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Closing Ranks: Discipline and Loyalty in the Umayyad Army*

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Abstract

Soon after his arrival as newly appointed governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj (d. 95/714) faced a standoff with a prominent member of the Baṣran garrison, Ibn al-Jārūd al-ʿAbdī (d. 76/695). In this article, I track the course of this rebellion as an example of a political system that, lacking a hegemonic system of coercion and control, was rather characterized by multiple overlapping centers of authority in which the caliph, his governor, and those under their rule all played a part. Within this system, power was in an ongoing state of contestation as it was conceived of in different ways by the various stakeholders. Ibn al-Jārūd's rebellion thus operated as a form of political negotiation, following established, if fragile, norms of communication within which violence was a calculated gambit, one of a repertoire of available and accepted tactical options. Indeed, despite the violent death of Ibn al-Jārūd and a number of his close followers, his supporters, high-ranking commanders among them, were reintegrated into the caliphate and were soon participating again in the political system, including through rebellions. The article thus argues for a re-evaluation of revolts and for their conceptualization not as a breakdown of government structures or as a rejection of them by those rebelling but rather as an understood and even inevitable feature of a political system in which certain tensions between different centers of authority and instruments of control could be mediated and resolved only through open conflict.

If people fear punishment, they take the misdeed seriously. If they feel safe from punishment, they will think little of trespassing. But if they despair of forgiveness, *that* turns them into rebels.¹

— al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra in a letter to al-Ḥajjāj

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Al-Ḥajjāj was the first to execute rebels.²
—al-Balādhurī

By the time al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) was appointed governor of Iraq in the year 75/694 his fame as a suppressor of revolts and mutinies was already well established. His appointment as governor of one of the most important but also most restless provinces was both a reward and a strategic calculation on the part of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705), who was obliged to find a successor to his deceased brother and governor of Iraq Bishr b. Marwān (d. 75/694). The new governor’s first goal was to restore discipline among the soldiers stationed at the garrisons of Kūfa and Baṣra, who refused to fight. He set about it with a will. Although al-Ḥajjāj’s exacting measures had some initial success in restoring order and obedience, dissent was not so easily quashed and serious opposition soon began to emerge under the leadership of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Jārūd al-‘Abdī (d. 76/695), chief of the ‘Abd al-Qays. This resistance was quelled and al-Ḥajjāj’s position saved only when Ibn al-Jārūd was killed in battle.

This episode was neither the first nor the last expression of organized discontent by Iraq’s inhabitants. What it offers, however, is a window onto how complaints were expressed and grievances addressed, what systems were available to deal with such disruptions, and how the act and rhetoric of revolt operated within the political systems of the time. Comparing the ways in which Ibn al-Jārūd and his followers, on the one hand, and al-Ḥajjāj, on the other, framed their respective grievances and justified their actions offers valuable insights into how dissent and resistance were conceived of and responded to in the Umayyad empire as remembered in later accounts. Even though al-Ḥajjāj’s tactics are sometimes depicted as uncommonly brutal in their use of exemplary violence—a depiction that, no doubt, also reflects this notorious governor’s stereotypically severe image in the sources—the events of this episode clearly show that rough and ready procedures did exist to address and even resolve disagreements between rulers and the ruled, even when violence or the threat thereof was involved. Indeed, taking a step back, it is possible to read what has been labeled Ibn al-Jārūd’s “revolt” rather as a *negotiation* within the existing systems of exchange, disputation, and redress.³ Ibn al-Jārūd and his fellow “rebels” sought not to remove or

1. *Inna al-nās idhā khāfū al-‘uqūba kabbarū al-dhanb wa-idhā aminū al-‘uqūba ṣaghgharū al-dhanb wa-idhā ya’isū min al-‘afw akfarahum dhālika*; al-Mubarrad (d. 286/900), *al-Kāmil*, ed. W. Wright (Leipzig: G. Kreysing, 1874), 667. Because of the context of the quotation—al-Ḥajjāj and al-Muhallab were discussing the rebellious nature of the soldiers under al-Muhallab’s command, and al-Ḥajjāj had a tendency to call rebels “unbelievers”—I opted to translate *akfarahum* as “it will turn them into rebels” rather than, literally, as “it turns them into unbelievers.” I would like to thank Geert Jan van Gelder and Peter Webb for helping me understand this passage properly.

2. *Wa-kāna al-Ḥajjāj awwal man ḍaraba a’nāq al-‘uṣāt*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. W. Ahlwardt as *Anonyme Arabische Chronik Band XI* (Greifswald: Hinrichs, 1883), 275. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb* are to this edition.

3. For the application of the term “revolt” to Ibn al-Jārūd’s actions in modern studies, see, among others, Everett K. Rowson, trans., *The Marwānid Restoration*, vol. 22 of *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 23; Jean Baptiste Périer, *Vie d’al-Ḥadjjāj ibn Yousuf (41–95 de l’hégire = 661–714 de J.-C.) d’après les sources arabes* (Paris: Librairie Emile Bouillon, 1904), 81. Major revolts in later

replace existing political structures of dialogue and compromise, but rather to use them to express and remedy what were felt to be justified complaints and to restore what they saw as proper rule.⁴ Negotiation eventually turned into open and very violent conflict between the Umayyad governor and his Iraqi opponents, but this did not end political engagement between the actors involved; rather it escalated it into a different phase. In fact, with the exception of some high-profile supporters and the rebel leader himself, Ibn al-Jarūd's followers were soon rehabilitated and reintegrated into Umayyad society and politics. In other words, the standoff between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Jārūd is not evidence of a breakdown of a hierarchical relationship, with rebels operating outside the political formation and in contravention of the standards of political engagement, but rather brings to the fore the multicentric Umayyad governance structure within which various stakeholders—the caliph, his governors, soldiers, tribal chiefs—conceived of power in different ways. Assertions of rights and appeals to responsibilities could always be negotiated, even if the parties vehemently maintained entitlements to control and dominance. Negotiation, if necessary with violent means, constituted a normative tool of power, even as it challenged the gradually crystallizing notions of regulating, centralized authority.⁵ After presenting a short

medieval European cities have been similarly observed to have “employed long-established venues for and methods of complaint to pursue their aims”; J. Firnhaber-Baker, “Introduction: Medieval Revolt in Context,” in *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*, ed. J. Firnhaber-Baker and D. Schonaers, 1–15 (Milton Park: Routledge, 2017), at 4 (describing the findings of a comparative study of Bruges and York by Jelle Haemers and Christian Liddy). A reassessment of “some kinds of violence [including revolt; PS] not as crime but as politics” is also inherent in the re-valuation of revolt as negotiation (Firnhaber-Baker, “Introduction,” 5); see C. Wickham, “Looking Forward: Peasant Revolts in Europe, 600–1200,” in Firnhaber-Baker and Schonaers, *Routledge History Handbook*, 155–67, at 155–56. Patrick Lantschner, in “Revolts and the Political Order of Cities in the Late Middle Ages,” *Past and Present* 225 (2014): 3–46, at 4, has emphasized that “revolts were not, in general at least, an antithesis, subversion or pathology of the political order, but formed a fundamental part of the political interactions in late medieval cities.” Another way to problematize the historic label “revolt” is Gerd Althoff's argument that rulers in medieval Europe expressly provided ways and possibilities out of (violent) conflicts as they aimed to facilitate a mostly antagonism-free coexistence in their realms; G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: WBG, 2014), 21–153, 364 and n. 7. A similar approach is applied by Erich Gruen who looks at the contingent nature of uprisings which are not always aimed at imperial power and do not always follow a similar inevitable trajectory; E. S. Gruen, “When Is a Revolt Not a Revolt? A Case for Contingency,” in *Revolt and Resistance in the Ancient Classical World and the Near East: In the Crucible of Empire*, ed. J. J. Collins and J. G. Manning, 10–37 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

4. In this view, the building of state structures was accompanied by expectations of proper governance among the ruled, and when these were not met, protest would ensue (Firnhaber-Baker, “Introduction,” 4). Lantschner, in his comparative study of revolts in fifteenth-century Italy and Syria, emphasizes that protesters and rebels invoked their legitimate right to stand up against tyranny employing legalistic arguments and political instruments; Lantschner, “Invoking and Constructing Legitimacy: Rebels in the Late Medieval European and Islamic Worlds,” in Firnhaber-Baker and Schonaers, *Routledge History Handbook*, 168–88, at 168–70, 178–80. The opposite phenomenon—namely, a state's expansion clashing with the established privileges of the ruled and causing frustration—also plays a role in the episode under discussion and elsewhere. Cf. Y. Lev, “Coptic Rebellions and the Islamization of Medieval Egypt (8th–10th Century): Medieval and Modern Perceptions,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012): 303–44; and C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140–43, 163–64, 529–33.

5. Violence (or the threat thereof) was also obviously exercised by Ibn al-Jārūd and his followers, identifying his movement as a rebellion. In rebellion studies, the discourse of revolt has been gaining attention; it focuses

summary of the relevant events and a brief discussion of the sources, this paper explores the conflict between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Jārūd in light of the triangular relationship between the caliph, his appointees or representatives, and the people over whom they ruled, and demonstrates how the competing views within this triangle formed a fragmented but nevertheless integrated system of political authority.

Disaffected Soldiers

The insurrection of the garrisons in Kūfa and Baṣra was provoked by two major grievances.⁶ The first was the endless, costly, and dangerous campaign against the Khārijites. The second, as always, was concern about pay. The Khārijite insurgents had been preoccupying the governors of Iraq since the late seventh century CE. Although they had been pushed back several times, their continued attacks on the rich villages of the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys and their expansion eastward toward Khurāsān and India were nuisances that the caliph and his governor could ill afford to tolerate. The Kūfan and Baṣran troops had been fighting the Khārijites under the command of al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra (d. 82 or 83/702–3) in Rāmḥurmuz, some 600 kilometers west of Kūfa on the Tigris. But when Iraq's governor Bishr b. Marwān died in 75/694, they returned en masse to Kūfa and Baṣra and refused to fight further.⁷ No one in charge, neither the military commanders

on how such activities were remembered by subsequent generations or used for political purposes. Hannah-Lena Hagemann has examined the historiography of Khārijite revolts and identified a concern among authors for the consequences of (overly) pious norms: H.-L. Hagemann, *The Khārijites in the Early Islamic Historical Tradition: Heroes and Villains* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 15. That historical sources apply the term revolt to a variety of expressions of social unrest and dissatisfaction is noted in several articles in *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*, including Firnhaber-Baker, "Introduction," 5, 7–8, and Wickham, "Looking Forward," 155. Myles Lavan explains the almost complete absence of accounts of revolts in the Roman empire by Roman historians' disinterest in common people's dissatisfaction in his "Writing Revolt in the Early Roman Empire," in Firnhaber-Baker and Schonaers, *Routledge History Handbook*, 19–38. See also Paul Cobb's interpretation of rebellions as a form of contention, referring also to earlier authorities, in *White Banners: Contention in 'Abbasid Syria, 750–880* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 6–7.

6. The following account is based mainly on al-Balādhuri's (d. 279/892) *Ansāb*, 266–303, which served as the basis for Ibn al-Athīr's (d. 630/1233) version in *al-Kāmil fī al-ta'rīkh*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 13 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1867), 4:380–84. Al-Balādhuri seems to have made use of a lost *Kitāb Ibn al-Jārūd wa-Rustaḡabād* by al-Madā'inī (d. ca. 228/843); R. Sayed, *Die Revolte des Ibn al-Aṣ'at und die Koranleser* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1977), 130. Al-Madā'inī is certainly the main authority he cites in this passage, alongside a few references to Abū Mikhnaḡ (d. 157/774). Other, less extensive, accounts are found in al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 2:864–75, and al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. C. Barbier de Meynard and A. Pavet de Courteille, 9 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1861–77), 5:291–302. Finally, there are very short references of a line or two in al-Balādhuri's *Futūḡ*, Ibn Khayyāṭ's (d. 240/854) *Ta'rīkh*, the *Ma'ārif* by Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), and Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*. Especially important single events or those that occur in some sources only are indicated in the footnotes.

7. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:857. A. Dietrich's remark in "Al-Ḥadjdjād b. Yūsuf," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al., 3:39–43 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), at 41, that the troops returned "at the instigation of Bishr" seems a mistake. Al-Mas'ūdī adds that upon al-Ḥajjāj's entrance into the city of Kūfa, soldiers who were supposed to have been away on campaign were sitting around in groups "of twenty, thirty, and more" with their families and clients (*min ahlihi wa-mawālihi*); al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:292.

nor the governors of Baṣra and Kūfa, was able to convince them to return to their posts.⁸

In the accounts describing the course of events, al-Ḥajjāj arrives incognito at the Kūfan mosque and sits on the *minbar* for some time in silence before addressing the troops and haranguing them with imprecations and threats.⁹ Presenting himself as the deadliest “arrow” in the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik’s “quiver,” purposely aimed by the caliph at the Kūfans, he accuses the Kūfans of “factionalism, hypocrisy, lawlessness, and rumour-mongering.”¹⁰ He promises to give the soldiers their pay but in exchange demands that they return forthwith to al-Muhallab, who has been fighting the Azāriqa, the main branch of the Khārijites, since 64/684 and is continuing to do so with much effect under al-Ḥajjāj’s governorship. The mutinous soldiers are to rejoin al-Muhallab’s campaign immediately on pain of loss of life and property.¹¹ As the Kūfans continue to waver, al-Ḥajjāj resorts to more severe inducements. He summons the elderly tribal leader ‘Umayr b. Ḍabī al-Tamīmī and demands to know why he has not yet left for Rāmḥurmuz. ‘Umayr points to his age and infirmity and pleads that he is sending his son, who is much stronger and fiercer, to fight in his stead. Unmoved, al-Ḥajjāj has him executed as an example. A town crier announces ‘Umayr’s death throughout the city, adding that anyone remaining within the city walls after that day can expect the same fate. Soon the streets leading out of the town are crowded with soldiers leaving for Rāmḥurmuz.

A similar course of events takes place in Baṣra, where al-Ḥajjāj subsequently relocates. Delivering another threat-laden speech in the local mosque, he executes Sharīk b. ‘Amr, chief of the Banū Yashkur, after dismissing Sharīk’s claim that Bishr, the previous governor, had exempted him from military service on account of his hernia and blindness. The Baṣrans, seeing that the new governor’s patience is not to be tried, start flooding out of the city and back to al-Muhallab, who expresses his joy at the arrival of such a strong and determined governor.

Having reimposed order in Kūfa and Baṣra, al-Ḥajjāj marches with a contingent of Baṣran soldiers to Rustaqabādh on the road to Rāmḥurmuz, intending to support al-Muhallab from the rear.¹² In Rustaqabādh he delivers another speech, prohibiting the soldiers from leaving

8. This is despite increasingly harsh measures imposed on the reluctant soldiers; M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation*, vol. 1, A.D. 600–750 (A.H. 132) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 102.

9. Al-Ḥajjāj’s famous speech is cited in several sources: al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 267–69; al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 215–16; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:864–66; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:295–96. For a more extensive list of citations, see ‘Abd al-Ameer Dixon, *The Umayyad Caliphate 65–86/684–705: A Political Study* (London: Luzac, 1971), 143 n. 2. For a close reading of the speech that al-Ḥajjāj gave in Kūfa, see P. Klasova, “Empire through Language: Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī and the Power of Oratory in Umayyad Iraq” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2018), 208–24. The payment of stipends, supervised by al-Ḥajjāj himself, is described in al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:297–98; al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 216.

10. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 268–69; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:865–66.

11. The soldiers get three days to move or al-Ḥajjāj turns them into outlaws by removing their protection (*fa-man wajadtuhu ba‘d thālitha min jaysh Ibn Miḥnaf fa-bari’at minhu al-dhimma*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 270, 274) or cuts off their heads (*wa-aqsimu bi-llāh lā ajidu aḥadan ba‘d thālitha mimman akhalla bi-markazihi illā ḍaraba ‘unuqahu*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 271).

12. The military camp that al-Ḥajjāj set up at Rāmḥurmuz later became known as ‘Askar Mukram. See M.

their stations until the Khārijites have been destroyed, even if it takes years. Although the soldiers react by affirming their eagerness to fight, their enthusiasm falters when al-Ḥajjāj goes on to announce that as an economizing measure,¹³ the raise in their stipends, agreed to by Muṣ‘ab b. al-Zubayr (d. 72/691) and, according to the soldiers, confirmed by the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik and implemented by his governor Bishr, will be cancelled.¹⁴ The troops take fierce exception, and when al-Ḥajjāj refuses to bend, prominent leaders such as al-Hudhayl b. ‘Imrān b. al-Fuḍayl al-Burjumī (d. 76/695),¹⁵ ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥakīm b. Ziyād al-Mujāshī‘ī (d. 76/695), and Qutayba b. Muslim (d. 96/715)¹⁶ begin to work with ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Jārūd to arrange al-Ḥajjāj’s removal as governor of Iraq.¹⁷

Initially, the mutineers seem to be winning. They even manage to raid al-Ḥajjāj’s camp, seizing weapons and other possessions, including two of his wives.¹⁸ However, more and more of Ibn al-Jārūd’s supporters begin to switch sides, some being uncomfortable with opposing the caliph’s legitimate representative, others claiming tribal solidarity.¹⁹ In the ensuing battle at the end of Rabī‘ I 76 (July 695), Ibn al-Jārūd is almost immediately hit by an arrow and killed.²⁰ Instantly, Ibn al-Jārūd’s party falls apart, with his soldiers giving themselves up or deserting to al-Ḥajjāj. The two other main figures who have remained loyal to his cause, al-Hudhayl b. ‘Imrān al-Burjumī and ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥakīm b. Ziyād al-Mujāshī‘ī, are captured and killed on al-Ḥajjāj’s orders. The two of them along with Ibn al-Jārūd are then crucified and put on display. Ibn al-Jārūd’s head, together with those of some dozen

Streck and L. Lockhart, “Askar Mukram,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:711 (Leiden: Brill, 1960).

13. “Why do you, may God make the *amīr* thrive, leave us here imprisoned? Take us to those dogs who will be chanceless when the two garrisons [of Kūfa and Baṣra] pound on them” (*wa-līmā taḥbisunā aṣḥāḥa allāh al-amīr bi-hādhā al-makān sir binā ilā ha’ulā’i al-kilāb fa-mā hum idhā ajtama’a ahl al-miṣrayn ‘alayhim bi-shay’*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 279). Because of the mismanagement of his predecessors, al-Ḥajjāj encountered a rather empty treasury upon his arrival in Iraq, motivating his decision to cut costs (Sayed, *Die Revolte*, 129; Shaban, *Islamic History*, 104; Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 144). That al-Ḥajjāj was more concerned with fighting the caliphate’s enemies than with raising salaries for the troops is, however, confirmed by a disagreement he had with al-Muhallab about the importance of collecting taxes versus fighting the Khārijites (al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 668).

14. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 280; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:874 (Bishr is not mentioned). Attempts to lower the amount paid out in stipends appear often in the history of Iraq.

15. P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 114.

16. Crone, *Slaves*, 136–37.

17. They express their support for Ibn al-Jārūd’s replies to al-Ḥajjāj concerning the cut in their stipend (*naḥnu ma’aka wa-yaduka wa-a’wānuka inna hādhā al-rajul ghayr kāffīn wa-yanquṣanā hādhihi al-ziyāda*) and even give him a secret oath of allegiance with the purpose of removing al-Ḥajjāj (*fa-halumma nubayī’uka ‘alā ikhrājīhi min al-‘Irāq*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 281). The conspiracy also appears in the very short entries in Ibn Khayyāṭ’s (d. 240/854) *Ta’rīkh* (*khala’ūhu*, i.e. al-Ḥajjāj, *wa-bāya’ū ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Jārūd*), and in Ibn Qutayba’s *Ma’ārif* (*wa-ijtima’at ‘alayhi al-qabā’il min ahl al-Baṣra wa ahl al-Kūfa fa-wallawhu amrahum*). See Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Ta’rīkh*, ed. A. D. al-‘Umarī (2nd revised edition; Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1405/1985), 272; and Ibn Qutayba, *Ma’ārif*, ed. Tharwat ‘Ukāsha (electronic edition; Riyadh: Turath for Solutions, 2014), 339–40.

18. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 283.

19. *Ibid.*, 280, 284, 287.

20. He dies just one hour after the start of the battle; *ibid.*, 289.

of his followers, is sent to al-Muhallab's camp, where it provides a great morale boost for his soldiers and a grim reminder to the Khārijites of what lies in store for those resisting al-Ḥajjāj.²¹

Although al-Ḥajjāj offers the regular troops a general pardon or safe-conduct (*amān*), the senior figures in Ibn al-Jārūd's party are given less forgiving treatment. Some escape by running away to remote corners of the empire, seeking the protection of local strongmen. Those who eventually fall into al-Ḥajjāj's hands are almost without exception killed. Only a few manage to escape this fate, mostly through the intercession of the caliph himself.

Distorting Sources

Ibn al-Jārūd's rebellion occurred at a crucial point in the history and historiography of the Islamic empire. The reports of the conflict between Ibn al-Jārūd and al-Ḥajjāj are preserved in the works of Abbasid historians writing a century or more after the events took place under a different dynasty. Scholars who have examined the discourse of revolt have pointed to the distortion of historical accounts in later debates that have exploited them for their rhetorical value.²² The presence of al-Ḥajjāj in this story warrants additional caution.

Al-Ḥajjāj is best known for his image in the sources as a merciless enforcer of caliphal rule, demanding from others the same absolute obedience and dedication he demanded of himself. As in our account, al-Ḥajjāj's actions are, however, often depicted as needlessly cruel, excessively harsh, and in general going against the rules of good government, especially in his refusal to exercise clemency and leniency toward dissenters, which sometimes even placed him at odds with the caliph 'Abd al-Malik.²³ As in his treatment of Ibn al-Jārūd,

21. Ibid., 291–92.

22. See above, n. 5.

23. For a discussion of al-Ḥajjāj's strongly negative image in the Muslim historical sources that describe his dealings with Khārijites, see Hagemann, *Khārijites*, 233–40. For his general bad press, see Klasova, "Empire," ch. 1. Indeed, the sources offer various interactions between the caliph and his governor. Most famously, al-Ḥajjāj directly disobeyed the caliph 'Abd al-Malik's orders when he decided to bomb the Ka'ba in response to Ibn al-Zubayr's (d. 73/692) continuing resistance in Mecca. The caliph's insistence that al-Ḥajjāj show 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr clemency compares well with 'Abd al-Malik's attempt to convince 'Abd Allāh's brother Mus'ab b. al-Zubayr to lay down his resistance in exchange for his life and the governorship of Iraq. The high profile background of these sons of an important companion of the prophet Muḥammad surely motivated these repeated attempts at reconciliation. For al-Ḥajjāj's upright behavior and his insistence on similar behavior from others, sometimes in contravention of 'Abd al-Malik's orders, see Dietrich, "Al-Ḥajjāj." Obviously, there are plenty of examples of al-Ḥajjāj's showing quick and full obedience to the caliph's orders. In one instance, for example, 'Abd al-Malik ordered al-Ḥajjāj to leave the taxes of the province of Fārs, which al-Muhallab had regained from the Khārijites after many years of intensive fighting, to pay for the maintenance of the commander's troops, and al-Ḥajjāj immediately and without any problems executed the order (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2:1004). Christian chroniclers also contain negative accounts. His suspension of the patriarchate of the Church of the East because of what he considered abuse of power by the patriarch is extensively discussed. The patriarchate was reinstated only at al-Ḥajjāj's death sixteen years later. See P. Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 266. Al-Ḥajjāj's rejection of the request for tax exemption by the inhabitants of the Iraqi town of Najrān, sought on the basis of the inhabitants' descent from the population of the Arabian Najrān, is deemed excessively cruel in the sources (Wood, *Seert*, 251). Dionysus

al-Ḥajjāj had little patience for mutinous troops, offering them a narrow window to repent and subsequently punishing without mercy those who continued to resist.²⁴ But the sources also contain examples of al-Ḥajjāj's uprightness, such as his rigorous rejection of bribes, his generosity to the poor, his forgiveness toward (some) defeated opponents, and his protection and patronage of Christian holy men and pious Muslim men and women.²⁵ In addition to his successful handling of rebellions in Iraq, he was especially appreciated by the caliph for being a reliable agent in administrative matters, collecting taxes, building infrastructure so that even more taxes could be raised, and ensuring that peace and quiet prevailed in the land.²⁶

The view of an excessively tyrannical and hot-headed al-Ḥajjāj in the sources can be explained by the general anti-Umayyad tendency of Abbasid historiography.²⁷ Al-Balādhurī,

of Tel Maḥre devotes a section to “the evil deeds of al-Ḥajjāj and Muḥammad b. Marwān in their provinces” where he describes the two as “powerful men, capable of shedding blood without the slightest pity”; A. Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 109, 200. The historian relates in relation to al-Ḥajjāj's governorship of Iraq: “Given authority over Persia, al-Ḥajjāj began to wreak destruction pitilessly. He even murdered the leading men of the Arabs and looted their houses”; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 201. But other Christian sources are more neutral, e.g., the citations gathered in Robert Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011). By contrast, ‘Abd al-Malik's successor, al-Walīd (r. 86–96/705–15), did not interfere with al-Ḥajjāj's policies.

24. Al-Ḥajjāj offered Ibn al-Jārūd a short period in which to show penitence, as he had done with other opponents such as ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and Ibn al-Ash‘ath, but when they refused (out of fear of being punished anyway), he fought them until absolute defeat, death, or execution, as Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik himself had done with Mus‘ab b. al-Zubayr in Iraq.

25. On the orders of ‘Abd al-Malik, al-Ḥajjāj gave the Nestorian John of Daylam (d. 738) 12,000 silver pieces for the building of monasteries; S. Brock, “A Syriac Life of John of Dailam,” *Parole de l'Orient* 10 (1981–82): 123–89, at 148–49, 165–68. (I would like to thank Philip Wood for pointing me to this reference.) Al-Ḥajjāj gave to the poor any money he had left after paying for his regular expenses and those of his family; al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/942), *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’ wa-l-kuttāb*, ed. M. al-Saqqā’ et al. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad al-Ḥanafī, 1357/1938), 42. Al-Ḥajjāj let go a Khārijite who did not renounce ‘Alī and ‘Uthmān; Hagemann, *Khārijites*, 235. Pamela Klasova has interpreted the anecdotes that the fifth/twelfth-century Ibn al-‘Asākir gathered in his *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq* depicting al-Ḥajjāj engaging in superior moral acts as a rehabilitation of his image; Klasova, “Empire,” ch. 3.

26. Best illustrated by an anecdote set at the caliph al-Manṣūr's (r. 136–58/754–75) court that al-Ṭabarī relates and that, incidentally, also reflects al-Ḥajjāj's contested reputation. While waiting to gain access to the caliph, some courtiers debate al-Ḥajjāj's achievements: some greatly admire him, but others vehemently despise the governor. As they enter into the caliph's presence, one of them complains: “O Commander of the Faithful, I did not think that I would live to see the day when al-Ḥajjāj would be discussed in your house and on your carpet and given praise.” The caliph replies: “Why do you disapprove of that? He was a man whom the Umayyads entrusted with power and he served them well. I would be happy, by God, if I could find a man like al-Ḥajjāj so that I could hand over my responsibilities to him.” See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 3:400–401; translation from H. Kennedy, trans., *Al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī*, vol. 29 of *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 102–3. The passage is also partially quoted in T. El-Hibri, “The Redemption of Umayyad Memory by the ‘Abbāsids,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 61, no. 4 (2002): 245–61, at 244.

27. El-Hibri, “Redemption.” On the memory of Umayyad history in Abbasid historiography, see also A. Borrut, “The Future of the Past: Historical Writing in Early Islamic Syria and Umayyad Memory,” in *Power, Patronage, and Memory in Early Islam: Perspectives on Umayyad Elites*, ed. A. George and A. Marsham, 275–300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); idem, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L'espace Syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et*

the historian whose elaborate account forms the basis of this article, was especially closely associated with the Abbasid caliphal court. Even more than other Abbasid historians, he was concerned with moral questions of good governance and proper behavior, using historiography to illustrate explicit ethical principles. At the same time, as a court historian, he had to entertain his readers and clothe his historical accounts in engaging anecdotes, which might explain his attention to gruesome and dramatic details in the description of Ibn al-Jārūd's downfall. It could also account for the romanticized depiction of Ibn al-Jārūd as a tragic hero fighting an abusive representative of the established power.²⁸ Finally, al-Balādhurī's close association with the Abbasid rulers made him more prone to emphasize the moral decay of Umayyad rulers as a justification for the regime change initiated by his masters.²⁹ Comparing the treatment of al-Ḥajjāj by three Abbasid historians, Mohamed El Yamani concluded that al-Balādhurī shaped the figure of al-Ḥajjāj to serve as an instrument for instructing his audience about good—that is, measured, controlled, and just—governance versus cruel, harsh, and unjust rule.³⁰

Several historical circumstances should also be taken into account when considering Ibn al-Jārūd's revolt and al-Ḥajjāj's uncompromising reaction to it as reported in the sources. After the crisis of the second *fitna*, which al-Ḥajjāj crucially helped to decide in favor of the Umayyads, the Marwānid caliphs launched their famous program of state building, characterized by centralization, uniformization, Arabicization, and Islamicization. As governor in the Ḥijāz and especially later in Iraq and beyond, al-Ḥajjāj was an essential instrument for implementing the caliph's policies. As part of this program of administrative reform, the traditional power structures relying on *ashrāf*, local Arab noblemen, had to be broken down to make space for the new Marwānid order. This context explains the *ashrāf*'s resistance to these changes as well as al-Ḥajjāj's application of exemplary violence against their main representatives to break their resistance (see below on the execution of tribal leaders).³¹ Interestingly, this crackdown on Arab tribal leaders is also reported by Dionysus of Tel Maḥre (d. 845).³²

The watershed changes in administrative practice and organization under the Marwānids were not the first adjustments to government, nor were they the last. Most notable is obviously the development of ideas on governance under the Abbasids, resulting in the building of the elaborate government infrastructure described in countless works of statecraft; this is also the period in which the authors I draw upon in this article wrote their versions of the events. The clear-cut opposition between the caliph as an absolute ruler and

les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809) (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 79–108.

28. The image of the late seventh-century Iraqi Khārijite rebel Shabīb b. Yazīd (d. 77/696 or 78/697–98) as a pious and honourable fighter contrasting a scheming and deceptive al-Ḥajjāj is similar, and not only in al-Balādhurī; Hagemann, *Khārijites*, 237–38.

29. *Ibid.*, 204, 258.

30. M. El Yamani, “Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ b. Yūsuf al-Ṭaqafī: Entre histoire et littérature” (PhD diss., INALCO, 2014), 258.

31. Clifford E. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs, from the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Ṣaffārids (30–250/651–864)* (Rome: IsMEO, 1968), 60. See also the contributions by Alon Dar and Reza Huseini in this issue.

32. “He even murdered the leading men of the Arabs and looted their houses”; Palmer, *West-Syrian Chronicles*, 201.

his insubordinate governor who subverts his policies and decisions is a false dichotomy that belongs to the more developed governmental context of the Abbasid period. In fact, al-Ḥajjāj was a loyal and reliable instrument of Marwānid policy, and these two seemingly opposed poles of political authority operated in a much more fluid and fragmented governance system in the Umayyad caliphate.³³ There was not an absolute caliphal hegemony radiating out from the capital and encompassing the entire empire, but rather a multinodal imperial structure in which caliph, governor, and those under their rule operated as interconnected and overlapping sources of authority, sometimes aligned, sometimes contradicting, on a fluid and unstable continuum between dutiful obedience and violent defiance.³⁴ In relation to Ibn al-Jārūd's story, however, it is important to realize that rules and moral standards of good governance had already been established by the Umayyad period.³⁵

In addition, even without the centralizing measures imposed by al-Ḥajjāj, Iraqi Muslims had been engaged in almost continuous revolt, rallying around a variety of 'Alid, Khārijite, and other protest movements. Twice their preferred caliph, 'Alī in the first *fitna* and Ibn al-Zubayr in the second, had lost out against Umayyad alternatives. This history made the Iraqis prone to revolt—to try to have their priorities heard, as it were. It may be exactly the Iraqis' persistence, however, that explains al-Ḥajjāj's recalcitrance in dealing with the rebels: he may have wanted to foreclose future opportunities for revolt. Perhaps al-Ḥajjāj, whose support of the Umayyad caliphate was unequivocal, felt a need to deal once and for all with the "losers of history," for whom, moreover, he had little respect.³⁶

33. Similarly, another key figure of Marwānid administrative change, the governor of Egypt Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 90–96/709–14), is described in the historiographical sources as tyrannical and bent on imposing direct and absolute supremacy, whereas papyri show him as strict and consistent, but with limited tools to enforce government control. See A. Papaconstantinou, "The Rhetoric of Power and the Voice of Reason: Tensions between Central and Local in the Correspondence of Qurra ibn Sharīk," in *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power*, ed. S. Procházka, L. Reinhardt, and S. Tost, 267–81 (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015). Discussing this point with Andrew Marsham clarified its significance appreciably for me, and I would like to thank him for that.

34. Firnhaber-Baker, "Introduction," 2–5. Cf. above, n. 4.

35. These were similar to the "rules of the game" that governed political interactions in early medieval Europe. The latter, however, remained largely undefined and unrecorded; Althoff, *Spielregeln*, 233, 366. The need for predictable behavior in political interaction and communication, especially when looking for compromises in and solutions to conflicts, predates the recording of such rules (ibid., 257). The presence of standardized and inferable rules of governance is reflected already in the peace treaties that the Arab conquerors concluded during their conquests; see M. Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 32–56. Papyri likewise provide evidence of the introduction of a governance etiquette and practice by the Arab conquerors; P. M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 64–81.

36. See Klasova's discussion of al-Ḥajjāj's speech in Kūfa in "Empire," 208–24. Al-Ḥajjāj does not hide his dismay and disappointment at the achievements and attitude of the Iraqi troops. In 77/696 he writes to 'Abd al-Malik, asking him to send Syrian troops to deal with the Khārijite revolt under Shabīb b. Yazīd because the Kūfan garrison is entirely hopeless; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3:943. Someone in al-Ḥajjāj's entourage confirms that the governor has mobilized Kūfan troops but does not find them very reliable (ibid., 3:945). Finally, when Shabīb b. Yazīd is threatening to enter Kūfa, al-Ḥajjāj scolds the Kūfan troops, telling them to "go and join the Jews and Christians in al-Ḥīra," as he now has Syrian soldiers to handle the problem (ibid., 3:955). Al-Ḥajjāj claims that the Syrian troops he has brought are more disciplined than the "lazy and hypocritical (*nāfiq*)" local soldiers.

The final historical circumstance that could explain al-Ḥajjāj's crackdown is closely related to the relentless insurrections in Iraq and to the weariness of the Iraqi troops tasked with dealing with them. These troops had been in the field for many intensive years of warfare. Their exhaustion and disillusionment must have been real. The endless and hopeless fighting motivated other rebels as well, such as those following al-Ḥārith b. Surayj in Umayyad Khurāsān (116–28/734–46), discussed by Reza Huseini in this issue, who claimed that they had worn their armor without interruption to the point that it had grown into their flesh. Al-Ḥajjāj went to Iraq accompanied by Syrian troops. His men were not only more obedient but also more effective than the local forces. Governors and caliphs before al-Ḥajjāj had used both reward and punishment in their attempts to convince the Iraqi soldiers to maintain their positions on the battlefield, especially in the form of assignments and withdrawals of the *ḥayʿ*, that is the revenue from conquered lands, in the form of stipends. Caliphs and their governors variously raised and lowered the stipends, or *ʿaṭāʾ*, paid to the Iraqi troops to motivate them to continue fighting.³⁷ As a consequence, dissatisfaction about pay was a constant grievance and a flashpoint for revolts. With the arrival of al-Ḥajjāj, however, the fate of the Iraqi troops was sealed. He simply diverted Iraq's income to pay his own soldiers, eventually abolishing the Iraqi garrisons altogether and founding al-Wāsiṭ for his Syrian troops.³⁸

It may not be possible at this moment to disentangle the negative elements of al-Ḥajjāj's image, especially his more cruel and seemingly unreasonable acts, from his actions in the specific historical context of Ibn al-Jārūd's revolt.³⁹ The purpose of this article is, however, to use Ibn al-Jārūd's conflict with al-Ḥajjāj to analyze the function of rebellions as an integral feature of the political culture of the time, responding to rules and expectations of conduct that regulated the political cut and thrust. For such an understanding of revolts, al-Ḥajjāj's and Ibn al-Jārūd's specific actions in their interaction matter less compared with what they represent in terms of how contemporary and later observers understood the course and resolution of conflicts.⁴⁰ In other words, the account illustrates what the rules of engagement

The Syrians are said to have functioned as the governor's private police force, fighting Iraqi expressions of dissatisfaction (Sayed, *Die Revolte*, 129).

37. For examples of the withholding of payments, cancellation of payment increases, and disagreements about payments, see Sayed, *Die Revolte*, 32–33; H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2001), 38–42, 76–77. Shabīb b. Yazīd, the most famous Khārījite rebel in Iraq, is even said to have revolted because his stipend was withheld because of an administrative error; K. V. Zetterstéen and C. F. Robinson, "Shabīb b. Yazīd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 9:164–65 (Leiden: Brill, 1997). The caliph Yazīd b. al-Walīd (r. 126/744) acquired the nickname *al-nāqīṣ* for, among other reasons, reversing the ten-dirham increase on the stipends that al-Walīd b. Yazīd (r. 125–26/743–44) had initiated (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:1825).

38. Kennedy, *Armies*, 41, 42.

39. Even though there is an explicit possibility within the system for an individual historical actor to maneuver within the unwritten and implicit rules of interaction; Althoff, *Spielregeln*, 366–67.

40. In other words, even though anecdotes may be used to embellish the story, its audience expects both parties to behave according to rules in conflicts, and the normative behavior in these situations is made clear even in the beautified and exaggerated account (*ibid.*, 372).

were and how they were transgressed, manipulated or adhered to by the actors involved.⁴¹ The threat and even use of violence and force were central elements of these negotiations, driving the recourse to rebellion and determining the response to and popular perception of rebellions.⁴² Exploiting the dynamics of this system, al-Ḥajjāj was able to maneuver the negotiator Ibn al-Jārūd into the position of a rebel who had to be annihilated as a threat to the new political order in an increasingly centralized Umayyad state. But the rhetoric of the rebellion had not developed to the point that Ibn al-Jārūd's case could be invalidated, and a more pragmatic solution had to be found whereby the soldiers' grievances were redressed and they and their leaders were reintegrated into the caliphal order.

Playing by the Rules of the Game

Within a view of violent protest as an integral part of a multipolar political system, an examination of al-Ḥajjāj's and Ibn al-Jārūd's navigation of the instruments of power offers interesting insights into how and when the articulation of complaints against the caliphate's governance turns into revolt. The actions of Ibn al-Jārūd and his supporters in their struggle against al-Ḥajjāj conform to a striking degree to normative patterns, in the sense that they adhere to political and legal prescriptions and mores. Both men participate fully in the political game, interacting with authorities and using established political and legal instruments. Al-Ḥajjāj, representing legitimate rule, is challenged by the rebels both for his neglect of the moral responsibilities that come with this position and for his goal of asserting the caliph's authority more thoroughly. Within a politically fragmented landscape in which caliph, governor, local commanders and chiefs, and military troops compete for authority, power, and access to constituencies, Ibn al-Jārūd and al-Ḥajjāj effectively exploit the political avenues of communication available to them. As a result, those involved in the conflict constantly change their political and military configurations, switch allegiances seemingly at will, appeal to alternative powers beyond those directly ruling them, and claim legitimate rule or decry oppression and tyranny to support their acts of protest or their subsequent reactions.⁴³

The conflict between al-Ḥajjāj and the Iraqi troops starts with negotiations over stipends to which the Iraqi troops feel entitled but which al-Ḥajjāj declines to pay. Both parties present their arguments. Al-Ḥajjāj refuses outright to concede, dismissing his predecessor Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr's promised pay raise as the work of a "heretic, hypocrite, and sinner" (*mulḥid munāfiq fāsiq*), calling Ibn al-Jārūd a liar, and threatening him when he suggests that the governor is rolling back a legitimate decision.⁴⁴ The soldiers add that 'Abd al-Malik confirmed Muṣ'ab's decision and that his appointed governor (and brother) Bishr effected the increased payments.⁴⁵ Indeed, as already mentioned, access to Iraq's *fay'* in the form of

41. Ibid., 369.

42. Wickham, "Looking Forward," 158.

43. Acknowledging the agency of rebels is an important shift in the field of rebel studies (Firnhaber-Baker, "Introduction," 1).

44. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 280; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:874 (*fāsiq munāfiq*).

45. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 280; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:874.

stipends for the troops was a constant point of conflict, motivating rebellions on more than this one occasion. Al-Ḥajjāj's measures are in that sense no different from those of other governors, except that the influx of Syrian troops under his command decided the case in his favor once and for all.

At the outset of their protest, Ibn al-Jārūd and his men emphasize that they do not intend to fight al-Ḥajjāj, let alone kill him, but “merely” want to see him recalled by the caliph, who will then be asked to send a replacement governor. Al-Balādhurī, our main source for the events, states that Ibn al-Jārūd “disagreed [with al-Ḥajjāj] and the people concurred with him to remove al-Ḥajjāj from Iraq and to ask ‘Abd al-Malik to appoint someone else as governor.”⁴⁶ Ibn al-Jārūd sees open battle as a last resort, to be pursued only if al-Ḥajjāj refuses to leave the governorship of his own accord.⁴⁷ In response to al-Ḥajjāj's threats, Ibn al-Jārūd exclaims, “Why [do you say this]? By God, I am truly a counselor to you and verily my words reflect what my followers say.”⁴⁸ In other words, Ibn al-Jārūd and his men are not seeking to throw off Umayyad rule or even to challenge the caliph's right to appoint his representative over the province. Rather, they appeal precisely to the caliph's prerogatives when they ask that al-Ḥajjāj be removed and a different governor be sent. The possibility of removing the caliph himself, should he be unwilling to accede to their request, is quickly discounted, with the argument that the caliph would never risk losing their support as long as they are needed to fight the Khārijites.⁴⁹ These actions find echoes in similar instances in other places and times in the Umayyad caliphate, when troops appealed to higher authorities to intervene in local appointments that did not sit well with the *jund*. Disagreements over the suitability of a local ruler could be solved through a menu of expedients ranging from diplomacy to violent means.⁵⁰

46. *Khālafa wa-tābi‘ahu al-nās ‘alā ikhrāj al-Ḥajjāj min al-‘Irāq wa-mas’alat ‘Abd al-Malik tawliyat ghayrihi*; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 281.

47. *Wa-lakin li-yakhruj ‘annā madhmūman madḥūran wa-illā qātalnāhu ... wa-kāna ray’uhum an yukhrijūhu ‘anhum wa-lā yuqātīlūhu*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 283.

48. *Wa-limā wa-llāh innī laka la-nāsīḥ wa-inna qawlī hādihā la-qawl man warā’ī*; *ibid.*, 280.

49. *Ibid.*, 281.

50. Asking a higher authority to replace a local administrator was a common tactic on the part of local troops dissatisfied by such appointees. When the request was not honored, things could get out of hand, as the case of Ibn al-Jārūd shows. In another case, the *ashrāf* of Ifrīqiya assassinated the governor Yazīd b. Abī Muslim (in office 102/720–21) because they were dissatisfied with his rule. Interestingly, they objected because Yazīd b. Abī Muslim tried to implement a policy copied from al-Ḥajjāj, namely, sending converts who had moved to the garrison back to their place of residence and ordering them to continue to pay the poll tax. The *ashrāf* reinstalled Yazīd's predecessor and were quick to inform the caliph that their loyalty to *him* was unwavering (*innā lam nakhlā‘ aydaynā min al-ṭā‘a*). The caliph Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik indeed confirmed the re-installed governor in his position (al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā‘*, 57; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:1435). A similar later incident developed rather differently. In the year 177/793 the *jund* of Tūnis, dissatisfied with their local ruler, al-Mughayra b. Bishr b. Rawḥ, wrote to his uncle al-Faḍl b. Rawḥ, governor of Ifrīqiya, asking for a replacement. When the latter did not answer, the troops resolved to oust al-Mughayra, writing to Faḍl that they did not want to be disobedient but that they were forced into it by al-Mughayra's bad behavior; their missive used language similar to that of the previous “rebels” (*innā lam nakhruj yaddan ‘an ṭā‘a lakinnāhu asā’a al-sīra*). The troops asked that the governor appoint over them someone they approved of (*fa-wallī ‘alaynā man narḍāhu*), but when the governor instead appointed another family member, the troops felt betrayed and rose up in a full-fledged rebellion (confusingly

Two references in al-Balādhurī's account, however, point to a more explicit and immediate goal of undermining the government on Ibn al-Jārūd's part, one that contrasts with more loyalist voices in his camp arguing for a conciliatory approach. At the second confrontation between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Jārūd, when the governor repeats his intention to lower the men's stipend, a certain Maṣqala b. Karib b. Raqaba b. Khawta'ā al-ʿAbdī in Ibn al-Jārūd's entourage expresses unease: "It is not right for the herd to oppose its shepherd; we heard what the *amīr* said, so we hear and obey, whether we like it or not." Ibn al-Jārūd is not impressed, and, with an obvious dislike for the lower ranks getting involved in decision-making, dismisses Maṣqala's reservations outright.⁵¹ When it is clear that a violent confrontation is imminent, groups move from one camp to the other. The first party to leave Ibn al-Jārūd's side for al-Ḥajjāj's does so "fearing to fight and to oppose the authorities (*sulṭān*)."⁵² These expressions of opposition by Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters to his aim of securing their rights through violent confrontation show that the principle of obedience to caliphal representatives and caliphal decisions was contested.⁵³

Throughout the conflict, Ibn al-Jārūd and his men apply the instruments of an almost legalistic-seeming procedure. First, there is the secret *bayʿa* (oath of allegiance) with the specific and limited goal of removing al-Ḥajjāj from Iraq.⁵⁴ The acts of giving the *bayʿa* and mutual pledges of loyalty between Ibn al-Jārūd and his supporters with the aid of contracts and treaties are formal and context-appropriate.⁵⁵ The *bayʿa* functions here as an affirmation of loyalty for a specific, primarily military, purpose, and it follows pre-Islamic Arabian and early conquest practice.⁵⁶ Second, the dissidents' plan to write to ʿAbd al-Malik and ask

led by someone called ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Jārūd known also as "slave of his Lord" ʿAbd Rabbihi al-Anbarī, obviously a different person than the protagonist of this study), killing the appointee and the governor. The caliph sent a new governor with an army, and they eventually subdued the insurgents and arrested the rebels. See Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, 10:92–95 (where his name is rendered in the obvious misspellings ʿAbd Wayh, ʿAdwayh, and Baʿdwayh) and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), *Taʾrīkh*, 7 vols. (electronic edition; Riyad: Turath for Solutions, 2014) 4:248–49. I would like to thank Alon Dar for referring me to this report. A final example is Egypt's financial governor ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, who, operating in the interest of local Egyptian *ashrāf*, would send back governors he deemed unfit and ask the caliph to appoint more suitable candidates; see N. Abbott, "A New Papyrus and a Review of the Administration of ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb," in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. G. Makdisi, 21–35 (Leiden: Brill, 1965). See also the case described by Alon Dar in this issue; in that case, however, no higher power was invoked to solve the disagreement of some *ashrāf* with the governor of Egypt.

51. *Laysa li-l-raʿīyya an tarudda ʿalā rāʿihā wa-qad samiʿnā mā qāla al-amīr fa-samʿan wa-ṭāʿatan fimā aḥabnā wa-karihnā*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 280–81.

52. *Wa-atāhu qawm min ahl al-miṣrayn fa-ṣārū maʿahu mustawḥishīn min muḥārabat al-sulṭān wa-mukhālafatihi*; *ibid.*, 284.

53. See the discussions in *ḥadīth* collections about whether alms collection and distribution ought to be managed by government officials or by individual Muslims; Sijpesteijn, *Shaping*, 181–98. For competing views on the right to rebel, see K. Abou El Fadl, *Violence and Rebellion in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 8.

54. *Nubāyiʿuka ʿalā ikhrājīhi min al-ʿirāq*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 281. Cf. nn. 17 and 46 above.

55. *Fa-bāya ʿahu al-nās sirran wa-aṭawhu al-mawāthiq ʿalā al-wafāʾ wa-akhadha baʿḍuhum ʿalā baʿḍ al-uhūd*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 281.

56. A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire*

him to send them another governor also shows respect for the established structures of government and the correct mechanisms for contact, in this case an official letter.

Ibn al-Jārūd also adheres to the laws of war and diplomacy. When al-Ḥajjāj dispatches a messenger, al-A‘yan, to invite Ibn al-Jārūd to surrender, the latter respects the traditional inviolability of messengers despite his inclination to treat al-A‘yan badly, exclaiming: “If you were not a messenger, I would kill you!”⁵⁷ Instead, he has al-A‘yan hit on the neck, perhaps in imitation of cutting off his head. In another incident, too, Ibn al-Jārūd carefully defers to the codes of conduct among Muslim elites. In the raid on al-Ḥajjāj’s camp, two of his wives are captured. Ibn al-Jārūd has them locked up, “fearing rascals [who might hurt them].”⁵⁸

Both Ibn al-Jārūd and al-Ḥajjāj attempt to settle the conflict by persuading the other party to back down, in this sense operating as political equals. This is a reminder that revolts, even when they appealed to the rank and file, were led by notables whose motives might or might not overlap with those of their supporters.⁵⁹ As just noted, al-Ḥajjāj offers Ibn al-Jārūd the option of surrender with protection.⁶⁰ Similarly, Ibn al-Jārūd gives al-Ḥajjāj several opportunities to leave for Damascus before a battle breaks out, even though al-Ḥajjāj is clearly in a disadvantageous position, standing alone with his special troops and family against Ibn al-Jārūd’s large army.⁶¹ In fact, in al-Ḥajjāj’s own camp there are also those who advocate avoiding battle and securing safe-conducts.⁶²

Even after the battle is over, Ibn al-Jārūd’s followers continue to participate in political negotiations as they spread out across the caliphate in search of safe-conducts guaranteeing their security and property. The reports of al-Ḥajjāj intentionally disregarding such

(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 28–32, 66–68. See also the oath of allegiance that the *jund* of Tūnis swore to their rebellious leader for the purpose of removing al-Mughayra as governor of Tūnis, while simultaneously stating that this did not mean they were disobedient to the governor (see above, n. 50). Similarly Ibn al-Ash‘ath’s followers offered their leader a *bay‘a* with the “limited” goal of removing al-Ḥajjāj (Bosworth, *Sistān*, 59). For other *bay‘as* given to rebels, see E. Landau-Tasserion, *The Religious Foundations of Political Allegiance: A Study of Bay‘a in Pre-modern Islam* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2010), 26–29.

57. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 281; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 283.

58. *Wa-ḥaṣṣanūhumā* [corrected from *ḥaṣṣanūhā* at the suggestion of one of the anonymous reviewers] *mukhāfat al-sufahā*². This passage is missing from Ahlwardt’s edition of the *Ansāb* but is present in another edition of the text, namely al-Balādhurī, *Kitāb Jumal min Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ al-Ziriklī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1417/1996), 7:3009.

59. Revolts in the Muslim empire and early medieval Europe were often led by notables (Wickham, “Looking Forward,” 160; Lev, “Coptic Rebellions”).

60. Al-Ḥajjāj similarly offered Ibn al-Zubayr and Ibn al-Ash‘ath the possibility of surrendering on the eve of battle. Both refused, with well-known, deadly results. See Dietrich, “Al-Hadjjadj.”

61. “My words are those of [everyone] behind me,” Ibn al-Jārūd exclaims when al-Ḥajjāj asks him to obey (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 280). For the remark that al-Ḥajjāj is alone except for his family and special troops (*wa-laysa ma‘ahu illā khāṣṣatuhu wa-ahl baytihi*), see *ibid.*, 282.

62. This view is expressed by Ziyād b. ‘Amr al-‘Atakī, head of Baṣra’s police force (*ibid.*, 284; Crone, *Slaves*, 121). Some years earlier, Ziyād had led his tribe, al-Azd, to side with the ‘Abd al-Qays (Ibn al-Jārūd’s tribe) in support of al-Muthannā as the latter tried to raise support for al-Mukhtār in Baṣra (Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 52–53).

guarantees of safety granted to his former opponents by notables throughout the empire and even by al-Ḥajjāj himself seem to be inspired by the kind of colored reporting discussed above.⁶³ In one such report, when al-Ḥajjāj confronts Ashyam b. Shaqīq b. Thawr al-Hudhalī⁶⁴ about the latter's support of Ibn al-Jārūd, Ashyam invokes the *amān* he has received from al-Ḥajjāj, reminding him, "You forgave me for that," but to no avail: al-Ḥajjāj still has him killed.⁶⁵ In some cases al-Ḥajjāj is said to have even gone against specific orders from the caliph in his pursuit of Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters. When a dispatch from the caliph orders the release of Ibn al-Jārūd's banner-bearer, al-Ḥajjāj hurries to cut off the man's hands and feet as well as those of two other prisoners before they can be released.⁶⁶ Anas b. Mālik al-Anṣārī also holds an *amān*, but it does not stop al-Ḥajjāj from confiscating his possessions as punishment for his support of Ibn al-Jārūd.⁶⁷ The granting, acknowledging, and rejecting of *amāns* is another stage on which tensions between different centers of political authority were played out (see below).

Conflicting Political Ideologies

Al-Ḥajjāj's effectiveness as a governor stands out when compared to the failures of his predecessors. The previous governor of Iraq and brother of the caliph, Bishr b. Marwān, was effectively cashiered because of his inability to deal adequately with the Khārijite insurgents. The caliph instructed him in writing to escalate the pressure on the Khārijites, but placed the reinforcements he sent for this purpose under the command of al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, to Bishr's great chagrin. Khālīd b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 93/711–12), Bishr's temporary successor, wrote a letter to the deserting soldiers. Khālīd was himself no weak administrator and had earned his stripes by forcing the Khārijites to retreat some years earlier. In his letter he addressed the mutineers with al-Ḥajjāj-like severity:

He who defies the governors and rightful authorities brings down God's wrath on himself, merits corporal punishment, and makes himself liable to confiscation of his property as spoil, cancellation of his stipend, and exile to the most remote and evil of lands. I swear by God that after this letter of mine, any rebel that I find I will surely slay, God willing.⁶⁸

63. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 292. In another context al-Ḥajjāj tries to obstruct someone's obtaining an *amān* from a local governor, as discussed by Hannah-Lena Hagemann in her contribution to this issue (nn. 23–24).

64. Crone, *Slaves*, 120.

65. *Wa-qatala Ashyam b. Shaqīq b. Thawr al-Hudhalī wa-yuqālu innahu dakhala fī amānihi man āmana fa-raʾāhu fī majlisihi fa-qāla lahu yā Ashyam akharajta maʿa Ibn al-Jārūd qāla naʿam wa-qad atā ʿafwuka ʿalā dhālika*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 292.

66. *Ibid.*, 295. See also below.

67. *Ibid.*, 298–301. The case of al-Ghaḍbān b. al-Qabʿatharā is less clear. The caliph might have given him an *amān* while he was imprisoned by al-Ḥajjāj or reminded the governor of the protected status that the caliph's *amān* (obtained earlier) gave him, or al-Ḥajjāj might also have released al-Ghaḍbān of his own account because he was impressed by the poet's clever replies (*ibid.*, 291–92, 297). As Andrew Marsham and Chase Robinson have shown in "The Safe-Conduct for the Abbasid ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī (d. 764)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70 (2007): 247–81, a ruler's violation of an *amān* should be considered a literary topos.

68. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:858; translation from Rowson, *Marwānid Restoration*, 6.

Nevertheless, his letter produced no effect at all. No wonder, then, that the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik emphasized that it was Khālīd’s “weakness in dealing with the [registered] soldiers in the garrison (*ahl al-miṣr*)” that had led to his dismissal.⁶⁹ Khālīd’s deputy over Kūfa, ‘Amr b. Ḥurayth, to whom the rebelling soldiers turned next with their request to abandon their station and return to the city, responded with a similarly condemnatory, though equally ineffectual, letter: “You have abandoned your assigned places and come here in rebellion and disobedience.”⁷⁰ Al-Muhallab, in his capacity of general, also spoke to the troops, but his words had as little effect as had those of the others.⁷¹ In short, neither Khālīd, ‘Amr, nor al-Muhallab was able to convince the soldiers to return to their camp.

Al-Ḥajjāj, by contrast, does not leave obedience up to chance or encouraging words. He starts his tenure by stating in no unclear terms what he thinks of the deserting soldiers. Then, as described above, he turns to a show of exemplary force, executing two prominent inhabitants of Kūfa and Baṣra. But for all his ferocity, he does not rely on menace alone. After convincing the troops to return to al-Muhallab, al-Ḥajjāj travels after them to ensure that they do indeed continue all the way to the army camp. He sets up military checkpoints on the road, sends military controllers to hunt down soldiers who have gone into hiding on their way back to al-Muhallab, and demands the soldiers present receipts to confirm their safe arrival in the camp and their renewed enrollment in the *dīwān*.⁷²

The governor’s attitude is thus first and foremost one of Realpolitik: as al-Ḥajjāj has had ample occasion to learn, maintaining control requires constant vigilance, absolute obedience, and merciless punishment of any signs of deviance. Comparing his approach to those of other caliphal agents, al-Ḥajjāj’s policy in relation to the Iraqi troops’ stipends or their refusal to fight does not seem to differ greatly, except in its effectiveness.⁷³ This approach nevertheless represents a particular view on effective rule, which differs from that of other agents of the caliphate, as will be discussed below. Besides his practical motives, al-Ḥajjāj’s actions seem at times to be driven by ideology.

What al-Ḥajjāj’s ideological motivations are becomes clear when we examine what incites his anger. Al-Ḥajjāj’s main concern seems to be the display of obedience and respect toward those in power and strict adherence to God’s laws and intentions. When he reads out his letter of appointment from the caliph, he fumes at the behavior of the Kūfans, who remain seated as the caliph’s greetings are read to them. He demands that they stand up and return the caliph’s written blessing with a spoken reply.⁷⁴ His obsessive punishment of rebels and other disobedient opponents has already been discussed.

69. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 266–67. Al-Mas‘ūdī describes Khālīd as a “weak man” (*rajuḷ ḡa‘īf*) in *Murūj*, 5:291. After only two months in the position, Khālīd was replaced by al-Ḥakām b. Ayyūb b. al-Ḥakam b. Abī ‘Aqīl, to whom al-Ḥajjāj gave instructions to “treat Khālīd badly” (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:872; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 266, 275).

70. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:859; translation from Rowson, *Marwānid Restoration*, 7.

71. Al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 664–65.

72. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 271, 275, 279; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:866; al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 665. For a more extensive description of the fleeing soldiers who, hidden in the Sawad, ask their family members to bring them provisions, see al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:301–302.

73. I would like to thank Pamela Klasova for bringing this point to my attention.

74. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:870; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:292.

Indeed, al-Ḥajjāj has a clear preference for sober military efficiency and order. Although the description of his arrival at Kūfa—alone, on a camel, without an entourage or regalia or indication of rank, and with only the Qurʾān in his hands—is unlikely to be historical, as it makes all sorts of appealing references to pious celebrities of Islamic history, it nevertheless fits al-Ḥajjāj’s general image in the sources.⁷⁵

Al-Ḥajjāj’s dislike of vanity and disdain for worldly attachments can be connected both to his pious reputation and his demonstrated antipathy to ostentatious behavior. His rejection of finery and needlessly and inconveniently long robes is illustrated by his call to al-Hudhayl b. ‘Imrān b. al-Fuḍayl al-Burjumī: “Hey, al-Hudhayl, lift up your robes!” Al-Hudhayl, whose high status among the notables of Baṣra was indeed indicated by the sumptuousness of his garments, has to point out to the new governor that it is not proper to speak in this way to someone like him. Unchastened, al-Ḥajjāj adds to the insult by replying that it might not be appropriate to speak in such a way to someone of al-Hudhayl’s stature, but it is surely fitting to have someone like him executed—a threat seemingly triggered entirely by al-Hudhayl’s perceived overstatement of his elite status.⁷⁶ This scene is echoed in the ridicule that al-Ḥajjāj’s followers direct at two of Ibn al-Jārūd’s leading supporters, including al-Hudhayl, whose robes are so long that one of them trips over them as he approaches the executioner to be beheaded.⁷⁷ When Ibn al-Jārūd’s head is brought to al-Ḥajjāj, he has it washed and decorated with a turban, seemingly to make fun of him.⁷⁸ Others, too, such as Anas b. Mālīk al-Anṣārī (d. 93/712), find that even the most honorable of backgrounds—in Anas’s case more than ten years in the service of the prophet Muḥammad—does not spare them al-Ḥajjāj’s bitter contempt.⁷⁹ The distaste al-Ḥajjāj exhibits for any signs of moral corruption is apparent also at other moments in his career, for example when he scolds the inhabitants of Medīna for debasing themselves on his departure as governor of that city.⁸⁰

Al-Ḥajjāj’s rejection of the trappings and entitlement of elite status is also behind another key motive for his actions—his role as an agent of centralizing Marwānid policy determined to tame local centers of power and bring them firmly under caliphal control. It is al-Hudhayl b. ‘Imrān b. al-Fuḍayl al-Burjumī’s and Ibn al-Jārūd’s roles as the leaders of the revolt that brings al-Ḥajjāj’s fury down upon their heads and inspires his ostentatious acts of disrespect toward them. But his treatment of the tribal leaders seems to be also driven by an underlying practical strategy of suppressing local tribal structures that oppose the expansionist and centralizing ambitions of the Marwānid state.⁸¹ This comes out clearly in al-Ḥajjāj’s confrontation with al-Hudhayl *before* the latter joins Ibn al-Jārūd. Al-Ḥajjāj’s background, like al-Muhallab’s, was modest, and ‘Abd al-Malik’s appointment of al-Ḥajjāj was the product of a Marwānid policy of prioritizing military and administrative skill rather

75. Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5:292.

76. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 279.

77. *Ibid.*, 291.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*, 301.

80. Périer, *Vie*, 69–70.

81. See above, nn. 31–32.

than family relations when selecting governors and other officials.⁸² By contrast, Bishr, the caliph's brother and al-Ḥajjāj's predecessor as governor of Iraq, owed his position to his family connections.⁸³ He held al-Hudhayl in especially high esteem and had tried hard to obstruct al-Muhallab's progress by, for example, exempting tribal chiefs and members of the elite such as al-Hudhayl from military service.⁸⁴ This background may explain in part why al-Ḥajjāj, who had previously not always been entirely supportive of al-Muhallab, does everything he can to assist the commander after having been appointed governor of Iraq.⁸⁵ Perhaps he sees getting rid of symbols of the previous order that favored elite members as part of his mandate. Ibn al-Jārūd and al-Hudhayl, like the other leaders in Ibn al-Jārūd's entourage, represent the old order of the Iraqi *ashrāf*, whose lack of solidarity with those of lesser backgrounds is a recurrent theme in the sources.⁸⁶

A disdain for the old order of partisan tribal politics probably underpins al-Ḥajjāj's dislike of many of Bishr's decisions. Already mentioned is the case of Sharīk b. 'Amr, chief of the Banū Yashkur, whose argument that Bishr had given him a dispensation exempting him from military service because of his ill health is dismissed by al-Ḥajjāj.⁸⁷ Another man who is brought before al-Ḥajjāj charged with leaving the army without permission (*ʿāṣin*) asserts that he in fact "was never registered in the *dīwān* and has never seen an army camp" but is instead a weaver. Al-Ḥajjāj impatiently refuses to consider his claim and orders him to be executed. The swiftness and casualness with which al-Ḥajjāj reaches this verdict is emphasized by the setting of the event: it happens during breakfast, and al-Ḥajjāj's guests do not even have time to put down their food before their appetites are ruined by the execution.⁸⁸ The spectacle of al-Ḥajjāj's absolute power being advertised through an act of gruesome violence resonated both in its contemporary context and later at the Abbasid court, where al-Balādhurī's telling of the events would have been read.

82. Crone, *Slaves*, 39–40.

83. There were, of course, plenty of governors from the caliph's family who were appointed to or remained in office at this time. See, for example, another brother of 'Abd al-Malik, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān, who was appointed governor of Egypt (in office 65–86/685–705). Examples from Egypt and Iran are discussed by Simon Gundelfinger and Peter Verkinderen in "The Governors of al-Shām and Fārs in the Early Islamic Empire: A Comparative Regional Perspective," in *Transregional and Regional Elites: Connecting the Early Islamic Empire*, ed. H.-L. Hagemann and S. Heidemann, 255–330 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020). I would like to thank Hannah-Lena Hagemann for referring me to this article.

84. For al-Muhallab's criticisms of Bishr's privileging of the elites, see al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 663.

85. Hannah-Lena Hagemann has shown that al-Muhallab experienced obstruction from all three governors under whom he served in Iraq; Hagemann, *Khārijites*, 219–27.

86. See, for example, Ibn al-Jārūd's dismissive reaction to the suggestion offered by Maṣqala b. Karib b. Raqaba b. Khawta'a al-'Abdī, whose status was obviously inferior to his, above, at n. 51.

87. The governor might also have been dismayed by the lack of prowess shown by Sharīk b. 'Amr. Compare his response to Sharīk with his praise for the old fighter Zuhra b. Hawiyya (d. 77/696), "an old man who was unable to stand up by himself without a helping hand," but who nevertheless suggested: "I have lost my strength and much of my eye-sight but send me out. I can stay on a saddled riding-camel well enough." Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3:942–43; translation by Rowson, *Marwānid Restoration*.

88. The story is told in the third person in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 277, whereas al-Mubarrad quotes it from an eyewitness in *Kāmil*, 666.

Al-Ḥajjāj's decision to offer a general *amān* to the regular troops who had joined Ibn al-Jārūd seems to be inspired by similar a motive: to favor lower social strata at the expense of members of the elite. Al-Ḥajjāj punishes the leaders in Ibn al-Jārūd's army mercilessly but allows the common soldiers to return to their garrisons.⁸⁹ The choice to punish the leaders of the revolt publicly but let the much larger group of common soldiers go unscathed serves a propagandistic goal but also has obvious practical benefits.⁹⁰ It is striking that the caliph, by contrast, as discussed further below, offers *amāns* to several of Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters among Iraq's *ashrāf* who had been captured and slated for punishment by al-Ḥajjāj.

Even before he deals with Ibn al-Jārūd's lieutenants, al-Ḥajjāj's focus on Iraq's *ashrāf* is evident. To bring the mutinous Kūfan and Baṣran troops to heel, he kills two of the cities' prominent inhabitants. These are ʿUmar b. Ḍābī al-Tamīmī and Sharīk b. ʿAmr, both of whom are *ʿarīfs*, tribal leaders, whose reputation and status has hitherto remained unchallenged.⁹¹ This decision directly contradicts ʿAbd al-Malik's advice to the governor. In a letter to the caliph about the events surrounding the uprising of Ibn al-Jārūd, al-Ḥajjāj writes: "They said: 'Leave our country [and go] to the one who sent you to us!'" ʿAbd al-Malik replies: "If the people of Iraq express doubts about you, kill the insignificant ones (or those of lower status), and the important ones will be afraid of you."⁹²

There are other examples of the caliph's objections to al-Ḥajjāj's methods. Even before al-Ḥajjāj's arrival in Iraq ʿAbd al-Malik has had occasion to restrain the governor, whose severity is notorious, and he has apparently regularly received complaints about it from those on its sharp end in Iraq.⁹³ As a consequence, ʿAbd al-Malik dispatches ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Masʿūd al-Fazārī⁹⁴ to al-Ḥajjāj to look into Iraqi accusations (*fī maḏālihihim*) against the governor.⁹⁵ As mentioned earlier, al-Ḥajjāj flagrantly obstructs ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's work by killing three of Ibn al-Jārūd's followers who are about to be released as a result of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's intervention. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān confronts al-Ḥajjāj about his brutality

89. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 289.

90. As Seth Richardson has shown so well for early Mesopotamian states, practical limitations constrained (premodern) states in imposing de facto sovereignty over their constituencies. Their simultaneous desire and inability to exert absolute domination led them to resort to a rhetoric of threats (of disorder and animosity) and persuasion (promises of order and abundance), which we see playing out in the Ibn al-Jārūd rebellion as well. See S. Richardson, "Early Mesopotamia: The Presumptive State," *Past and Present* 215 (2012): 3–49, at 4, 36; idem, "Before Things Worked: A 'Low-Power' Model of Early Mesopotamia," in *Ancient States and Infrastructural Power: Europe, Asia and America (Empire and After)*, ed. C. Ando and S. Richardson, 17–62 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), at 18–20, 43–44. I would like to thank Mehdy Shaddel for referring me to Richardson's work and Hannah-Lena Hagemann for pointing out that annihilating an entire army would cause all sorts of practical problems. For the role of exemplary violence, see C. Lange and M. Fierro, eds., *Public Violence in Islamic Societies: Power, Discipline, and the Construction of the Public Sphere, 7th–19th Centuries CE* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

91. Both claimed to be entitled to an exemption from fighting. Sharīk b. ʿAmr's claim rested on a ruling of Bishr, seemingly confirming al-Muhallab's claim that Bishr privileged members of the elite.

92. *Fa-idhā rābaka min ahl al-ʿIrāq rayb fa-qtul adnāhum yurʿab minka aqṣāhim*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 294.

93. Dietrich, "Al-Ḥadjjāj."

94. For this individual, see Crone, *Slaves*, 143.

95. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 295.

and blatant defiance of the caliph's orders, following him several steps up the *minbar*.⁹⁶ "What of it?" responds al-Ḥajjāj. Even 'Abd al-Raḥmān's critical report to the caliph and 'Abd al-Malik's expression of support for 'Abd al-Raḥmān and trust in his judgment fail to impress al-Ḥajjāj.⁹⁷

Another remonstrance to the caliph, however, ends less well for the governor. Anas b. Mālīk al-Anṣārī, a follower of Ibn al-Jārūd, is treated especially harshly by al-Ḥajjāj. Despite his excellent reputation, his long tenure in the service of the prophet Muḥammad, his membership of the Baṣran nobility, and his possession of an *amān*, al-Ḥajjāj confiscates his property after Ibn al-Jārūd's death and insults him gravely, accusing him of disloyalty and of repeated alliances with opponents of the Umayyad regime. Anas writes a petition to the caliph to complain about his treatment at the hands of the governor. 'Abd al-Malik calls al-Ḥajjāj to order in no uncertain terms, accusing him of overstepping his remit and exceeding his authority. It is only because he assumes, as he writes, that the scribe who composed Anas's petition must have exaggerated the case that he does not immediately punish al-Ḥajjāj in the most terrible manner. The caliph nevertheless demands that al-Ḥajjāj restore Anas to his position, return his possessions, and ask Anas personally for his forgiveness.⁹⁸ While reading 'Abd al-Malik's letter, al-Ḥajjāj, who has been expecting to get away with dealing with the disobedient Iraqis in his own way, starts to sweat profusely, and his face becomes distorted. As al-Ḥajjāj tries to explain what motivated him to treat Anas in the way that he did, Anas points out that there is always a higher authority that can be invoked against misbehaving officials: "I am powerless vis-à-vis you, so I entrust you to God and the caliph. For he protected my right, which you did not."⁹⁹

This anecdote displays the very different concepts of good governance that the caliph and his governor are drawing upon. For al-Ḥajjāj, the ends justify the means, and if his utilitarian calculations show no practical advantage to be gained from leniency, he sees no reason to refrain from ruthlessness. The caliph's view, by contrast, is encapsulated in the statement of al-Ḥajjāj's general al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra quoted at the beginning of this article: clemency and the possibility of forgiveness are essential instruments of sound government. Mercy to those who have trespassed is granted on the basis of their position and past achievements, as in the case of Anas. It can also be attained by the intercession of someone close to the ruler, as in the cases of a number of Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters who obtain safe-conducts after their defeat. 'Ikrama b. Rib'ī, for example, flees to Syria and then obtains an *amān* from the caliph through the intercession of Yazīd b. Abī al-Nims al-Ghassānī,¹⁰⁰ because 'Abd al-Malik owes the latter a favor. 'Ikrama himself subsequently

96. *Wa-lammā qadima Ibn Mas'ūd 'alā al-Ḥajjāj ṣa'ida al-Ḥajjāj al-minbar wa-ṣa'ida Ibn Mas'ūd darajatayn wa-thalāthan thumma qāla alā man yaṭlub al-Ḥajjāj bi-mazlima fa-l-yaqum*; *ibid.*, 295.

97. *Ibid.*, 296. For a similar mission to look into complaints against al-Ḥajjāj sent a couple of years earlier by the caliph, who in that case, however, stood by his governor, see Hannah-Lena Hagemann's contribution to this issue (n. 38).

98. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 298–300.

99. *Wa-lam yakun bī 'alayka quwwa fa-wakaltuka ilā allāh 'azza wa-jalla wa-ilā amīr al-mu'minīn fa-ḥafiẓa min ḥaqqī mā lam taḥfazhu*; *ibid.*, 301.

100. For him, see Crone, *Slaves*, 163.

intervenes with the caliph on behalf of al-Ghaḍbān b. al-Qaba^ʿtharā;¹⁰¹ the caliph grants al-Ghaḍbān an *amān*, which causes al-Ḥajjāj to release him. ʿAbd Allāh b. Faḍāla flees to Khurāsān but is eventually imprisoned by al-Ḥajjāj. His wife speaks on his behalf to ʿAbd al-Malik’s wife, who speaks to her husband, who then asks al-Ḥajjāj to release him.¹⁰² Anas, too, is rehabilitated thanks to his petition to ʿAbd al-Malik, as described above.

These accounts serve an obvious rhetorical goal—namely, to present the caliph as a symbol of just rule and the ultimate appeals authority for the inhabitants of the caliphate. They also, however, demonstrate the radically different positions that could coexist in the same political structure. Rather than competitors for power, with al-Ḥajjāj cynically undermining the caliph’s orders and political aims, al-Ḥajjāj and the caliph represent two different sources of authority in operation in the Umayyad caliphate, both at the level of the state and its representatives and among its inhabitants. As governor of a notoriously rebellious province, al-Ḥajjāj upholds a different model and practice of good governance than does the caliph, the symbol of absolute rule for all those in his realm.

Interestingly, some of the men opposing the Umayyad regime were serial rebels, having variously joined the rebellions of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, and al-Mukhtār (d. 67/687) before enlisting with Ibn al-Jārūd, and some of them subsequently going on to join Ibn al-Ashʿath’s (d. 704) uprising. But this does not prevent the caliph from allowing them to reintegrate into society and even remain at the center of power.¹⁰³ Hannah-Lena Hagemann makes the same observation in relation to the supporters of Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī (d. 77/697) in her contribution to this issue, and Reza Huseini, in his article, notes that some of the participants in al-Ḥārith b. Surayj’s uprising in Khurāsān (116–28/734–46) had taken part in other rebellions before his. On the one hand, this shows how easily the dissatisfactions of these Iraqi *ashrāf* and their followers could be ignited by a variety of different sparks. On the other, it demonstrates the caliph’s implementation of the maxim that forgiveness and the possibility of rehabilitation are essential tools of sound rulership.¹⁰⁴

But it is not only because he feared that the absence of the possibility of rehabilitation would drive people away that ʿAbd al-Malik exercised forgiveness. The caliph needed the support of the *ashrāf*, just as he needed the support and cooperation of the inhabitants of the empire in general. Clemency, even against the will of some lower administrators or in defiance of their actions, was one of the tools the caliph could wield within the fragmented

101. For him, see *ibid.*, 162.

102. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 290–91.

103. Al-Ḥajjāj accuses Anas of having supported ʿAlī, then Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, and finally Ibn al-Jārūd; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 298. See also the names of Ibn al-Jārūd’s followers who are subsequently found in Ibn al-Ashʿath’s army in *ibid.*, 302–3.

104. See also the integration of another rebel by the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik discussed by Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych in “Umayyad Panegyric and the Poetics of Islamic Hegemony: Al-Akhtal’s Khaffa al-Qatinu (‘Those That Dwelt with You Have Left in Haste’),” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28 (1997): 89–122. Marsham and Robinson list a number of rebels, including some who initially refused a safe-conduct, who were offered *amāns* at defeat in “Safe-Conduct,” 254, 278, 280. By contrast, when the Kharijite Hārūn al-Shārī was captured and brought to Baghdad in 283/896 it was explicitly ‘without amnesty’ (*min ghayr amān*) (al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, 8:168).

political structure of the early Umayyad empire. He was the final and superior fount of justice. Being able to govern through exceptions demonstrated that he stood above the rules. Paradoxically, it was the caliph's position in a web of power-holders, a multinodal power structure, rather than at the top of a hierarchical pyramid, that motivated his quintessential behavior. Ultimately, he needed the *ashrāf* to maintain this position, as he competed with other figures of authority such as his governors and the troops.

It was thus critical that he provide ways for his subjects to express their disagreement with his policies and with those of his appointees in some fashion. Such diverging viewpoints could be articulated in petitions and complaints. Refusing to follow particular orders fell, to a certain extent, in the same category. In short, protest against unjust behavior was allowed within the parameters of political communication and just governance. When al-Ḥajjāj asks al-Muhallab to kill potential rebels in his army and to report the names of deserters so he can put them or their relatives to death, al-Muhallab replies: "I have only obedient men (*muṭīʿ*) here . . . so send over to me those persons whom you have called rebels (*ʿuṣāṭ*), because they are but brave horsemen (*fursān abṭāl*) and I hope that Allāh may kill the enemy through them."¹⁰⁵ In other words, al-Muhallab sees those who have expressed disagreement with al-Ḥajjāj's policy not as rebels who should be killed but rather as soldiers whose statements of dissent are, in his view, appropriate. By doing so, al-Muhallab seeks to accomplish what he recommends to al-Ḥajjāj in the letter quoted earlier: continuing to work with people after they have expressed disagreement, even to the point of insubordination, will keep them on board.

Al-Ḥajjāj, by contrast, does exactly what al-Muhallab warns against: he sees dissenters not as communicating acceptable disagreement within the state structure but as having left the community, and he cannot and will not forgive them. Thereby, however, he drives them to total rejection and rebellion. He is unmoved by appeals from members of his entourage to pardon Ibn al-Jārūd's deputies al-Hudhayl and ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥakīm.¹⁰⁶ Leading followers of Ibn al-Jārūd are summarily killed, as are those who join the later revolt of Ibn al-Ashʿath. On other occasions he even reverses pardons when evidence of past misdemeanors emerges.¹⁰⁷ Even allowing for later constructions of a forgiving caliph set against a ruthless governor (the product of Abbasid historians writing in a more fixed and clearly demarcated imperial world), al-Ḥajjāj's role and function on the ground in the famously rebellious province of Iraq called for a tighter and more rigorous approach to governance and authority. When al-Balādhurī writes that al-Ḥajjāj was the first to execute rebels, he is precisely noting and criticizing the governor's lack of leniency in his policies.¹⁰⁸

105. Al-Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 667.

106. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 291.

107. Such as having participated in ʿUthmān's killing or having said something critical about his (al-Ḥajjāj's) behavior; *ibid.*, 294–95, 302.

108. For the quotation, see above, n. 2. For the practice of executing rebels, see A. Marsham, "Attitudes to the Use of Fire in Executions in Late Antiquity and Early Islam: The Burning of Heretics and Rebels in Late Umayyad Iraq," in *Violence in Islamic Thought: From the Qurʾān to the Mongols*, ed. R. Gleave and I. Kristó-Nagy, 106–27 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); *idem*, "Public Execution in the Umayyad Period: Early Islamic Punitive Practice and Its Late Antique Context," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 11 (2011): 101–36; S. W. Anthony, *Crucifixion and Death as Spectacle: Umayyad Crucifixion in Its Late Antique Context* (New Haven, CT:

Conclusion

Ibn al-Jārūd's uprising was not the only expression of grievance in Umayyad Iraq. Khārijites and 'Alids had been calling for autonomy, justice, and equality for decades, and they would continue to do so.¹⁰⁹ Most notably, the uprisings under Muṭarrif (see Hagemann's article in this issue) and Ibn al-Asha'ath expressed similar dissatisfactions with the governor's rule, even if other demands, too, were mobilized in the course of the events.

So how to interpret Ibn al-Jārūd's movement and the way it was documented? The first point to acknowledge is the place that violent protest movements played in the eighth-century CE political landscape. The Umayyad caliphate was far from able to enforce absolute hegemony over its domains and the people and resources within its borders. The uprising of Ibn al-Jārūd occurred at a time when the Marwānid dynasty was trying to tighten its grip. This effort ran into conflict with existing patterns of power and authority, especially those of the *ashrāf*, who staged rebellions all over the caliphate.¹¹⁰ At the same time, the constant assertions of autonomy in the form of rebellions and the necessity of suppressing these highlighted the state's lack of definitive territorial control.¹¹¹

The second point is that this rebellion, like others, was an integral element of the political landscape. Both in their use of the channels of political communication and their appeal to diverse authorities within a multinodal system, revolts operated as a form of negotiation for rights and as a solution to conflicts. Despite having ignored requests to return to their military camps, the garrisons of Kūfa and Baṣra eventually complied with al-Ḥajjāj's orders. The demand that soldiers enrolled in the *dīwān* should follow orders to fight was, after all, not entirely unjustified. The real problem arose when the governor overruled his predecessor's decision to increase the soldiers' stipends. This the soldiers experienced as unjust and unlawful. First, Ibn al-Jārūd and his supporters sought to address the threat of receiving less pay via regular administrative channels. When al-Ḥajjāj refused, their next step was to demand his removal as governor, which they did through the existing governance structures of the empire, writing to 'Abd al-Malik and asking him to appoint a substitute governor, as was common procedure in Iraq and other provinces. They did not request that someone of their own constituency be appointed governor, nor did they question the legitimacy of Umayyad rule. Instead, they clearly intended to remain within the caliphal system in terms of ideology, administrative organization, and government. Their intention was not to fight al-Ḥajjāj, let alone kill him; their aim was simply to be ruled by a different caliphally appointed governor. Even as Ibn al-Jārūd's support grew, al-Ḥajjāj refused to relent, and Ibn al-Jārūd did not see a need to back down either. A confrontation on the battlefield was thus inevitable. When Ibn al-Jārūd was killed, his supporters disbanded their movement as easily as they had formed it. Conversely, his death did not mean the

American Oriental Society, 2014).

109. Sayed, *Die Revolte*, 32.

110. Alon Dar is currently examining such rebellions in his doctoral thesis research. Already two centuries earlier, the Iraqis and Egyptians who traveled to Medina to protest Caliph 'Uthmān's (r. 23–35/644–56) centralizing policy eventually murdered him.

111. Richardson, "Presumptive State," 44; idem, "Before Things Worked," 21–28.

end of expressions of discontent with al-Ḥajjāj's rule. As al-Ḥajjāj continued to attack the position and privileges of the *ashrāf* in Iraq, general dissatisfaction with the nature of Umayyad rule grew.

Meanwhile, the concerns of Ibn al-Jārūd and his men were concrete and limited to the protection of their stipends. They did not consider themselves opponents of the Umayyad regime in Iraq, and several of Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters disliked the idea of standing up against the appointed authorities, especially once violent conflict seemed unavoidable. It might indeed have been the imminent reality of military confrontation that motivated many of his followers to switch sides to al-Ḥajjāj.¹¹² Just as the Iraqi troops appealed to sources of authority other than the governor (the caliph, justice, history, precedence), al-Ḥajjāj fulfilled a role different from that of other sources of power in the caliphate. These were not competing claims to control and command, but rather complementary elements in a political system in which the ruler did not enjoy absolute hegemony. The objectives of the caliph and his governor coincided in the long-term interests of the caliphate, but their roles therein differed. Al-Ḥajjāj was responsible for executing the Marwānids' centralizing policy in an especially troublesome province. Maintaining order and establishing control on the ground were his main concerns. The caliph 'Abd al-Malik operated on a very different moral and political level, as he claimed (but could not actually wield) absolute, God-approved sovereignty. Finally, there is the general al-Muhallab, whose thoughts on good governance quoted at the beginning of this article can be explained as much by his position as military leader on the battlefield as by any political philosophy. The mercy shown by the general and the caliph but not by the governor was not only a sign of the workings of the multinodal power structure of the caliphate; it also reflected their different functions within the flexible political structure.

On the morning of the battle, Ibn al-Jārūd and his most loyal supporters, including al-Hudhayl and 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥakīm, knew that they had no other option than to fight al-Ḥajjāj, as the road to his forgiveness was now closed.¹¹³ With their forces having dwindled, as more and more of their followers had switched sides during the night, their ability to force al-Ḥajjāj to back down with the threat of defeat disappeared too. As one of Ibn al-Jārūd's supporters put it: "The time of good ideas is gone; now all that is left is patience."¹¹⁴ Ibn al-Jārūd was so taken aback by this turn of events that he put his armor on

112. The role of (tribal) factionalism in their decision is hard to establish. On the one hand, some of those changing sides invoked tribal solidarity. For example, 'Abbād b. al-Ḥuṣayn al-Ḥabaṭī might have been driven to al-Ḥajjāj by an insult concerning his tribal affiliation (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 287). Qutayba b. Muslim explained his joining al-Ḥajjāj's camp by his tribal background: a Qaysī should not fight al-Ḥajjāj (ibid., 287). Cf. Dixon, *Umayyad Caliphate*, 146, and Sayed, *Die Revolte*, 130, who both see factionalism as the main reason for the failure of Ibn al-Jārūd's movement. On the other hand, the tribal lines between the two parties were not absolute and alliances were not fixed, neither in this conflict nor in others.

113. See also Hagemann's observation that fear of al-Ḥajjāj's reaction drove protestors to rebel openly as negotiations broke down in her contribution to this issue. Other examples of negotiations preceding rebellion are discussed by A. Elad, "The Siege of Wasit (132/749): Some Aspects of Abbasid and Alid Relations at the Beginning of Abbasid Rule," in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilisation: In Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon, 59–90 (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

114. *Wa-qaḍ dhahaba al-ra'y wa-baqiya al-ṣabr*; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 288.

the wrong way around.¹¹⁵

Ibn al-Jārūd did not start off as a rebel opponent of the Umayyad regime. Rather, it was al-Ḥajjāj's refusal to reconsider his decision to lower the troops' stipends and to acknowledge their perception of unjust treatment that drove Ibn al-Jārūd further and further along the road to rebellion. Unable to achieve redress for their grievances in any other way, Ibn al-Jārūd and his men found themselves on the battlefield facing al-Ḥajjāj's army in open combat. The final step al-Ḥajjāj took toward turning Ibn al-Jārūd's movement into a rebellion was the crucifixion of the bodies of Ibn al-Jārūd, al-Hudhayl, and 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥakīm and the dispatch of the heads of Ibn al-Jārūd's leading supporters to al-Muhallab as a warning to anyone contemplating revolt against the Umayyads.¹¹⁶ In other words, al-Ḥajjāj was as instrumental in creating Ibn al-Jārūd's rebellion as Ibn al-Jārūd and his followers themselves were. Two articles in the present issue—by Hannah-Lena Hagemann and Alon Dar—discuss other instances in which conflict resolution between dissenters and an Umayyad governor broke down. We cannot yet determine whether the reason that conflicts turned into open rebellion in provinces under al-Ḥajjāj's rule more often than they did elsewhere lay in his methods or in the historical conditions in Iraq of the time. In any case, subsequent rebellions, such as that of Ibn al-Ash'ath, started off with the same desire to remove the governor, even if the movement later took on a religious-political program. As Reza Huseini shows in his article, rebellions could appeal to people bearing a variety of grudges who were dissatisfied for different reasons, and the movements might, moreover, develop new causes along the way.

Our sources are inclined to present a clear-cut picture of an absolute ruler forced to keep a tight lid on acts of protestation. Any opposition group was thus quickly labeled rebellious and expressions of disagreement automatically characterized as attempts to overthrow the whole system on ideological or political grounds. What Ibn al-Jārūd's movement and al-Ḥajjāj's and 'Abd al-Malik's interactions with its adherents show, however, is that such acts of dissent, in the various guises they took, were in fact an inherent part of the caliphate's governance.

115. *Fada'ā Ibn al-Jārūd bi-dir' fa-labisahā maqlūba fa-taṭayyara*; *ibid.*

116. For the symbolic function of public execution and punishment, especially crucifixion, see Anthony, *Crucifixion*; Marsham, "Public Execution"; T. Seidensticker, "Responses to Crucifixion in the Islamic World (1st–7th/7th–13th centuries)," in Lange and Fierro, *Public Violence*, 203–16; E. K. Rowson, "Reveal or Conceal: Public Humiliation and Banishment as Punishments in Early Islamic Times," in Lange and Fierro, *Public Violence*, 119–29; P. M. Sijpesteijn, "Shaving Hair and Beards in Early Islamic Egypt: An Arab Innovation?," *Al-Masāq* 25 (2018): 9–25. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr also suffered at the hands of al-Ḥajjāj after his defeat in Mecca, even if crucifixion was expressly supposed to be used not for rebels but solely for highway robbers (Hagemann, *Khārijites*, 201–2, 238).

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