, but it seems prudent to urge caution here: the reason for the apparent 'Abbāsīd preference for Abū Ḥanīfa's teachings, and thus the precise logic inherent in the appointment of proto-Ḥanafī *qāḍīs* in certain cities and regions, still requires significant investigation.<sup>104</sup> The apparent lack of proto-Ḥanafī judges in al-Mawṣil could also be due to the sparse information included in the sources, which often do not mention affiliation with a particular *madhhab*.

If the majority of Mosuli judges were indeed from local families, the situation was likely similar to that in Ḥarrān: a strong juridical elite supported by local power networks rather than largely dependent on caliphal support. The relatively long terms in office the judges enjoyed would act as a counterweight to the frequent change in governors typical of the early Islamic Empire, providing some much-needed stability and continuity.<sup>105</sup> This also further strengthened the *qāḍī*'s local power vis-à-vis imperial authority, especially the continuous at-

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<sup>101</sup> Ibn Manẓūr 1984, 22:283–284.

<sup>102</sup> Tsafrir 2004, 77.

<sup>103</sup> Tsafrir 2004, 79.

<sup>104</sup> Tillier 2013, 195.

<sup>105</sup> Robinson, C. 2000, 158, 161.

tempts on the part of caliphs and governors to exert influence over the judgeship.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, the judges of al-Mawṣil had strong connections within and outside the Jazīra, representing a hybrid form of elite status that combined local, regional, and transregional networks of power and influence.

## Conclusion

This paper represents a first step towards disentangling and illuminating the administrative and political history of the early Islamic Jazīra. The *qāḍīs*, officials whose importance to the smooth administration of early Muslim cities sometimes surpassed that of the governors, constitute a fitting case study for a prosopographical study. The preceding analysis shows that the judges of the three cities shared some characteristics, such as Arab background (or clientage) and the predominance of *ḥadīth* transmitters. Robinson has argued with regard to al-Mawṣil that this predominance indicated “the office [having] something of a role to play in the nascent *ḥadīth* industry of the second-century town”,<sup>107</sup> but this was a geographically and temporally much more widespread phenomenon related to the *qāḍī*ship, in the Jazīra and beyond.<sup>108</sup>

However, we could also observe differing patterns in the three cities regarding the composition of their juridical elites: while Ḥarrān’s judges represent a local elite, the *qāḍīs* of al-Raqqā were primarily transregional; the judges of al-Mawṣil, on the other hand, counted among their number representatives of local, regional, and transregional elite status. For the most part, this variance is probably due to political and administrative factors, emphasizing that the study of a province, let alone an empire, needs to take into account regional and local differences if it seeks to do justice to the complex dynamics and hierarchies of governance in the early Islamic period.

This paper focused on prosopography rather than the responsibilities of the judgeship as an office, but the collected material nevertheless provides some insight into the latter. The appointment of the *qāḍī* seems to have been the prerogative of the caliph in the ‘Abbāsīd period. Judging from the few pieces of evidence we have, in the Jazīra this apparently occurred already in the Umayyad period when elsewhere “a large majority of *qāḍīs* was [still] appointed by provin-

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**106** For the limits imposed on the *qāḍīs*’ judicial authority during the Umayyad period, see Judd 2015. For the ‘Abbāsīd period, see Tillier 2014. Regarding competing claims to judicial authority among governors and caliphs, see Tillier 2014 and 2015.

**107** Robinson, C. 2000, 161.

**108** For the Umayyad period, see Judd 2015, 52, on *qāḍīs* from Egypt and al-‘Irāq.

cial or city governors.”<sup>109</sup> Tillier has stated that rare cases of direct caliphal appointment of judges in the Umayyad period are known exclusively from Egypt,<sup>110</sup> but the evidence from Umayyad al-Mawṣil and al-Raqqā, as limited as it may be, qualifies this statement.

Caliphal or imperial authorities also intervened in the judges’ affairs if the situation required it: a *qāḍī* of al-Mawṣil was dismissed after participating in a rebellion;<sup>111</sup> Hārūn al-Rashīd had to intervene drastically in a conflict over money when the responsible judge of al-Raqqā was unable to enforce his ruling;<sup>112</sup> and the chief *qāḍī* Yaḥyā b. Aktham once dismissed another judge of al-Raqqā, claiming he was clueless about *fiqh*, although the Raqqans were happy with him.<sup>113</sup>

However, the material also suggests that the *qāḍīs* of the early Islamic Jazīra were often relatively independent actors whose responsibilities reflected a broad understanding of the dispensing of justice. Two of the judges of al-Mawṣil and one *qāḍī* of al-Raqqā were also in charge of taxation, for instance. Much to the displeasure of Church officials, Muslim *qāḍīs* also interacted with non-Muslim segments of the population—for instance, al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Ashyab declined the petition of Mosuli Christians to rebuild a church that had been destroyed, arguing that it had been built after the conquest and thus constituted a violation of the peace agreement.<sup>114</sup> Whether or not we accept the historicity of the incident or line of argument,<sup>115</sup> the episode illustrates that the *qāḍī*’s authority was widely recognized, especially considering the usually short terms in office of provincial and city governors. While there is much less evidence for the city of Ḥarrān, the regional character of its judges is a particularly good example of the fact that in the early Islamic period, state control was frequently imposed by local elites. All three cities thus exemplify the ‘politics of notables’,<sup>116</sup> which was based on local elites serving as intermediaries between the imperial administration and the provincial populations.

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109 Tillier 2014, 121.

110 Tillier 2014, 121.

111 Robinson, C. 2000, 161–162.

112 Al-Nahrawānī 2005, 222.

113 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 11:52–54.

114 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī 1997, 7:438–441. On the issue of Christian recourse to non-ecclesiastical judicial authority in the early Islamic period and the reaction of Church leaders, see e.g. Simonsohn 2009 and 2011; Weitz 2018.

115 The same episode, but naming the caliph al-Mahdī instead of al-Ḥasan and taking place about 30 years earlier, is also recorded in al-Azdī 1967, 244, 340. See Robinson, C. 2000, 11 (and note 60).

116 Shoshan 1968.

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Philip Wood

# Christian Elite Networks in the Jazīra, c.730 – 850

**Abstract:** A major survival from the Roman Near East that endured within the caliphate was the episcopal and monastic networks making up the different Christian denominations. This article draws on the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian to illustrate how the caliphate became an increasingly hostile environment for Christian landed lay elites, incentivizing powerful families to take roles in the state's administration or within the church. Using examples from the Jacobite church, I argue that the state became increasingly involved in church governance, by publicly endorsing the patriarch and his ability to raise revenues from Christians, and by supporting him with state troops against rival clerics.

**Keywords:** Caliphate; Jacobite; patriarchate; Jazīra; Edessa; taxation; elites

## Introduction

Chris Wickham defines aristocrats in the period 300–800 by their ability to remember their ancestry; their control of land and official position; their expensive lifestyles; their mutual recognition; and their ability to control *Königsnähe* (proximity to royal influence).<sup>1</sup> The relative importance of these characteristics ebbed and flowed with the importance of the state: for example, official position and court influence were particularly important for Roman aristocracies but dwindled in value in the weaker states of the post-Roman West.<sup>2</sup> The manner through which later aristocrats demonstrated their elite status also differed markedly: the cultural capital of the elite of the early medieval West became much less literary and more military.<sup>3</sup>

The caliphate differed from other post-Roman polities in its maintenance of a Muslim monopoly over military service. Crucial means of signalling Christians' subordinate status included their obligation to pay the *jizya* and a ban on their

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This paper is an initial exploration of ideas that I intend to develop into a monograph. I am very grateful to Stefan Heidemann and Hannah Hagemann for the invitation to the conference in Hamburg in 2016 for which I wrote an initial version of this paper.

1 Wickham 2005, 154.

2 Wickham 2005, 156–162, 176.

3 Halsall 2007, 495–497.

riding horses or bearing arms.<sup>4</sup> Christian elites were therefore denied military experience and this restricted their potential to challenge the state. They were also deprived of the forms of masculine display typical of many of their ancestors.<sup>5</sup> For some this deprivation may have been an incentive to convert to Islam.<sup>6</sup>

However, one important similarity between the caliphate and other post-Roman states was the retention of episcopal and monastic networks. We should see the episcopal network in particular as a survival of the Roman administration, or (in the case of the Sasanian world) as an imitation of it. Church institutions had developed in the context of an intrusive bureaucratic government,<sup>7</sup> and its members both served as agents of the state and were empowered to resist its demands.

I focus in this paper on the Jazīra, defined here as the lands between Amida, Aleppo and Mosul, with occasional glances south-west to Syria and south-east to Takrit and Baghdad. This geographical perspective is drawn from the Syriac chronicles of Michael the Syrian and Bar Hebraeus, whose works preserve quotations from earlier chronicles. Where we can isolate his testimony within these later works, the history of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (Jacobite patriarch of Antioch, d. 846) is particularly important.<sup>8</sup> Though we must always be careful not to take his words at face value, his interest in elite lineage (including his own), in relations with Muslim authorities and in the repetition of patterns in church politics makes the medieval compilations that used his history a significant source for any investigation of political networks in this period.

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<sup>4</sup> Wood 2015, 39–40. Arab Christians did, however, participate in the early conquests: Donner 2010, 192. Noth 2004, 13, argues that restrictions on Christians bearing arms were not a significant handicap since most Christians were city-dwellers. I strongly disagree: this reads back the *effects* of this kind of restriction as a ‘natural’ characteristic of Christians in the region. For the military values of Sasanian Christians in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, see Walker 2006. For the post-conquest period, see Cobb 2001, 114–116 (on Mount Lebanon); Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, V. xiii (294/523 ff.) (on the warlike village of Zarn in northern Iraq); *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, 196/171 ff. (on the raising of Christian war-bands in the Jazīra during the ‘Abbāsīd revolution).

<sup>5</sup> Wood 2015, 43–47.

<sup>6</sup> An important category of early converts were prisoners of war, who thus retained a position where they could put their military skills to use. The classic example are the *asāwira*, the elite cavalry of the Sasanian army, who became members of the Banū Tamīm: Morony 1983, 271–272; Zakeri 1995, 190.

<sup>7</sup> Chamberlain 1994.

<sup>8</sup> The reconstruction of Dionysius’ *Chronicle* is part of an on-going project by Peter Van Nuffelen and Maria Conterno at Ghent, and I have benefited greatly from the preliminary results of their project.

## Christian Confessions and Episcopal Structures

Three major Christian confessions were active in the Near East at the time of the Arab conquests.

The Chalcedonians (the so-called Melkites) were approved by the Roman Empire and in communion with Catholic Christians in Western Europe. They originally used Greek as a liturgical language, but were the first confession to switch to an Arabic liturgy.<sup>9</sup>

The Miaphysites were concentrated in rural Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. They differed from the Chalcedonians on important points of doctrine, but never uniformly condemned the authority of the Roman emperor. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century at least they should be seen as an orthodoxy in waiting, gradually distancing themselves from the memory of Roman authority and Roman imperial support.<sup>10</sup> By the 7<sup>th</sup> century they employed Syriac in their liturgy and religious writing,<sup>11</sup> but this is more a consequence of Miaphysite displacement into rural areas where Greek was not spoken than deliberate policy on the part of church leaders.<sup>12</sup> This 6<sup>th</sup>-century displacement also meant it was the Miaphysites rather than the Chalcedonians<sup>13</sup> who were active as missionaries on the frontiers of the Roman world; most notably in the Arabian Peninsula,<sup>14</sup> Iraq<sup>15</sup> and the Jazīra.<sup>16</sup> Within this group, I differentiate between two factions, the Jacobites and Julianists, who were still present under the caliphate. Of these the Jacobites were by far the larger and more powerful.

Finally, the Church of the East, sometimes problematically referred to as the Nestorian church,<sup>17</sup> was the chief Christian organization within the Sasanian Empire. They too employed Syriac, which served as a Christian high-dialect for speakers of various forms of Aramaic across the Fertile Crescent.<sup>18</sup> Though the Church of the East shared many traditions with the Miaphysites, they were starkly different in their theology, a difference that became ever more exaggerated from the start of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Griffith 2008, 138; Griffith 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Wood 2010, 256.

<sup>11</sup> van Rompay 2008; Hage 1996, 57–58.

<sup>12</sup> Wood 2010, 173–175.

<sup>13</sup> Ivanov 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Wood forthcoming.

<sup>15</sup> Fiey 1970a, 127.

<sup>16</sup> *Life of Ahudemmeḥ*, PO 3.

<sup>17</sup> Brock 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Chediath 1982.

Both the Roman and Sasanian empires were interventionist bureaucratic states. This shaped the experience and expectations of the Christian episcopate. Church institutions came to mirror the bureaucracy of the secular state, most explicitly in the Roman Empire, where the episcopate was an extension of the imperial bureaucracy (if a sometimes independent-minded one).<sup>20</sup> The empire accorded bishops roles as arbitrators and gave church councils the force of imperial law.<sup>21</sup> Bishops also played a role in wider networks of secular elites, both military figures and bureaucrats. Letter collections show them interceding for friends and clients to obtain patronage<sup>22</sup> and petitioning for tax remissions for individuals, cities and monasteries.<sup>23</sup> While bishops never had a state-sanctioned role as judges in the Sasanian world, they aspired to this role (if only for Christian communities)<sup>24</sup> and occupied it in practice after the collapse of Sasanian authority in the 640s.<sup>25</sup>

## Christian Lay Elites and the Caliphate

In some parts of the early caliphate, the Jazīra in particular, the Arab conquests generated an ‘Indian summer’ because the new regime was much less intrusive than the Sasanian and Roman states that preceded it.<sup>26</sup> The weakness of the Sufyānid state in this region meant increased leeway for regional magnates, such as the *shahregan* of Marga, to accumulate massive wealth. Some of these figures were Christians and spent fortunes on founding a swathe of new monasteries in northern Iraq between 580 and 720.<sup>27</sup> The same period saw a similar burst in the construction of Jacobite churches and monasteries in the Ṭūr ‘Abdīn, though probably on a rather smaller scale.<sup>28</sup>

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**20** Jones 1964, chp. 22; Liebeschuetz 2001, 139–140 and 145–155.

**21** Humfress 2005.

**22** Schor 2011; Brown 1992, 106–109.

**23** Rapp 2005, 261 (on Cyrene); Brown 1992, 144 (on Sohag), 151 (on peasants near Antioch).

**24** Payne 2015, chp. 3; Wood 2013, chp. 4.

**25** Payne 2014.

**26** Robinson 2000, 50–62.

**27** Wood 2017. These monastic foundations are the subject of an archaeological survey by Karel Novaček et al. at Prague University.

**28** Palmer 1990, 186–187, notes the prosperity of the monasteries in contrast to the villages and suggests that this may stem from tax exemptions as well as elite protection. For the distribution of these churches and monasteries, and dating using architectural features, see Keser-Kayaalp 2013; Keser-Kayaalp 2016.

The hagiographic collection of Thomas of Marga, written in the 840s, represents the Umayyad period as a time of contest between these Christian lay elites and the monasteries that they founded. Some of the monastic hagiography set in this period can be read as statements on the ideal autonomy of monasteries and the secondary status of the men who founded them. Such statements were necessary because founding aristocrats were not always ready to relinquish control.

The tightening of the state under the ‘Abbāsids is represented as a catastrophe for the *shahregan* as a class.<sup>29</sup> However, Christians with different kinds of skills and cultural capital benefited greatly from the expansion of the state. Even as the rural peasantry suffered from the application of the poll tax,<sup>30</sup> the Christian administrative class was employed in implementing the new taxation systems, drawing on skills developed during the Roman and Sasanian period. Sarjūn b. Maṣṣūr (fl. 690s), father of John of Damascus, and Athanasius bar Gumaye (fl. 690s), an ancestor of the Jacobite patriarch Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (r. 818–845), are good early examples of Christians in charge of tax collection on behalf of the caliph. Service for the state brought great rewards for both men, channelled into investment in his home-town (in the case of Athanasius) and political influence deployed in regional competition between Christian confessions (in the case of Sergius).<sup>31</sup>

The drift of the administration towards the use of Arabic, even if it was intended to disempower non-Arab administrators, probably had the effect of accelerating a change in Christian language use away from Greek (and to a lesser extent Syriac) and towards Arabic.<sup>32</sup> Arabic became the language of young men aspiring to a role in government, and educational establishments followed suit. Vollandt argues that this switch began first in Melkite Palestine, where the Sabaite monasteries were early adopters of Arabic education in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> ‘Nestorian’ centres near Baghdad followed suit from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Jacobites, who were located further from longstanding centres of caliphal power, were the last to adopt the new language. However, we can further divide the Ja-

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, III. iii (150/307 ff.) for the fall-out from the imposition of ‘Abbāsid government. See Robinson 2000, 82–83. Cf. Robinson 2016.

<sup>30</sup> *Chronicle of Zuqīn*, 154/147, for the census of ‘Abd al-Malik. Later sections of the Chronicle provides rich evidence for the imposition of taxes and a census in the Abbasid period.

<sup>31</sup> Debié 2016. The Maṣṣūr family are accused of denouncing Athanasius to the caliph and of facilitating the promotion of Chalcedonians in Syria by getting the local governor to ban an addition to the Trisagion prayer used by Miaphysites and Maronites. *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian* (MS) XI. 20 (IV 248/II 492).

<sup>32</sup> For the a wider discussion of the relative fates of Greek, Aramaic, Arabic and Coptic: Hoyland 2003; Papaconstantinou 2012; Wasserstein 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Leeming 2003; Griffith 1989; Griffith 1998.

cobites between the eastern Jacobites, with their centre at Takrit, and the western Jacobites, with significant centres in the Ṭūr ‘Abdīn and in Edessa and Amida. Proximity to large sites of Arab settlement in Iraq meant that the eastern Jacobites adopted Arabic much faster, and eastern Jacobites were producing philosophy in Arabic by the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup>

Thus there were regional exceptions to the general trend towards the Christian use of Arabic by Christians and the importance of Christian ‘middle-class’ professions. In Marga, even in the ‘Abbāsīd period, the *shahregan* continued to expect to dominate episcopal elections<sup>35</sup> and to fund monasteries out of personal wealth and have them named after them.<sup>36</sup> And even at the end of the *Book of Governors*, one gets the impression that Arabs were present in this region only in small numbers and that knowledge of Arabic by Christians was exceptional. Likewise, the region of Edessa that is described by Dionysius of Tel-Mahre does not seem to have produced the dominant class of secretaries or physicians in the 9<sup>th</sup> century that occur in Mārī b. Sulaymān’s description of Baghdad.<sup>37</sup> One Jacobite patriarch, George of Beltan (d. 790), a native of Emesa, suffered for his inability to communicate in Arabic at court, and his faux-pas of swearing in Greek before the caliph is said to have led to his imprisonment.<sup>38</sup>

## Monopoly of Access and the Clerical Hierarchy

Christian episcopal structures in the Roman world operated in hierarchies based on provincial organization. Patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops and bishops occupied successive ranks within this hierarchy, which was signalled publicly by the laying on of hands at a candidate’s consecration to a new rank and by the reading out of the names of bishops during the liturgy. But there was always tension in this ranked system. What right did a patriarch have to intervene in the

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<sup>34</sup> Vollandt 2015, 27–33.

<sup>35</sup> See Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, IV.v–vi, for their refusal to accept Ishoyahb of Marga as metropolitan of Adiabene after he is appointed by Timothy the patriarch.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors*, V.ii (for the Hiran ascetic Shubhalisho and his foundation of Beth Habba) and VI.Xii (for the naming of a monastery after Nerab Barzai, who funded a nearby cistern). Thomas has little sympathy with monks who resent these acts of charity as unwarranted external interference.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Cabrol 2012; Cabrol 2000.

<sup>38</sup> MS XI. 26 (IV, 476/II, 528). For professional opportunities for Christians in Baghdad, see Putman 1975.

consecration of bishops by his archbishops?<sup>39</sup> And what right did citizens of a town have to refuse the imposition of a bishop?<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, clerical hierarchies also had an ambiguous relationship to parallel monastic and lay hierarchies. In the Roman Empire, the emperor had convened the great councils of the church to agree on orthodox doctrine and the excommunication of dissenters. This legacy left churches within the caliphate uncertain who could legitimately convene a council, especially in conditions where there were multiple claimants to the patriarchate or no sitting patriarch.

The history of the Jacobite church as an organization that evolved an episcopal structure during rural exile also gave monasteries a close relationship to the patriarchate. Monasteries such as Qenneshre, Qartmin and Gubba Barraya were traditionally nurseries of the patriarchate and could prove hotbeds of opposition to patriarchs who did not come from this background.<sup>41</sup>

The relatively decentralized and rural composition of the Jacobite church meant that bishops could find it hard to maintain their prerogatives according to church canons. 9<sup>th</sup>-century canonists condemned the practice of laypeople going to those other than bishops for judgement, whether those chosen were monks<sup>42</sup> or powerful laymen (the laymen in question may have been Christian magnates or local Muslim leaders).<sup>43</sup> Other canons further condemned those who appealed to laymen to intervene in theological quarrels<sup>44</sup> or excommunicated members of the lower clergy who ask Muslim leaders to overturn decisions.<sup>45</sup> It is worth stressing that the concern of these canons was to insulate Christians from Muslim jurisdiction while also asserting the rights of the clergy over lay and monastic rivals. Both the division of society according to religion and the cleric-

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**39** E.g. MS XI.22 (IV, 466/II, 508), where bishop Bacchus of Nineveh and the monks of Mar Mattai were condemned at the council of Reshaina for ordaining bishops without the consent of the metropolitan of Takrit.

**40** E.g. MS XII. 5 (IV, 489/III, 19), for the rejection of Cyriacus' candidate for Cyrrhus (with comments of Oez 2012, II, 48). See Norton 2007, 34, 63–66, for comparisons to the late Roman period.

**41** The appendix to MS gives the training and places of ordination for all the Jacobite patriarchs, which makes the dominance of these monasteries in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries very clear. Also note *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, 244–245/217–218, for his comments on the arrogance of bishops drawn from 'famous monasteries'. See here the comments of Oez 2012, II, 38.

**42** Synod of Dionysius II, canons 8 and 10 (Vööbus 1976, 60–61/64–65).

**43** Synod of Ignatius, canon 4 (Vööbus 1976, 53/57).

**44** Synod of Cyriacus canon 14 (Vööbus 1976, 21/23).

**45** Synod of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, canon 4 (Vööbus 1976, 29/32). Parallels occur in the Church of the East at the synod of Henanisho II in 778 (Chabot 1902, 245–250/515–521).

alisation of leadership within *dhimmi* communities should be seen as important features of 'Abbāsīd society.<sup>46</sup>

Such shrill condemnations indicate the church's reliance on symbolic power. Bishops could impose bans on communion or acts of penance, but their ability to enforce such penalties was limited.<sup>47</sup> There were occasions where bishops acted on behalf of the caliph and were empowered to act as judges,<sup>48</sup> but even then the authority of a given bishop relied on other Christians agreeing to his decisions. A patriarch who regularly required coercive backup from the state would not have been seen as an effective manager of his co-religionists.

If we conceive of Muslim and Christian governance structures as independent hierarchies, then it was in the interests of a patriarch to monopolise interactions between those two hierarchies and to ensure he alone spoke on behalf of the caliphal government before his co-religionists. Wherever his subordinates were able to secure the support of a local emir, or worse still the caliph, his ability to guarantee his judgements or secure patronage was diluted.

A good example of the chaos that might emerge when a patriarch lost his monopoly of access to Muslim authority is the period around 740–750. This period was dominated by Athanasius Sandalaya, the metropolitan of Maypherkat, and characterized by the use of royal influence by figures other than the patriarch. For instance, one Cyriacus of Segestan, together with a doctor named Bar Salta of Reshaina, composed an apocalypse foretelling the rule of the descendants of Marwān II.<sup>49</sup> Marwān rewarded this act of sycophancy by proclaiming Cyriacus bishop of Tūr 'Abdīn, although it contravened the rules against the transfer of episcopal sees and the rights of the higher bishops to fill the see.<sup>50</sup> It was not possible to excommunicate Cyriacus until 'the tyrant who protected him had died'.<sup>51</sup> The historian can only present his condemnation of Marwān and Cyriacus in such stark terms because of the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty with the 'Abbāsīd revolution: in other circumstances commentators may have been more circumspect.

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<sup>46</sup> See Papaconstantinou 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Simonsohn 2010; Simonsohn 2011, 154–155.

<sup>48</sup> Simonsohn 2011. Edelby 1951 remains important and useful. Note, for instance, the scene in the *Life of Theodota of Amida* (§ 156) where the saint is made responsible for 'the laws of the city of Amida' after being elected bishop. There is no sense, however, that this is an automatic function of his office, and in the *Life* as a whole the norm is for laymen bearing Greek names to hold office on behalf of the caliph. Payne 2009, 407–408, and Papaconstantinou 2008, 145, observe the predominance of lay elites in 7<sup>th</sup>-century Nisibis and Egypt respectively.

<sup>49</sup> MS XI. 22 (IV, 464/II, 507).

<sup>50</sup> Hage 1966, 35.

<sup>51</sup> MS XI. 22 (IV, 466/II, 507).

The importance of courtly influence is even more apparent in the case of Sandalaya himself, who enjoyed close links to Marwān's government. Sandalaya accused the patriarch Iwannis of simony (the sale of ecclesiastical office) to Marwān II, and was accused in turn of paying massive bribes to the caliph. Sandalaya and six other bishops were subsequently excommunicated at a synod at Ḥarrān (750) organized by the metropolitan David of Dārā. It is striking that neither David nor the patriarch felt able to carry the other bishops and appealed to the caliph to send a neutral bishop to act as an arbitrator.<sup>52</sup>

Michael's *Chronicle* represents Sandalaya as temporarily humiliated at Ḥarrān, but he managed to restore his dominance by interceding with the caliph's brother 'Abdallāh at a later synod at Tella (752). 'Abdallāh also secured Sandalaya's promotion as metropolitan of Maypherkat.<sup>53</sup> In canonical terms, this is especially striking because Maypherkat was not a metropolitanate: the city's prestige increased alongside Sandalaya's. It may be that Sandalaya took this route because Maypherkat was a power base for him personally (for unstated reasons of family background or influence).<sup>54</sup> At any rate, Sandalaya's promotion was followed by his endowment of a major church at Maypherkat and a monastery at Tell-Bashmai.<sup>55</sup>

Exactly how the office generated this revenue is unclear. If we compare bishops to highly ranked *qādīs*, then we might envisage that a role as a judge offered opportunities for substantial bribes or influence.<sup>56</sup> One novelty in the 'Abbāsīd period was that bishops were able to levy a tithe on their parishioners (though the fair level of these tithes was a matter for debate).<sup>57</sup> Straightforward simony may also have been a means of raising money or generating influence.<sup>58</sup> Sandalaya's career as metropolitan (and briefly as patriarch) was characterized by attempts to impose candidates on unwilling sees<sup>59</sup> and the division of sees into

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52 MS XI. 23 (IV, 468/II, 512).

53 MS XI. 23 (IV, 469/II, 514).

54 Hage 1966, 32.

55 MS XI. 23 (IV, 469/II, 514); *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, 210/192.

56 Wickham 2014.

57 The first explicit references to church taxes are the accusations made against the patriarch George by David of Dārā: MS XI. 26 (IV, 476/II, 526).

58 Hage 1966, 35.

59 MS XI. 15 (IV, 471/II, 520), for his division of the see of the Ṭūr 'Abdīn between Gabriel of Qartmin and Cyriacus of Segestan, in defiance of the will of the patriarch Ishaq. Iwannis' attempt to divide the diocese of Amida may have had a similar motivation (MS 467/509).

smaller units,<sup>60</sup> both of which may represent attempts to pay back substantial initial investments. The construction of the church at Maypherkat could also be seen as the repayment of a (political) debt incurred in Sandalaya's quest for promotion.

Where a patriarch failed to inspire confidence in his bishops or monopolise access to higher authorities, it opened the door to other bishops like Cyriacus of Segestan or Athanasius Sandalaya to use their own contacts with Muslim leaders to assure promotion. In so doing they damaged established conventions for church governance and undermined the authority of the office of the patriarch.

## Established Churches

If the patriarch aspired to monopolise contacts with the caliph and his agents, we should remember that the caliph benefited from Christian governmental structures that could be used to raise taxes or to ensure the regime had a measure of legitimacy for its Christian population (which was probably in the majority in many regions at this time, including the Jazīra). Individual caliphs also used the higher clergy for their distinctive skills: for their diplomatic connections to Christian states such as Byzantium<sup>61</sup> and Nubia;<sup>62</sup> to intervene in the governance of Christian populations in other provinces;<sup>63</sup> and for their mastery of arcane knowledge (such as alchemy).<sup>64</sup> In addition, the presence of the patriarch at court also served to legitimize the caliph as a just ruler before his Muslim sub-

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**60** MS XI. 15 (IV, 471/II, 520), for his consecration of new bishops for Sinjār and Samosata as well as the Ṭūr 'Abdin. Cyriacus of Segestan's consecration in the Ṭūr 'Abdin was obviously controversial, given his earlier career.

**61** MS XII. 5 (IV, 487/III, 18). The patriarch Cyriacus of Takrit is accused of being a Roman collaborator because he had funded church-building across the border. These contacts would have been diplomatically advantageous to the caliph in some circumstances. Also note MS XII. 9 (IV, 500/III, 36) for the rebel Naṣr b. Shabath using a Christian secretary to write to the Byzantines.

**62** MS XII. 19 (IV, 530/III, 190–191), for the Nubian embassy to al-Raqqā that met Dionysius. For Sasanian precedents for the use of Christian bishops as diplomats, see Sako 1986.

**63** MS XII. 13 (IV, 516/III, 63), for Dionysius' visit to Egypt. Caliphs also employed 'Nestorian' Christians to destroy the churches of other confessions in Egypt and Palestine: Meinardus 1967.

**64** MS XI. 25 (IV, 473/II, 523), for the election of Ishaq of Ḥarrān because of his presumed knowledge of alchemy on the recommendation of Akhi, emir of the Jazīra. For the wider appeal of Christian specialists in medicine, philosophy and the translation of the Greek classics: Gutas 1998; Tannous 2010.

jects, a sign of his toleration of the *ahl al-kitāb*, in accordance with Qur'ānic principles, and the universal reach of his empire.<sup>65</sup>

Caliphal attitudes towards the Jacobite patriarchs never took an interventionist stance regarding points of theology, perhaps because Jacobite theology never had the political salience of Chalcedonianism as the state religion of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>66</sup> But the period covered here does see the disappearance of confessional groups and the dominance of three Christian confessions (the Church of the East, Chalcedonianism, and Jacobitism) as the orthodox Christianities of the Islamicate world, to the exclusion of others. For instance, when the patriarch of the Church of the East, Timothy I (r. 780 – 823), issued a general statement on the unity of the faith, he stressed the common beliefs of the Church of the East, the Melkites and the Jacobites in the resurrection and in the saving power of Christ. He passed over in silence other groups that might have called themselves Christian, such as the Marcionites<sup>67</sup> or the Julianists.

Relations between the Julianists and the Jacobites are a good example of the trend towards the consolidation of Christians into three main confessions. Julian of Halicarnassus was a Miaphysite theologian who had disagreed with Severus, the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch, in the 520s.<sup>68</sup> His followers persisted as a distinct group and launched missions from Syria and Egypt into Armenia, South Arabia and Iraq. In other words, they subscribed to an alternative version of the Miaphysite theology from the Jacobites and formed an independent church (though we do not know much of its internal details).

Major efforts towards the reconciliation of the Julianists were made by the patriarch Cyriacus of Takrit at a synod in 798. Gabriel, the Julianist leader, “recognised the stupidity of the doctrine of Julian and agreed to follow the things that we confess”. Michael the Syrian reports that Gabriel agreed to include Severus in the diptychs and even accept his anti-Julianist writings, though he would not anathematize Julian himself. Cyriacus and Gabriel then agreed that the names of both men would be proclaimed in the churches and that whoever out-

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<sup>65</sup> Compare the cosmopolitan self-fashioning of Sasanian *shāhs*: Payne 2016.

<sup>66</sup> For Marwān's intervention in favour of Theophylact bar Qanbara, and his actions against supporters of the Trisagion prayer (probably Maronites in this context), see MS XI. 22 (IV, 467/III, 511). Also note Signes-Codoñer 2014, 396 – 397, for the extent of communication between Byzantium and the Melkite patriarchates of the east.

<sup>67</sup> For the earlier history of the Marcionites in the time of Ephrem, see Bundy 1988. For the presence of Marcionites in the east, see Fiey 1970b.

<sup>68</sup> Menze 2008, 152.

lived the other would reign as sole patriarch. Following this agreement, Cyriacus and Gabriel received communion from one another.<sup>69</sup>

This meeting seems to have been a magnanimous arrangement by Cyriacus to resolve a longstanding separation. However, he faced problems from his own intransigent bishops, who demanded that Gabriel anathematize Julian. Gabriel responded that while he was willing to anathematize Julian, he did not feel that his followers would be prepared to accept this. The Jacobite bishops pressed the point, which ultimately prompted Gabriel to break off negotiations.<sup>70</sup>

One reason for the opposition to reconciliation with Gabriel was likely Cyriacus' own position as an outsider (he was the first 'easterner' to reign as a Jacobite patriarch) and a sense by Jacobite bishops that Gabriel's succession would further remove power from the monasteries that had traditionally produced the patriarch.<sup>71</sup> But even though the reconciliation with the Julianists failed, the fact that Gabriel was receptive to Cyriacus' overtures may also point to broader changes within the Jacobite church that made union seem attractive at this point. Takrit had become a wealthy trading centre with links to Egypt and the Mediterranean, and a native of Takrit may have been able to tap into these networks in soliciting donations or receiving tithes.<sup>72</sup> Tithing itself may have become more accepted and systematized as well at this stage: Cyriacus is accused of excessive tithing, suggesting that the process was becoming more regularized.<sup>73</sup> We get an indication of Cyriacus' more centralized and proactive governance through his organization of five synods and his investigations into the theology employed at a parish level.<sup>74</sup> Cyriacus is also the first patriarch for whom Michael the Syrian is able to give a full list of all the bishops he consecrated (86 in total), which suggests that his reign was a threshold for major administrative reforms.<sup>75</sup>

The improved organization and wealth of the Jacobite church may have been an incentive to other Miaphysites to seek union. The appointment of Cyriacus himself, an easterner and probably an Arabic speaker, may have sent signals that a compromise was possible; if not on a theological level, then at least for

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<sup>69</sup> MS XII. 4 (IV, 485/III, 13).

<sup>70</sup> MS XII. 4 (IV, 486–7/III, 14–15). One long-term result for Cyriacus was periodic suspicion that he was himself a Julianist: MS XII. 7 (IV, 492/III, 25).

<sup>71</sup> For the dominance of Mesopotamia in patriarchal elections, see Hage 1966, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Fiey 1969; Immerzeel 2004. The Takritians had permanent colonies in Mosul, al-Raqqqa, Nisibis and Egypt: Fiey 1959, 27 note 2.

<sup>73</sup> MS XII. 4 (IV, 487/III, 18). The complaints of the Gubbaye monks imply that they had been stripped of an informal exemption from tithes.

<sup>74</sup> MS XII. 8 (IV, 496/III, 33).

<sup>75</sup> MS Appendix III, 450–53.

the incorporation of men outside a narrow clique from what had been Roman Mesopotamia.

## The Use of Diplomas

A major mechanism that caliphs used to promote the authority of their Christian appointees, and sometimes to make them independent of local emirs, was the issuing of royal diplomas. These pertained to the right to hold office as patriarch, the right to build new churches and the tax exemptions of individual cities or monasteries.

Michael the Syrian's flagship example of the construction of a new church is the one that was built at the entrance of the patriarch Elias into Antioch, when he came to consecrate the first Jacobite church in the city in 732. It was only constructed thanks to a diploma from Yazīd II. This was a major coup: Antioch was the titular see of the Jacobite patriarch but there had not been a Miaphysite incumbent since the patriarch Severus (d. 538).<sup>76</sup> It was one of the first signs of public recognition of the Jacobites by the Arab authorities. Other examples of diplomas for church building in this period allowed for the restoration of churches in Edessa, Ḥarrān and Amida and the construction of new churches in Takrit, Mosul, Edessa and Maypherkat.<sup>77</sup>

The construction of new churches was theoretically forbidden according to the *shurūṭ* 'Umar imposed upon the *dhimmī*. These rules were only disseminated under the caliph al-Mutawakkil, but individual parts of this code had been imposed locally before this point, depending on local circumstances.<sup>78</sup> At several points in Michael's history, Muslim emirs destroy churches built after the Arab conquests. This may be a sign that such rules were promoted by some sections of the Muslim population, perhaps in part because the destruction of churches could be a source of revenue or building materials.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> MS XI. 19 (IV, 456/II, 491).

<sup>77</sup> Hage 1966, 59–61. See also Timothy's intercession with al-Hādī to get churches rebuilt: Fiey 1980, 49, citing *Letter* 39.

<sup>78</sup> Levy-Rubin 2011. There is an on-going debate on the origins and application of the *shurūṭ* in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century, for which see Yarbrough 2016 and Levy-Rubin 2016 on 'Umar II, as well as Noth 2004 and Cohen 1999 on the Rāshidūn and the Umayyad context for discriminatory legislation more generally.

<sup>79</sup> *Chronicle to 1234*, II (10/6) for Ibrāhīm, emir of Ḥarrān, being informed about new church buildings in Edessa by the pagan population of Ḥarrān; MS IV, 478/III, 3, for Mohtasib's destruction of new churches; MS XII. 13 (IV, 513/III, 60–61), for Yaqdan's destruction of churches in Takrit and Edessa, especially targeting new buildings. See also al-Azdi's description of how a Mus-

In an environment where Christian authorities felt threatened by local Muslims wishing to destroy churches and where the destruction of new churches was seen as legitimate, caliphal intervention constituted a suspension of normal rules of behaviour. As has been observed in other authoritarian societies, the primacy of the caliph was underscored by his ability to overturn expected law or custom, in this instance in response to intercession from a patriarch or bishop.<sup>80</sup> In so doing the caliph confirmed the importance of the patriarch to his flock, and more importantly his own primacy in both the Muslim and Christian hierarchies.

The use of diplomas to confirm tax exemptions had good precedents in the Roman world. Gaining diplomas depended on bishops' diplomatic skills and allowed them to provide wider protection from taxation or political advantage to the towns and monasteries that funded and supported them. There are examples of this from our period from Takrit,<sup>81</sup> Edessa<sup>82</sup> and Mosul,<sup>83</sup> as well as from the monastery of Gubba Barraya near Cyrrhus.<sup>84</sup>

One important difference of these later, Islamic-period diplomas was that they frequently purported to be 7<sup>th</sup> century historical documents dating back to the Arab conquests. This meant that Muslim authorities could not reject these Christian claims out of hand. The image of the good Muslim ruler included their ability to protect the *dhimmī* and to respect the treaties concluded by their 'pious forebears' who had conquered the Near East.<sup>85</sup> And there was sufficient ignorance of the precise details of early conquest treaties that the claims of Christian archives in some cities (Edessa in particular) might be taken seriously during debates over taxation.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, we should also remember that in order for these claims to be convincing, bishops were forced to use a Muslim script. This meant they had to themselves relay a story in which the Muslim conquest was legitimate and Christians (and bishops in particular) collaborated in the conquest of the cities of the Near East. In other words, producing these 'ancient treaties' as proof also meant accepting the terms and validity of the Muslim *futuḥ*, according to which resis-

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lim mob in Mosul destroyed a church that had taken over a piece of land owned by a mosque (Fiey 1956, 20–21), and MS XII. 6 (IV, 490/III, 2) for the lucrative destruction of ancient churches in Jerusalem and Aleppo.

**80** Brown 1992, 3; Kelly 2004.

**81** Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 123–126.

**82** *Chronicle to 1234*, II (3/1).

**83** MS XII.14 (IV, 520/III, 69). Note the comments of Robinson 2000, 12.

**84** MS XII. 12 (IV, 510/III, 57).

**85** Borrut 2005; Khalek 2011, 48.

**86** Calder 1993, 121–138.

tance was futile and Muslim rule natural. In telling a story whereby bishops facilitated the Muslim conquest, these documents also justified a present in which bishops acted on behalf of the Muslim state and obscured alternative histories where local Christian populations supported the Romans or Sasanians.

The use of diplomas to mark the patriarchal office itself is first referred to in the reign of Iwannis, who is said to have received it by offering a bribe to Marwān II after his election by his fellow bishops. His controversial successors David of Dārā, John of Callinicum, Ishaq of Ḥarrān and Athanasius Sandalaya also held patriarchal diplomas from Marwān II or from al-Manṣūr.<sup>87</sup> But it is clear that possession of a diploma did not necessarily guarantee a patriarch the obedience of his flock. For instance, Iwannis was unable to force his metropolitans to accept the popular election of one Dionysius as bishop of Ṭūr ‘Abdīn and was then placed in an embarrassing position when his patron Marwān tried to impose his own candidate Cyriacus of Segestan.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, Sandalaya may have presumed that his possession of a diploma qualified him to put forward his own candidate for bishop, one Abdani, on the independent-minded see of Ḥarrān. Instead Sandalaya was strangled by the town’s citizens.<sup>89</sup>

On the other hand, by the end of the 750s possession of a diploma was a crucial prerequisite for raising tithes. The raising of tithes without a diploma was the key accusation made by David of Dārā against the patriarch George of Beltan, which resulted in George’s imprisonment and David’s own appointment as patriarch.<sup>90</sup> The implication is that church tithes were raised in the caliph’s name and represented an extension of the symbolic power of the state to its agent the patriarch.

The controversial period between 740–760 was filled with a number of short-lived patriarchs, whom Michael the Syrian often presents as illegitimate. This was a transitional period. Bishops and Christian notables were not yet accustomed to the intervention of the state in elections or the state’s endorsement of the rights of the patriarch to raise tithes. At the same time, caliphs sought to impose individual bishops (Cyriacus of Segestan) or patriarchs (the ‘alchemist’ Ishaq of Ḥarrān) upon the Jacobites, with little long-term success. A more *laissez-faire* attitude was expressed by al-Ma’mūn when he ordered that a diploma be given to “whoever the Jacobites agree upon”: this may recognize that the patriarch’s effectiveness would be compromised if he interfered unnecessarily with

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<sup>87</sup> Hage 1966, 20, 67.

<sup>88</sup> MS XI. 14 (IV, 464–5/II, 506–507).

<sup>89</sup> MS XI. 25 (IV, 473/II, 523).

<sup>90</sup> MS XI. 25 (IV, 477/II, 528).

the structures of church governance. The elections of Cyriacus of Takrit and Dionysius of Tel-Mahre as patriarch seem to have been much more smooth than their predecessors as a result.<sup>91</sup>

## The Emirs, Muslim Citizens and the Bishops

If the caliphs had a vested interest in patriarchal authority, the same cannot always be said of other Muslim elites, whether government appointees or local aristocracies.<sup>92</sup>

We first hear of an emir of the Jazīra in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian when one named Muhammad crucifies local Christian notables in the 690s. This was probably part of a state drive to increase revenue by making prominent examples of elites who resisted tax demands.<sup>93</sup> His successors Mūsā b. Muṣʿab and Mūsā b. Sulaymān ruled the Jazīra and Qennesrin in the 770s and were also associated with the violent collection of taxes: the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* reports Mūsā's ruthless pursuit of the poll tax after conducting a detailed census and audits even during a time of famine and plague.<sup>94</sup> Precise knowledge of estate yields and accumulated wealth was crucial for governors to extract taxes and for caliphs to monitor how much revenue eventually found its way to Baghdad. Chase Robinson has suggested that the relentless squeezing of the peasantry (both Christians and more recently settled Arab Muslims) was a consequence of the demands of a Baghdad government that took no account of local volatility in prices and production but needed to pay a large standing army in coin rather than kind.<sup>95</sup>

Later governors continued to be effective and much-resented seekers after tax revenue. Dionysius, for example, complains about the agents sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to find the fabled wealth of the Rusafaye family (of which he was a descendant): he protests, probably falsely, that the riches have long been frittered away.<sup>96</sup> Dionysius also narrates the zealous acts of governors such as Yaḡdan of Edessa, who forced the citizens to free their slaves in order to make them Muslims,<sup>97</sup> or Ali of Damascus, who targeted the sons of rich

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<sup>91</sup> MS XII. 12 (IV, 511/III, 57).

<sup>92</sup> For these two groups in Mosul, see Kennedy 1981.

<sup>93</sup> MS XI. 16 (IV, 447/II, 473).

<sup>94</sup> MS XI. 26 (IV, 476/II, 526).

<sup>95</sup> Robinson 2016.

<sup>96</sup> MS XII. 4 (IV, 485/III, 13).

<sup>97</sup> MS XII. 13 (IV, 514/III, 62).

men who had recently died and accused them of patricide.<sup>98</sup> Dionysius places this ‘injustice’ against a background of an expanding infrastructure of governance; he describes, as though writing of a novelty, the installation of a judge (“called a qadi”) at al-Raqqa who oversaw taxes, supported by a prefect and a courier system.<sup>99</sup>

Here it is worth stressing the difference in perspective between Dionysius and the *Chronicle of Zuq̄nīn*. The *Chronicle of Zuq̄nīn* presents the suffering inflicted by Mūsā b. Muṣ‘ab as universal: it is a mark of the apocalypse and afflicts people of all religions and classes.<sup>100</sup> Dionysius is more concerned with the fates of noble families and their wealth. As a member of the elite families of the Gumaye and Rusafaye, one of the purposes of his *Chronicle* is to retell his own family history (interwoven with the history of the church), both to legitimize his family’s importance and to evoke sympathy for its misfortunes.

The government appetite for effective tax information may have made elite families much more vulnerable to those who would inform against them. In other words, as a consequence of a newly intrusive state local elites had a vested interest in social solidarity that they might not have a generation before. One example of this comes in a scene just after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution, when a Persian denied lodging by the Gumaye at Baghdad accused them of Manichaeism. This religion was banned by the caliphate, as it was by the Romans, and the accusation was always a good claim to make against any intellectual or cultural elite.<sup>101</sup> That this kind of denunciation was a serious threat indicates the ease with which information flowed between the capital and the Jazīra. This in turn may point to the interlinking of provincial social networks in the aftermath of the revolution.

The flow of information to the capital was, however, a negative development for elites whose status and interests were not at that stage sustained by service to the state. In other words, while the ‘Abbāsīd revolution facilitated the involvement of Muslims of diverse origins in the state by giving them resources and influence, it also encouraged Christian elite families to re-fashion themselves as a service elite whose links to court could protect them from the envious.

An increasingly common route for information to reach governors to the detriment of the Christian population was via their Muslim and pagan neighbours. Muslims in Edessa reportedly encouraged looting by invading armies during the

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<sup>98</sup> MS XII. 21 (IV, 539/III, 104).

<sup>99</sup> MS XII. 21 (IV, 538/III, 105). See further Silverstein 2007, ch. 2.

<sup>100</sup> *Chronicle of Zuq̄nīn*, 316/273.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Arjomand, 1994; Chokr 1993. For the accusations of human sacrifice made against Manicheans at Ḥarrān, see *Chronicle of Zuq̄nīn*, 224–225/203.

fourth *fitna*.<sup>102</sup> Pagans in Ḥarrān (possibly a local majority) allegedly encouraged the emir Ibrāhīm to destroy churches and synagogues.<sup>103</sup> And Ḥarrānian Muslims raided Christian properties during Yaqdan's actions against Christian slave-owners in Edessa.<sup>104</sup> In these cases local non-Christian populations may have been sources of information for emirs who were outside appointees, as well as a physical support to any emir who wanted to penalize the Christian population.

In the event of a local emir treating the Christian population unfairly, it was often possible for the patriarch to appeal to a higher-ranking governor or to the caliph. For instance, when Yaqdan demolished Jacobite churches in Edessa and freed the slaves of the Christians, Dionysius successfully appealed to 'Abdallāh, the governor of al-Raqqā and a relative of the caliph, to put a stop to it.<sup>105</sup> Dionysius was able to use his influence at court to prevent further demolition, but he could not do so by appealing to Yaqdan directly. Sponsorship and employment by the caliph could mitigate but not eliminate the vulnerability of the Jacobites of Edessa to a governor who was opposed to them. Indeed this vulnerability exaggerated Dionysius' dependency on the caliph and the 'Abbāsīd family.

Appeals by the patriarch or bishops to the administration could not work in situations where the state was essentially taken over by kin-groups. An example of this occurs with the exactions of one Aḥmad b. Abī Dāwūd, a member of the Iyād tribe who abused his government position to make free Christians perform corvée labour and overtaxed estates to force owners to sell to members of his family.<sup>106</sup> In this case, Aḥmad's obligations to his relatives may have motivated him to use governmental structures in their interests, while the presence of large numbers of the Iyād in his district acted as a disincentive to other state actors to challenge his power. I suggest that tribal groups who had recently acquired roles on behalf of the state were especially difficult for Christian leaders to negotiate with. Incidentally, the inability of Dionysius to protect Christians from the Iyād in the way he had from Yaqdan also points to a wider vulnerability of the 'Abbāsīd state, whereby tribal groupings could circumvent the normal systems of reward and censure.

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102 MS XII. 6 (IV, 492/III, 22).

103 MS XII. 11 (IV, 505/III, 47).

104 MS XII. 13 (IV, 514/III, 62).

105 MS XII. 13 (IV, 514/III, 62).

106 MS XII. 21 (IV, 540–2/III, 107–111).

## Conclusions

I have suggested that episcopal and monastic networks represent a survival of Roman-era notions of territoriality that endured under Muslim rule. Over time, these Christian structures were incorporated into 'Abbāsīd imperial structures. In the case of the Jacobites, the episcopacy remained vulnerable at a local level. This intensified their reliance on the caliph.

Several turning points are apparent in the sources. The first is the dramatic increase in the quantity and complexity of historical material available from the 740s (from the reign of Iwannis onwards). This may be a function of the transfer of the caliphal capital to Ḥarrān under Marwān II, which provided much easier access to the caliph. The move opened up new possibilities for advancement that threatened the monopoly of the great monasteries (though it still tended to favour candidates from former Roman Mesopotamia over those from Syria or Takrit). The need to legitimise or condemn the new practices of the time may have themselves spurred a generation of historians.

The period 740 – 780 also sees the first use of caliphal diplomas. These provided licences to tithe parishioners, construct churches and call bishops to council. We should see this as an instance of the Jacobite church mimicking (and drawing on) the ability of the state to tax and coerce. It made the office of the patriarch both more lucrative and effective.

The escalation of the powers of the patriarch occurs against a wider background of pressure against lay aristocrats, through regular state taxation by the state, extortion by state servants acting in their own interests, or denunciations by local opponents. These phenomena seem to have accelerated markedly after the 'Abbāsīd revolution, and I suggest that this led Christian elites to place a higher premium on *Königsnähe*, in order to protect property from a variety of threats. However, a critical difference that we should note between courtly influence in the Roman and 'Abbāsīd periods was that Christian clergy were increasingly seen as the main representatives of their communities (even where others held power behind the throne), and that clerical rank became a key means to secure influence with Muslim rulers.

Dionysius' history can be read as an example of how one aristocratic family adapted to these changing circumstances by seeking a rank in the higher clergy. He is at pains to stress his noble lineage back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century and draw on family histories written by his ancestors to do so.<sup>107</sup> His inherited cultural capital, as

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<sup>107</sup> E.g. MS XII. 4 (IV, 485/III, 13), for the story of how Hārūn al-Rashīd sent a tax collector to seize the treasures of the Rusafaye and Gumaye families, both ancestors of Dionysius.

a man schooled in Arabic and courtly speech<sup>108</sup> as well as in Syriac, made him (at least in his own representation) such a suitable candidate for the patriarchate that the other bishops elected him without his having been ordained (he was only a monk of Qenneshre at the time).<sup>109</sup> Like Ambrose of Milan or Synesius of Cyrene, his training and connections as an aristocrat were seen to be more useful to the church than ascending the traditional ladder of promotion, in a context where the patriarch had become part of al-Ma'mūn's service elite.

## Jacobite patriarchs of Antioch, giving the year of consecration (after Hage 1964)

Iwannis	739/40
Ishaq	754/5
Athanasaius Sandalaya	755/6
George	758 (deposed between 766/7–775)
John of Callinicum	758/9
David of Dārā	766/7
Joseph of Gubba Barraya	790
Cyriacus of Takrit	793
Dionysius of Tel-Mahre	818
John	845

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<sup>108</sup> For a set-piece display of his virtuoso abilities in his meeting with al-Ma'mūn, see MS XII. 14 (IV, 517/III, 65 ff.).

<sup>109</sup> For his ordination, see MS XII. 10 (IV, 502/III, 41).

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**The West**



Petra Sijpesteijn

# Establishing Local Elite Authority in Egypt Through Arbitration and Mediation

**Abstract:** Using evidence from Arabic, Coptic and Greek papyri, this paper examines the role and organization of and individuals involved in mediation in the four centuries following the mid-7<sup>th</sup>-century Muslim conquest of Egypt. Conflict resolution, the actors involved therein and whether the process took place in an institutional framework or in a more informal environment all inform us regarding changing power relations in the province. The effect of shifting power dynamics between members of the local Egyptian elite and the incoming Muslim rulers as well as the effect this had on social organization, the position of local elites and their relations with their indigenous constituencies and the authorities will be discussed. The paper also considers what this says about modifications in Egyptian elite composition and how these modifications relate to developments at the caliphal center. Finally, the question of how the role of local elites as arbitrators can be connected to their position vis-à-vis the Egyptian population on the one hand and the empire's political center on the other is examined.

**Keywords:** Mediation; law; Egypt; bishops; Islamicization; Arabicization; excommunication

## Introduction

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the bishop of al-Ashmūnayn in central Egypt sent an incensed letter to the members of his community. Some thieves, he writes, entered the house of the widowed mother of Sawep and took one artaba (*irdabb*) of corn, six quarts of flax, two chickens and a cock.<sup>1</sup> The bishop calls upon the thief or thieves, whether male or female, locals or strangers, to step forward, confess their deed and return the stolen goods. If they do not, he threatens, “God will be angry with them as He was with Sodom and Gomorra and He will bring upon

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This work was supported by the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant number 683194.

1 Crum 1909, no. 267. Also discussed by Mikhail 2013, 156. There are several of such letters banning thieves, all dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and written in Coptic and Arabic (e.g. Reinhardt 1897; Steindorff 1892, 37–41).

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110669800-015>

them the curses of the Apocalypse and the plagues of the book of Job and the 108th Psalm.” The threats are impressively thunderous.<sup>2</sup> But the calling down of divine wrath also draws attention to the lack of other levers at his disposal.<sup>3</sup> The instruments he is able to draw upon to deliver justice contrast sharply with those of his contemporary Muslim counterparts, and for that matter those of his ecclesial predecessors. Moreover, this relatively minor theft, though hardly immaterial for the victim, is not something a bishop would typically busy himself with.

At the same time, it is worth asking what motivated Sawep’s mother to turn to the bishop with a criminal case, technically a matter for the secular courts. Her son’s name cannot be connected to a recognizable Coptic name; it seems to be a transliteration of the Arabic *Shu‘ayb* or *Şa‘b*. On the other hand, the letter, which is written in Coptic, locates the complainant very clearly in a Christian Egyptian context. The emphasis on religious punishment and the relative insignificance of the theft suggest that this was foremost a local affair. Victim and perpetrator belonged to the same community and responded to the same norms and values; they would continue to occupy the same social space after this issue was resolved. Restoration of a workable equilibrium was therefore more important than retribution. Punishment of the thief seems to have been the goal of neither the widow nor the bishop. Rather, the aim of the letter was the restitution of the stolen goods, a confession from the culprit and the maintenance of stable relations and social order within the community.

In this context the bishop probably was the best person to turn to for a quick and effective outcome. For the widow, his local prestige and personal authority would have offset his lack of formal judicial power. While he had no apparatus of practical enforcement, he had the weight and status of his traditional leadership role. For the bishop, interceding successfully on the widow’s behalf could only enhance his standing. This would have been a method of problem resolution familiar to all the actors involved.

Arbitration was a favored way to resolve private disputes between two civil parties in Byzantine Egypt and it continued to be used in the Arab period.<sup>4</sup> Local

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<sup>2</sup> See Scheerlinck forthcoming for a discussion of the terminology used in Christian excommunication letters.

<sup>3</sup> An inability to enforce their judgments was felt by both Jewish and Christian authorities under Islam. Excommunication was their most effective and often their sole sanction (Simonsohn 2011, 141). Edmund Hayes has examined how excommunication was used by the Shī‘ite *imāms* in relation to the above-mentioned practices; I thank him for pointing me to the discussion on Jewish and Christian excommunication.

<sup>4</sup> Gagos/van Minnen 1994.

elites – the economic, social and religious authorities residing in the towns, religious settlements and agricultural estates – had always played a major role therein. But whereas the notables of the estates and monasteries of Byzantine Egypt had considerable powers of detention and punishment, in Muslim Egypt force was more and more the exclusive preserve of the administration and later the courts.<sup>5</sup> The bishop of al-Ashmūnayn could threaten and enjoin, but he could not arrest, try or sentence. The tradition of arbitration existed in parallel to the formal judicial system, not in competition with it so much as in tandem.<sup>6</sup> This raises several questions. What does the handling of conflicts say about changing power relations in the province? What does this tell us about modifications in Egyptian elite composition, and how can these changes be linked to developments at the caliphal center? How can the role of local elites as arbitrators be connected to their position vis-à-vis the Egyptian population on the one hand and to the empire's political center on the other?

The process of dispute resolution has produced much documentary evidence in Arabic, Coptic and Greek. Making use of documents from the first four centuries of Arab rule, this article will use the linguistic conditions of the documents as well as the identity of the addressees to explore the significance of the practice.

## Papyri

The papyri and paper documents from Egypt are a uniquely rich source for the study of the social make up of Egypt's local elite and how its position, role and composition changed in the early Muslim period. The Arabs used papyrus as their main day-to-day writing material, shifting to paper only in the course of the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. Most papyri are found in the uninhabitable deserts of Egypt outside the main centers of occupation and government where continuous habitation has disturbed or outright destroyed the archaeological record, making excavations impossible today. Conversely, the absence of rain and habitation has helped to protect the desert sites since they were abandoned some fifteen hundred years ago. Papyrus documents have been found in Fuṣṭāṭ, but these remain mostly unpublished. The main supplies remain the rubbish dumps of middle Egyptian towns such as Edfū, Medīnat al-Fayyūm and al-Ashmūnayn. Hardly

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<sup>5</sup> Sijpesteijn 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Tillier 2016. For a similar analysis of private and public (court-based) dispute resolution as part of the same legal system in Roman Egypt, see Kelly 2011, chapter 7.

any documents survive from the 'wet' Delta, although references to this area occur.

The papyrus documents were never intended for preservation. They offer unusually direct access to the society that produced them, but the often-haphazard conditions of their excavation and conservation also offer particular challenges. The Greek, Coptic and Arabic documents can sometimes be ascribed a specific provenance from internal evidence or (when it is known) where they were found. Most of the time, though, documents were unearthed during unofficial excavations and can be ascribed no clear place of origin. Sometimes the year in which the text was written appears at the end, or an identifiable individual is mentioned who dates a document. In most cases, however, a papyrus is dated solely on the basis of palaeographical criteria and the formulae it uses—a rough method that divides the documents into large groups spanning several centuries.

Because archaeological activities on mediaeval sites in Egypt have not been systematic, let alone exhaustive, the chronological and geographic distribution of papyri and paper documents is uneven. Some areas are over-represented and others occur hardly at all. Documents can also inform us of places other than where they were found through references or discussions mentioned in them. In this paper the date and provenance of papyri are given when known, but the documents have otherwise been treated as one source body. While this might obscure some fine-grained differences, it offers enough detail to highlight several long-term historical processes.

A final consideration in terms of evidence is the linguistic situation. Starting directly after their arrival, the conquerors of Egypt used Arabic to communicate with the inhabitants of the province, along with the other two administrative languages already in use, Coptic and Greek. Arabic documentation from the first half-century of Arab rule in Egypt is, however, much less voluminous than the Coptic and Greek material. Coptic and Greek continued to be used for internal written communication outside the administration as well. With very few Arabs settled in the Egyptian countryside, most events related to non-administrative activities of the Egyptian population were mainly recorded in Coptic or Greek. Due to the lack of precise dates on non-official documents, however, most Coptic and Greek papyri that have been assigned a firm date in the Arab period originated in the chancery and its offices. Few 'private' documents have been ascribed to the Arab period. In general, moreover, the Greek non-administrative material has received much more attention than the Coptic or Arabic.

Greek continued in use as an administrative language into the 9<sup>th</sup> century, while the use of Coptic actually increased in the administrative domain under

the Arabs, especially in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The last Coptic legal documents and letters from private contexts date to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The use of Arabic had increased dramatically by the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and many more Arabic documents are preserved from then on.

The increase in the production of Arabic papyrus documents spanned legal, private (i.e. commercial and personal) and administrative subjects. It is clear that the number of consumers and producers of Arabic documents in the countryside (where most papyri in our collections originate) had increased fundamentally. That does not mean that all those using Arabic documents were also *speakers* of Arabic. A group of Arabic legal documents from Ṭūṭūn in the Fayyūm oasis dating to the 960s illustrates the difference. They record transactions of property between Christian inhabitants of the town, set down according to Islamic legal rules in Arabic. At the end of the documents an interesting condition is added: that the seller agreed to the sale after the document was read to him “and explained to him in Coptic (*bi-l-‘ajamiyya*).”<sup>7</sup>

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, administrative structures in the countryside expanded, resulting in an initial increase in the use of Coptic but eventually stimulating the spread of Arabic as well. Muslim legal infrastructures evident from the late 8<sup>th</sup>–early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries similarly promoted the use of Arabic. Merchants and others were already active in the Egyptian countryside, but starting in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Arabic land-leases show Arabic speakers settling and getting integrated in the countryside at a larger and more intensive scale. The increase in the use of Arabic in documents was thus the result of the expansion of Arab Muslim institutions such as administrative offices and legal structures, an expansion that took place in response to the migration of Arabic-speaking Muslims and non-Muslims from the garrisons into the countryside. As a result, local Egyptians also began to switch to Arabic, first to interact with the new Arabic-using individuals and institutions and later for internal communication.

The question of whether these Egyptian Arabic speakers also converted to Islam, or conversely whether the increase in Arabic usage signals an expansion of Islam, remains a vexing one. It is clear that converts did not automatically switch to Arabic for their daily communications, and that in any case a linguistic change to Arabic was not necessarily the result of conversion. The adoption of Arabic, the Arabicization or even Islamicization of personal names and the use of Arabic/Muslim or monotheist expressions also cannot automatically be connected to conversion. On the contrary, documentary and material evidence

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7 Frantz-Murphy 1981, no. 1; Faḥmī 1972–1973, no. 9. Frantz-Murphy 1981, no. 2 contains the same expression, but the seller is a woman.

suggests that the majority of Egypt's population remained Christian far into the medieval period, and that the area became mainly Muslim only in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

## Egyptian Administrators

The Arab conquerors entering Egypt in 639 initially left native administrative structures and the personnel that staffed them largely in place.<sup>9</sup> In the newly-founded capital of Fustāṭ, Arabs did take control, filling the highest state functions of governor, fiscal agent and chief judge (*qāḍī*). Additionally the governor, who was only appointed for short intervals, was wholly dependent on his fellow Arab *wujūh*. These were the descendants of the Arabs who had conquered Egypt and now filled the other senior posts in the capital. However, army units and military officials co-operated closely with local Egyptian administrators in the rest of the province.<sup>10</sup> Outside the capital, an overwhelming sense of continuity prevailed, and administrative and legal offices continued to function more or less as before.

The administrative organization of the province was also left intact. Five eparchies were divided into some 30 pagarchies, all headed by members of the local Christian Egyptian economic and social elite who had held similar offices under the Byzantines. The pagarchs were responsible for fiscal and administrative matters in their district, relying on village headmen (Greek *meizōn*; Coptic *lashane*) and other communal leaders to execute their orders at the community level. Five dukes headed the eparchies. They stood in the administrative hierarchy between the pagarchs and the governor's office. Both the pagarchs and the dukes had an administrative staff at their disposal.<sup>11</sup>

Continuity also characterized the experience of locals accessing the systems of redress. Local notables, administrative officers, bishops, abbots and large landowners continued to be the first recourse for legal disputes amongst the Egyptians.<sup>12</sup> Practically speaking, with very few Arabs residing outside Fustāṭ there were not many alternative avenues for conflict resolution.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> El-Leithy 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Sijpesteijn 2007; Sijpesteijn 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Such *amīrs* were in charge of military affairs and had administrative-financial tasks (Morelli 2010, introduction).

<sup>11</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 64 ff.; Legendre 2016.

<sup>12</sup> For the rise of Christian religious authorities in conflict resolution in the late Roman Near East, see Brown 1992 and Lamoreaux 1995. See also the late 6<sup>th</sup>-century bishops Abraham and

A Coptic papyrus dating to shortly after the arrival of the Arabs illustrates how legal conflicts were typically resolved and the authorities involved. Its more than 285 lines record the hearings regarding a family dispute over the ownership of part of a house in Edfū.<sup>14</sup> The petitioning party calls upon “your illustrious lordships” as arbitrators, hoping they will judge him fairly because, as he writes, “the fear of God resides in you, that you are not partial to (any) man, that you observe justice onto us, so that the Lord, Jesus Christ, may preserve you and your children for a long and peaceful time and that you end well in body, soul and spirit.” The “lordships” belonged to the notables of the town and are also called “the Great Men” in Greek and Coptic papyri.<sup>15</sup>

These Egyptian notables had fulfilled a crucial role in the legal, economic and administrative organization of Egypt since Byzantine times.<sup>16</sup> As estate-holders and otherwise economically powerful individuals they had taken over most of the public functions from the administration, not so much in competition with the central authorities but rather as a form of delegation. Bishops, estate-holders and heads of villages presided over legal courts, operated prisons and maintained private guards.<sup>17</sup> While their jurisdiction extended generally over the lands they owned, the authority of ecclesiastical office-holders also covered their religious constituency. Under the Arabs both existing estate-holders and clerical officials initially continued to play a role in the resolution of the legal conflicts of the native Egyptian population, but over time that position changed.

A first step was taken under the Sufyānids (661–684), when changes in the administrative organization of the caliphate had repercussions at the provincial level in Egypt. From the 660s documents bear witness to the establishment of semi-permanent Arab settlements in the Egyptian countryside.<sup>18</sup> While interaction between the local population and the Arab rulers continued to be rather limited, this new Arab presence was both the result and the catalyst of social change. An increasingly centralized administration diminished the role of

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Pesyntius, who played an essential role in the solving of disputes and conflicts, sometimes in cooperation with village headmen (Dekker 2018).

**13** For the development of legal penal practice in early Islamic Egypt, see Sijpesteijn 2018 and the references therein.

**14** Schiller 1968.

**15** Sijpesteijn 2013, 155 ff.

**16** Palme 2007; Schiller 1968, 89 n. 20. On the Great Men, see Sijpesteijn 2013, 152–163.

**17** Sijpesteijn 2018.

**18** A government postal office was established by 669 in the Fayyūm (SB VI 9232). The earliest Arabic debt acknowledgement is dated to 44 H/664–665 CE (Bruning 2015). The earliest commercial letter dates to the 1<sup>st</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century and originates in al-Ashmūnayn (Rāḡib 1991).

local officials, to the advantage of the higher-placed duke and governor.<sup>19</sup> In general the caliphal state was more present than the late Byzantine, directly demanding contributions in kind and personnel from Egyptian communities and sending its representatives as far south as Edfū.<sup>20</sup>

The Arab military officials (*amīr*) were removed at the level of the eparchies, making dukes (still Christian and Egyptian at this time) the most important local representatives of the Arab administration. Dukes received their orders from the capital, often traveling there in person, but could also initiate administrative and legal actions.<sup>21</sup> Pagarchs—all still Christian Egyptians belonging to the province's social economic elite—were responsible for the local execution of legal orders from the duke, the investigation of claims brought before the duke and the making known of law-breaking in the district.<sup>22</sup> Pagarchs could also address legal issues that arose in their district directly after having been approached by local parties or at their own initiative.<sup>23</sup> Pagarchs could forward a conflict to the duke, while claimants could turn to the duke as a form of appeal, presumably when the treatment of the pagarch was unsatisfactory or in order to circumvent the latter entirely.<sup>24</sup> Simultaneously, cases of private law were presented to local elite members; for example, the mother of four who writes a Cop-

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**19** On the position of the duke, see Legendre 2016.

**20** Foss 2009.

**21** For attestations of the duke of Jēme deciding legal disputes, see P.KRU 10, dating to 722 CE; P.KRU 25, dating to 722/723 CE, P.KRU 66 and 76 dating to before 722 CE. The duke of Edfū appears as a legal authority in PSI 15 1570, dating to 652, 667 or 682 CE. The duke of Fayyūm or Ikhnaš appears as judge in CPR VIII 84, dating to the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century. But see the representatives of the capital (*moagaritai*) sent to collect the money taxes and take care of other important matters (P.Apoll. 2). For the duke spending time in Fuṣṭāṭ, see P.Apoll. 6, 9, 20, 27, 28). Tillier characterizes this period as “un système judiciaire centré sur le duché,” (“pagarche,” 22).

**22** See the order to the pagarch Papas to forward some adversaries of a claimant who had turned to the duke's office (P.Apoll. 18).

**23** For examples of pagarchs getting involved at their own initiative in legal conflicts from Edfū, see the request from pagarch Platon to his colleague Papas to look into the conflict between a female slave owner and her opponent concerning her slaves (P.Apoll. 37). Another example shows the pagarch mediating in a case between a mother and her son (P.Apoll. 61. cited in Tillier 2013, 21 n. 8). See also the letter in which a plaintiff turns to Papas concerning a right he seems to base on “a previously recorded document” (P.Apoll. 60). Other examples of pagarchs taking charge of legal affairs all date to the 8<sup>th</sup> century and originate from different areas in the province (see below).

**24** Tillier 2013, 21–22. For a similar case from the early 8<sup>th</sup> century in which villagers whose complaint has been ignored twice by the local Arab administrator turned first to the pagarch for help and then to the governor, see Sijpesteijn 2013, nos. 1, 6. Another group of villagers complained to the governor about incorrectly imposed tax levels in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century (P.Lond. IV 1367, dating to 710 CE, provenance Ishqūh).

tic letter in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century asking the help of a highly-placed individual in obtaining her yearly alimony of wheat, oil, wine, a dress and a coat from her ex-husband directed probably at a religious functionary.<sup>25</sup>

An Arabic letter sent in 65 H/684–685 CE from a higher official, probably the governor, to a lower administrator (presumably located in al-Ashmūnayn where the text was found) asks him to deal with a complaint raised by a Muslim woman and illustrates how these changes in the administrative organization affected certain types of litigation.<sup>26</sup> Although only fragmentary, the papyrus tells us that by the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century Muslims living in the Egyptian countryside could reach the highest legal authorities in Egypt's capital with their complaints. Whether the Muslim plaintiff was purposely circumventing local authorities, appealing a case dealt with locally first or turning for help to an authority from her own ethnic-religious background is not clear.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the Arab Muslim high official gives directions in this letter to his subordinate Christian Egyptian pagarch about a local affair. In other words, the governor's jurisdiction extended far into the Egyptian countryside, competing with that of local Christian Egyptian authorities.

After the administrative reforms of the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, local Christian Egyptian officials and other authorities still dealt with most legal conflicts within their constituencies and domains, occasionally involving a higher official such as the duke or directly cooperating with officials such as headmen at the village level. However, especially important cases, for example those affecting one of the few Arab Muslims living in the countryside, could reach the highest authority and be dealt with by the governor himself.

## The Arrival of the Arabs

Sometime after 694, the Arab Muslim pagarch 'Aṭīya b. Ju'ayd (Gr. Attias) of the Fayyūm, apparently in response to a woman's complaint about maltreatment at the hands of some village headmen, instructed the latter in a Greek letter: "Do not mistreat the female letter carrier."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Till 1938, provenance not mentioned.

<sup>26</sup> Diem 1983.

<sup>27</sup> See Mathieu Tillier's discussion of the different possible scenarios involving similar complaints of Christian plaintiffs dealt with by the governor Qurra b. Sharīk (2015, 139–141). See below for a discussion of the Qurra letters.

<sup>28</sup> Morelli 2014.

This papyrus is important for several reasons. First, it is the first example of an Arab Muslim in the position of pagarch in the Egyptian countryside. Secondly, it demonstrates that Christian Egyptians began to turn to the Arab Muslim authorities for help in local conflicts. These transactions took place in Greek and Coptic, languages that continued to be used administratively, especially at the local level. The fact that in this case the woman's opponents were functionaries in the Arab Muslim system of rural control might explain why she turned to a representative of that same system rather than to a local Christian Egyptian notable. The papyrus bears witness to the new situation of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, whereby the relationship between Egyptian authorities and their local constituencies as well as the Muslim rulers had altered significantly as the structures of social control were increasingly centralized in Arab Muslim hands.

The net effect of the changes that took place in the organization and composition of Egypt's administration at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century was greater centralization and bureaucratization, as well as increasing Arabization and Islamicization. These reforms were obviously connected to empire-wide changes introduced under the Marwānid caliphs, reinforced by increased Arab settlement in the countryside. The developments extended beyond the Arab administration; in 109 H/727 CE a Greek document in the Upper Egyptian town of al-Ashmūnayn was for the first time dated according to the *hijra* calendar while referring to Arab Muslim authorities.<sup>29</sup>

For the administration the main change concerned the ethnic-religious background of its executors. Arab Muslim administrators started to replace Christian Egyptians in the position of duke and, somewhat later, of pagarch. These new administrators acquired greater administrative and fiscal responsibilities and rights than their Egyptian predecessors, including in the legal domain.<sup>30</sup> Arab Muslim pagarchs dealt directly with the complaints and legal conflicts presented to them,<sup>31</sup> and papyri attest to their roles as legal investigators, mediators and judges.

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<sup>29</sup> SPP VIII 1184, for the date, see Morelli 2010, 57. The earliest known Coptic document bearing a *hijra* calendar date dates to 116 H/734–735 CE (P.KRU 106 = MacCoull 2009, 166–173).

<sup>30</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 102–104, 200–211.

<sup>31</sup> For examples of pagarchs fulfilling the role of arbitrator or legal authority, see Sijpesteijn 2013, 132–134. Cf. the pagarch supervises the settlement of a theft (P.KRU 52, dating to 733 or 735 CE, provenance Jēme); the pagarch Nājid b. Muslim (in office ca. 730) orders a lower administrator to supervise the access to water of the village that complained about having lost out on water at the expense of another community (Sijpesteijn 2013, no. 16, dating to ca. 730 CE, provenance al-Fayyūm).

Like the woman mentioned above, who turned to the Arab Muslim pagarch ‘Aṭīya around 694, other Christian Egyptians found their way through the Arab Muslim administrative system to receive the legal assistance they required. Dating from the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, several Christian Egyptians residing in Upper Egypt petitioned the governor Qurra b. Sharik (in office 709–715) regarding cases involving large sums of money or valuable property. The plaintiffs seem to have all been members of Egypt’s socio-economic elite and thus able to access the Arab Muslim authorities in the capital several hundred kilometers to the north.<sup>32</sup> Both the Christian and Jewish Egyptian plaintiffs and their Arab Muslim mediators operated in the same socio-political milieu. Egypt’s indigenous elite (regardless of religion) shared the same class interests as the dominant Arab Muslims, and they co-operated with the new rulers in the administrative and even military organization of the province. With the most to lose, their pragmatism generally prevailed over prejudice.

The extended jurisdiction and availability of the Arab Muslim officials as pagarchs in the Egyptian countryside soon made their services desirable at other levels of Egyptian society. The pagarch Rāshid b. Khālid (who held offices in Ihnās in 718–723), and al-Ashmūnayn (725–731), called up witnesses and questioned them in a dispute between two Christian Egyptians over a piece of land.<sup>33</sup> The pagarch ‘Abd al-Humar (who is otherwise unknown) not only ordered the Christian Egyptian litigants in a disagreement over a house to come forward, but also offered instructions on solving the conflict. As a result, a Coptic document of settlement between the parties was drawn up in 725/6 in Jēme in the presence of ‘Abd al-Humar.<sup>34</sup> Another pagarch in Jēme, a certain ‘Amr, also got involved in a local property dispute on behalf of the claimant, ordering her opponent to sell her half of a house that he had inherited.<sup>35</sup>

All pagarchs fell directly under the responsibility of the governor and his financial director in Fuṣṭāṭ. The main difference was that Arab Muslim pagarchs—or their administrations—communicated directly and independently with individual members of the local Egyptian population. Contemporary Christian Egyptian pagarchs, on the other hand, had less latitude. Not only were most of them removed from administrative posts at the local level, the authority and respon-

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<sup>32</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 156.

<sup>33</sup> CPR IV 51, provenance not mentioned. For this pagarch, see Gonis 2004, 195.

<sup>34</sup> P.KRU 42 = MacCoull 2009, 127–129.

<sup>35</sup> P.KRU 25, provenance Jēme, dating to 722/723 CE. Finally, in c.730 in the Fayyūm, the pagarch Nājid b. Muslim asks his subordinate ‘Abdallāh b. As’ad to research a claim against two brothers and send them to him so that he can do justice to the claimant. Sijpesteijn 2013, no. 21.

sibility of those who remained was significantly reduced. They received orders from the capital on how to handle complaints, including criminal cases presented to the governor such as theft, assault and mistreatment.<sup>36</sup>

## Alternative Markers of Authority

Christian Egyptian village notables, religious leaders and estate-holders continued to be influential local socio-economic players who fulfilled an important role as executors of the administration at the village and local community level. They transmitted and executed administrative orders, including those relating to civil and penal legal cases.<sup>37</sup> They also collected and transferred taxes and shipped goods and people demanded by the Arab Muslim authorities. While functioning as brokers and agents for the Arab Muslim administration, they additionally represented local communities upwards. They stood as guarantors for taxpayers, debtors and the accused vis-à-vis the Arab Muslim authorities.<sup>38</sup> In the Greek, Coptic and Arabic papyri of the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century they are described as “solvent,” “powerful,” “strong,” “great” and “guarantors.”

Despite all this, when compared to the late Byzantine period or the first 50 years of Arab rule, the Christian Egyptian local elite’s responsibilities in the administration can only be described as drastically diminished.<sup>39</sup> Their autonomy was reduced, as they executed tasks rather than initiated them, and they must inevitably have experienced this as an assault on their status and position.

Traces of their anxiety around such changes in status can be observed in the documentary record. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the number of arbitration cases in which Christian Egyptian notables function as judges increased dramatically according to Coptic documents.<sup>40</sup> What seems to be happening is that members of the local elite, whose position in the provincial hierarchy had been diminished with the recent administrative restructuring but who maintained positions of prestige within their own constituencies, used arbitration to compensate for their loss of influence in the official organization of the country.<sup>41</sup> Outside the administra-

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<sup>36</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 210. Tillier 2013, 22–23.

<sup>37</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 202–203. For village headmen involved in legal cases, see Reinfandt 2010, 661 n. 36.

<sup>38</sup> For standing guarantor for prisoners, see Sijpesteijn 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Sijpesteijn 2013, 200 ff.

<sup>40</sup> See the numerous examples in MacCoull 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Similar behavior has been observed amongst West-African tribal chiefs whose role in the law courts was drastically reduced after national independence. As a result they increased their ac-

tive framework, where as discussed above Arab Muslim pagarchs were called upon to solve internal conflicts, Egyptians continued overwhelmingly to turn to the existing leaders of their communities using the familiar languages of Coptic and Greek.

The replacement of Christian and Jewish Egyptians as local administrators with Arab Muslims did not mean that Christians and Jews stopped playing a role in the administration. In fact the bulk of the administrative offices continued to be filled with local specialists: scribes, secretaries, fiscal collectors and all sorts of executive officers continued to be Egyptian, Christian and/or Jewish. This continued role in the administration might even explain the increase in the use of Coptic in the Muslim chancery in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, given the close relations between the religious institutions (such as the monasteries) where these officials were trained and the Muslim administration.<sup>42</sup> In this way clerical leaders continued to play an indirect role as well. Christians and Jews working in the Muslim administration might play a significant intermediary role for their co-religionists, although this could on occasion backfire.<sup>43</sup> Such indirect involvement through Christian and Jewish Egyptian administrators was, however, of a markedly different order than the direct role that religious and local authorities had played before.

## An ‘Abbāsīd Revolution?

Following the ‘Abbāsīd takeover in 750 another set of changes in the administrative, judicial and political organization of the province occurs in the documentation, and its repercussions for the Egyptian elite can also be seen in documents dealing with conflict resolution and informal requests for help.

The first attestation of a functioning *qāḍī* in Fustāṭ is dated to 141 H/758–759 CE.<sup>44</sup> From then on references to Islamic law courts and infrastructures gradually increase in both quantity and spread. An 8<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic papyrus records a petition to a *qāḍī* in which he is asked to mediate in a conflict between several

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tivities and responsibilities in arbitration, seemingly in an attempt to compensate for lost influence (I would like to thank David Ehrhardt for sharing this insight based on his current research with me).

<sup>42</sup> Lajos Berkes made this argument in his lecture at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Society for Arabic Papyrology congress in Berlin in 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Simonsohn 2011, 154–155.

<sup>44</sup> Tillier 2013, 31ff. For other attestations of *qāḍīs* in the papyri, see Sijpesteijn 2013, 403.

siblings over their mother's inheritance of a share in a house.<sup>45</sup> This is precisely the kind of civil dispute that would previously have been dealt with before a local authority figure. Other legal reforms were the introduction of the institution of professional witnesses (*'udūl*) in 174 H/790 CE by *qāḍī* Mufaḍḍal b. Fuḍāla (in office 174–177 H/790–793 CE), which coincides with the appearance of hand-written witness signatures at the end of Arabic legal documents. This indicates the Muslim legal apparatus was beginning to operate beyond the capital.<sup>46</sup>

Arbitration remained very important, especially in civil law cases, but the increased presence of the Muslim court, with its more stable infrastructure and mechanisms of enforcement such as prisons and guards, provided a powerful alternative to local mediators.<sup>47</sup> While some domains, especially those involving punishments under penal law, were removed from local elite jurisdiction entirely, the Christian Egyptian population played a decisive part in undermining the remnants of the old system as they progressively turned to Muslim legal instruments and institutions to solve conflicts. On the other hand, a general preference in some cases for private conflict resolution rather than a public treatment in court did not disappear.<sup>48</sup>

A shift is also visible in civil cases and requests for other kinds of help. Not only were Islamic legal structures more readily available to Egyptian plaintiffs, but a growing Arab Muslim population in the Egyptian countryside increased the opportunities for interaction between the different populations in various domains. This in its turn led to conversions amongst the local population, albeit at this time still on a small scale. It is in this context that we can understand the 8<sup>th</sup>-century Coptic papyrus in which Ibrāhīm, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Phiph, 'Abd al-Bāth, Joseph and Chael Kalthourte make a statement in front of Abū Sa'īd concerning a donkey.<sup>49</sup> Abū Sa'īd, although not necessarily a Muslim, is apparently acculturated enough to have taken on an Arab *kunya*. The other parties involved carry partially Arabic names, sometimes in combination with a Coptic one. The deliberations concerning the conflict over the donkey were probably conducted in

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45 CPR XVI 3.

46 Khan 1993, 173; El Shamsy 2013, 105–107. The earliest document with hand-written signatures is a debt acknowledgement dated 178 H/795 CE (CPR XXVI 17, provenance not mentioned).

47 But see also the opposite development, the increased popularity of arbitration as an alternative for a slowly operating court system in 'Abbāsīd Iraq (Tillier 2014).

48 The prolonged time that cases could sometimes take in court once there were more Muslims to use them seems to have motivated plaintiffs to turn to the more effective arbitration (Tillier 2014). Kelly lists the reasons why people turned to private conflict solution in Roman Egypt (2011, chapter 7).

49 P.KölnÄgypt II 56, provenance unknown.

Coptic, as was the document that records the statement. Abū Saʿīd apparently held some kind of position of authority, but no official title is mentioned. From the same period comes an Arabic letter in which a request for financial help is directed to an unnamed benefactor.<sup>50</sup>

These two documents originate in two different ethnic-linguistic milieus and show Arab Muslim patrons serving Arab Muslim petitioners and Egyptians helping Egyptians, but a definite shift is detectable. Arabicized Muslim, Christian and Jewish administrative and private authorities were increasingly involved in resolving civil and criminal conflicts amongst the Egyptian population.<sup>51</sup>

## Turkish-Persian Influx

The 9<sup>th</sup> century shows a rapid increase in Arabic documentation at the expense of Greek and to a lesser extent Coptic material. In this period, Arabic became the vehicle of communication and it was in Arabic that Muslim, Christian and Jewish Egyptians turned to mediators and patrons for help. Arabicization increased through Arab settlements outside the garrison cities and an expanding Arab Muslim administration encroaching on the countryside. The number of civil and penal law cases involving both Muslims and non-Muslims—including those concerning small properties—brought before the Muslim authorities consequently grew. Moreover, the results of such cases were increasingly recorded in Arabic.<sup>52</sup>

While the daily use of Arabic grew in Egypt, other developments taking place at the center of the empire led to a diminished position for Arab Egyptians. The descendants of the conquerors had been in charge of the main administrative positions in the capital Fustāṭ, gradually extending their presence and influence into the Egyptian countryside. An influx of Turkish-Persian administrators and military leaders and the appointment of Arab high officials originating from the caliphal center in Egypt eroded the position of Arab Egyptians in the province.<sup>53</sup>

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50 P.Ryl.Arab. I VI 8.

51 See for example the unpublished Arabic papyrus AP 849, dating to the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, which records a request to oversee a failure in an exchange between three Jewish Egyptians in Arabic. I am preparing this document for publication.

52 See the petition sent by an orphaned heir, seemingly a Muslim, to the *amīr* Abū l-Ḥasan asking to retrieve his share of the inheritance of his father which a certain Elias, presumably a Christian, has taken (Grohmann 1952, 186–188).

53 Sijpesteijn 2016.

The unrest following the death of caliph al-Rashīd in 809 was quelled and ‘Abbāsīd control secured by the general ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir (d. 230 H/844 CE) and his troops. His seizure of Egypt in 210 or 211 H/825–826 CE to 212 H/827 CE resulted in increased centralization and influence from the East. Egypt’s governors were now appointed for longer periods of three to four years and therefore more independent of local Arab elites. No longer forced to rely on locals when filling the crucial positions of *ṣāhib al-shurṭa*, *ṣāhib al-kharāj* and *qāḍī*, governors appointed men to enact these roles from their own class of eastern military leaders. *Qāḍīs* were still Arab, but arrived from the central lands of the empire.<sup>54</sup> The abolition of the *dīwān* in 218 H/833 CE by the caliph al-Ma’mūn put a formal end to the privileged position of Arab Egyptians, but rather than a watershed this event was the last stage in a drawn-out process that steadily undermined their position and authority.<sup>55</sup>

The new eastern officials appointed to top positions brought their own entourage of officials to Egypt and these spread eastern practices into lower layers of the administration. The deteriorating political and economic situation in the capital Baghdad drove further Persian-trained administrators to Egypt in search of employment, and documents show Persian-named officials appearing with more frequency in the documentation. These officials introduced a more eastern technical terminology into the bureaucracy, as the appearance of terms such as *jahbadh* (cashier) or *sulṭān* (for the administration) show.<sup>56</sup> Certain scribal practices occur for the first time in Egypt, including authentication methods and chancery scripts, and seem to be connected to customs current earlier in the eastern part of the empire.<sup>57</sup>

The lost authority of Arab Egyptians vis-à-vis Turkish-Persian immigrants found expression through different channels. The 9<sup>th</sup>-century local Egyptian history *Futūḥ Miṣr* seems partially to have been written to record the deeds of Egypt’s *wujūh*.<sup>58</sup> Other texts show Egypt’s Muslim population developing regional affiliations as a result of local conversion and in reaction to the sidelining of Arab Egyptians.<sup>59</sup> Al-Shāfi‘ī’s (d. 204 H/820 CE) canonization of Islamic law was

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54 Tillier 2012, 33.

55 Sijpesteijn 2016.

56 Frantz-Murphy 2001, 122. The earliest attestation of *jahbadh* dates to 259 H/874 CE (CPR XXI 61). The first attestation of *sulṭān* in an agricultural lease is dated 217 H/832 CE (Frantz-Murphy 2001, 36–39).

57 Khan 1994; Khan 2006; Sijpesteijn 2012.

58 Kennedy 1998, 66–80.

59 Sijpesteijn 2011.

a response to a loss of Arab exclusivity amongst Egypt's expanding—through immigration and conversion—Muslim population.<sup>60</sup>

The change in ethnic identity at the top echelons of the administration and the consequent downgrading of the Arab Egyptian elite can be traced in the documents and shows striking parallels with similar developments some hundred years earlier. In the first part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Arab Egyptians had risen to their prestigious position by replacing Christian Egyptians in the administration. A century later the Arab Egyptians were being replaced by Turkish-Persian officials. In a 9<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic papyrus, a farmer turns to an *amīr*, presumably a military functionary who has arrived with the troops from the east, to ask for help paying his taxes after a bad harvest.<sup>61</sup> In another Arabic papyrus, an immigrant (*gharīb*, “stranger”) asks another army leader identified as *qā'id* for help in getting settled in his new hometown.<sup>62</sup> Finally, a Ṭūlūnid official is consulted by a former chancery scribe concerning a marriage.<sup>63</sup>

Contemporaneous to these letters directed to members of the new Turkish-Persian military elite in their administrative functions are the numerous Arabic letters containing informal requests for help directed to unidentified individuals.<sup>64</sup> As discussed above in the case of the Christian Egyptians, these informal Arabic-language requests suggest that Arab notables expanded their presence in the domain of private problem solving and dispute resolution when their role in public administration was diminished.

## Conclusion

Christian and Jewish Egyptian community leaders continued to play a role in private dispute resolution. The letter quoted at the beginning of this article shows how a bishop could still exert power through his religious authority over transgressors in his community. The Geniza preserves plenty of examples of Jewish authorities in Fustāṭ fulfilling similar functions into the medieval period. Cases that threatened community norms were especially likely to be dealt with by mediators from that community. Moreover, mediation offered a strong alternative to a complicated and expensive legal system. It was especially attractive as the

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<sup>60</sup> El Shamsy 2013, chapter 4.

<sup>61</sup> P.Khalili I 16. See the contemporary petition directed to the *amīr* Abū l-Ḥasan asking for help in retrieving part of an inheritance (Grohmann 1952, 186–188).

<sup>62</sup> P.Ryl.Arab. I I 2.

<sup>63</sup> P.Khalili I 18.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Grohmann 1952, 179–180; 185–186.

court system developed in complexity and the official system became overloaded with the growth of the Muslim population and a subsequent increase in court cases.<sup>65</sup> Christian, Jewish and Muslim community leaders continued to serve the need of their specific constituencies, but shifts can be observed.

A connection has been made in this paper between administrative status and socio-economic elite membership. A diminished role in the administrative hierarchy had repercussions for one's social reputation and standing in the community. This becomes explicit in the way informal dispute resolution was organized and in whom the community chose as its arbitrators. An arbitrator's authority was based on a position of trust, respect and eminence in the community. While religious leaders obtained their authority from their religious institution, state officials and the infrastructure at their disposal were obvious mediators as well.

Individuals without a title and official position needed to establish their authority within society in other ways. With the loss of institutional backing as their position in the Muslim administration was downgraded, the autonomy of their religious institution was decreased or their independence lost to an increasingly centralized state, the stage of private conflict solution becomes especially attractive as a way to build and maintain a reputation. In the face of the loss of a formal position of prestige in society, an individual's presence as a mediator may be said to have increased.

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<sup>65</sup> Tillier 2014.

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# The Civilian Ruling Elite of the Tūlūnid-Ikhshīdid Period

**Abstract:** This paper examines the participation of the civilian elite of the Ikhshīdid period during the succession crises of 946 and 961. The discussion of these events is preceded by a review of terminology referring to the elite and its composition.

**Keywords:** *ʿaqd*; al-Balawī; al-Kindī; Ibn Zūlāq; al-Maqrīzī; Roy P. Mottahedeh

## Obscure Beginnings

One can argue that the Muslim elite in post-conquest Egypt evolved from the several-thousand-strong Arab army that conquered the country and settled in Fuṣṭāṭ. The most renowned of these conquerors was ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ who led the conquest of the country and later served as the governor of Egypt under ʿUmar I and during the early years of ʿUthmān’s rule (r. 644–656).

In 28 H/648–649 CE ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ was apparently dismissed from the governorship. His re-emergence on the political scene and return as governor of Egypt (38 H/658–659 CE) was the result of what has been described by Nabia Abbott as a deal made between him, his sons (ʿAbdallāh and Muḥammad) and Wardān (the family’s protégé and confidant), and Muʿāwiya. Through it, military and political support was traded for the governorship and revenues of Egypt. After heavy fighting, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ conquered Egypt with troops drafted from Syria and took back the area’s governorship. Al-Kindī (897–961) writes that Egypt became ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ’ personal source of income (*tuʿma*) and that he kept its revenues for himself after paying the troops and covering other expenses involved with ruling the country.<sup>1</sup>

ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ governed Egypt until his death in 43 H/663–664 CE and was briefly succeeded by his son ʿAbdallāh, whom Muʿāwiya immediately dismissed and replaced with his own brother ʿUtba b. Abī Sufyān. This move marked the return of Egypt from private patrimonial rule to the direct control of the ruling family, or one should perhaps say its return to direct state control.

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<sup>1</sup> Abbott 1972, III, 47–53; al-Kindī 1912, 28–9, 31, 34. For ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ’s self-enrichment, see Lecker 1989, 24–37. CE dates are used when dating is securely established, while Hijrī dates are used when events referred to in the sources are discussed.

In 667, Muslama b. Mukhallad was appointed governor of Egypt and it seems he fulfilled all of Mu‘āwīya’s expectations for smooth and profitable governance of the province. It is claimed that he made yearly payments to 40,000 people who were entitled to cash stipends (‘*aṭā*) and food allocations (*arzāq*). This number included troops and their families, of which 4,000 received the highest remuneration of 200 *dīnārs*. Muslama b. Mukhallad also maintained the military and civilian administrative apparatus, shipped grain to Arabia, and transferred 600,000 *dīnārs* to the caliph, apparently on a yearly basis.<sup>2</sup>

Passing on to larger issues from the personal vicissitudes of people for whom participation in the conquest was instrumental in amassing huge (though occasionally short-lived) family fortunes, a question arises: what were the driving forces behind the stratification process within the conquering society? A reasonable conjecture would be that the process was driven by ownership of urban and/or agricultural land, success in commerce, or appointments to posts in the early Muslim state. 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup>-century sources depict the conquering society as vast rentier class. Stipends were, however, paid according to certain criteria, with some receiving as much as 200 *dīnārs* per year and most far less. This system was known as *dīwān* and recipients of its benefits as *ahl al-dīwān*. One can assume that the significance of the *dīwān* system diminished over time, especially as the payroll was constantly re-drawn to include new tribal and military groups. The system was abolished in 833.<sup>3</sup>

Sources in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries provide examples of lively discussions regarding whether Egypt was conquered by force or treaty and the tax consequences of the two different forms of conquest.<sup>4</sup> The sources do agree that the conquerors were not permitted to settle on Egyptian land and were instead maintained by the *dīwān* system.<sup>5</sup> This depiction is highly schematic, and contradicted by scattered references to settlement outside Fuṣṭāṭ and more frequent references to efforts to gain access to land. One can, for example, only wonder at the presence and subsequent history of 10,000 Arab troops in Kharibta in the Delta on the western branch of the Nile in 37 H/657–658 CE. Al-Kindī refers to them as *wujūh ahl Miṣr*, *ashrāf*, and *ahl al-ḥifāz*, which must be not taken literally but as an indication of their status as a privileged veteran military group. Their entitle-

<sup>2</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 102; al-Kindī 1912, 38–40; Ibn Zūlāq 2000, 90–91; al-Maqrīzī 1991, VI, 410–411. For the caliph ‘Umar I’s financial demands on ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, see al-Maqrīzī 1991, VII, 260–261.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Kindī 1912, 193.

<sup>4</sup> This subject has been extensively discussed by Noth 1994, 182–189.

<sup>5</sup> For the most explicit statement on this subject, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 162.

ment to cash stipends and food allocations is explicitly mentioned; they must have participated in the conquest of Egypt.<sup>6</sup>

Grants of land are referred to by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (798–871) using the term *iqṭā’*. Whether this meant full ownership of the land or merely enjoying rights of usufruct remains vague. In Egypt, the first recorded grant of *iqṭā’* was made by the caliph ‘Umar I (r. 634–644). Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam gives the impression that such grants were rare while other sources throw no additional light on how widespread the practice was. Ibn Yūnus (894–958), for example, notes that Mu‘āwiya’s military and naval commander in Egypt received an *iqṭā’* grant from the caliph.<sup>7</sup> Urban grants of land were known as *qaṭā’i* and involved full ownership. These played a role in the development of Fustāṭ after Mu‘āwiya’s reign.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor that drove urban development were direct investments made by the Umayyad governors of Egypt and the caliphs. The governor ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (r. 685–705), the son of the caliph Marwān I (r. 684–685), built several covered markets (*qaysāriyyas*). Each was dedicated to the trade of a specific product such as honey, cloves, or robes and textiles. The caliph Hishām (r. 724–743) also built a *qaysāriyya* in Fustāṭ in which textiles were traded or produced.<sup>9</sup> It can be argued that these investments by members of the royal ruling family benefited the local economy but were detrimental to the local financial elite and its opportunities for investment. That ownership of urban properties was widespread is indicated by numerous references to familial pious endowments and other endowments made for the benefit of Muslims in general or the poor in particular.<sup>10</sup> Such pious endowments were often an instrument used to transfer property and maintain wealth within a family.

Allusions to enrichment achieved through any type of local, trans-regional, or international commerce are entirely absent in the literary sources. Papyrological evidence indicates that a Muslim landowner in the Fayyūm of the 730s went

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6 Al-Kindī 1912, 20–21. For Arab settlement in the Egyptian countryside, see Sijpesteijn 2013, 81–85.

7 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 136–138; Ibn Yūnus 2000, I, 345–346, 470, 471.

8 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 132–133. For urban and rural *qaṭā’i* grants in Iraq, see Kennedy 2004, 13–29; Kennedy 2014, 159–182.

9 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 136–137.

10 For references to *waqfs* in favor of the Muslim community in Egypt, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 89 (attributing the first *waqf* of this type to ‘Umar I), and 107, referring to the endowment of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ’s house in Fustāṭ. For familial *waqfs*, with and without charitable stipulations, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 100–101, 104, 135–136; Ibn Yūnus 2000, II, 138–139, regarding an early 9<sup>th</sup>-century familial *waqf*. For *waqfs* in early Muslim Egypt, see Bouderbala 2013, 37–56, including French translations of some key accounts.

on commercial trips to Alexandria, but how widespread commerce was along the Nile in Upper and Lower Egypt remains unknown. Information about the salaries of governors, tax officials, and scribes is also sparse. A documentary fragment from 748 indicates that the monthly salary of one *qāḍī* was ten *dīnārs*. Salaries of other *qāḍīs* increased to 30 *dīnārs* per month during the early ‘Abbāsid period, but how this data relates to a broader picture of prices and salaries remains unknown.<sup>11</sup>

As important as stratification driven by economic forces might have been, we know next to nothing regarding *‘ilm* (knowledge) as a factor in social and economic mobility. How rewarding learning was in terms of social prestige and economic position within society is rarely mentioned in the source material. The most important information is provided by Ibn Yūnus’s account of the success of the Iraqi storyteller Maṣṣūr b. ‘Ammār b. Kathīr al-Sulaymī, who practiced his craft in 8<sup>th</sup>-century Fustāṭ for some time. He impressed the two most prominent scholars of that time, Layth b. Sa‘d (713–792) and Ibn Lahī‘a (715–791), who bestowed land grants (*iqtā‘*) and money on him.<sup>12</sup> The inescapable though unsurprising conclusion is that in this agricultural pre-modern society, access to land was the main source of wealth and the underpinning factor in the fortunes of any type of contemporary social elite.

## Terminology

The sources for Egypt’s history during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries offer abundant information on the socio-political evolution of the country and the formation and functions of civilian elites. A pre-requisite for any meaningful discussion of these developments is an understanding of the reference terminology used. Although the terms ‘elite’, ‘class’, and ‘social stratification’ reflect modern sociological concepts, these notions were not foreign to medieval sages or commoners. However, medieval sociological terminology was not well-defined and lacked precision. The notion of an elite group as expressed by the term *khāṣṣa*, which meant a social class vital to the proper functioning of a state and society, permeated medieval Muslim thinking about a social order which they viewed as basically divided into the elite and the common people (*‘amma*). Social classes,

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Kindī 1912, 354; Tillier 2012, 114, and al-Kindī 1912, 317, 377, 421, 435; al-Qadi 2009, 9–10, 22, 28.

<sup>12</sup> For modest payments (three *dīnārs* per month) rendered to Qur’ān reciters in the early ‘Abbāsid period, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 117. For Maṣṣūr b. ‘Ammār, see Ibn Yūnus 2000, II, 237–238. For both scholars, see Guest’s introduction (29–32) to his edition of al-Kindī 1912.

or in modern parlance the notion of stratification, were referred to by terms such as *ṣinf* (pl. *aṣnāf*), *firqā* (pl. *fīraq*), and *ṭāʿifa* (pl. *ṭawāʿif*). The term *fīraq* also had a narrower meaning of ‘faction’, while *ʿawwām* (the plural form of *ʿamma*) had negative connotations of an unruly crowd or mob. Each of these terms had a wide range of meanings and they were used loosely and dynamically, reflecting place and time.

One of the most pertinent texts for the discussion of medieval sociological terminology is the description of Aḥmad b. ʿUyūnī’s funeral by his 10<sup>th</sup>-century biographer al-Balawī. This was an impressive and carefully staged event and al-Balawī uses two terms (*ṣinf/aṣnāf* and *fīraq/fīraq*) to describe the various groups that attended it. He states that the different groups (*fīraq*) did not mingle and that each group paraded separately and kept to itself (literally, “kept its boundaries”). The different categories (*aṣnāf*) referred to by al-Balawī consisted of Aḥmad b. ʿUyūnī’s military slaves, the officers of his army, the scribes, and various groups of people that served him. The presence of women at the funeral was massive and somewhat surprising. Several female groups are mentioned, among whom were Aḥmad b. ʿUyūnī’s womenfolk, the wives of the military commanders, the wives of military slaves, the wives of scribes, and the wives of the people close to him, with each group making a separate appearance. Black women who were on a monthly pay-list of the deceased ruler also attended the funeral as well as the urban poor of both genders on whom Aḥmad b. ʿUyūnī had bestowed charity. In addition, people of the religious class (low- and high-ranking *ʿulamāʾ*; literally, *ṣaghīr* and *kabīr*), *qāḍīs*, and court witnesses were also present at the event.<sup>13</sup>

The recipients of Aḥmad b. ʿUyūnī’s charities and payments who attended the funeral appear in the text in separate groups. The terminology that refers to the poor is derived from the Qurʾān and involves terms such as *fuqarāʾ*, *masākīn*, and *ḍuʿafāʾ*. Muslim jurists debated how to distinguish between the *fuqarāʾ* and *masākīn*. They reached the conclusion that a *faqīr* is defined as a destitute person, one who neither owns anything nor earns a livelihood, while *miskīn* is defined as a poor person who has some possessions although not enough to sustain himself. Other terms that are relevant for the discussion of poverty are *sitr* and *ahl al-sitr*; the term *sitr* had a broad meaning referring to piety and denoted adherence to a strict code of privacy, while *ahl al-sitr* referred to people living in seclusion. In medieval Jewish Middle Eastern society the term *ahl al-sitr* alluded to the “shame-faced poor” or the “deserving poor”, or in modern parlance the conjectural poor in contrast to the structural poor. Both terms are widely used

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13 Al-Balawī 1939, 344–345.

in discussions about the poor and poverty in medieval Europe and were introduced into medieval Middle Eastern studies by Mark R. Cohen.<sup>14</sup>

To what extent al-Balawī's terminology is a reflection of 10<sup>th</sup>-century 'Abbāsīd concepts of social stratification is difficult to assess. Roy P. Mottahedeh's study of the political life of 'Abbāsīd-Būyīd Baghdād constitutes the most important reference in studying it. Mottahedeh defines the term *ṭabaqa* as referring to "a professional category", but the term also had a broader meaning of a social class or layer and a narrower meaning of a vertically stratified group of courtiers. This term is rarely used by al-Balawī, who usually employs the terms *firqā* and *firaq*. His use of these terms conveys no sense of hierarchy. According to Mottahedeh, the term *ṣinf* conveyed a loose meaning that referred to broad social categories and was also used when referring to ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup> Medieval sociological terminology was, however, flexible, and in documentary and literary sources of the Mamlūk period the term *ṭā'ifa* was used when referring to European nations.

Although al-Balawī's use of the term *ṭabaqa* appears in a different context from the one discussed by Mottahedeh, it retains the same meaning. Al-Balawī states that Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn was fascinated by the *ahl al-sitr*, who are described as upright poor men and women to whom the ruler gave large monthly donations. In another section of al-Balawī's text they are described as meritorious religious people living according to a strict code and avoiding the impermissible (*wara'*). Perhaps the most significant aspect of al-Balawī's description of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn's interest in this group is the fact that he regarded them as a *ṭabaqa*. This means he saw them as a normative social class within the overall social model, not as members of the pitifully wretched poor underclass. The medieval notion of poverty, like that of the elite, was a nuanced concept referred to by a number of terms that conveyed economic status but also referred to piety and different modes of life.

## A Local Elite: Meaning and Formation

Al-Kindī refers to the Arab elite of early Muslim Egypt by the term *wujūh*, a common appellation used for the elite in both Arabic and Hebrew. The term also appears in a military context. The Arab military force in Egypt is referred to by al-

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<sup>14</sup> For al-Balawī's references to Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn's relations with *ahl al-sitr*, see 184. For other 9<sup>th</sup>-century luminaries who supported *ahl al-sitr*, see Bruning 2012, 102; Cohen 2005, 34–53, 70–71.

<sup>15</sup> Mottahedeh 1980, 105–106.

Kindī using three terms: *ahl al-dīwān*, *jund Miṣr*, and *ahl Miṣr*, all of which allude to the paid Arab military force stationed in Fustāṭ. For example, when referring to the Coptic rebellion of 150 H/767 CE in the Ṣakhā area of the south-central Delta, al-Kindī states that the Arab force dispatched from Fustāṭ (*ahl al-dīwān*) was led by *wujūh ahl Miṣr*. This reference may be interpreted in two different ways. In a broad sense, the phrase can be understood as meaning the force was commanded by elite members of the Arab population of Egypt and that such an unusual mobilization reflected the gravity of the situation. But it can also be argued that in this context the term *ahl al-dīwān* stands for *ahl Miṣr* and that the force was led by high-ranking officers. The second interpretation is possible, since in al-Kindī's narrative the term *wujūh* appears mostly (if not exclusively) in a military context. Al-Kindī, for example, describes the war of 65 H/684–685 CE, when the force led by the caliph Marwān, fought Ibn al-Zubayr's supporters in Egypt, as having been fought between *ahl Shām* and *ahl Miṣr* and states that there were many casualties among *ahl al-qabā'il min ahl Miṣr* which reflected the tribal composition of the force.<sup>16</sup>

The military also played a key role in the politics of the country, or to put it differently, governors had to be attentive to their demands. In 141 H/758–759 CE, for example, upon the arrival of a new governor (Mūsā b. Ka'b) a power struggle immediately unfolded between him and the *wujūh al-jund*, the force stationed in Fustāṭ. In this context that means the prominent commanders of the *jund*. This understanding of the term *jund* is supported by other references to *wujūh al-jund bi-Miṣr* appearing in the description of the struggle between al-Ma'mūn and al-Amīn and its impact on Egypt.<sup>17</sup> Only once can the phrase *wujūh ahl Miṣr* be understood as alluding to the local elite. In 137 H/754–755 CE, the governor of Egypt went to Palestine with a number of *wujūh ahl Miṣr* (al-Kindī provides their names). This term can be considered as equivalent to *ashrāf ahl Miṣr* (to whom al-Ma'mūn wrote seeking recognition and support).<sup>18</sup>

Going beyond terminology, Maged S. S. Mikhail has approached al-Kindī in his search for prosopographical data about elite families in early Muslim Egypt with some success. The Tujībī family, for example, held posts in the local government from 655 to the 720s. From the 720s onwards members of the Fahm family were frequently appointed to the post of *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* in Fustāṭ, a military force that combined the functions of the police and garrison. Al-Kindī's text, however,

<sup>16</sup> Al-Kindī 1912, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Kindī 1912, 107, 168.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Kindī 1912, 105, 148.

yields little and neither the Tujībīs nor the Fahmis appear on the list of *wujūh ahl Miṣr* for 137 H/754–755 CE.<sup>19</sup>

This discussion can be concluded by saying that although al-Kindī expands our understanding of the terminology referring to the elite, he offers no insight into the meaning and formation of Egypt's local elite.

## A Local Elite and the Politics of Succession

The information and insights into Egypt's social history that al-Kindī fails to provide are to be found in other 10<sup>th</sup>-century chronicles of the Ṭūlūnid-Ikhshīdid period which have been preserved and cited by Mamlūk historians. The civilian elite of the Ṭūlūnid period consisted of administrators brought from Iraq, who not only managed Egypt's agricultural wealth but were also involved in the financial affairs of Syria. They additionally maintained connections with the 'Abbāsīd court and viziers. The fortunes of these elite families are exemplified by the Mādharā'ī family, which attained great wealth, displayed a considerable degree of cohesion, and survived the political shifts that took place in Egypt during the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of this family followed the demise of the powerful administrator Ibn al-Mudabbir, whom Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn had killed in 270 H/883–884 CE.<sup>20</sup>

The first member of the Mādharā'ī family to make a career in Egypt in the service of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn was Abū Bakr al-Uṭrāsh. Another, Abū Zunbūr (232–317 H/846–929 CE), served as a tax collector in Syria and eventually in Egypt during the rule of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn. He survived the overthrow of the Ṭūlūnid dynasty by the 'Abbāsīds.<sup>21</sup> Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Mādharā'ī (258–345 H/871–956 CE) is perhaps the best-known member of his family and signifies their pivotal role in Egypt. He became famous for his extraordinary wealth, charities, and piety, all of which were symbolized by his twenty-two pilgrimages to Arabia and the massive support he provided to commoners and members of the elite in Mecca and Medina. His charitable deeds in Egypt were no less extensive and involved the ransom of captives and the distribution of

<sup>19</sup> Mikhail 2014, 140-1. For other *wujūh* families in Umayyad Egypt, see Kennedy 1998, 86; Kennedy 1981, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Kutubī 1973, V, 132.

<sup>21</sup> The family's history has been discussed by Gottschalk (1931, 22–117), using a wide range of sources. He was also the first to publish biographies of members of the family, using those manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī's *Muqaffā* available to him at that time. My references go to the fuller 1991 edition of the text. Al-Maqrīzī 1991, I, 343–344; III, 466–481.

food, while his standing in local society and politics is illuminated by the events that took place following Muḥammad b. Ṭughj's death in 946.

The Ikhshīdīd dynasty barely survived the death of its founder. Only the involvement of the civilian elite in Fustāṭ during the succession ensured the smooth transfer of rule to Unūjūr, Muḥammad b. Ṭughj's sixteen-year-old son, and the appointment of his uncle as regent. This disposition of power was shaped in two consecutive meetings (5–6 Muḥarram 335 H/5–6 August 946 CE) and formalized in a signed document (*'aqd*) that was in fact a pact between the various people and groups involved in the negotiations.

Al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442) states that the participants in the first meeting were the vizier Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Muqātil, the people of the court (*ahl al-dawla*), and *wujūh al-balad*. In this context (and in contrast to al-Kindī's text), *wujūh al-balad* unequivocally means the notables of Fustāṭ. The first meeting failed to reach a decision on the implementation of the succession as envisioned by Ibn Ṭughj; in 934 he had proclaimed that Unūjūr was his successor and added his son's name to the Friday sermons delivered in Egypt and Syria. The public announcement of the intended succession was followed by a declaration of allegiance to Unūjūr by high-ranking officers (*quwwād*) when he was twelve years old.

In the second meeting, which took place on 6 Muḥarram/6 August in the presence of Abū Bakr Muḥammad, Unūjūr was proclaimed ruler and his uncle installed as regent. The vizier was arrested and required to pay a sum of money, Abū Bakr Muḥammad was recognized as the strong man in the state, and his son Abū 'Alī l-Ḥusayn was appointed vizier. Al-Maqrīzī provides a long list of the people (referred to as *wujūh al-nās bi-Miṣr wa-ahl al-ra'y*) who witnessed this and were most likely actively involved in the shaping of the *'aqd*. These participants belonged to several clearly discernible groups, including members of the three administrative families of the Ṭūlūnid-Ikhshīdīd period (the Madharā'īs, the Furāts, and the Rūdhābārīs) as well as people belonging to the two long-established Shī'ī families in Egypt (the Ṭabāṭabās and the Rasīs, referred to as *ashrāf*). Other individuals involved included the people of the court (*ahl al-dawla*), the administrators (*wujūh al-kuttāb*), and the military (referred to as *ḥujariyya*, i.e. the former cadets of the *ḥujra* [barracks] where military slaves were trained).

Another group of people associated in some unspecified way with the *'aqd* were the *qāḍīs*, among them the *qāḍīs* of Mecca and Fustāṭ who also served as the *qāḍīs* of the towns of Ramla and Tiberias in Palestine. These *qāḍīs* remained in Fustāṭ and sent representatives to the towns under their jurisdiction. Several prominent members of the corps of witnesses associated with the *qāḍī's* court in Fustāṭ are also mentioned as involved in some way with the *'aqd*. The integration

of the judicial system into the state structure was a typical medieval phenomenon. By that time, the position of *qāḍī* had acquired respectability and a religious aura. Both were instrumental in bestowing legitimacy on the pact, which preserved both the political status quo and the vested interests of the groups and people involved.

The disposition of power was publicly proclaimed on Friday when Unūjūr, accompanied by his uncle Abū Bakr Muḥammad and his cousin the vizier, marched in a procession to the Ancient Mosque in Fuṣṭāṭ. Meanwhile, letters announcing the political deal forged in Egypt were sent to Damascus. The most important endorsement came from the black eunuch Kāfūr, when he arrived in Fuṣṭāṭ with the Ikhshīdid army from Damascus at the beginning of Ṣafar. Only when this took place did Unūjūr feel secure enough to show himself to the people, in a carefully orchestrated appearance attended by poets including the renowned al-Mutanabbī, who was in Egypt at that time.<sup>22</sup>

Following Unūjūr's death in 961, rule was usurped by Kāfūr. He enjoyed the cooperation of many but still relied on his private army. Upon Kāfūr's death in 968, a new succession and disposition of power were arranged. These were formulated in a document devised by the vizier Ja'far b. Faḍl b. al-Furāt and the Shī'ī notable Abū Ja'far Musallam and signed by Kāfūr's leading military commanders. The document details the division of responsibilities among the people involved and alludes to the exchange of oaths of obedience to God, to His messenger, and to the Qur'ānic dictum of commanding good and forbidding wrong. The document proclaims a political program promising to uphold justice, help the oppressed against the oppressor, care for the holy cities in Arabia and frontier towns, and conduct holy war. In practical terms the dynastic claims of the Ikhshīdid family as the legitimate rulers of Egypt were acknowledged and the minor Ikhshīdid prince Abū l-Fawāris Aḥmad installed as the nominal ruler. Shamūl al-Ikhshīdī was vested with the command of the army and financial affairs entrusted to Ja'far b. al-Furāt.

The document also guaranteed the preservation of the vested interests of the different military groups according to their ranks (*ṭibāq*). The composition of the army was complex. While the main military groups consisted of the military slaves (*ghilmān*) of the Ikhshīdid rulers, the army also included Kāfūr's military slaves and the infantry and cavalry. The ethnic factor in the composition of the army must also be taken into account. The black servile infantry were lowest in terms of military prestige and pay while the white-skinned servile cavalry were

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Maqrīzī 1991, II, 313–314.

highest in the military structure. Shamūl al-Ikhshīdī faced a tremendous challenge in his efforts to balance the interests of all these military factions.

Unsurprisingly, this elaborate disposition of power, shaped by the civilian elite and endorsed by the military, failed in its implementation. Members of the Ikhshīdī ruling family, the administrators, and the military factions remained suspicious of each other. This suspicion turned into violence and the situation deteriorated into the chaos that led to many welcoming the Fāṭimid conquest of the country in 969.<sup>23</sup>

## A Local Elite: An Outsider's View

The political arrangements shaped after Kāfūr's death were observed and commented upon by Sībawayhi the "wise fool". Ibn Zūlāq's *History of Sībawayhi* is an important contemporary testimony; the work was modeled on Iraqi books devoted to "wise fools" (*'uqalā' al-majānīn*). Sībawayhi was very critical of the nomination of Abū l-Fawāris Aḥmad as ruler and mocked his immaturity, deficient education, and lack of military skills. One wonders how much of Ibn Zūlāq's own voice and criticism is grafted upon Sībawayhi's remarks (real or invented). That question can be expanded into the broader query of whether Ibn Zūlāq's work is a reflection of the views of the wider circles of the *'ulamā'* class observing the deals concluded between the military and the civilian elite. To put it differently, was public opinion, subdued as it might have been, echoed in the *History of Sībawayhi*?

Sībawayhi's sarcastic remarks are directed at the main players in the political drama unfolding before his eyes. He mocks the changing fortunes of the vizier Ja'far b. al-Furāt, who had had to hide himself from the military (literally, the Turks) that looted his house and humiliated him. Sībawayhi, however, saw him at the moment of his triumph, marching in a parade accompanied by a large entourage of his clerks with men and the army behind him, and expresses wonder at the reconciliation between the vizier and the army. Other of his remarks focus on the political program proclaimed in the *'aqd* document; Sībawayhi cynically asks whether the army marching behind the vizier is marching to defend Islam or protecting the Ka'ba sanctuary?<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Al-Maqrīzī 1991, I, 536–538. For a French translation of the text, see Bianquis 1974, 263–269, esp. 264–265.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Zūlāq 1933, 52–53. For quotes from *Kitāb Akhbār Sībawayhi*, see al-Ṣafādī 1979, XII, 119; Bianquis 1972, 55–56. For the vicissitudes of the vizier, see al-Kutubī 1973, V, 293. While Sībawayhi was critical of the political scene, Abū Bakr b. 'Utayba (d. after 957), who is described as be-

Sibawayhi was a highly educated person, who in his youth received a comprehensive education in the traditional Arabic-Islamic sciences: Qur'ān, the Prophetic tradition, jurisprudence, theology, and, of course, grammar. His nickname, derived from the great 8<sup>th</sup>-century grammarian Sibawayhi, testifies to his linguistic skills. The purpose of the political program published by the regime was to win over the 'ulamā' class, who were also the great protectors of Sibawayhi from occasional persecutions by powerful members of the civilian elite. Although Sibawayhi's life oscillated between periods of clarity and delusion, he clearly belonged to the 'ulamā' class with whom the civilian elite shared a set of common religious and cultural values. The Ṭūlūnid and Ikhshīdid rulers also shared this set of values, or to put it more cautiously, were not strangers to them. Since the dividing line was drawn between the military and civilian elite and the 'ulamā' class, it was up to the rulers to create working cohesion between them—and most of the time this was something that the Ṭūlūnid and Ikhshīdid rulers did successfully.

## Conclusions

Medieval Arabic terminology referring to social groups and classes is rich and involves four basic terms: *ṣīnf* (pl. *aṣnāf*), *fīrqa* (pl. *fīraq*), *ṭā'ifa* (pl. *ṭawā'if*), and *ṭabaqa* (pl. *ṭibāq*). The meaning of these terms varies and must be ascertained by context. Although the primary concept of society was polarized between *khāṣṣa* and 'amma, practically speaking terminology referring to the elite and the common people consisted of several terms of which *wujūh*, *fuqarā'*, *masākīn* (*du'afā'*), *ahl al-sitr*, and 'awwām appear in the sources discussed in this paper. There are also other terms referring to the elite, common people, the poor, and the underclass, not attested to in these sources but quite common in other contexts.

The events discussed in this paper pertaining to the involvement of the civilian elite in the political life of the Ikhshīdid period are narrated through al-Maqrīzī's prism. It must be pointed out that the terminology he uses, such as *ahl al-dawla*, *wujūh al-balad*, and *wujūh al-nās bi-Miṣr wa-ahl al-ra'y*, is his own, a reflection of his understanding and interpretation of events and intended for contemporary readers. It is not the terminology of the original 9<sup>th</sup>- and 10<sup>th</sup>-century sources. The term *ahl al-dawla*, for example, is al-Maqrīzī's understanding of

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longing to *ahl al-'ilm wa-l-adab*, served as go-between for the main political figures in Fustāṭ. See al-Maqrīzī 1991, VII, 69–70.

the Ikhshīdīd dynasty and period as *dawla* and reflects a natural evolution of political-administrative vocabulary. The same applies to al-Maqrīzī's creation of the term *wujūh al-balad*; in al-Kindī's narrative *wujūh* appears in a military context in conjunction with *jund*.

Al-Maqrīzī's modification of terminology does not undermine the value of his narrative, which is rich in detail and derived from lost 10<sup>th</sup>-century works. It must be read carefully, with an awareness of the problem of terminology, but it depicts a rich socio-political world that became extinct under the far more authoritarian Fāṭimid regime, when the *imām*'s claims to divine guidance left no place for any other type of elite in the political life of the country.

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Cyrille Aillet

# Connecting the Ibādī Network in North Africa with the Empire (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

**Abstract:** At first sight, North African Ibādism emerged during the Berber uprisings against Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd rule and stayed at the margins of the empire. The imamate of Tāhart even stood, in the posthumous memory of the school, as an ideal counter-model of the caliphate. In fact, during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries western Ibādism remained under the influence of its eastern strongholds, in particular Baṣra where the sectarian elite was well integrated into ‘Abbāsīd culture. Intense scholarly exchange linked west and east thanks to intermediary meeting points like Mecca and Fuṣṭāṭ. The Ibādī political opposition of ‘Berber’ and ‘Arab’ ethnicity certainly worked against the imperial discourse, but the Persian *shu‘ūbiyya* shaped it. The Rustamid imamate came to be the symbol of a Persian state in a Berber milieu and its capital and state apparatus underwent a gradual orientalization. Trade also played a key role in connecting the Ibādī network with the empire. Baṣra was a notorious emporium and Ibādī merchants circulated widely between the ‘Abbāsīd realm and its western fringes. The Maghribīs owned stores in Fuṣṭāṭ and traveled as far as Baghdad and Sāmarrā’. Trans-Saharan trade, including slaves and gold, also presumably saw its first development thanks to imperial demand.

**Keywords:** Ibādism; North Africa; Rustamid state; *shu‘ūbiyya*; cultural contacts; trading networks

## Introduction

The Ibādī cluster in North Africa emerged in the global revolutionary context that characterized the last decade of the Umayyads. The first uprisings were mostly led by Ṣufrī leaders;<sup>1</sup> the Ibādīs did not engage in the struggle for the domination of Tripolitania before 131 H/748 CE. They formally declared their first imamate in asserting leadership over the Warfajūma rival confederation in 141 H/

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars such as Lewinstein 1992 have wondered what *ṣufrīyya* really meant. In North Africa, Sunni and Ibādī writers used this word to designate the *khārījī* hard line, in contrast with the Ibādī openness to sectarian coexistence.

758 CE. However, the first two *imāms*, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma‘āfirī and Abū Ḥātim al-Malzūzī, failed at creating a lasting state and were unable to resist the ‘Abbāsīd re-conquest of Ifrīqiya (144–156 H/761–772 CE).<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the *da‘wa* continued to fuel Berber rural settlements situated at the borders of the pro-‘Abbāsīd area. A new imamate was rooted further west in Tāhart (160 H/777 CE), not far from a former late antique establishment that was already part of an autonomous Berber polity.<sup>3</sup> The city soon became a flourishing commercial and cultural hub, and relations between the ruling Rustamid dynasty and neighboring polities, including the Aghlabids, stabilized.<sup>4</sup>

At first sight, the political and social structures of western Ibāḍism during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries seem to fully contradict the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd imperial standards. The first writings of the sect, whether penned a few decades after the ‘Abbāsīd revolution or a century later in North Africa, emphasize the imamate as a virtuous leadership opposed to the political hubris supposedly embodied by the eastern caliphs. As an heir of the Khārijī nebula, Ibāḍism advocated for a collegial model of government based on an *imām*’s election, with the consequent possibility of his overthrow if constant political and religious consultations (*shūra*) deemed him unsatisfactory. Under this model, an accomplished *imām* was a virtuous leader with an ascetic contempt for personal ambition and enrichment.<sup>5</sup> The first of the Rustamids, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam, perfectly epitomized this idealized figure.<sup>6</sup>

Early literature depicted the ‘Men in Black’ as persecutors and held dissent (*khurūj*) to be a condition for the free ‘manifestation’ (*ẓuhūr*) of the imamate.<sup>7</sup> The Ibāḍī school of law thus legalized rebellion against the “tyrants” and the “*imāms* of misguidance” but at the same time encouraged the *qa‘ada*: living peacefully with other Muslims and even concealing one’s true faith if necessary.<sup>8</sup>

When the paramount state of Tāhart fell to the Fāṭimids in 296 H/909 CE, coexistence became vital.<sup>9</sup> However, in reaction writings from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onward further emphasized the dichotomy between the idealized model of the Rus-

2 ‘Abd al-Razzāq 1985.

3 Cadénat 1977–1979; Cadénat 1988.

4 Dangel 1977; Baḥāz 2010.

5 Gaiser 2010; Aillet 2015b.

6 Aillet 2011, 64–66, 68–73.

7 See the apologia of Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 83, 95–99, 110–111, 121, 128–129, and an analysis in Aillet 2015a, 74–75.

8 See for instance Ibn Dhakwān, *Sīra*, 144–145.

9 Aillet 2016.

tamid imamate and the oppressive power of the empire.<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise, then, that scholarly works mostly perceived the western Ibāḍī territories as marginal lands alien to the imperial cultural, economic and political spheres, and hostile to it. Abdallah Laroui, for instance, saw Khārijism in North Africa as a “national schismatic movement”. He sharply opposed the Mediterranean coast, where empire succeeded empire, to a free “Middle West” that always resisted foreign influence.<sup>11</sup>

This essay aims to move beyond doctrinal opposition and binary ideological construction by reconnecting the imperial center with the heterodox belt that stretched from Tripolitania to the central African highlands. A promising path for the study of the Maghrib lies in understanding how eastern or imperial influence affected local autonomies. A centralistic approach inherited from the colonial and nation-state tradition sometimes fails to correctly explain local societies by simply opposing the imperial state-civilization and the chaotic tribal patchwork of the so-called ‘marginal’ lands—in Khaldūnian terms, *‘umrān* and *bada-wiyya*. Recently, an alternative vision of the empire has instead highlighted the concepts of “polycentricity” and “connectivity”. This helps us to consider political structuration as a multi-scalar process producing “layered” and “overlapping” sovereignties and centralities.<sup>12</sup>

The study of imperial ‘elites’ is at the crossroad of these perspectives. Their extreme mobility throughout the Islamic world and their natural inclination to build professional and cultural networks contributed deeply to the globalization of imperial culture. At the same time, indigenous or local elites competed with the newcomers, who were qualified as ‘Arabs’ or ‘Oriental’. A whole set of social strategies—from distinction to alliance, hybridization or fusion—was available to either integrate the imperial elite or claim its insertion into a local Islamic context.

What kind of ‘elites’ characterized Ibāḍī social organization? The egalitarian and puritanical ethos of the school seems to exclude the use of such commonplace terms as *al-khāṣṣa*, *al-kibār* and *al-a’yān*. The Ibāḍī dignitaries are rather called *shuyūkh*, *aṣḥāb* and *‘ulamā’*, or *a’imma* if they are local religious leaders. The advent of the Rustamid dynasty introduced new political and social distinctions, and the early 10<sup>th</sup>-century chronicler Ibn Ṣaghīr (who was not an Ibāḍī but lived in Tāhart) described local elites as *kubarā’*, *wujūh* or *ru’asā’*.<sup>13</sup> The social

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<sup>10</sup> Aillet 2011, 74–75.

<sup>11</sup> Laroui 1975, I, 67, 70, 81.

<sup>12</sup> Burbank/Cooper 2011; Nef/Tillier 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akḥbār*, 16–17. See the introduction of this volume for a study of the terminology referring to leading groups.

structure of Tāhart was completely different from the highly urbanized and state-controlled 'Irāqī society, but once again, differences should not prohibit us from looking for similarities.

This essay will try to comprehend what could link a seemingly marginal entity with the empire,<sup>14</sup> taking into consideration personal networks, economic relations and cultural circulation. Sources are limited. Apart from well-known Sunni examples of literature, few 9<sup>th</sup>-century western Ibāḍī sources survive; most authors lived after the 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> As for material sources, they are even scarcer.

## The Baṣran Connection

In Ibāḍī canonical tradition, the 'Irāqī emporium of al-Baṣra was the cradle and headquarters of the sect, from which its revolutionary wave spread over various provinces to North Africa.<sup>16</sup> While the Baṣran influence over Ibāḍism is unquestionable, the diffusion of the *da'wa* appears to have been much less centralized than was supposed by later authors like the late 11<sup>th</sup>-century writer Abū Zakariyyā' al-Wārjlānī.

The Baṣran and 'Irāqī legacy deeply imbued Ibāḍī law with late Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd culture. Such prominent figures as 'Abdallāh b. Mas'ūd and 'Abdallāh b. 'Abbās ranked among the early authorities of the sect, and the key figure of Jābir b. Zayd al-Azdī connected the school with the mainstream thanks to his well-known master Ibn 'Abbās, the famous arbitrator of the conflict between 'Alī and the 'people of Nahrawān'. The "ocean of knowledge" (*baḥr al-'ilm*), as al-Shammākhī called him, had supposedly instructed the first *imām* of al-Baṣra, Abū 'Ubayda Muslim b. Abī Karīma, and therefore linked the Ibāḍī imamology to a continuous line of transmission from the Prophet himself.<sup>17</sup> The Ibāḍī imamate also stemmed from Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya, a Janus figure who first embodied a quietist attitude (*qa'ada*) towards the Umayyads before choosing the way of the sacrifice (*shirā'*) by facing up to the governor 'Ubaydal-

<sup>14</sup> See the well-documented study of 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 1990 on the relations between western and eastern Ibāḍism and the essay of Dridi (in press).

<sup>15</sup> We have deliberately chosen to refer only to the oldest texts when later sources did not contain relevant material for our purpose.

<sup>16</sup> Wilkinson 2010, 211–219.

<sup>17</sup> See for example al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, I, 182–189, and Wilkinson 2010, 163–164.

lāh b. Ziyād (d. 67 H/686 CE) of al-Baṣra, whose army killed him during prayer.<sup>18</sup> His martyrdom legitimized the first revolt of the Khawārij (61 H/680 CE) and Ibn al-Ṣaghīr says that he was also a model for Maghribī Ibādism.<sup>19</sup> His popularity as a symbol of a pious resistance against tyranny even reached ‘Abbāsīd literature.<sup>20</sup> Anti-Umayyad arguments circulated widely. In the *Kitāb fihi bad’ al-Islām*, compiled in Tripolitania around 273 H/886–887 CE, Ibn Sallām al-Lawātī relies on traditions attributed to Ṣuhār al-‘Abdī, a disciple of Jābir and teacher of Abū ‘Ubayda, to portray Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (101–105 H/720–724 CE). This sequence is almost identical to the black legend popularized by the famous Baṣran polygrapher al-Jāhīz (d. 255 H/869 CE) in his *Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*.<sup>21</sup>

The Ibādī vulgate generally asserts that Abū ‘Ubayda, who died during the reign of al-Manṣūr (136–158 H/754–775 CE), organized the propagation of the faith thanks to the five ‘knowledge bearers’ (*ḥamalāt al-‘ilm*) he trained secretly in al-Baṣra. This team allegedly included two future *imāms* (Abū l-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma‘āfirī and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam) and three minor Maghribī figures (‘Aṣīm al-Sadrātī, Ismā‘il b. Darrār and Abū Dāwūd al-Qiblī), and thus allegorized the geographical spread of the sect and the alliance between the east and the west.<sup>22</sup> Another ‘monolinear model’ of the sect’s origins shows the obscure Salma b. Sa‘īd leaving al-Baṣra for the Maghrib on the same camel as ‘Ik-rīma, the client of Ibn al-‘Abbās who was supposed to represent the rival Ṣufrī school.<sup>23</sup> This narrative does not reflect the revolutionary period, when the two streams competed for control of Tripolitania. It rather echoes the political stabilization of the twin states of Tāhart and Sijilmāsa. These two legendary tales, never alluded to by Ibn Sallām, thus symbolize the close relationship between eastern and western communities rather than describing a real process.

In the future, critical investigation should focus on the epistolary corpus between the ‘Irāqī *imāms* and the Maghribīs. A *risāla* on *zakāt* attributed to Abū ‘Ubayda was supposedly addressed to Abū l-Khaṭṭāb (140–144 H/757–761 CE),<sup>24</sup> and among the recently edited treaties of the Kūfī Ibādī scholar ‘Ab-

18 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 110–111; al-Darjīnī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt*, II, 22–34; Gaiser 2010, 89–92.

19 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 13.

20 See for example Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-‘Iqd*, I, 182–185, and al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, III, 77–82.

21 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 100–101.

22 Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 57–58.

23 Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 42–43.

24 Francesca (in press).

dallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī (d. after 179 H/795 CE) there may be an answer to the Maghribī theological controversy against the competing Mu‘tazilī school.<sup>25</sup>

Ibn Sallām, a well-informed author whose grandfather was a Berber veteran of the first revolts in North Africa and a companion of Abū l-Khaṭṭāb,<sup>26</sup> displays a slightly different version of the *da‘wa*. Instead of focusing only on al-Baṣra, he also alludes to its expansion to al-Kūfa, Makka and Madīna, Yaman and ‘Umān, Khwārazm and Khurāsān. Local personalities, some in disagreement with Abū ‘Ubayda, are given equal mention in his book. Far from making al-Baṣra the seat of a centralized structure, he rather conceives his stream as a multipolar organization headed by various autonomous circles of ‘companions’. He insists, for example, on the Egyptian companions, who could have played a key role in the propagation of the movement in the neighboring region of Tripolitania.<sup>27</sup> The diffusion of the doctrine and the organization of the revolt must in this version have been more dispersed and multi-focused than tradition asserts.

After the foundation of Tāhart in 160 H/777 CE and until the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, al-Baṣra was a major economic and cultural partner of the new city. The cradle of a strong Ibādī community, the metropolis of southern al-‘Irāq was also a gateway to the prosperous ‘Abbāsīd market. A famous tale transmitted by Ibn al-Ṣaghīr is a reminder that the first Baṣran delegation arrived soon after the new *imām* had been elected and contributed to finance Tāhart’s initial economic takeoff. When the Baṣrans came back three years later, the city had already become so prosperous it did not need further financing: the west had emancipated itself from the east.<sup>28</sup>

Relations with al-‘Irāq continued to flourish under the reign of ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (168–208 H/784–823 CE), when Baṣran and Kūfan merchants built mansions in Tāhart.<sup>29</sup> Al-Rabī‘ b. Ḥabīb al-Azdī al-Farāhidī, the successor of Abū ‘Ubayda, was repeatedly asked for legal advice by the Maghribīs and was also engaged in giving religious support to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb against his adversary Yazīd b. Fandīn and the Nukkārī schismatic opposition.<sup>30</sup> His powerful influence on Maghribī law is well reflected by the late compilation of his *Musnad* by Abū Ya‘qūb al-Warjlānī under the name of *Kitāb al-Tartīb*.<sup>31</sup> According to Ibn Sallām,

25 ‘Abdallāh b. Yazīd al-Fazārī, *Kitāb al-Qadar*, in al-Salimi/Madelung, *Early Ibādī Theology*, 13–29.

26 Aillet 2015a, 69.

27 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 114–115.

28 Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 10–11, 13.

29 Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 13.

30 Abū Zakariyyā‘ al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 93–94.

31 Abū Ya‘qūb al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb al-Tartīb*.

the Baṣran *imām* was also involved in trade between the east and the west, sending his brother to Tāhart with commodities valued at 12,000 dinars (or dirhams, the author is unclear).<sup>32</sup> In his turn, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was prepared to send 1,000 dinars to al-‘Irāq for the purchase of books, but instead his coreligionists sent him forty packs for free.<sup>33</sup>

This close relationship was maintained under Abū Sufyān Maḥbūb b. al-Raḥīl (d. c. 210 H/825 CE), the sixth and last *imām* of al-Baṣra, who presumably moved to ‘Umān at the end of his life. Equally engaged in favour of the Rustamids, he denounced the *khalafī* protest with other Oriental scholars.<sup>34</sup> Ibn Sallām also recalls his notorious pilgrimage to Makka. Followed by 150 companions, he pitched his camp in a place called “Maḍārib Maḥbūb” near Minā and offered hospitality to every member of the school, including the Maghribīs.<sup>35</sup> His memoir of the sect, the *Kitāb Abī Sufyān*, was very influential on western Ibādī historiography.<sup>36</sup>

## Broader Eastern Connections

The Baghdādī geographer al-Ya‘qūbī, who visited Tāhart during the 880s, reported that the city was “the ‘Irāq of the Maghrib”.<sup>37</sup> The ‘Irāqī-Rustamid connections were not limited to al-Baṣra. Ibādī literature portrayed Baghdad as the headquarters of the “tyrants” who sent the *jund* against Abū l-Khaṭṭāb and Abū Hātim under the reign of Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, but a later anecdote suggests that the capital was frequented by the western Ibādī elite. Under the reign of Aflaḥ b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (208–258 H/824–875 CE), his opponent Naffāth b. Naṣr travelled from Jabal Nafūsa to Baghdad and stayed there for a long time, surely while trading. The tale says that al-Mutawakkil (232–247 H/847–861 CE) was subjugated by Naffāth b. Naṣr’s knowledge when he received him for a theological debate. As a reward, he opened his library, where the complete *dīwān* of Jābir b. Zayd was allegedly preserved, to his guest for one day and one night. Naffāth b. Naṣr copied the nine volumes in that time thanks to a squad of scribes. Before

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 110.

<sup>33</sup> Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 102–103.

<sup>34</sup> Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Warjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 122–123.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 109.

<sup>36</sup> Wilkinson 2010, 161–162.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 141–143.

reaching Tripolitania, however, he hid this treasure in a secret place rather than sharing it with his deviant contemporaries.<sup>38</sup>

Another interesting episode is the captivity of Abū l-Yaqẓān Muḥammad b. Aflah in Mashriq, about which Ibn al-Ṣaghīr gives a precise account while Abū Zakariyyā' is almost silent. The prince was arrested during his pilgrimage by the 'Abbāsīd authorities, who suspected him of preparing a rebellion against them. He was imprisoned and in jail he met and sympathized with the ruling caliph's brother. When the caliph was overthrown, the brother was chosen to succeed him. The chronological context is not precise, but the story should likely be situated around 250 H/864–865 CE, before *imām* Aflaḥ died. If we refer to the 'Abbāsīd history, things become clearer: the ruling caliph was certainly al-Musta'īn (248–252 H/862–866 CE), who imprisoned his brother al-Mu'tazz in Sāmarrā' before being himself overthrown by a powerful Turkish militia. He was then replaced by al-Mu'tazz (252–255 H/866–869 CE). The new sovereign proposed his former companion of captivity stay to govern a province, but the young prince renounced wealth and decided to go home.

Despite the chaotic political life of Sāmarrā' in these years, Abū l-Yaqẓān was apparently fascinated by the strong army, courtly education (*adab*) and “firm government” of the 'Abbāsīds. The chronicle reports that as soon as he was designated *imām* in 254 H/868–869 CE, he began to use an 'Irāqī tent (*sirdaq*) for official ceremonies, a political symbol his Berber subjects had never seen before.<sup>39</sup> This anecdote may hint at the gradual influence of the 'Abbāsīd model on the imamate, itself corresponding to the assertion of central authority through the adoption of standard institutions like the *qāḍī*, the *shurṭa*, the *ḥisba*, the personal guard (*al-ḥaras*), the use of slave soldiers and ethnic division in the army. It is noticeable that some decades before Abū l-Yaqẓān, the famous singer Ziryāb introduced 'Irāqī fashion in Cordoba, the capital of the Umayyads who were themselves in good terms with the Rustamids. It is no surprise that quotations from the 'Irāqī polygraphs al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 H/869 CE) and Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 H/889 CE) were incorporated into Maghribī Ibādī literature.<sup>40</sup>

In Tāhart, two of the most prominent traders of the 860s were a man from al-Wāsiṭ, between Baghdad and al-Baṣra, and another from Sirāf, the great port on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf.<sup>41</sup> There were also some contacts with 'Khurāsānī' elites who were possibly living in al-'Irāq. Abū Ghānim Bishr b. Ghānim al-Khurāsānī reportedly led a delegation to *imām* 'Abd al-Wahhāb in Tāhart.

<sup>38</sup> Abū Zakariyyā' al-Warjīlānī, *Kitāb siyar*, 139–142.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akḥbār*, 27–30.

<sup>40</sup> Abū Zakariyyā' al-Warjīlānī (*Kitāb Siyar*, 44), relying on earlier sources.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akḥbār*, 38–39.

On his way back to Egypt, Abū Ghānim met the *qāḍī* ‘Amrūs b. Faṭḥ in Jabal Nafūsa and gave him a copy of the twelve volumes of his great juridical compilation, called the *Mudawwana*.<sup>42</sup> Conversely, a scholar named Abū ‘Īsā Ibrāhīm b. Ismā‘īl al-Khurāsānī received a delegation from ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and denounced his opponent Khalf b. al-Samḥ in an epistle.<sup>43</sup> We also know, thanks to al-Ya‘qūbī, that small communities of Khurāsānī Persians (‘*ajam*’) were hosted in Zawīla or Qayrawān.<sup>44</sup>

It is no wonder that Tāhart was described by eastern travelers and geographers like Ibn Khurradādhbih around 232 H/845 CE, al-Ya‘qūbī in the 880s, and al-Istakhri a few years before the Fāṭimid conquest.<sup>45</sup> Western Ibādī elites were culturally and economically well connected with the ‘Abbāsīd realm and ‘Irāqī traders had settled in the main urban centers. The first local dynasties in the west were proud to display Oriental genealogies, and it is noticeable that at roughly the same period the newly established ‘Alid dynasty of the Idrīsids founded the city of ‘al-Baṣra’ between Tangier and Fez.<sup>46</sup>

Archaeological studies have recently outlined the artistic and material expressions of this relationship. The French archaeologist Chloé Capel has proved that the local wadi of Sijilmāsa was in fact an important artificial canal created to supply water to the Midrārid city, and which closely parallels contemporary ‘Irāqī hydraulic structures.<sup>47</sup> Our research project on the archaeological site of Sedrata also provides late evidence for these cultural contacts. Sedrata, or the medieval city of Wārjlān, was a major Ibādī crossroads for Trans-Saharan trade from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, situated as it was eight kilometers south of Wargla (Algeria). Patrice Cressier and Sophie Gilotte have shown, using the work of Marguerite van Berchem, that the aesthetic program displayed in the stucco panels of the so-called ‘palace’ at this site (one of the excavated mansions) was mainly influenced by the art of Sāmarrā’ and other ‘Abbāsīd establishments in 9<sup>th</sup>-century al-‘Irāq and western Iran. Although these panels were probably not completed before the 11<sup>th</sup> century, their seemingly archaic program could be explained by the Rustamid legacy.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, we know al-

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42 Al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, II, 369.

43 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 138–139; al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, 293, 319.

44 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 134–138.

45 Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 87–88; al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 141–143, 149–150; al-Istakhri, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 39.

46 Eustache 1955.

47 Capel 2016.

48 Cressier/Gilotte (in press).

most nothing about the material culture of Tāhart, whose archaeological site is still not correctly identified.<sup>49</sup>

## ‘Persians’ in a Berber Land

Al-Baṣra and al-‘Irāq were places where Iranian culture had been integrated into the Islamic imperial structure, but also places where the new converts did not necessarily identify with the Arabs and could combine adherence to Islam with the assertion of a Persian identity. Since the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Khārījī and Ibāḍī movements had advocated for precisely such a cultural distinction within the larger Islamic framework. While in Yaman, they stood with Qaḥṭān against ‘Adnān, in eastern provinces such as Fārs, Kirmān, Sistān, Khwārazm, Khurāsān, and others, they mainly supported the social and political demands of the ‘Persians’ against the ‘Arabs’ or the ‘Quraysh’, who were accused of imposing their own hegemony over Muslim converts. In this stream, *shu‘ūbī* discourse was a literary game,<sup>50</sup> but also a form of protest against caliphal power.<sup>51</sup>

The first generation of Ibāḍī leaders in Maghrib was apparently affiliated with Southern Arabian tribes, like most of their Baṣran fellows: Abū l-Khaṭṭāb al-Ma‘āfirī was a “Yamanī” and Abū Ḥātim al-Malzūzī a “Tujibī” and a *mawla* of Kinda, according to al-Shammākhī.<sup>52</sup> Yet the movement was soon associated with the Berbers, and in his proselytizing treaty Ibn Sallām purposely placed the ‘Arabs’ of the *jund* (the ‘Men in Black’ or ‘Abbāsīd party) in opposition to the ‘Muslims’ and the ‘Berbers’, whom he identified with the Ibāḍī community. While the ‘Arabs’ were accused of corrupting Islam and tyrannizing over their subjects, the Berbers were shown as legitimate owners of the country and sincere Muslims.<sup>53</sup> This dichotomy, which became a leitmotif in early western Ibāḍī sources, echoed the well-known Oriental controversy against the Berbers. In the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ibāḍīs produced their own *ḥadīths* in response to imperial dismissal of the Berbers as uncivilized subjects and false or bad Muslims. This ‘black legend’ of the Berbers reflects the ideological struggle led by the ‘Irāqī authority against the anti-caliphal Ibāḍī and Ṣufrī movements.

<sup>49</sup> See the first survey by Marçais/Dessus-Lamare 1946 and, among other references, the overview of Dangel 1977, 39–44.

<sup>50</sup> Mottahedeh 1976; Norris 1990; Enderwitz 1997.

<sup>51</sup> Gibb 1962, 69.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Shammākhī, *Kitāb al-Siyar*, II, 245, 258.

<sup>53</sup> Aillet 2015a, 77–79.

Conversely, the *ḥadīths* compiled by Ibn Sallām were the counterpart of those circulating in contemporary ‘Abbāsīd literature.<sup>54</sup>

A *ḥadīth* popularized by Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 H/855 CE) shows how the Prophet anathematized the Berbers and accused them of hypocrisy. The final words echo the final sentence against the Khawārij,<sup>55</sup> whose faith “**will not pass beyond their throats**”.<sup>56</sup>

A man came and seated down close to the Prophet—God’s peace and blessings be upon him—and the Messenger of God asked him: “Where do you come from?” He answered: “I am a Berber.” Then, the Messenger of God—God’s peace and blessings be upon him—gave him this order: “Go far from me!” and asked everybody around him to do the same. After he stood up, the Messenger of God—God’s peace and blessings be upon him—came to us and declared: “Their faith does **not pass beyond their throats.**”

Not surprisingly, the opposite side presents the Berbers very differently. Their primitiveness is turned into ascetic purity and religious sincerity. They appear as the new chosen people who will regenerate western Islam, as opposed to the Arabs who are accused of creating the *fitna* and perverting the religion in its native land.<sup>57</sup>

One day, as she was seated with twelve members of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, a Berber came in. ‘Ā’isha stood up and stayed alone with him, while the others had to move out reluctantly. She gave answers (*istafatā*) to whatever the Berber needed and he went out. After that, she sent someone to seek them out in their houses, so they came back to her. “Why did you go away from me with anger?” she asked them. “We were angry against this man. A Berber came to us, a man we all despise because we hate his group, but you gave your preference to him over us, and even to him over you,” they replied. “I gave him my preference over you and me because the Prophet—God’s peace and blessings be upon him—told me something about them,” ‘Ā’isha said. “And what did the Prophet of God tell you about them?” they asked. “Do you know anybody from the Berbers?” she replied. “Yes, we do.” Then ‘Ā’isha said: “I was seated with the Prophet one day when this Berber came to us, with his face yellow and his eyeballs sunken. The Prophet of God—God’s peace and blessings be upon him—stared at him and told him: “What is wrong with you? Do you have any problems? Are you sick? Yesterday, when you went to bed your blood was pure and your color sane, and now you seem to have awoken from the grave!” The Berber answered: “I was preoccupied by a very serious concern.” “What concern?” the Prophet asked. “Yesterday, you glanced at me in such a way that I feared a verse of God would descend.” Then he told him—God’s peace and blessings be upon him: “Don’t be afraid, I looked at you yesterday in such a manner because Jibrīl—peace upon him—came and told me: ‘Muḥammad,

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54 Analysis in Aillet 2015a, 77–78.

55 Al-Sabi’i 1999.

56 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, XIV, 402.

57 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 121–122.

you must only trust the fear of God (*taqwā*) and the Berbers!’ The Prophet said: ‘Then I asked Jibrīl: Who are these Berbers?’ He said: ‘This group.’ He pointed at you, so I looked and asked: ‘Why?’ He answered: ‘Because they will give a new life to the religion of God after its death and revitalize it when it will be ruined. Oh Muḥammad! The religion of God was born in the Ḥijāz and its cradle was in Medina. It was weak at its birth, but it will strengthen and grow. It will become huge and give as many fruits as a tree does. Then it will decay like the trees. At this time, the religion of God will have its crown in North Africa, a heavy and high crown, while nothing will grow from the middle to the roots of it. The crown will be the only part that will grow up.’

The reference to Berber nativeness was apparently not sufficient to support the state-building project fostered by the Rustamids, who became the first lasting autonomous dynasty in North Africa. According to Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, the first *imām*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, was chosen precisely because he was a stranger, foreign to any local tribe or *‘aṣabiyya*: this distance from local interests was thought to be a condition for governing impartially.<sup>58</sup> The first *imām* was therefore a ‘Persian’ in a Berber land. The Rustamids kept on claiming their Persian identity,<sup>59</sup> unlike the Umayyads of Cordoba and the Idrīsids of Fez who chose to stress their Arab origins. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam was probably from al-‘Irāq, like many other Ibādī leaders. His *nisba* ‘al-Fārisī’ may also have meant that he came from the province of Fārs,<sup>60</sup> where Khārījism was strong up until his time. According to al-Ya‘qūbī, his descendants were clearly labelled ‘Persians’ and constituted the ruling elite in Tāhart.<sup>61</sup> As for Ibn Khurradādhbih, he described the *imām* as “a Persian whom they saluted like a caliph”.<sup>62</sup> Nobody paid attention to the name of the dynasty (Rustum or Rustam), which clearly refers to the legendary Iranian hero who became a major protagonist of the 10<sup>th</sup>-century Persian literary monument, the *Shāhnāmeḥ*.

This could be a detail if Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Wārjlānī and later authors had not forged a mythical genealogy for the Rustamids,<sup>63</sup> one reproduced with some variations by the Andalūsī writers Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 H/1064 CE) and al-Bakrī (d. 487 H/1094 CE).<sup>64</sup> In this pattern, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam was made a descendant of the pre-Islamic Persian ‘kings of kings’. This included the paradigmatic imperial figures of Ardashīr, Sābūr, Bahrām, Yazdajird, Anūshirwān and

58 Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 9.

59 Aillet 2011, 68–73.

60 First documented in Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 127.

61 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 141–143.

62 Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 87–88.

63 Abū Zakariyyā’ al-Wārjlānī, *Kitāb Siyar*, 58–60.

64 Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb Jamharat*, 511–512; al-Bakrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik*, 66–69.

evidently Khosrow. In the *Kitāb al-Siyar* of Abū Zakariyyā', this genealogy is associated with tales predicting the fall of the Sasanians, the advent of Islam and the rebirth, some generations later, of a Persian dynasty. Evidently, this is an allusion to the 'manifestation' of the imamate in Tāhart. The local and somewhat marginal dynasty of the Rustamids is therefore transformed into the heir of the glorious dynasty of Persia and thus given imperial ancestry.

In this construction, the *fadā'il al-furs* inherited from the eastern *shu'ūbī* tradition are combined with the local formula of the *fadā'il al-Barbar*. This emergence can be traced through Ibn Sallām. Tāhart and the imamate had been founded thanks to an alliance between the indigenous population (the Berbers) and the newcomers (the Persians), whose prestigious origin would later be elaborated upon. What is interesting for our purpose is that the *shu'ūbī* controversy, which called for the reevaluation of political functions in Persian lands, was imported to the Maghrib and hybridized with a Khārijite political discourse against the domination of the 'Arabs'. We lack early evidence to prove that the Rustamids themselves developed this argument before their fall. Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, for instance, does not mention it. However, other elements, like the cosmopolitan image of Tāhart as a crossroads between the east and the west, the *bilād al-Sūdān* and the Mediterranean,<sup>65</sup> or the above mentioned reference to the caliphal ambition of the *imāms* by Ibn Khurradādhbih, could fit with this idea.

What is clear is that the Sasanian genealogy of the Rustamids reached al-Andalus during the first part of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, probably conveyed by the Ibāḍīs themselves. Ibn Ḥazm was in touch with Wahbī and Nukkārī informers and al-Bakrī used the former *Kitāb Masālik Ifrīqiya wa-mamālikihā* written by the Qayrawānī scholar Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Warrāq (d. 363 H/973–974 CE). Al-Warrāq was well informed about Tāhart and the Ibāḍīs, and he also gave the Rustamids a Sasanian genealogy. We can reasonably suppose that this discourse was forged by the imamate itself during the 9<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps to reinforce the authority of the rulers against internal opposition. This kind of political claim was certainly not accepted by the whole Ibāḍī nebula—Ibn Sallām did not mention it, for instance—and the earlier egalitarian and ascetic ethos of the school survived through tales depicting 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Rustam as a humble meason of the community.<sup>66</sup>

What is suggestive for our purposes is how the Persian *shu'ūbī* argumentation was projected far to the west, inspiring the Berber *shu'ūbiyya*. The circulation of such political and genealogical concepts was clearly facilitated by contact

65 Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 13.

66 Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 10–12.

between the eastern and western branches of the movement. As al-Ya‘qūbī observed during his travels, in their attempt to compete with the ‘Arab’ elites, the Berbers—mostly part of Ibāḍism at this time—had the choice of various genealogical combinations. Indeed, among the Hawwāra the local genealogical market included references to Qays ‘Aylān as well as to Yamanī tribes.<sup>67</sup> The western Ibāḍī combination of two *shu‘ūbiyyas* was possibly intended to symbolize the alliance of the greatest non-Arabic Muslim nations of the time. It is also a good illustration of how social actors could hybridize imperial culture with local structures to produce political autonomy.

## Trading with the Empire

The intra-community circulation of persons and ideas between the east and the west was itself embedded into a much wider relationship between the empire and its western confines. Sectarian and ethnic distinctions did not prevent the Ibāḍī from participating in a much larger economic network.

Historiographical tradition has mainly insisted on Tāhart as a bridgehead between the Mediterranean and the Sahel.<sup>68</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, himself a local merchant, describes the flourishing city opening “the roads to the land of the Sūdān and to all the countries of east and west to trade and all kinds of goods”.<sup>69</sup> Tāhart certainly contributed to the awakening or revival of commercial relations between the Mediterranean and the Sūdān.

Ibn al-Ṣaghīr records the embassy led to the “king of Sūdān” by Muḥammad b. ‘Arfa, the right-hand man of *imām* Abū Bakr b. Aflaḥ (250–254 H/864–868 CE), and the projected travel to Gao of Aflaḥ b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.<sup>70</sup> He also frequently alludes to the presence of slaves surrounding the *imām*, the wealthy patricians and the tribal leaders of Tāhart, which thus clearly appears to be a hub for this trade.<sup>71</sup> The increase of commercial relations with the Sahel was itself a response to the huge economic demands created by the empire since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In Ibn al-Ṣaghīr’s description of Tāhart, the Sahelian vocation of the city is closely associated with its nodal function between the Maghrib and the Mashriq.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 131–135.

<sup>68</sup> Lewicki 1965.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 31; al-Wisyanī, *Siyar*, II, 328.

<sup>71</sup> For example in Ibn al-Ṣaghīr, *Akhbār*, 13, 27, 48.

Above all, Tāhart was in fact an emporium where various commercial roads converged and fanned out again towards other markets, a pivotal place capitalizing on its relations with the Western Maghrib (including Sijilmāsa), the Berber hinterland, al-Andalus and Ifrīqiya.<sup>72</sup> In brief, it connected the empire with its western and Saharan confines.

During the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it seems that the Ibāḍī commercial network was still a juxtaposition of segmented regional circuits magnetized by the Mediterranean and eastern demand. What we know about the network developed by Tāhart is enhanced by the information provided by the *Kitāb fīhi bad' al-Islam* of Ibn Sallām, which exclusively focuses on the eastern Ibāḍī network from Ifrīqiya to the east. The author's subjects mainly came from Surt and Jabal Nafūsa, and practiced trade as well as intellectual exchange. Even if Ibn Sallām does not mention it, the Nafūsīs were in contact with the Trans-Saharan road leading to the cluster of oases of the Fazzān, and had possibly already reached the northern shore of Lake Chad.<sup>73</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī refers to Zawila as the main locations of the slave trade and says that people from al-Baṣra, al-Kūfa and Khurāsān, three areas where Ibāḍism was also rooted, had settled there.<sup>74</sup>

Coming back to the personalities Ibn Sallām mentions, in the west their business activity reached Ifrīqiya and the Jarīd and was in contact with the trading sphere of Tāhart. To the east, they mainly frequented Egypt and the Ḥijāz. The first meeting place of the western Ibāḍīs and the imperial sphere was Qayrawān, where some of their wealthiest coreligionists lived. One of them owned a street of stores along the Great Mosque, and another was based in the Sūq al-Aḥad and traded in wheat, barley, olive oil, cotton and other crops with the Hawwāra Berbers.<sup>75</sup> The Ibāḍī merchant-scholars were also familiar with Fustāṭ, where one of them supervised the Sūq al-Ḍuhr.<sup>76</sup> This Egyptian metropolis formed the junction of the western and eastern Ibāḍī communities.

The pilgrimage to Makka provided another opportunity for commercial and cultural contact. The western Ibāḍī elites showed their piety as well as their prosperity by repeatedly accomplishing the *ḥajj*.<sup>77</sup> Ibn Sallām gives precise information on this. The Nafūsīs, for example, went assiduously. Later sources also de-

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72 Baḥāz 2010, 230–288.

73 For other publications of the Fazzān project, see Mattingly 2013.

74 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 134–135.

75 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 132–135.

76 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 109–110, 114–115.

77 'Abd al-Ḥalīm 1990, 88–93.

scribe the Nafūsīs coming to al-Ḥijāz in huge family processions;<sup>78</sup> one tale even reports that during a single trip 800 male children were born.<sup>79</sup>

This circulation reflected a precise economic system, regarding which we are very poorly informed. The main question, naturally, is the role played by the Ibāḍīs of the west in the supply of commodities from the *bilād al-Sūdān* to the empire, namely gold, slaves, ivory and so on. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Ibāḍī and Sunni sources mainly mention the slave trade without specifying its destination. It is tempting to hypothesize that this specific commercial network corresponded with the cartography of human circulation we have already sketched out. Some clues seem to indicate that the Ibāḍīs of the west were among the most relevant actors in the global trade in African slaves.<sup>80</sup> The Aghlabid army and some of the great estates in Ifrīqiya were making use of black slaves,<sup>81</sup> who also fought in the special troops of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn.<sup>82</sup> As for al-Ḥijāz, it was a major market for African slaves and a significant black minority worked in the mines there.<sup>83</sup> Finally, the rebellion of the Zanj between 255 H–270 H/869–883 CE sheds light on the massive use of black slaves in al-Baṣra and southern al-‘Irāq, in particular for agricultural tasks.<sup>84</sup> Even if the ethnonym ‘Zanj’ normally designates the populations from Eastern Africa, the close relationship between al-Baṣra and the Ibāḍī realm in the Maghrib during the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century hints at the internal diversity of this poorly identified population. The Zanj possibly included slaves supplied by the Ibāḍī network.

## Conclusion

Anti-caliphal ideology certainly contributed to shape the Rustamid state of Tāhart, and above all its memory, as a counter-model. Yet the definition of western Ibāḍism cannot be dismissed as marginal and its relationship with the imperial sphere should be reexamined. Far from simply representing, as caliphal sources claimed, the promotion of a ‘Berber’ ethnicity against an ‘Arab’ or imperial identity, western Ibāḍism was influenced by the eastern model of the Persian *shu‘ū-*

78 Ibn Sallām, *Kitāb Ibn Sallām*, 109–110.

79 ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm 1990, 91.

80 This issue deserves a specific study; this paper only formulates preliminary hypotheses that illustrate how North African Ibāḍism was entangled with the imperial economic system.

81 Talbi 1982, 212; Thiry 1995, 513; Trabelsi, 61–62.

82 *EP*, “Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn” (M. Gordon).

83 Power 2012, 142.

84 Popovic 1999.

*biyya*. The imamate itself thus came to symbolize a Persian state rooted in a Berber milieu. The city of Tāhart was hailed as the “‘Irāq of the Maghrib” and the local state apparatus even experimented with a gradual influx of ‘Abbāsīd models. Trade and exchange also played a key role in connecting the Ibādī network with the east, thanks to such nodal points as Qayrawān, Fustāṭ, Makka and al-Baṣra. Thanks to the close relationship between Tāhart and al-Baṣra, Ibādī merchants circulated widely between the ‘Abbāsīd realm and its western fringes. The Maghribīs owned stores in Fustāṭ and traveled as far as Baghdad and Sāmarrā’. Trans-Saharan trade itself was probably additionally boosted by the imperial demand for slaves. Connections with the empire therefore irrevocably shaped ‘transregional elites’ within the North African Ibādī milieu.

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