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Framing the conquest: Bactrian local rulers and Arab muslim domination of Bactria (31-128 AH/651-746 CE)

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Framing the Conquest

Bactrian Local Rulers and Arab Muslim Domination of

Bactria (31–128 AH/651–746 CE)

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Table of Contents

List of figures -----	vii
Note on conventions -----	viii
Acknowledgements -----	x
Introduction -----	1
1. A historical overview-----	3
2. Sources -----	14
2.1 Group one: narratives -----	15
2.1.1 The <i>futūḥ</i> literature -----	15
2.1.2 Local histories -----	21
2.1.3 Geographical accounts-----	23
2.1.4 Chinese narratives -----	24
2.1.5 Documentary sources-----	25
2.1.6 Numismatic and archaeological data -----	27
3. Methodology -----	30
4. Organisation of chapters -----	31
Chapter One: Conceptualising the Region	
Introduction-----	35
1.1. Geography of Bactria -----	36
1.1.1 Name and location-----	36
1.1.2 Bactria as part of a shatter zone-----	40
1.1.3 Western Bactria -----	41
1.1.4 Bactria proper-----	43
1.1.5 Southern Bactria -----	44
1.1.6 Eastern Bactria-----	45
1.1.7 Northern Bactria -----	46
1.2. Impacts of the shatter zone -----	49
1.2.1 Settlement patterns: sedentary and pastoral life-----	50
1.2.2 Interconnectivity -----	51
1.2.3 Religious diversity -----	52
1.2.4 Buddhism-----	54
1.2.5 Worshipping Iranian deities -----	56
1.2.6 Christianity and Judaism -----	59
1.2.7 A place for all religions -----	62

1.2.8 Political organisation -----	64
Conclusion-----	66
Chapter Two: Bactrian Local Rulers and Overlords	
Introduction-----	69
2.1. Local autonomy in Bactria-----	70
2.1.1 Areas of political control in Bactria -----	71
2.1.2 Western Bactria -----	71
2.1.3 Bactria proper-----	80
2.1.4 Southern Bactria -----	84
2.1.5 Eastern Bactria-----	87
2.1.6 Northern Bactria -----	90
2.2. Background of local autonomy in Bactria -----	92
2.3. Overlordship in Bactria -----	97
2.3.1 Overlordship: definition and components -----	98
2.3.2 Rituals of overlordship -----	100
2.3.3 Rendering service to overlord-----	103
Conclusion-----	106
Chapter Three: Conquests Through Negotiation: First Fifty Years (31–86/651–705)	
Introduction-----	109
3.1. Sasanian Khurasan on the eve of the conquests -----	111
3.1.1 Sasanian Khurasan's geography and politics-----	111
3.1.2 Political competition in the frontier region of Khurasan -----	113
3.1.3 The last Sasanian king and local politics in Khurasan -----	116
3.2. Arab Muslims and local rulers in Sasanian Khurasan-----	120
3.2.1 The Arab Muslims' participation in local politics in Khurasan -----	122
3.2.2 The fall of Nishapur and its impact on the region -----	127
3.2.3 Entering Western Bactria: from Marw al-Rūd to Balkh -----	129
3.2.4 Return to Iraq -----	132
3.3. Establishment of Umayyad authority in Sasanian Khurasan-----	133
3.3.1 The Umayyad's claim to Khurasan -----	133
3.3.2 The great migration to Khurasan -----	135
3.3.3 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim's de facto independence in Khurasan -----	139
3.3.4 The kingdom of Mūsā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim in Tirmidh-----	142
3.3.5 The Muhallabids between Mūsā and the Umayyads -----	144

3.3.6 <i>The Muhallabids and Bactrian local rulers</i> -----	148
Conclusion-----	151
Chapter Four: Conquests Through Violence: Second Fifty Years (86–128/705–746)	
Introduction-----	156
4.1. The Umayyads' new policy towards the East -----	157
4.1.1 <i>Making a new political order in Khurasan</i> -----	158
4.1.2 <i>Forming armies of the conquests</i> -----	160
4.1.3 <i>Interaction with Bactrian local rulers to facilitate the conquests</i> -----	162
4.1.4 <i>Qutayba's conquests in Sogdiana and Bactrian rulers' responses</i> -----	166
4.2. Incorporating Bactrian local rulers -----	170
4.2.1 <i>The rebellion of the nizak in Bactria</i> -----	170
4.2.2 <i>Incorporation of Bactria into Umayyad Khurasan</i> -----	176
4.2.3 <i>The end of the Umayyad conquests in Bactria</i> -----	181
4.3. The rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj in Bactria-----	183
4.3.1 <i>Al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and Bactrian local rulers</i> -----	184
4.3.2 <i>Bactrian rulers between the Umayyads and the Türgesh Turks</i> -----	186
4.3.3 <i>Re-consolidation of Umayyad authority in Bactria</i> -----	189
Conclusion-----	192
Chapter Five: Bactria Under the Umayyads' Control	
Introduction-----	195
5.1. The areas under Umayyads' direct control -----	195
5.1.1 <i>Obtaining political influence in western Bactria</i> -----	195
5.1.2 <i>Umayyad political and military reforms</i> -----	198
5.1.3 <i>Imposing direct control over western Bactria</i> -----	202
5.1.4 <i>Re-establishing Umayyads' direct control over western Bactria</i> -----	205
5.2. The areas under Umayyads' indirect control -----	208
5.2.1 <i>Offering areas to the Umayyads</i> -----	209
5.2.2 <i>The fidya-rahn process</i> -----	211
Conclusion-----	217
Chapter Six: Social Impacts of the Umayyad Control over Bactria	
Introduction-----	221
6.1. Arab Muslim settlement pattern in Bactria -----	222
6.1.1 <i>Military garrisons</i> -----	224
6.1.2 <i>A web of military settlements in Bactria</i> -----	227

6.1.3 <i>Moving into the main cities to live among the locals</i> -----	230
6.2. Spread of Arabic language and culture in Bactria-----	232
6.2.1 <i>Bilingualism</i> -----	232
6.2.2 <i>Adopting Arabic personal names</i> -----	233
6.2.3 <i>Influence of Arabic letter writing formula on Bactrian</i> -----	235
6.2.4 <i>Arabic as an administrative language in Bactria</i> -----	236
6.2.5 <i>The rise and spread of New Persian</i> -----	239
6.3. Spread of Islamic institutions and infrastructures in Bactria-----	243
6.3.1 <i>Building mosques in Bactria</i> -----	244
6.3.2 <i>Individuals' conversion to Islam</i> -----	251
6.3.3 <i>Influence of Islamic legal regulations</i> -----	259
6.3.4 <i>Expansion of Umayyad fiscal system in Bactria</i> -----	261
6.3.5 <i>Bactria and Arabicisation and Islamicisation discourse</i> -----	266
Conclusion-----	272
Conclusion: A New Framing for the Conquests -----	274
Bibliography -----	280
Figures -----	317
Summary -----	333
Samenvatting -----	334
Curriculum Vitae -----	335

List of Figures

Figure 1. The direction of Ibn ‘Āmir’s march towards Khurasan -----	317
Figure 2. Makran-Pamir shatter zone -----	318
Figure 3. General view of Bactria -----	318
Figure 4. A view of Western Bactria -----	319
Figure 5. A view of Bactria Proper -----	319
Figure 6. A view of the Balkh River creating the Oasis -----	320
Figure 7. A view of Khulm Pass -----	320
Figure 8. A view of Khulm Valley-----	321
Figure 9. A view of Southern Bactria -----	321
Figure 10. A view of the villages in Southern Bactria -----	322
Figure 11. A view of Eastern Bactria-----	322
Figure 12. A view of Northern Bactria-----	323
Figure 13–15. A view of defensive walls in Balkh-----	323-24
Figure 16. Remains of the Naw Bahar -----	325
Figure 17. Bactrian principalities-----	325
Figure 18. Diagram of Bactrian local rulers and their overlord -----	326
Figure 19. The direction of al-Aḥnaf’s campaign in western Bactria -----	326
Figure 20. Qutayba’s military campiness in Bactria -----	327
Figure 21. Bactrian local rulers between the Umayyads and the Turks -----	327
Figure 22. Areas under Umayyad’s control -----	328
Figure 23–26. Masjid-i Haji Piyāda, Balkh-----	329-331

Note on conventions

The Arabic transliteration follows the system employed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*. However, placenames are not transliterated. Names of the regions like the Hijaz, Iraq, and Khurasan or the areas like Faryab, Baghlan, Samarkand, Nishapur and Kunduz are spelt commonly, which can be found on Google Maps easily. All Arabic words and technical terms are italicised. Exceptions are those terms that are familiar in English usage (e.g., Islam, caliph, hajj, Qur'an). Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Arabic words and passages are my own.

Bactrian personal names and technical terms are not transliterated. However, their forms in the Greek alphabet reproduced by Nicholas Sims-Williams are given to allow the reader to see how they look in Bactrian documents. Place names like Samangan, spelt as Samingan (*σαμινγανο*) in Bactrian documents, remain the same only when the relevant Bactrian document is discussed. The Turkic titles like *χαγανο* and *ταρχανο* that are mentioned in Bactrian documents and also known from the Arabic narratives follow Arabic transliteration based on the *IJMES* guidelines. Bactrian names mentioned in Arabic documents follow the same idea. Translation of Bactrian texts is all borrowed from Sims-Williams. The contextualisation of the Bactrian documents is mine, and any possible misinterpretation of them is only mine and not the translator's. Transliteration of the Sogdian names and technical terms follows the English translation of V. A. Livshits' *Sogdian epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015). Transliteration of Sanskrit terms follows the *IAST* system.

Transliteration of Middle Persian names and technical terms follow D. N. MacKenzie's *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). Exceptions are the titles and names of the Sasanian kings that are spelled commonly as in most of the publications related the Sasanian history. For instance, *šāh*, *Pērōz*, *Husraw*, *Šābuhr* and *Xwarāsān* are spelled as *shāh*, *Peroz*, *Khusrow*, *Shapur* and *Khurasan*. The terms such as *xwadāy* and personal names like *Xwarazād* that are mentioned in the Arabic narratives related to the conquests follow Arabic transliteration based on the *IJMES* guidelines. Transliteration of New Persian names and technical terms follows the *IJMES* transliteration guidelines. Like the Arabic, translation of Persian terms and passages are mine.

Throughout the dissertation, Islamic lunar *hijrī* (AH) and Common Era (CE) dating are ordinarily used when introducing events. If the year is according to the Bactrian calendar, it is

mentioned, and the equivalent year in Common Era (CE) is provided. If a date does not follow CE, it represents Common Era.

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Introduction

In the summer of the year 30/651, a group of Arab Muslim¹ forces led by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir (4–59/625–679) crossed the great desert of Kirman (*mafāza*) and arrived in Nishapur, an important city in Sasanian Khurasan.² They captured the city by force (*‘anwatan*). Ibn ‘Āmir then dispatched his soldiers who conquered all of the major cities in the vicinity. Khurasan, meaning the “East” in the Middle Persian language, was a vast region stretching from Qumis in present-day Iran to the Amu Darya (Oxus River) and included northern parts of the Hindukush mountains.³ However, at the time of Ibn ‘Āmir’s conquest, Sasanian Khurasan did not include the regions to the east of the Marw al-Rūd River.⁴ After establishing Sasanian Khurasan, Ibn ‘Āmir sent a group of his soldiers accompanied by a unit of the former Sasanian cavalry towards Bactria, the region that stretched from Marw al-Rūd to Badakhshan and included the river valleys on both sides of the Amu Darya.⁵ They faced some resistance but quickly reached Balkh, and after capturing it, they moved towards Khwarazm to the north of Amu Darya. Whether they reached there or not is unknown. Within two years, between 31–33/651–53, all major cities from Nishapur to Balkh submitted to Ibn ‘Āmir and paid tributes in cash and kind. Eventually, Ibn ‘Āmir returned to Mecca to thank God for his extraordinary achievements. His return signified the end of the conquests of Sasanian Khurasan (Figure 1).⁶

The rapid victory over Sasanian Khurasan is recorded in the narrative of Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) in his *Futūḥ al-buldān* (“Incorporation of Cities”) written two

¹ Scholars of early Islamic history have different ideas about the identity of the seventh-century Arabian conquerors. They suggested terms such as ‘Arab’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Arab Muslim’ and ‘early Muslim’. This dissertation utilises Arab Muslim as an umbrella term for the diverse groups of conquerors. For a discussion on these terms, see Fred MacGrew Donner, “From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-identity in the Early Islamic Community,” *al-Abḥath* 50–51 (2002–03): 9–53; Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), and “Identity and Social Formation in the Early Caliphate,” in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (London: Routledge, 2017), 129–158; Robert G. Hoyland, “Reflections on the Identity of the Arabian Conquerors of the Seventh-Century Middle East,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 25 (2017): 113–140.

² For his biography, see Shadi Da‘i Reza‘i Muqaddam, “‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir b. Kurayz,” trans. Farzin Negahban, *Encyclopedia Islamica*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-islamica/abd-allah-b-amir-b-kurayz> (accessed on 18 October 2022).

³ See chapter three, section 3.1.1.

⁴ M. A. Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), 5; Mark David Luce, “Frontier Process: Umayyad Khurāsān” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 15–27; Robert Haug, *The Eastern Frontier: Limits of Empire in Late Antique and Early Medieval Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019), 10.

⁵ For the definition of Bactria, see the section on Name and Location in chapter one, section 1.1.1.

⁶ Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 404–408; For the English translation of al-Balādhurī’s narratives on the conquests of Khurasan, see Hugh Kennedy, *History of the Arab Invasions: The Conquest of the Lands: A New Translation of al-Baladhuri’s Futuh al-Buldan* (Bloomsbury: I. B. Tauris, 2022), 399–413.

centuries after the actual events happened.⁷ Other Muslim authors—who lived at the same time or later—compiled reports related to the Arab Muslim conquests (*futūḥ*) that repeated more or less the same story.⁸ The protagonist, Ibn ‘Āmir, was born and grew up in the Hijaz and later served his uncle ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, the third Commander of Believers (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*), as the leader of forces stationed in Basra in the south of Iraq. Al-Balādhurī’s report creates an impression that Sasanian Khurasan, which was a vast territory with many cities and local rulers, submitted to the young Ibn ‘Āmir in a short period. The speed of the conquests and their scope were extraordinary. However, al-Balādhurī’s report does not offer any details about the process of the conquest. The Arab Muslim military capabilities and logistical issues, as well as the geographical formations they went through and the local political situation in the conquered areas, are not discussed. The absence of information on the *process* of the conquests creates serious questions. Did they really happen in the way they are reported? How did the Arab Muslim forces conquer such a vast region? Our suspicions increase further if we consider that shortly before these events, the Sasanian king Yazdgird III (r. 632–651) was murdered in Marw.⁹ He attempted to bring the region under his control. How did Ibn ‘Āmir conquer Khurasan while the Sasanian king failed?

The above-mentioned story and its problems do not end here. Arabic historical narratives related to the conquests show that the Umayyads (661–750) expanded their rule over the Marw region. They moved further east, incorporated Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm, and formed the Umayyad province of Khurasan that covered all these conquered regions, but could not keep them consistently under firm control. For a century, they were busy conquering and reconquering these regions. Khurasan was the eastern frontier (*thaghr al-mashriq*) of the empire, the most challenging region for the Umayyads to control.¹⁰ Apart from local rulers, they fought the Tūgresh, a confederation of Turkic groups, who contested the Umayyads over control of the East. In addition, the Umayyads sent army after army from Syria and Iraq to Khurasan, in order to secure the region. Nevertheless, they could not bring political stability to the conquered lands. Only by the end of the Umayyad period were most local rulers

⁷ For his biography, see Ryan J. Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography: The Futuh al-Buldan of al-Baladhuri* (London. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2020).

⁸ These narratives are discussed in the section in this Introduction, sources 2.1.1

⁹ See the detail in chapter three, section 3.1.3.

¹⁰ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1879–81), 8: 860.

incorporated within the political structure of Umayyad Khurasan.¹¹ The Arabic narratives also show that the Umayyads faced many rebellions led by various local rulers and Arab Muslim leaders. Eventually, Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī (d. 137/754) united the Khurasanis under his banner, conquered Umayyad Khurasan, and then turned westward, removed the Umayyad caliph, and replaced him with the Abbasids.¹²

The dichotomy between rapid conquests and difficult control creates several questions. What did bring the Arab Muslims to the Sasanian Khurasan? How did this region fall to the Arab Muslims so quickly at the beginning? Which areas did Arab Muslims control? Why did the Umayyads face so many challenges to control this region? Are we missing anything in the story of the conquests of Khurasan? By focussing on Bactria as a case study, this dissertation will show that the missing parts in the conquest story are the local rulers and their responses to the conquests. The local political situation significantly facilitated the rapid conquests at the beginning. However, the local rulers' concerns for their political autonomy threatened by the Umayyads imposed challenges to the latter. An overview of the existing literature helps us know what has already been said about the conquests of Khurasan and what is the position of Bactria and its rulers in this literature. This will clarify the historical context and the approach taken by this dissertation.

1. A historical overview

There are three different views on the Arab Muslim conquests of the eastern Iranian regions (i.e., Sasanian Khurasan, Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm that later formed the Umayyad

¹¹ Umayyad Khurasan was a common term applied to all areas conquered by the Umayyads in the east. It combined Sasanian Khurasan, Khawarazm, Bactria, Sogdiana and Jurjan (see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 12–13); For further information on Greater Khurasan, see Rante Rocco, ed., *Greater Khorasan, History, Geography, Archaeology and Material Culture. Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East*, vol. 29 (Berlin and Munich: Walter de Gruyter, 2015).

¹² There is a rich bibliography on the Abbasid Revolution. See, for instance, Shaban, *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*; Elton L. Daniel, *The political and social history of Khurasan under Abbasid rule, 747–820* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979); Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the 'Abbāsīd State-Incubation of a Revolt* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press-The Hebrew University, 1983), and *Revolt: The Social and Military Aspects of the 'Abbāsīd Revolution* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1990); Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994); Salih Said Agha, *The Revolution which Toppled the Umayyads: Neither Arab nor 'Abbāsīd, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts*. Leiden: Brill, 2003; Étienne de la Vaissière, "The 'Abbāsīd Revolution in Marw: New Data," *Der Islam* 95, 1 (2018): 110–146; Said Reza Huseini, "The Rebellion of Hārith b. Surayj (116–128/734–746): A Local Perspective," in *Acts of Rebellion and Revolt in the Early Islamic Caliphate*, ed. Petra Sijpesteijn and Alon Dar, Special Issue, *Al-Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 516–53.

Khurasan).¹³ The first one can be called the Sasanian-centric view, in which the eastern regions are considered as a political continuum with the rest of the Sasanian empire. It addresses the conquests of these regions as a geographically sequential process that began with the collapse of Sasanian political power in the western parts of the empire. According to this approach, the Sasanian empire is seen as a political unit with its political centre in Ctesiphon.¹⁴ The collapse of its capital automatically led to the fall of the rest of the empire.¹⁵ Khurasan was the northeastern frontier of the empire. The last Sasanian king, Yazdgird, took refuge there to create a regional alliance to reclaim his lost throne, but he was killed in 651 in Marw.¹⁶ For the advocates of this view, how or why the Arab Muslim conquests of the eastern regions were not a question that needed to be answered. Instead, scholars working within this paradigm considered the rapid fall of the Sasanians an *enigma*. How could the Sasanian empire extending from Sogdiana to Egypt and Anatolia have fallen to the Arab Muslims in a short time? There are various reasons and factors such as: the structure of the Sasanian empire;¹⁷ political chaos after the death of Khusrow II (r. 590–628);¹⁸ the cruelty of the Zoroastrian church towards

¹³ This dissertation does not use terminologies such as ‘Central Asia’, ‘Transoxiana’ or ‘Turkestan’ unless they appear in the quotation. These terminologies are exonyms and do not exist in the local sources. Instead, it uses ‘the eastern Iranian regions’ for Sasanian Khurasan, Sogdiana, Bactria and Khwarazm. The reason is that the Middle Iranian languages like Middle Persian, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Khwarazmian were spoken in these regions. Moreover, the people of these regions shared many common cultural elements. Although the Turkic languages were also spoken there, the Middle Iranian languages and cultures were still popular. Khurasan, Sogdiana, Bactria and Khwarazm are known from the documentary and literary sources. After the conquests, the New Persian became the *lingua Franca* in all these regions. For discussion on eastern Iranian regions, see Khodadad Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians: East Iran in Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 11–23.

¹⁴ There is a rich bibliography on the Sasanian empire. For an overview on the reception of the Sasanians by modern historians, see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), and “The Limits of Sasanian History: Between Iranian, Islamic and Late Antique Studies,” *Iranian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2016): 193–203; Also, see Michael R. Jackson Bonner, *The Last Empire of Iran* (Gorgias Press, 2020).

¹⁵ Daniel C. Dennet, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (1950; repr., New Delhi: Idarah-i Adabyat-i Delli, 2000), 104.

¹⁶ Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 257–263.

¹⁷ Arthur Christensen argued that the Sasanians had a centralised political structure (see Arthur Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1944)). That means the removal of the Sasanian king marked the fall of the empire. His idea was widely accepted by later scholars. For instance, see Richard N. Frye, “The Political History of Iran Under the Sasanians,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (1983; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3 (1): 116–180; V. G. Lukonin, “Administrative division of Parthian and Sasanian Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (1983; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3 (2): 681–746; Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1996). However, Pourshariati argued that the Sasanians did not have a centralised system. Instead, the political structure was formed by a confederation of the *parsig* and *pahlav* noble families. Before the conquests began, this confederation had already collapsed, facilitating the Arab Muslim conquests (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*).

¹⁸ Sa’id Nafisi listed the name of fourteen kings and queens who ruled between 628–632, showing the zenith of political chaos at the Sasanian court (Sa’id Nafisi, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā’i-i Irān az Inqirāz-i Sāsāniān tā Inqirāz-i Umaviyān*, 10th ed. (Tehran: Bunyād-i Tarjuma va Nashr-i Kitāb-i Pārsa, 1390/2011), 25–26; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 153–160).

other religious groups;¹⁹ the rise of military generals who kindled the political chaos;²⁰ climate change;²¹ and the Sasanian military's exhaustion after warring with Byzantines.²² These are suggested to have been behind the fall of the Sasanian empire.²³ These studies focussed on the western parts of the empire, as the central and crucial stage for the fall of the all regions automatically following the fate of the political centre, and thus the geographical and socio-political situation in the eastern regions was not much discussed. Nevertheless, these points help us understand that Sasanian power had already declined after Khusrow II's death in 628. They show that the Arab Muslims entered an empire, whose last king came to power at the time of political chaos. The Sasanians at this time did not have authority over much of the empire and lacked enough forces to resist the conquests.²⁴ Therefore, the local chiefs of each area decided to fight or submit to the Arab Muslims.²⁵ This is an important element in this dissertation that will become clear.

The second view differs from the first one in its approach to the conquests of the Sasanian empire. It looks at its overthrow as being part of the 'great' Arab conquests and highlights the agency of the Arab Muslims as central to the story of the conquests. The dominance of the traditional Arabic sources filtered through this lens makes it an Arabic-

¹⁹ A. I. Kolesnikov, "Social and Political consequences of the Arab conquests," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol 3: *The crossroads of civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 468; Nafīsī maintains a similar idea. He argued that the Sasanian kings did not have control over all political affairs. Moreover, the clergy was very powerful in this period and created problems (Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī-i Irān*, 21–36); Abd Al-Husain Zarrinkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran and its Aftermath in Cambridge History of Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (1975; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4 (1): 17.

²⁰ Abd Al-Husayn Zarrinkūb, *Tārīkh-i Irān ba'd az Islām*, 10th ed. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1368/2007), 190–99.

²¹ Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East 500 B.C. to 1500 A.D* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1993); Esmaeil Matloubkari and Babak Shaikh Baikloo Islam, "Climate Change and Challenges of the Last Ancient Dynasty of Iran: The Decline and Fall of the Sassanid Empire," *The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2022): 61–76.

²² Kolesnikov, "Social and Political consequences of the Arab conquests," 468.

²³ Pourshariati has a different argument. She mentioned that the Sasanian political structure was a confederation that collapsed after the death of Khusrow II in 628. That created a political vacuum filled by the Arab Muslims. Thus, in her view, the fall of the Sasanians was caused by an internal collapse rather than external issues (see Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*); Also, see Khodadad Rezakhani, "Arab Conquests and Sasanian Iran: Some General Observations on the Late Sasanian Period," *Mizan*, available online, <https://mizanproject.org/the-arab-conquests-and-sasanian-iran-part-1> (accessed on 29 October 2022).

²⁴ Mihrdād Ghodrāt Dizaji, "Historical Background of Islamic Conquests in Iran: The Collapse of Sasanian Political Order according to Written Sources and the Numismatic Evidence," (text in Persian) *Faṣḥnāma-yi 'Ilmi Pazuhishī Tārīkh-i Irān ba'd az Islām* 5, no 10 (1394/2015): 61–78.

²⁵ Good examples are the conquests of Khuzistan and Fars. See Saeid Jalalipour, "A Study of The Sasanian Province of Khūzistān at the Time of Muslim Conquests in The Seventh Century" (PhD diss., California State University, 2015); Martin Hinds, *An Early Islamic Family from Oman: Al-'Awtabī's Account of the Mullabids* (University of Manchester, 1991).

centric view, in which the conquests are said to have been the outcome of the caliphs' leadership and the extraordinary achievements of their generals and soldiers,²⁶ who were motivated by Islamic ideology,²⁷ apocalyptic ideas,²⁸ and economic interests.²⁹ These individuals are credited with a higher religious morality compared to their foes.³⁰ In this view, the Arab Muslims defeated the Sasanians, rapidly conquered many cities of the empire, and levied taxes on them.³¹ The conquests are depicted as planned and performed by the Arab Muslims.

Because of its prime focus on Arab Muslims, this approach mainly observes their activities in the eastern regions. It helps to trace the direction of the conquests, the places in which the Arab Muslims faced challenges, the pattern of Arab Muslim settlement, and the formation of the Umayyad Khurasan that incorporated all conquered regions in the east. It shows that Khurasan hosted a large Arab Muslim population of mostly military backgrounds who migrated there from Iraq and Syria. Though Khurasan was key to accessing the wealth of Sogdiana, it was a frontier region that had to be guarded against the Türgesh, a confederation of Turkic groups who came to power in 716, who rivalled the Umayyads over control of the East.³² Khurasan was a place of many rebellions, and it acted upon the centre stronger than any

²⁶ There is a rich bibliography on this subject. See, for instance, J. Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, trans. Margaret Graham Weir (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927); Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), and "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East III: States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: N. J. Darwin Press, 1995), 337–360; Also, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (Da Capo Press, 2007). However, the earlier ideas about the conquests are criticized by later scholars (see Donner, *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State*). Simplification and idealisation of the conquests are not yet totally abandoned (see Justin Marozzi, *The Arab Conquests: The Spread of Islam and the First Caliphates* (London: Head of Zeus, 2021).

²⁷ Zarrinkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*; Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*; Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²⁸ See the discussion in Hoyland, "Reflections on the Identity of the Arabian Conquerors," 113–140.

²⁹ Zarrinkūb, "The Arab Conquest of Iran," 9–17; Wadād al-Qādī, "Non-Muslims in the Muslim Conquest Army in Early Islam," in *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, ed. Antoine Borrut and Fred M. Donne (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2016), 83–127; Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Arezou Azad, "Ecology, Economy and Conquests," in *The Umayyad World*, ed. Andrew Marsham (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 344–45.

³⁰ Sara Savant has discussed this topic in detail (Sarah Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Also, see Scott Savran, *Arabs and Iranians in the Islamic Conquest Narrative: Memory and Identity Construction in Islamic Historiography, 750–1050*. Culture and Civilization in the Middle East 57 (London: Routledge, 2018).

³¹ Bertold Spüler, *Iran in the Early Islamic Period: Politics, Culture, Administration and Public Life between the Arab and the Seljuk Conquests, 633–105*, ed. Robert G. Hoyland, trans. Gwendolin Goldbloom and Berenike Walburg (Leiden: Brill, 2015). Originally published as *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit: Politik, Kultur, Verwaltung und öffentliches Leben zwischen der arabischen und seldschukischen Eroberung 633 bis 1055* (Frank Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden 1952).

³² Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 397–491; Shaban, *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Farīd al-'Afnān, "Al-qabāyil al-'Arabiyya fī Khurāsān wa bilād Māwarā' al-Nahar fī al-'aṣr al-Umawī" (PhD diss., Umm al-Qurā

other region.³³ Hence, controlling a frontier region that was contested by other regional powers like the Türgesh Turks was not easy. While these points can be helpful, this approach has some limits. It reflects a top-down view in which the Arab Muslims are the leading political players overshadowing the important role that local people played in managing the province. It also does not pay much attention to the local context in which the rapid conquests happened. The processes of the conquests and the actual areas controlled by the Arab Muslims at the early stage of the conquests are not discussed. The conquests are described as a *linear* process, and the socio-political situation in the eastern regions is neglected. Indeed, the locals are treated as shadowy figures.³⁴

The third view focusses on the eastern Iranian regions. It considers the geographical conditions, and socio-political situation in the eastern Iranian regions as important elements to understand the conquests. Unlike the first view, which focussed on the western Iranian regions, and the second view, which highlighted the centrality of the Arab Muslims in the conquest story and neglected local socio-political involvement, the third approach explains the conquests within their local contexts. In other words, it reflects the conquests of the eastern regions not as a ‘logical’ linear sequence of events, but as a dynamic and complex process that was affected by the local agency. Unlike the previous views, this approach does not look at the eastern regions as a monolithic unit that automatically fell to the Arab Muslims after they conquered Ctesiphon, but addresses diversities in geography and socio-political life, and thus discusses the conquests from a regional perspective. While this study benefits from the ideas provided by the previous approaches, it follows the third view, which is appropriate to the socio-political situation in Bactria and looks at the conquests from a local perspective. Further explanation of this view clarifies the position of the current dissertation in this line.

The harbinger of the third view was Wasily Vladimirovich Barthold (d. 1930) who undertook one of the earliest research projects on the socio-political history of eastern Iranian regions. His work entitled *Туркестан в эпоху монгольского нашествия* (“Turkestan at the time of the Mongol Invasion”) appeared first in 1900 and included Bactria in a discussion

University, Mecca, 1413/1992); Parvaneh Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus and Arab Presence” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1995).

³³ Even more surprisingly, Wellhausen compared Umayyad Khurasan to pre-Islamic Arabia when he discussed the tribal war in Khurasan. This comparison is surprising as the two regions are very different regarding geography and social and political situation (Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 411–413).

³⁴ This is pointed out by Pourshariati (see *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 16).

related to Sogdiana.³⁵ Barthold followed the “Roads and Realms” approach already known to the fourth/tenth-century Muslim geographers who understood various regions by looking at cities and their adjacent areas along the trade routes.³⁶ He provided detailed information about the socio-political history of this region based on literary sources written in Arabic and Persian. He identified some crucial elements that are essential to know when discussing the socio-political history of the eastern regions during the Arab Muslim conquests.

Barthold understood the importance of local aristocracy in the eastern regions. In his brief discussion on the life of people in the eastern regions before the Arab Muslim conquests, Barthold recognised that “the principal feature of this life is to be found in the domination of territorial aristocracy (the so-called Dihqāns) which was not balanced, as in Persia.”³⁷ We will see later in chapter two (2:1) and chapter three (3.1.2) that Barthold’s insights are correct, as the local aristocracy were central to the story of the conquests. The local noblemen were the actual rulers in the eastern regions. They lived in palaces, had their guards, possessed private estates, and were often at war with each other. At the time of the conquests, the Arab Muslims faced not a unified political power but many small principalities, some of whom joined up with the Arab Muslims to overcome their local rivals. Although Barthold does not dismiss the importance of economic interests as a motivation behind the conquests, he shows that disunity and local political rivalry played an essential role in them. He suggests that though the region’s geography slowed the conquests’ pace, the wealth of Sogdiana and disunity among its local rulers encouraged the Arab Muslims to conquer the region.³⁸

Hamilton Alexander Gibb (d. 1971) echoed the similar line of argument established by Barthold.³⁹ To Gibb, Bactria was part of the Amu Darya Basin and was connected to Sogdiana. Therefore, he began his analysis by looking at the southern part of the Amu Darya, which the Arab Muslims pacified first to then reach Sogdiana. By consulting the Chinese sources, Gibb argued that this region was not politically unified but divided. He explained that the regions on both sides of the Amu Darya differed geographically and were decentralised politically. His

³⁵ Василий Владимирович Бартольд, *Туркестан в эпоху монгольского нашествия* (Санкт-Петербург: Тип. Имп. Акад. наук, 1898–1900); For the English version, see W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, translated from the Original Russian and revised by the Author with the Assistance of H. A. R. Gibb (London: Printed by the Oxford University Press for the Trustees of The E. J. Gibb Memorial, 1928).

³⁶ For discussion on the road and realm approach, see Zayde Antrim, *Roads and Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁷ Barthold, *Turkestan*, 180.

³⁸ Barthold, *Turkestan*, 181–183.

³⁹ Gibb was in contact with Barthold and read his *Turkestan* and other unpublished works with the help of Sir Denison Ross. Gibb has acknowledged Barthold’s comments on his book on central Asia (H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), vii–viii).

term “political division” echoes Barthold’s “territorial aristocracy”, which is very important for our discussion on Bactria.⁴⁰ As we will see in chapter two (2:2), Étienne de la Vaissière also calls this situation as “fragmentation territorial”, which reflects the political division and domination of the local aristocracy in Sogdiana. In Gibb’s view, local principalities controlled their areas while they recognised the Western Turks as their overlords and paid them tribute. However, he noticed that the Western Turks did not actually control this region when the Arab Muslims arrived, and thus they did not help the local rulers at the time of the Arab Muslim conquests. Only later, after the Arab Muslims encroached on the steppe, the Türgesh Turks, responded to the Arab Muslims and fought them over control of the eastern regions.

Like Barthold, Gibb emphasised that the Arab Muslims faced not a unified political power but small independent principalities in the region. Gibb adds that the local rulers resisted or united with the Arab Muslims to protect their political and economic positions. Their interactions were either friendly or hostile, and so were not inflected by their religious views because some of them fought with Arab Muslims against their co-religionist neighbours. Though Gibb discussed the conquests of Bactria and Sogdiana as relevant parts of the same story, he did not fail to recognise that the actual conquests began by Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bāhili (d. 96/715) in the early eighth century. The counterstroke by the Türgesh Turks later forced the Umayyads to reconquer the region by the end of the Umayyad period.⁴¹ Thus, the conquests were not simply uniform and linear sequences of events, but varied and skewed process. It was a complicated process. Barthold’s and Gibb’s views of the conquests are crucial for our work because they highlight the geographical diversity and political divisions in the eastern regions. Nevertheless, their studies lacked a detailed discussion on Bactria because they focussed on Sogdiana and had more sources about that region. They did not have access to the

⁴⁰ H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 4–5.

⁴¹ The existence of Turks in Khurasan and Sogdiana at the time of the conquests is an old topic discussed by several scholars. See Édouard Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) Occidentaux* (Saint Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l’Académie impériale des sciences, 1903), and “Notes Additionnelles sur les Tou-kiue,” *Occidentaux T’oung Pao*, 5 (1904): 1–110; Barthold, *Turkestan*, 186–87; Richard N. Frye, “The Turks in Khurasan and Transoxiana at the Time of the Arab Conquest,” *The Muslim World* 35 (1945): 308–315; Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsid Revolution*, 118; Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), and *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Clifford E. Bosworth, ed., *The Turks in the Early Islamic World. The formation of the Classic Islamic World*, vol. 9. Aldershot, Hunts (Burlington, VT: Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007); Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, 126–28, 155–61; Khodadad Rezakhani, “From the Kushans to the Western Turks,” in *King of the Seven Climates: A History of the Ancient Iranian World 3000 BCE–561 CE*, ed. Touraj Daryaee (California: UCI Jordan Centre for Persian Studies, 2017), 199–226.

new sources, particularly documentary sources found from Bactria that this study includes them.

The importance of the local political situation in the course of the Arab Muslim conquests is echoed by Muhammad Shaban, who included Barthold and Gibb's studies in his work on the Abbasid Revolution.⁴² Before explaining the conquests, Shaban discussed the political geography of the eastern regions. He mentioned that many local principalities which recognised the suzerainty of the Western Turks controlled these regions. Likewise, the Hephthalites, who ruled over Bactria from the fifth to the late sixth century, were still influential in northwestern parts of the Hindukush Mountains. Although Shaban is inclined to show that the conquests were 'organised campaigns' planned by the caliphs and performed by their governors, he nevertheless makes a crucial point to enhance our understanding of the local politics and their connection to the conquests of Sasanian Khurasan. He argued that the fear of the Hephthalites, who were expanding their authority in Sasanian Khurasan after the death of Yazdgird, the last Sasanian king, pushed the *marzbān* (lit. margrave) of Tus -an important city in Sasanian Khurasan- to seek help from the Arab Muslims.⁴³ In other words, the local political situation was a 'pull factor' that dragged the Arab Muslims to Sasanian Khurasan and marked the beginning of the conquests.

The idea of local political rivalry as the main reason behind the coming of the Arab Muslims to Sasanian Khurasan was expanded by Parvaneh Pourshariati. After analysing Arabic and Persian historical narratives, she argued that it was the political rivalries between the *kanārang*, the ruler of Tus (also called the *marzbān*) and Barzān Jāh from the *kārin* family over control of Nishapur that forced the *kanārang* to ally with the Arab Muslims and 'invite' them to Khurasan. Thus, in her view, the conquests of Sasanian Khurasan were not 'pre-planned' or a series of relevant campaigns led by the caliphs but were the outcome of the local political situation in Sasanian Khurasan. Moreover, she clarified that the Arab Muslim settlement pattern in the eastern regions is the key to understanding which areas came under Arab Muslim control.⁴⁴ Pourshariati's focus on Sasanian Khurasan did not leave room for discussing the Hephthalites or the political situation in Bactria. Still, her analysis of the local political situation

⁴² Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution* 172–73.

⁴³ Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 1–19; Also, see Muhammad A. Shaban, "Khurasan at the Time of the Arab Conquest," in *Iran and Islam in Memory of the Late V. Minorsky*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 470–90.

⁴⁴ Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 20–57; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 265–278.

in Sasanian Khurasan helps to understand the process of conquests of Sasanian Khurasan. This dissertation expands the line of argument by Shaban and Pourshariati concerning the importance of the Hephthalites, and the local political rivalries among local rulers in Sasanian Khurasan and builds on their tenets to discuss the conquests of Bactria.

The political geography and its importance in understanding the Arab Muslim conquests are further investigated by Mark Luce. He offers a new perspective on the Arab Muslim conquests of the eastern regions. He employed the notion of the ‘frontier process’ to explore Islamicisation not only among the conquered people, but also among the Arab Muslim conquerors who were settled in these regions and gradually lost their tribal values. Luce does not view the eastern regions as a single political or cultural unit but sees them as a shattered zone which is a geological term that applies to a region “composed of a variety of physical, environmental, social, economic, cultural, linguistic and religious conditions that with the advent of the Muslims started a process of fusion, which three centuries later resulted in a joint Islamic community.”⁴⁵ Luce argued that this characterisation of Khurasan as a fragmented zone is essential for understanding the Arab Muslim activities there. He discussed Bactria under the label of “Tukharistan”, which stretched from the Marw al-Rūd river to Badakhshan and included the river valleys on both sides of the Amu Darya. He briefly explained geographical and political divisions in Bactria and highlighted the significance of the Hephthalites in helping the Arab Muslims to conquer Sogdiana and their fierce resistance to the Umayyads after they realised the Umayyads’ expansionist policy.⁴⁶ However, the vast scope of his work did not leave much space for in-depth research on the socio-political situation in Bactria and the way Bactrian local rulers received the Arab Muslims.

Robert Haug expanded the idea of the frontier process further. He maintained the idea that the eastern regions were not politically monolithic. Instead, Haug highlighted the diversity in geography and societies in these regions that are crucial for understanding their socio-political history. He also showed that the local rulers in the frontier region were independent in their local affairs, but they recognised the overlordship of a more significant power, such as the Sasanians or Turks. In times of need, these rulers would ally or seek the help of any external

⁴⁵ Luce, “Frontier Process,” 1.

⁴⁶ Luce, “Frontier Process,” 36–78. While Luce undertook distinguished research by applying the frontier process to Khurasan, he followed almost the same view on the conquests reflected in the Arabic historical narratives. He used two specific categories to define political elites in the frontier zone: *ashrāf al-Islām* for the imperial representatives and *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif* for local elites. However, such categories do not exist in the Arabic or Persian historical narratives for the period under discussion and do not apply to the political situation in Khurasan.

power that would help them restore their local position.⁴⁷ Controlling a frontier region with its tradition of frequently shifting sides between more considerable powers was difficult, and the Arab Muslims were no exception in struggling to control it. Like Luce, Haug combined Sasanian Khurasan, Bactria, and Sogdiana, and his work did not permit separating out the local Bactrian socio-political situation. Except for a few references, Luce and Haug also did not include the new documentary sources discussed in this dissertation.

This overview of the existing literature highlights several points. The rapid fall of the Sasanian empire to the Arab Muslim conquerors was the central question for many scholars of Iranian studies. In contrast, the rise of the Arab Muslims and their making of a great empire was a significant concern for scholars of early Islamic studies. These studies often viewed the eastern Iranian region as one political unit and an extension of the Sasanian empire. While the political and cultural situations were different in these regions and the Arab Muslim interaction with local rulers differed from one region to another, the earlier studies mostly projected a general view of the conquests without taking the local context and the complicated process of the conquests into consideration. The generalisation of these regions as a Sasanian extension and simplification of the conquests as Arab Muslim great achievements did not leave much space for detailed studies of these regions' socio-political situation before the conquests and locals' interaction with the Arab Muslims. The absence of a local view of the conquests is visible in these studies. In this context, Bactria was no exception, and it was merely seen as a small part of Sasanian Khurasan.

Another point is that the socio-political situation and its relation to the Arab Muslim conquests received some scholarly attention. However, even these studies viewed Bactria as a connected part of Sogdiana (Barthold, Gibb) or a small part of Khurasan (Shaban, Luce, and Haug), which was not even important enough to be included as a separate region to be discussed in the relevant modern scholarship. As a result, the process of the conquests in Bactria and the Bactrian local players' concerns and interactions with the Arab Muslims remained obscure.⁴⁸ Moreover, the availability of sources and the way they are consulted contributed to the negligence of Bactria in the conquests' discourse. Most previous studies are primarily based on literary sources (Arabic, Persian, and Chinese), while documentary sources, such as Bactrian and Arabic documents, numismatic data, and archaeological reports, were less often

⁴⁷ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 3–14, 43–75.

⁴⁸ The exception is the uprising of the *nizak*, the Hephthalite prince of Badghis discussed in detail in chapter four, section 4.2.1.

consulted. All these led to the absence of a clear understanding of the complicated process of the conquests in Bactria.

The current dissertation focusses on Bactria. It does not treat Bactria as a corner of the Sasanian empire. Likewise, it does not categorise it as part of one single “eastern Iranian political unit” nor takes it as a small part of Sasanian Khurasan. It considers Bactria an important region connected to other eastern Iranian regions, yet having preserved its socio-political structure and priorities that defined its interaction with Arab Muslims. It builds on the framework and insights of scholars, mainly Barthold, Gibb, La Vaissière, Shaban, Pourshariati, Luce, and Haug, who already considered geographical diversity and political fragmentation in the eastern regions as the starting points to discuss the process of the conquests. It explains the conquests from a local perspective and highlights the role of Bactrian rulers whose political concerns affected the course of the conquests in the region. This regional approach is complemented by the new documentary sources and other materials in Bactrian, Sogdian, Middle Persian, Arabic and New Persian that have become available and which put a new perspective on existing ideas and views. The combination of these sources provides a better understanding of the local perspective of the conquests. The local relations were especially crucial in determining the course of the conquests and the establishment of Arab Muslim rule in Bactria. By bringing Bactria to the discourse, this study will show that the conquests were more dynamic and diverse than what the narrative on them wants us to believe.

Though comparisons between Bactria and other parts of the early Islamic empire will be invoked when it is appropriate, Bactria remains the focal point in the dissertation.⁴⁹ The current study does not intend to provide a comparative study between Bactria and other regions like Egypt, Syria, or Iraq, because any attempt to do that requires an entire study of its own. Nevertheless, the story of the conquests of Bactria is relayed in connection with Syria and Iraq, from where many Arab Muslim soldiers and the Umayyad governors were sent to Khurasan. Those who are familiar with Egypt and Iraq are aware of the existence of extensive studies on these regions.⁵⁰ They will quickly recognise that the process of the conquests and consolidation

⁴⁹ This mainly includes Bactria’s immediate neighbouring areas or another region like Armenia that had similar conditions.

⁵⁰ For instance, al-Azdi’s *Futūḥ al-shām*, composed before 190/805, is about the conquest of Syria. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Futūḥ Miṣr* is about the conquests of Egypt and North Africa composed before 257/871. For more details, see Albrecht Noth and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1994), 32; Michael Morony has carried out a detailed study of the conquests of Iraq in several publications that provide a very useful bibliography on this subject. See, Michael Morony, “Religious Communities in Late Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 2 (1974): 113–135, “The Effects of the Muslim Conquest on the Persian Population

of the Arab Muslim rule in Egypt and Iraq may have differed from those in Bactria. Unlike Bactria, which had an extremely diverse geography and was a military-contested frontier region between sedentary and nomadic states for most of its history wherein political stability was difficult to establish, Egypt and Iraq were great agricultural resource bases regions and enjoyed long periods of political stability before and after the conquests. Similarly, Bactria is not comparable to Egypt and Iraq in terms of having primary sources. While those regions, particularly Egypt, revealed a plethora of textual sources and archaeological data,⁵¹ Bactria showed much fewer and limited sources. Thus, it should not be surprising if the reader finds not much comparison between Bactria and the rest of the Umayyad empire. Looking at the sources consulted in this dissertation serves to clarify this issue.

2. Sources

Information about Bactria's socio-political situation before and after the Arab Muslim conquests is scattered in different sources. That means we should deal with sources written in various languages taken from different temporal and spatial contexts. The authors and compilers of these sources highlighted the issues that were important to them. Thus, each of these sources has its advantage and also a disadvantage. This dissertation engages with three groups of sources. The first group consists of the historical narrative in Arabic related to the conquests (*futūḥ* literature), Persian and Chinese preserved in chronicles, local histories, travelogues, and geographers' accounts. The second group includes documentary sources written in Bactrian and Arabic, produced within Bactria before and after the conquests. The third group is the coins, seals and sealing impressions, inscriptions, epigraphy, and archaeological reports—each of these, their limits, and the way they are consulted here needs a brief explanation.

in Iraq,” *Iran* 14 (1976): 41–59, and *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); For the conquests of Egypt, see, Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of the Roman Dominion* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1902); Walter Kaegi, “Egypt on the Eve of the Muslim Conquest,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt i: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. C. F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34–61; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–30; Petra Sijpesteijn, “The Arab conquest of Egypt and the beginning of Muslim rule,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine world, 300–700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 437–459; Petra Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim, State: The World of a Mid-Eighth Century Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Phil Booth, “The Muslim Conquest of Egypt Reconsidered,” *Travaux et Mémoires 17: Constructing the Seventh Century*, ed. Constantin Zuckerman (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2013), 639–670; Edward Zychowicz-Coghill, “Conquests of Egypt: Making History in ‘Abbāsīd Egypt” (DPhil diss, University of Oxford, 2017).

⁵¹ A quick look at APD and Trismegistos websites show this issue. See <https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp>, and https://www.trismegistos.org/tm/index_specific.php?searchterm=Egypt

2.1 Group one: the narratives

2.1.1 The *futūḥ* literature

The *futūḥ* is a conventional term to define the historical narratives in Arabic related to the Arab Muslim conquests. It is the plural form of *fath*, meaning “opening”, derived from *f-t-h*. The term *fath* is often interpreted as “conquest” achieved by the Arab Muslims. However, it is not confined to military conquests but also applied to the situation in which a city submitted without fighting and opened its gates to the Arab Muslims.⁵² The *futūḥ* was an important theme in the early Islamic historiography from the early second/eighth century and has been studied by modern scholars.⁵³ As Fred Donner argued, the *futūḥ* was a theme of “inception”, and in that, it aimed “to explain (and in doing so, to justify) the Muslim hegemony over non-Muslims in the Islamic state ... and to chronicle when particular regions and cities were first brought into the bosom of the expanding Islamic state.”⁵⁴ Thus, it offers a grand narrative about the formation of the early Islamic empire.

The development of *futūḥ* literature was gradual. It evolved from collections of various oral reports transmitted by several generations before putting into a written form almost two centuries after actual events. In other words, it is a *post-conquest* attempt to organise the memories of the conquest period. The *futūḥ*, as Albrecht Noth argued, was first specific to particular cities and battles but then gradually broadened by combining provincial collections of reports. Criticising this view, Donner mentions that the *futūḥ* was not limited to specific cities or battles but had a comprehensive manner from the beginning.⁵⁵ He adds that the Umayyads, from the time of ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705), supervised “an increasingly clear articulation of the Muslim community as a distinct monotheist confession”, encouraged “recounting and collection of reports” about the conquests to legitimise their hegemony over “great empire with large non-Muslim populations.”⁵⁶ They first looked at the earlier reports

⁵² Fred M. Donner, “Arabic *Fath* as ‘Conquest’ and its Origin in Islamic Tradition,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 24 (2016): 1–14.

⁵³ For details, see Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*; Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Fred M. Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins: the beginning of the Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1998); Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Fred M. Donner, ed., *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State* (London and New York, Routledge, 2008); Fred M. Donner, “Modern approach to early Islamic history,” in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. Chase Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 628–38; Sami G. Masoud, ed., *Studies in Islamic Historiography: Essays in Honour of Professor Donald P. Little* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Ryan Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography*, 3–12.

⁵⁴ Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins*, 174.

⁵⁵ Noth, 32–34; Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins*, 176.

⁵⁶ Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins*, 181.

about the conquests, and once the narratives were crystalised, relevant local materials were added. The *futūḥ* reflects different views simultaneously. It reflects a central-government point of view that appointed commanders, sent armies and administrators, and a view from the ground reflecting the commanders' achievements in different regions.⁵⁷ Hence, one can see the conquests from central government and ground perspectives.

The *futūḥ* narratives reflect some limitations. The elements of time, form and content can be briefly addressed here. The time of compilation of the *futūḥ* narratives imposes the first challenge to modern scholars. The oral reports on the conquests were written almost two centuries later by new generations of Muslim scholars living in the early Abbasid period. The Muslim authors' understanding of the conquests and how they should be narrated were not necessarily the same as those of the conquerors. If participation in the actual conquests were a matter of pride for some individuals, families, and tribes or had religious importance in the past, the compilers of these narratives wished to offer a coherent narrative about the formation of the early Islamic empire and the expansion of the Muslim community.⁵⁸ In other words, they created a form for the reports by organising them into coherent narratives beginning with the rise of Islam and the formation of a great empire. Their work creates an impression that the conquests were a linear process; the early Muslim state in Medina was a central and strong state that organised all matters of the conquests over far distances.⁵⁹ This is misleading because the Arab Muslim generals and their soldiers fought the actual war or made peace treaties in different regions, not Medina's leaders. This form of narrative created another problem. As Noth has shown, the compilers systematised and organised the reports, and in doing so, they invented a chronology and the order of events, omitted some reports and highlighted others. The process of systematisation created a schematic complexity, and that caused the reports to "lose their historical individuality and temporal depth."⁶⁰ The systematisation of the reports affected their contents as well. Thus, these re-organised reports should not be taken at face value or as sheer facts, but as records of the way the conquests were remembered.

With all their limitations, the *futūḥ* narratives are crucial for discussing Arab Muslim conquests. Though they are about the conquests and subjugation of various regions and taking

⁵⁷ Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins*, 181.

⁵⁸ See Donner, *Narrative of Islamic Origins*, 178–180.

⁵⁹ Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 197.

⁶⁰ Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 195; Also, see Vacca, "The Armenian Sources of al-Baladhuri's *Kitab Futuh al-buldan*," 21).

tributes from them,⁶¹ and deal lesser with the process of the conquests, logistical issues, or the pre-conquest socio-political life in the conquered regions, they offer valuable information about Arab Muslim achievements in different regions. They preserved earlier and different reports about the conquests that can be compared with each other. In some cases, the reports contain local voices that passed the filter of Arabic narrators and thus reflected local concerns. These narratives can reveal important information about the conquests if carefully examined and cross-checked with local sources.⁶² This dissertation aims to undertake it to explain the conquests in Bactria. The current study pays special attention to those narratives that contain local voices. Some words on the Arabic narratives consulted in this study highlight this point.

From the second/eighth century, some Muslim historians collected reports related to Khurasan.⁶³ The scholars such as Abū Mikhnaḥ Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā al-Azdī (living in 157/774),⁶⁴ al-Ḥaytham b. ‘Uday (living in 207/822),⁶⁵ Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā (d. 209/824–5),⁶⁶ Khālīd b. Khidāsh (living in 223/838), Yazīd b. Muḥammad al-Muhallabī, and ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’inī (135–225/752–839)⁶⁷ have written about Khurasan. However, their work in complete form did not survive, and only some parts of them were preserved in later works. Among these authors, al-Madā’inī stands in a special position. Later historians considered him the most prolific and reliable author about Khurasan.⁶⁸ He compiled many reports to give a complete picture of the events in Khurasan.⁶⁹ Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995)⁷⁰

⁶¹ Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 32.

⁶² Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 24.

⁶³ See the introduction in Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, reconstructed by Muḥammad ‘Alī Kāzīm Bigī (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1390/2011), 27–29.

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 136–37; H. A. R. Gibb, “Abū Mikhnaḥ,” *Encyclopaedia Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/abu-mikhnaḥ> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

⁶⁵ For his biography, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1978), 145–46; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhadabī, *Sīyar ‘Alām al-nubalā’*, ed. Shua‘yb al-Arnawūṭ and Muḥammad Na‘īm al-‘Arqasūī (Beirut: Mu‘assissat al-Risāla, 1417/1996), 10: 103–104.

⁶⁶ Wilfred Madelung, “Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā as a Historian,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (1992): 47–56.

⁶⁷ For his biography, see Ursula Sezgin, “Al-Madā’inī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-madaini> (accessed on 30 October 2022); Ilkka Lindstedt, “al-Madā’inī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-madaini> (accessed on 7 May 2023).

⁶⁸ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, xvii–xx; Also, see Ilkka Lindstedt, “Al-Madā’inī and the Narratives of the ‘Abbāsīd Dawla,” *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 5 (2017): 65–150.

⁶⁹ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, xvii; ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Qanavāt, “Futūḥ Khurāsān Madā’inī Kitāb-i Kuhan dar Tārīkh-i Khurāsān,” *Faṣlnāma-yi ‘Ilmī-Pazhuhishi Tārīkh-i Farhang va Tamaddun-i Islāmī* 19 (1394/2015): 121–134.

⁷⁰ On the biography of Ibn al-Nadīm, see J. W. Fück, “Ibn al-Nadīm,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-al-nadim> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

recorded the names of al-Madā'inī's books on Khurasan.⁷¹ Four of them, namely *Kitāb 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir b. Kurayz*, *Kitāb Nawādir Qutayba b. Muslim bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Wilāyat Asad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī*, and *Kitāb Wilāyat al-Naṣr b. Sayyār* were the primary sources of information for later historians like Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (fl. third/ninth-century),⁷² Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854),⁷³ Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892),⁷⁴ and Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (310/923).⁷⁵ All these historians highlighted the early stage of the conquest of Sasanian Khurasan under Ibn 'Āmir, the conquests of Bactria and Sogdiana by Qutayba, the consolidation of Umayyad rule in Khurasan by Asad al-Qasrī and its eventual downfall under Naṣr b. Sayyār. The information about the conquests of Bactria is mainly found in these works.

The historians who followed al-Madā'inī's tradition (and other traditions as mentioned earlier) of writing on Khurasan adjusted his reports to fit their framework. They explained the formation of the Islamic empire in which Khurasan was its eastern frontier. The details about Khurasan vary depending on the historian's profession, priorities, and methods he used to compile his work. For instance, Khalīfa b. Khayyāt's priority was to focus on the western parts of the empire, and thus, he summarised the earlier accounts on Khurasan without giving any details about the process of the conquests.⁷⁶ Similarly, al-Balādhurī, who was an administrator serving the Abbasids, aimed to write his *futūḥ al-buldān* like a "handbook" to benefit administrators during his own time.⁷⁷ As Ryan Lynch has shown, al-Balādhurī organised his *futūḥ* "geographically into chapters and chronologically within those chapters."⁷⁸ Al-Balādhurī

⁷¹ These are: *Kitāb Futūḥ Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Jurjān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Sajistān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Kābul wa Zābulistān*, *Kitāb 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir b. Kurayz*, *Kitāb Nawādir Qutayba b. Muslim bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb al-Riwāya fī Khabar Qutayba bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Wilāyat Asad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī* and *Kitāb Wilāyat al-Naṣr b. Sayyār* (Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 150–51).

⁷² Ilkka Lindstedt, "Sources for the Biography of the Historian Ibn 'Aṭham al-Kūfī," in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, Contact and Interaction: Proceeding of the 27th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Helsinki, Finland, June 2–6, 2014*, ed. Jakko Hämmen-Anttila, Petteri Koskikallio and Ilkka Lindstedt (Peeters, 2017), 299–309.

⁷³ S. Zakkar, "Ibn Khayyāt al-'Uṣfurī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-khayyat-al-usfuri> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

⁷⁴ C. H. Becker and F. Rosenthal, "al-Balādhurī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-baladhuri> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

⁷⁵ C. E. Bosworth, "al-Ṭabarī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-tabari> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

⁷⁶ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāt*, ed. Akram Ziyā' al-'Umarī (Riyadh: Dār Tayba, 1405/1985); Tobias Andersen, *Early Sunni Historiography: A Study of the Tārīkh of Khalīfa B. Khayyāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). It is worth noting that the whole information on Khurasan given by Khalīfa does not exceed two pages in print. His book is silent about the *nizak*'s uprising against the Umayyads and has only nine lines on the rebellion of al-Hārith (Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rīkh*, 346–48).

⁷⁷ Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography*, 68–9, 71.

⁷⁸ Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography*, 7.

primary focus was to explain how Arab Muslims administered various regions, so the story of the conquests is short and used only to introduce the region that came under Muslim rule.⁷⁹ His focus on the cities and the Muslim elites did not leave any space for discussing “detailed discussion of the ‘on the ground’ realities in the rural, resource-reproducing portions of the Islamic world”.⁸⁰

Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī echoes the same way of narrating the conquests. Like al-Balādhurī, al-Kūfī does not offer much detail about the process of the conquests in Khurasan. He narrates the conquests as a rapid process, saying that the Arab Muslims conquered cities after cities (*yufṭihu baladan baladan*) and subjugated their populations.⁸¹ Nevertheless, he preserved important reports about the Hephthalites’ relationship with the Arab Muslims. Some other scholars like Qudāma b. Ja‘far (living in the third/ninth century), who compiled his book to serve the Abbasid administration, repeated al-Balādhurī’s narrative. In his work, the conquest story is summarised and the role of local rulers in making the conquests is not reflected.⁸² Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawārī (d. 290/902)⁸³ went a step further to summarise the events. Though his work reflects valuable information about Sasanian Khurasan and the Abbasid Revolution, it does not describe the conquests.⁸⁴ Aḥmad b. Abī Ya‘qūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 292/905?) gives a short history of Khurasan. He mentions that his aim is not to explain the details but to offer a brief history of the empire.⁸⁵ However, he lived for some years in Tahirid Khurasan and had access to their administrative records. He provided crucial information on the role of local rulers in instigating the conquests of Sasanian Khurasan. He also reproduced the contents of a peace treaty between Ghūrak, the king of Sogdiana, and Qutayba, which matches the Sogdian letter-writing formulas known from the Mount Mugh

⁷⁹ Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography*, 7–8. The entire information on Khurasan is 26 pages in print (see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403–429). Out of these, the details about Bactria do not even fill one printed page.

⁸⁰ Lynch, *Arab Conquests and Early Islamic Historiography*, 11.

⁸¹ He depicts the Arab Muslim generals as heroes and uses harsh and accusatory language to describe local rulers who opposed the Umayyad governors. Possibly, he interpreted any opposition to Muslims as an offence (Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, ed. ‘Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Adwā’, 1411/1991), 150, 154.

⁸² S. A. Bonebakker, “Qudāma,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kudama> (accessed on 30 October 2022); Qudāma b. Ja‘far, *Al-kharāj wa Ṣanā‘at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1981), 400–402.

⁸³ T. Fahd, “al-Dīnawārī,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-dinawari> (accessed on 30 October 2022).

⁸⁴ Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Gergas (Leiden: Brill, 1888).

⁸⁵ In his *Kitāb al-buldān*, al-Ya‘qūbī followed a different approach by explaining the geography of Khurasan and then discussing its history (see Aḥmad b. Abī Ya‘qūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. T. G. J. Juynboll (Leiden: Brill, 1860).

documents.⁸⁶ Similarly, he talks about two peace treaties that remained among two local families in Marw and Nishapur. He does not reveal the contents of these two documents.

The exception among the historians mentioned above is al-Ṭabarī. He offers the most extensive information about Khurasan and pays particular attention to the process of the conquests. Unlike other scholars who were mostly administrators and compiled their work in that capacity, al-Ṭabarī was a great commentator (*mufasssir*) of the Qur'an,⁸⁷ collected *ḥadīth* (the sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet) and compiled his universal history *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* ("History of Prophets and Kings").⁸⁸ His history, as he himself says, was to know about the prophets and their life, the kings and their rise and fall.⁸⁹ Being a *muḥaddith*, he introduces his *isnād*, or chain of transmitters, for each specific report and then gives the details. In contrast to other historians, al-Ṭabarī clarifies that he did not tailor any of the reports and kept them as they were. He also does not make any judgments about them.⁹⁰ For instance, his narrative related to Yazdgird is very long, and the narrative related to Ibn 'Āmir's going to Sasanian Khurasan preserved all eight reports and their sources mentioned by al-Madā'inī.⁹¹ Other historians like al-Kūfī, Ibn Khayyāṭ and al-Balādhurī have only two reports about Ibn 'Āmir that are not different from each other. Judging from the details of his account, one can see that al-Ṭabarī did not summarise earlier reports to provide a short and coherent history. That increases the value of his work for this study.

Al-Ṭabarī's information on Khurasan comes mainly from al-Madā'inī, Abū Mikhnaḥ, Abū 'Ubayda, and Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819).⁹² Possibly, all 152 narratives about Khurasan mentioned by al-Ṭabarī come from al-Madā'inī's *Kitāb Futūḥ Khurāsān*.⁹³ Among the transmitters of these narratives, some local names such as al-Mufaḍḍal al-Kirmānī, Abū al-Surī al-Marwazī, Ḥasan b. al-Rashīd al-Juzjānī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Khurāsānī and the

⁸⁶ Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Wāḍih al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh al-Ya'qūbī*, ed. 'Abd al-Amīr al-Muḥannā (Beirut: Shirkat al-Ālamī li-l-Maṭbu'āt, 1431/2010), 210; Only Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī mentioned this letter earlier (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 7: 161); For the Mount Mugh Documents, see Vladimir A. Livshits, *Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e*, trans. Tom Stableford, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015).

⁸⁷ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān fī Taḥsīn al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1412/1992).

⁸⁸ For his work and profession, see *Yādnāma-yi Ṭabarī* (Tehran: Wizārāt-i Farhang wa Irshād-i Islāmī, 1369/1991); Hugh Kennedy, ed. *Al-Ṭabarī: A medieval Historian and his work* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008).

⁸⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1: 5.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1: 6–7.

⁹¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2855–2888.

⁹² W. Atallah, "al-Kalbī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-kalbi> (accessed on 10 May 2023).

⁹³ Qanavāt, "Futūḥ Khurāsān-i Madā'inī," 121–134.

marzbān of Quhistan can be observed. It is possible that some of them were Iranian, and some were descendants of Arabs who were settled in the eastern regions. In any case, they likely reflect local voices.

Al-Ṭabarī offers information on Bactria that is crucial for this study. He provides details about Bactrian local rulers, their areas, and their relation with the Arab Muslims. For instance, he explains the uprising of the *nizak*, the Hephthalite prince of Badghis who formed a regional alliance to stop the Umayyad conquests. He is the only historian who reveals the identity of Bactrian rulers who helped the *nizak* and those who betrayed him. He discusses how Qutayba mobilised local rulers of Inner Khurasan to fight the *nizak*. Similarly, he is the only one who explains the role of Bactrian rulers in the rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj (d. 128/746) occurred between 116–128/734–746.⁹⁴ More importantly, al-Ṭabarī does not depict the Arab Muslims as the only heroes of the conquests or the dominant political group in the eastern regions, but only one political group among others. His attention to other regional powers who challenged the Umayyads in the east and how the Umayyads responded can be understood from the amount of information he offers on the Umayyad war with the Türgesh Turks. The narratives related to this part almost overshadowed the events taking place in the rest of the empire during the region of caliph Hishām (r. 105–125/724–743). Most of the information in the edited version of volumes eight and nine in de Goeje’s edition are about Khurasan while the rest of the empire received lesser attention.⁹⁵ No other historians written after him offer such details.⁹⁶ Hence, al-Ṭabarī’s details about the process of the conquests and their challenges, preserving local voices and their concerns, makes his *Ta’rīkh* a central source of information for our discussion.

2.1.2 Local histories

The historical works discussed so far were written outside Khurasan. Some histories were written about Khurasan in Khurasan between the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries. Their main

⁹⁴ See Huseini, “The Rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj,” 516–553.

⁹⁵ For the relevant narratives in English translation, see Yahya Khalid Blankinship, *The history of al-Tabari. Vol. 25: The End of Expansion: The Caliphate of Hisham, A.D. 724–738/A.H. 105–125* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁹⁶ See, for instance, ‘Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, ed. Abū al-Fidā ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1407/1987); Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963); Ismā‘īl b. Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *Al-bidāya wa al-nihāya*, ed. ‘Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Ihyā’ wa al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1408/1988); Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān fī tawārīkh al-a’yān*, ed. Muḥammad Barakat, Kāmil al-Kharāt, and Ammār Rayḥāwī (Damascus: Dār al-Risāla al-‘Ālamiyya, 1434/2013); Abī al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas‘ūdī, *Mūrūj al-dhahab wa m’ādin al-jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥasan Mar‘ī (Beirut: Al-Maktabat al-‘Aṣrīyya, 1425/2005).

concern is not the formation of the Islamic empire but the position of Khurasan within that empire. At least the name of fourteen books written in Khurasan is preserved in later sources.⁹⁷ The authors of these books knew about their colleagues like al-Madā'inī and al-Ṭabarī, who lived in Iraq. Abū Ṣāliḥ Sulaymān b. Ṣāliḥ al-Laythī (living in 210/826) authored *Futūḥ Khurāsān* ("Conquests of Khurasan") and *al-daula* ("Governance") about the early Abbasid government. Both al-Madā'inī and al-Ṭabarī have taken some reports from Abū Ṣāliḥ's books.⁹⁸ Another important chronicle is *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān* ("Reports concerning the Governors of Khurasan"), written by Abū al-Husayn 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Sullāmī (d. 300/913).⁹⁹ It did not survive in one piece, but some parts were preserved in later Arabic and Persian sources, particularly those written in Khurasan.¹⁰⁰ Muḥammad 'Alī Kāẓim Bigī, who collected al-Sullāmī's reports from later sources, argued that al-Sullāmī had access to unknown local sources and his narrative does not reflect the Iraqi sources. Al-Sullāmī's narrative shows that preventing the formation of an independent government in Khurasan by the Arabian tribal leaders or the Umayyad governors was the primary concern for the caliphs.¹⁰¹ The fourth/tenth century historian Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bal'amī produced a free translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ* that is known as the *Tārīkh-nāma* ("Book of History").¹⁰² It refers to Persian narratives (*akhbār-i 'ajam*) that were not available to al-Ṭabarī. In his book, he often criticises al-Ṭabarī for not knowing the Persian sources on Khurasan and provides a Persian perspective that is significantly valuable to our discussion.¹⁰³

From the fourth/tenth century onwards, several works were written in Arabic about specific cities of Khurasan. The history of Nishapur, Herat, Bayhaq, Jurjan, Bukhara, Samarkand and Balkh, known as 'local histories', can be mentioned.¹⁰⁴ Most of these histories

⁹⁷ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 47.

⁹⁸ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 47.

⁹⁹ It contains the history of Khurasan from the Arab Muslim conquests to the reign of Ya'qūb b. Layth (r. 247–265/861–879), the founder of the Saffarid dynasty (247–393/861–1003). Then, al-Sullāmī's brother and nephew added the history of the Samanids (261–389/875–999).

¹⁰⁰ The best example is Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, which has a section on the governors of Khurasan ('Abd al-Ḥayy b. Zāḥāk Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1363/1984); For detail see al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 58–59; Al-Ya'qūbī has a similar section in his *Kitāb al-buldān* but its relation to al-Sullāmī's work is not known.

¹⁰¹ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 95–97.

¹⁰² Travis Zadeh, "al-Bal'amī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Third Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3> (accessed on 8 May 2023).

¹⁰³ Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bal'amī, *Tārīkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, ed. Muhammad Roshan (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1374/1995), 538.

¹⁰⁴ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, summarized and translated by Aḥmad b. Hasan al-Khalīfa al-Nishābūrī, ed. Muḥammad Rizā Shafī'ī Kadkanī (Tehran: Agāh Publications, 1374/1995); 'Abd al-Raḥmān Fāmī Hiravī, *Tārīkh-i Herāt*, introduction by Mohammad Hasan Mirhosseini and Mohammad Reza Abouyi Mehrizi, preface by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 2008); Abū

were later translated into Persian. These histories provide brief information about conquests that often do not contradict those in Arabic narratives, and thus their contribution to understanding the conquests is minor. However, they describe the process of Islamicisation from a local perspective that is unknown to the Arabic narratives.¹⁰⁵ For instance, the *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* ("Merits of Balkh") written by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Wā'iz al-Balkhī (b. ca. 565/1170) in Arabic and then translated into Persian by another Balkhi in 676/1277, contains important information about Islamicisation in Bactria.¹⁰⁶ The book's goal was not to give a history of Balkh but to show the position of Balkh as the "Dome of Islam" (*qubbat al-Islām*) and the centre of Islamic knowledge in the east. In order to do so, the *Faḍā'il* not only connected Balkh to the Hijaz, Iraq, Syria, and other important Islamic intellectual centres, but it also created an Islamic identity for Balkh. This study does not treat information from these local histories as absolute facts but considers them the way local people wanted to remember the conquests of their regions.

2.1.3 Geographical accounts

Another important source of information is geographical works written in Arabic and Persian between the late ninth and early eleventh century. Unlike the *futūḥ* narratives or local histories, the geographical accounts discuss the landscape, climates, cities, populations, and trade routes connecting them. Most of the Muslim geographers travelled to Khurasan and recorded what they actually observed, which makes their reports significantly valuable. They understood the relations between geography and human settlement patterns that impacted political organisations in Bactria. However, the problem with their work is that they focussed on urban areas and did not discuss city-hinterland relations. They neglected the countryside and its agrarian life which was the main sources of land taxes.

al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Abī al-Qāsim, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār, with an introduction by Mirzā Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Froughi Publishers, 1361/1982); Ḥamza b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Sahmī, *Tārīkh Jurjān*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1407/1987); Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, trans. Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Qubawī, ed. Mudarris Raḥavī (Tehran: Maṭba'a-yi Dawlatī, 1362/1983); Najm al-Dīn 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Al-qand fī dhikr 'Ulama' Samarqand*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1378/1999).

¹⁰⁵ See the discussion on local histories and their aims in al-Sullāmī, *Akhhār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 35–38.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Balkhī listed nine books about the history of Balkh that show writing about Balkh was important among the Balkhi scholars. There were: 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Juybārī's *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt*, Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's *Manāqib-i Balkh*, Muḥammad b. 'Aqīl's *Tārīkh-i Balkh*, 'Alī b. Faḍl's *Ṭabaqāt*, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Tārīkh-i Balkh*, Abū Ishāq al-Mustamlī's *Mu'jam al-kabīr*, Yunūs b. Ṭāhir al-Naṣīrī's *Kitāb al-bihja*, and Abū al-Qāsim Shahīd al-Balkhī's *Maḥāsin wa Ma'āthir Balkh*. For more detail, see 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Wā'iz al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, trans. 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī, ed. 'Alī Miranṣarī (Tehran: The Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, 1401/2022), 19.

2.1.4 Chinese narratives

The Chinese had economic, political, and religious interests in the eastern Iranian regions. From the time of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) to the Tang empire (618–907), the Chinese governments looked at these regions as places of benefit and also a threat.¹⁰⁷ The overland trade routes connected China to India, and Iran crossed Bactria and Sogdiana. However, the nomadic groups, particularly the Turks who lived in the steppes between Iran and China, posed a great threat to China. At the same time, Buddhism, which developed in India and then reached Bactria and Sogdiana, became popular in China. Hence, information about the eastern regions was necessary to the Chinese.

The Chinese reports about Bactria can be divided into two parts. The first is official records related to the political situation in the eastern regions organised by the Chinese administrators.¹⁰⁸ The second is the travelogues of Buddhist pilgrims who crossed Bactria for India to collect Buddhist materials.¹⁰⁹ Both parts reveal important information about the socio-political situation in Bactria before and after the Arab Muslim conquests. For instance, Xuanzang (c. 600–664), who visited Bactria in 629–30 on his way to India, explains that Bactria was not a politically unified region, but different local rulers who had autonomy in their internal affairs controlled their areas. These rulers recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān*. His records also reflect the popularity of Buddhism in Bactria.¹¹⁰ Next is the Korean pilgrim Hye Ch'o, who visited Bactria in 725. He left a travelogue that confirms the continuation of local political autonomy and local cultural traditions under the Umayyad overlordship in Bactria.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ See Édouard Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*; Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, trans. Raymond Dawson, preface by K. E. Brashier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sophia-Karin Psarras' articles, "Hun and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations (I)," *Monumenta Serica* 51 (2003): 55–236; and "Hun and Xiongnu: A Reexamination of Cultural and Political Relations (II)," *Monumenta Serica* 52 (2004): 37–93; Mu Shun-ying and Wang Yao, "The Western Regions (His-Yü) under the T'ang Empire and the Kingdom of Tibet," in *History of civilizations of Central Asia*, v. 3: *The Crossroads of civilizations, A.D. 250 to 750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guang-da and R. Shabani Samghabadi (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), 348–364; Minoru Inaba, "From Caojuzha to Ghazna/Ghaznīn: Early Medieval Chinese and Muslim Descriptions of Eastern Afghanistan," *Journal of Asian History* 49 (2015): 97–118; Minoru Inaba, "Central Asia in the Mid-Eighth Century: Wukong's Itinerary towards India," in *The History and Culture of Inner and Central Asia: From the Pre-Islamic to the Islamic Period*, ed. D. G. Tor and Minoru Inaba (Norte Dame, Indiana: University of Norte Dame Press, 2022), 125–149.

¹⁰⁸ See the previous footnote.

¹⁰⁹ *SI-YU-KI: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, trans. S. Beal (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906).

¹¹⁰ *SI-YU-KI*, 38–49.

¹¹¹ Hye Ch'o, *The Hye Ch'o Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, trans. Y. Han-Sung et al., (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1984), 52.

The Chinese sources have their limits. Identifying personal or place names in these records is very difficult. Like the *futūḥ* literature, most Chinese reports were re-organised after the occurrence of events, and thus only the important ones, according to the compilers, were preserved. The people's daily lives, the intercultural relations between the Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities, local customs and legal institutions did not receive enough attention. However, their information about the political structure and Buddhism in Bactria is critical. Chapters one (1.2.4) and two (2.1) will show that the documentary sources and archaeological data confirm the Buddhist monks' observations, particularly Xuanzang's reports about the political situation and the Buddhist monastery in Balkh. That makes them important and reliable to the present study.

2.1.5 Documentary sources

Apart from the historical narratives discussed above, this dissertation includes Bactrian and Arabic documents produced in the late antique Bactria. Since the 1990s, a small but incredibly important body of documents have been made available that provide information about the administration of daily life in Bactria, which is absent in literary sources. Bactrian documents written in the Bactrian language- the only Middle Iranian language that uses the Greek alphabet- were produced between the early fourth and late eighth century CE. Their subjects vary from economic and legal documents to official and private letters.¹¹² Although they do not directly inform us about the conquests, they show the social and economic conditions, as well as political relations in the region before and after the conquests. They offer valuable information about Bactrian rulers and their administration that are not found in any other

¹¹² Nicholas Sims-Williams has translated these documents into English and added extensive linguistic commentary on them. See, for instance, Nicholas Sims-Williams, "New Documents in Ancient Bactrian Reveal Afghanistan's Past," *IIAS Newsletter* 27 (2002): 12–13; "Nouveaux documents bactriens du Guzgan (New Bactrian Documents from Guzgan)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 146, no. 3 (2002): 1047–58; "Bactrian Letters from the Sasanian and Hephthalite Periods," in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, Ravenna, 6–22 October 2003*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies*, ed. A. Panaino and A. Piras (Milan: Mimesis, 2006), 701–13; *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 2, *Letters and Buddhist Texts* (London: Nour Foundation and Azimuth Editions, 2007); *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 1, *Legal and Economic Documents*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Nour Foundation, Azimuth Editions, and Oxford University Press, 2012); Nicholas Sims-Williams and Francois de Blois, *Studies in the Chronology of the Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, with contributions by Harry Falk and Dieter Weber (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2018). Recently, a group of twenty-nine Bactrian letters written on birchbark appeared in a private collection in London. It is said that these documents were brought for safety to London in 1979. These documents address a local lord named Sansidd who was loyal to the Sasanians. They were written in the late fourth century somewhere in southeast of modern Afghanistan. For details, see Nicholas Sims-Williams, "A New Collection of Bactrian Letters on Birchbark," With an Additional Note by Frantz Grenet, *Bulletin of Asia Institute* 31 (2022–2023): 135–144. These letters are not incorporated in this study because they are from outside Bactria.

sources. They show the local political structure in Bactria and its gradual changes after the conquests, the limits of conversion on the ground, the continuity of Buddhism and worshipping older Iranian deities among Bactrians during the Umayyad period.¹¹³ They provide a local perspective that helps us understand the socio-political context in which the conquests were happening.

The most significant advantage of the Bactrian documents lies in their form and contents. Most of these documents are completely preserved, and some were opened for research centuries after they were originally sealed.¹¹⁴ Thus, their texts remained undisturbed from any editing. Their contents reveal detailed information. The letters, for instance, often summarise the earlier correspondence between the senders and the receivers. The legal documents are in the form of double documents, in which the main text is written twice by the same person and sealed by the authorities.¹¹⁵ They provide details of the people who were involved in the making of these documents. The documents show continuity in their ‘form and formula’,¹¹⁶ representing administrative and cultural continuity for almost four centuries despite the regime changes in this period. They create an impression that local traditions and administrative regulations continued for a long time in Bactria.

¹¹³ These documents were known for two decades, and some scholars showed interest in them. See, for instance, Geoffrey Khan, “The Pre-Islamic Background of Muslim Legal Formularies,” *ARAM* 6 (1994): 193–224; Khodadad Rezakhani, “The Bactrian Collection: An Important Source for Sasanian Economic History,” *Sasanika* 13 (2008): 1–14, and “Balkh and the Sasanians: Economy and Society of Northern Afghanistan as Reflected in the Bactrian Economic Documents,” in *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies*, ed. Maria Macuch, Dieter Weber, and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 1–21; Kevin van Bladel, “The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids,” in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, ed. Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 43–88; Richard Payne, “The Making of Turan: The Fall and Transformation of the Iranian East in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9, no. 1 (2016): 4–41; Arezou Azad, “Living Happily Ever After: Fraternal Polyandry, Taxes and ‘the House’ in Early Islamic Bactria,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, no. 1 (2016): 33–56. Recently, more scholars paid attention to Bactrian documents. See Khodadad Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians: East Iran in Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Arezou Azad, “The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan: Conquest, Acculturation and Islamization,” in *Afghanistan’s Islam from Conversion to the Taliban*, ed. Nile Green (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 41–55; Hossein Sheikh, “Studies on the Bactrian Legal Documents” (PhD diss., Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2017); Said Reza Huseini’s articles, “Acts of Protection Represented in Bactrian Documents,” *Annales islamologiques* 54 (2021): 107–24, “The Idea and Practice of Justice Represented in Bactrian Documents,” *Association for Iranian Studies Newsletter* 41, no. 2 (2020): 28–31, and “Between Turks and Arabs: Household, Conversion and Power Dynamics in Early Abbasid Bactria (700–772),” in *The Ties that Bind: Mechanisms of Social Dependency in the Early Islamic Empire*, ed. Edmund Hayes and Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024, forthcoming); Hossein Sheikh, *Studies of Bactrian Legal Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

¹¹⁴ For the images of these documents, see Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan III: Plates* (London: The Nour Foundation, 2012).

¹¹⁵ See Huseini, “The Idea and Practice of Justice,” 28–31; Huseini, “Acts of Protection,” 107–124.

¹¹⁶ Sheikh calls it “continuity and conservation” (Sheikh, *Studies of Bactrian Legal Documents*, 5).

With all their significance, Bactrian documents do not cover the entire Bactria. They were produced in southern parts of the Amu Darya. From their contents, we realise that they were made in Guzgan (modern Juzjan), Gaz (possibly Darra-yi Gaz), Samangan (modern Samangan), Kadagstan (possibly around modern Baghlan), and Warnu (probably Qala-i Zal or Kunduz). So far, no Bactrian document has been found from the Balkh Oasis or northern parts of the Amu Darya. The official and private letters are primarily from the pre-conquest period. The legal documents were produced in local courts after negotiations between different parties. Thus, their backgrounds remain unclear. Their information should be used only for the areas they were produced and circulated and not for other areas in Bactria.

The Arabic documents provide some information about post-conquest Bactria. They are only thirty-two documents dating between 147–158/764–774 and were produced in the Rob region. Eight of them are legal documents related to Islamic emancipation (*ʿitq*) and marriage issues, and the rest are tax quittances (*barāʿa*) issued by Muslim authorities for the family of Mīr b. Bek al-Bāmiyānī, who is known from the Bactrian documents as well. Similar to the Bactrian documents, most of the Arabic documents are completely preserved, and some even have their clay sealings. They show the spread of Islamic legal regulations in the Rob region, their interactions with Bactrian laws, and the shift from levying taxes on Bactrian households in the Umayyad period to individuals in the early Abbasid period. They offer valuable information about the Arab Muslim fiscal regulations implemented in Bactria. Unlike the Bactrian documents, Arabic documents are very short in content and do not provide much information about the context in which they are produced.¹¹⁷ They are also limited to Rob and cannot be used for other areas.

2.1.6 Numismatic and archaeological data

The current study includes numismatic evidence. Some multilingual coins (Middle Persian, Arabic and Bactrian) were minted in Amber during the Umayyad period. Amber (modern Sari-i Pul) was a city in Guzgan. They are based on the Arab-Sasanian model and bear the names of the four kings of Guzgan. Some of these kings are known from Bactrian documents and Arabic narratives. They show the circulation of Arab-Sasanian coins in local markets in Guzgan only after being revalidated by local kings' countermarks and the payment of tributes to the

¹¹⁷ For English translation of these documents, see Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan* (London: Nour Foundation and Azimuth Editions, 2007), and “Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan,” in *Einstein Lectures in Islamic Studies* (Berlin: Freie Universität, 2014), 6–53.

Umayyads.¹¹⁸ Apart from them, some monolingual (Arabic) silver coins were minted in Balkh during the rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and are added to this study. These coins are essential for understanding his anti-Umayyad rebellion and the usage of religious vocabulary in this period.¹¹⁹ They also show a gradual change from multilingual coins minted by local kings to monolingual coins minted by the Umayyads after Bactria became part of the Umayyad empire.

These coins are significant historical sources of information for Bactria. Unlike the narratives, the coins are not edited. Whether commissioned by the Sasanians, Hephthalites, Arab Muslims or local Bactrian kings, they bear specific symbols and words reflecting religious vocabulary and political legitimacy. For instance, the fire altar, the images of deities, and the legends representing divine kingship on the Kushan and Sasanian coins reflect their sources of political legitimacy. The continuation of the Sasanian iconography and materials (silver) validated the Hephthalite coins, and later, the Arab-Muslim silver dirhams circulated in Bactria.¹²⁰ Though the coins reflect firsthand information about their mint locations and materials, they do not offer much about the social context they were used. The coins from Guzgan and Balkh are not found from archeological excavations, and thus their archaeological context remain unknown. These coins should be studied in light of documentary and literary sources.

Archaeological excavations to find traces of the Arab Muslims in Bactria are limited. Although excavations in Bactria go back to 1922 by the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA), this organisation focussed on finding Hellenistic remains in the region that eventually led to the discovery of a Graeco-Bactrian city at Ai-Khanoum in present-day Takhar province (1965–1978). The DAFA also excavated the Kushan royal temple at Surkh Kotal in Baghlan (1952–1961), Chishma-yi Shafa south of Balkh (2007), and Tepe Zargaran

¹¹⁸ In the early nineteenth century, Charles Masson (d. 1853) purchased them in Kabul, and then they were brought to Europe and ended up in various museums and private collections in the United Kingdom and France. For Masson's biography, see Elizabeth Errington, "Masson, Charles," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/masson-charles> (accessed on 7 May 2023); Joe Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan during the Period of Islamic Conquest, c. AH 70–150 [AD 690–767]." Paper presented at the workshop "Contesting Empires: Sogdiana, Bactria and Gandhara between the Sasanian Empire, the Tang Dynasty and the Muslim Caliphate (ca. 600–1000 CE)," Leiden University, 17 September 2020; Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Arab-Sasanian and Arab-Hephthalite coinage: a view from the East," in *Islamicisation de l'Asie centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VIIe au XIe siècle*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: 2008), 115–130; Hodge Mehdi Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics and History during the Early Islamic Period in Iran and Iraq: The Johnson Collection of Arab-Sasanian Coins* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 2019), 1: 71–72 and 399–408.

¹¹⁹ Stuart D. Sears, "The Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj and the Countermarking of Umayyad Dirhams in Early Eighth Century CE Khurāsān," in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. Paul Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 377–405.

¹²⁰ Joe Cribb informed me about this issue after his presentation (Joe Cribb, "Money as Power: A Metaphorical and Numismatic Approach." Paper presented at the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge, 17 March 2023).

(2004–2007) within the old city of Balkh, but none of these aimed to study the early Islamic period.¹²¹ Similarly, the Russian excavations in Bactria looked at the pre-historic period and unearthed the Tillya Tepe's treasure in 1978–79.¹²² On the other hand, the Japanese archaeological survey undertaken in 1959–60 in Samangan mostly looked at the Buddhist remains.¹²³ The only exception is DAFA's limited excavations conducted in 2005–2007 to study the mosque of Haji Piyāda in Balkh dated to the eighth century.¹²⁴ Thus, systematic excavations to study the early Islamic period remained to be done. Though the excavation reports do not directly inform us about the conquests, they shed light on religious and socio-political situation in pre-conquest Bactria.

Compared to Sogdiana, known for its wall paintings and other sources of material cultures, Bactria is poorly studied. Only the murals at Ghulbiyan near modern Maymana that were painted during the Sasanian period, and Nigar murals in Samangan dating from the seventh-eighth centuries, are known.¹²⁵ A short report about the fragments of wall paintings unearthed during DAFA's excavations at Tepe Zargarān has been published but is not scholarly contextualised.¹²⁶ So far, no wall paintings or decorations related to the Naw Bahar or other monuments described in the Arabic and Persian sources are to be found. Thus, the discussion on epigraphy is confined to studying the pre-conquest situation in Bactria.

¹²¹ For an overview, see N. H. Dupree, "Afghanistan viii. Archaeology," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/afghanistan-viii-archeo> (accessed on 31 October 2022); For a recent survey, see Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond, ed., *Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Time to the Timurid Period*, rev. ed., ed. Warwick Ball and Norman Hammond (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); For DAFA reports, see <https://www.persee.fr> (accessed on 31 October 2022).

¹²² The correct pronunciation is Tilla Tepe, but Tillya Tepe, which is common among scholars. Victor Sarianidi has published his excavations reports in several publications. For example, see Victor Sarianidi, "The Treasure of Golden Hill," *American Journal of Archaeology* 84, no. 2 (1980): 125–131, *Bactrian Gold: From the Excavations of the Tillya-Tepe Necropolis in Northern Afghanistan* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1985), and "Tillya Tepe: The Burial of a Noble Warrior," *PERSICA XIV* (1990–1992): 103–130.

¹²³ Seiichi Mizuno, ed., *Haibak and Kashmir-Smast, Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan and Pakistan Surveyed in 1960* (Japanese and English text) (Kyoto University, 1962).

¹²⁴ Philippe Marquis et al., "Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad: Works Carried out by the French Archaeological Delegation," in *The Nine Domes of the Universe: The Ancient Noh Gonbad Mosque, the Study and Conservation of an Early Islamic Monument at Balkh* (Kabul/New York/Lurano/Bergamo: Aga Khan Trust for Culture/Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA)/World Monuments Fund/Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo/Bolis Edizioni, 2016), 49–59.

¹²⁵ Jonathan Lee and Frantz Grenet, "New Lights on the Sasanid Painting at Ghulbiyan, Faryab Province Afghanistan," *South Asian Studies* 14 (1998): 75–85; Deborah Klimburg-Salter, "Dokhtar-i-Noshirwan Reconsidered," *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* 10 (1993): 355–368.

¹²⁶ Fouache Éric, Marquis Philippe, and Besenval Roland, "Nouvelles découvertes en Bactriane 2007–2009," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 153e année, no. 3 (2009): 1019–1061.

The above-mentioned sources show that we are dealing with information recorded in different languages and various temporal and spatial contexts. We have Arabic reports that were organised to provide a grand narrative about the conquests; local histories in Arabic and Persian highlighting local reception of the conquests; Chinese narratives reflecting the local political situation and popularity of Buddhism; Bactrian and Arabic documents showing local cultural traditions, political structure and administration of daily life in Bactria; limited numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological data revealing some information about religious places and economic situation. Each group of these sources sheds light on different parts of Bactrian history.

We should be aware that our sources do not cover the entirety of Bactria. The Arabic and Persian narratives pay attention only to the areas where the Arab Muslims were engaged in war, consolidated their authority, and interacted with local rulers. They focus on Guzgan and Balkh in western Bactria, Tirmidh, Chaghaniyan, and Khuttal in northern Bactria and only refer to other areas in eastern Bactria if a significant issue happens there. The Bactrian and Arabic documents shed light only on specific areas in the western (Guzgan, Gaz), the southern (Rob) and eastern Bactria (Kadagstan, Warnu). The Chinese narratives reflect the situation in Balkh and some areas in eastern and northern Bactria. Hence, they highlight the areas of Guzgan, Balkh, Rob, Kadagstan, Tirmidh, Chaghniayan and Khuttal. These areas remain at the centre of this study. We should not be surprised if all areas in Bactria are not discussed similarly. Except for Bactrian documents, other sources are limited to the urban areas, and the hinterlands are not much discussed. The diversity of sources and also their limitations create some questions. How can we use them responsibly? How should we consult them in order to make a comprehensive narrative? This brings us to discuss the method used in this study.

3. Methodology

The diversity of sources requires undertaking an inclusive methodology. This methodology serves the goal of having a better view of the conquests. Bringing all these sources together requires a close and comparative reading of them. This method helps us use one source to check another or complete an incomplete one. Similarly, it enables us to bring different voices into a dialogue and show various views about the process of the conquests described in these sources. An inclusive methodology does not allow using information related to one area to discuss another area. Thus, it prevents preferring one source over another, generalising, and assuming

one contains “truth” while another “misleads”. This methodology contributes to a better understanding of the conquests and their socio-political contexts.

The current study systematically analyses documentary, literary, and other relevant sources, and then combines their information. First, it discusses the local socio-political circumstances in Bactria before the conquests and then explains the Arab Muslim conquests in that context. In doing so, it reads the Bactrian documents together with archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic sources and geographical accounts to see what they tell us about Bactrian society, its local rulers, and the areas they controlled. Then, it looks at Arabic, Persian and Chinese narratives about Bactria’s religious practices and political structure. Subsequently, it brings the *futūḥ* narratives into the discussion to see the Arab Muslim interactions with the local rulers and the local ruler’s responses to the conquests. The *futūḥ* narratives will be discussed along the Arabic and Persian local histories. Special attention is paid to the reports that reflect the local concerns in all cases.

The sources and methodology discussed so far bring us to the central questions raised at the beginning of the introduction. How did the Arab Muslims rapidly conquer the vast region of Sasanian Khurasan? How did they expand their authority over Bactria? How did Bactrian rulers respond to the conquests? Moreover, how did Arab Muslims eventually incorporate Bactria into the Umayyad empire? This dissertation is organised into six chapters to systematically analyse the existing sources in order to provide answers to these questions.

4. Organisation of chapters

The first chapter conceptualises Bactria from geographical and historical points of view. It helps to understand the region and its conditions before the Arab Muslims arrive. It shows that Bactria is part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone located in Iran, India, the steppe, and China. As a result, Bactria has a shatter zone’s geographical and environmental features. The shatter zone is a geological term that applies to a region where diversity in landscapes, populations, cultural traditions, connection with other regions, and political divisions is most visible. The diversity did not allow one political group to dominate the entire region but created a space for cooperation between different groups of people. The rulers fostered religious accord and tolerance in Bactria and did not impose religious uniformity in this region. This chapter also shows that Bactria was part of a frontier region between more considerable political powers. The Sasanians, the Chionites, the Hephthalites, and the Western Turks tried to control it. Each

of these powers applied a different strategy to conquer and maintain its regional control. Hence, the first chapter shows that we are dealing with a frontier region where diversity in nature and population is the first element to consider when discussing Arab Muslim conquests.

The second chapter describes the political structure in Bactria. It attempts to recognise Bactrian local rulers, the areas they controlled, and their internal relations before they faced the Arab Muslims. It shows that more than ten different principalities coexisted in Bactria. They were autonomous in their local affairs and administration, had control of local resources, and took command of their military forces. However, they recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Western Turks and paid him tribute. The first two chapters are the foundation for understanding the local socio-political context in which the conquests happened. They let us see how the local rulers received the conquerors and reacted to them.

The third and fourth chapters answer the questions of how the Arab Muslims conquered Khurasan rapidly but then faced difficulties controlling it. They highlight two different phases of the conquests. Chapter three discusses the first phase (31–85/651–705), characterised by rapid and smooth conquests. It shows that political rivalries among various local rulers in Sasanian Khurasan provided the opportunity for Arab Muslims to involve in Khurasan. Once they established Sasanian Khurasan, they used Bactria as a safe passage to raid Sogdiana. In this phase, Bactrian rulers remained untouched, thus not resisting the Arab Muslims crossing their areas. In most cases, they cooperated with the Arab Muslims.

The second phase (85–128/705–746), discussed in the fourth chapter, shows that the Umayyads attempted to systematically conquer the eastern Iranian regions and incorporate them into the empire. That created enormous pressure on Bactrian rulers and threatened their political autonomy. It led to their uprising to stop the Umayyad conquests. However, the Umayyads eradicated the resisting rulers and imposed their control over Bactria. The Umayyads' aggressive politics in Sogdiana and encroachment on the steppe led to two decades of war with the Türgesh Turks. The Umayyad and Türgesh war over control of the eastern regions created anger among many Arab Muslims who had regional socio-economic interests, and the caliphal policies threatened their positions. As a result, they rebelled against the Umayyad caliph. The Bactrian rulers, who survived the earlier uprising, joined the anti-Umayyad rebellion. However, they shifted their side and supported the Umayyads to remove the Türgesh forces who invaded Bactria. All these made control of the region very difficult for the Umayyads.

The last two chapters discuss the socio-political impacts of the conquests in Bactria. They show that the rebellions in Bactria and the war with the Türgesh taught the Umayyads that they could not keep the region under their control unless they maintained a good relationship with local rulers. The new approach allowed the Umayyads to re-establish and consolidate their overlordship in Bactria. At the same time, being on the Umayyad board allowed some Bactrians to be promoted to high positions. The Arab Muslim settlements in Bactria created a space for intensive social interactions between Arab Muslims and local people and led to a centuries-long process of Islamicisation in this region. It allowed cultural exchange between them, eventually resulting the formation of an Islamic Balkh.

Chapter One: Conceptualising the Region

[In Balkh] all products of the tropical areas are available, but the date palm does not grow there... There is much snow in Balkh and the areas around it. Water freezes there, and [thus] it can be counted as part of the cold climate areas [too].¹²⁷

Introduction

This chapter gives general remarks on the region of Bactria. It provides an overview of the geography and political conditions in the region when the Arab Muslims entered it. It shows how Bactria as a regional entity is a result of the geological conditions that created a shatter zone with a very diverse landscape characterised by mountains and valleys, rivers, and deserts. This has created a population dispersed into small communities that settled in the few and confined spaces that provided the conditions that could sustain them, connected via a network of roads that extended even far beyond the region, but nevertheless separated from each other leading to a political organisation of autonomy and overlordship. The extensive and dense network of routes in which Bactrian settlements figured led to an endless stream of goods, people and ideas in the region, contributing to the population's cultural diversity. This chapter builds a foundation for understanding Bactria's main areas of political control, their local rulers, and their interactions with the Arab Muslims discussed in the next chapters.

This chapter is organised into two parts to explain the geographical and political characters of Bactria. The first part will discuss how Bactria is part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone (Figure 2). As a result, Bactria has the geographical and environmental character of a shatter zone.¹²⁸ This part shows that Bactria was divided into smaller units, and within these smaller units, the population was even further divided and diversified. That makes it different from the rest of the early Islamic empires like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The second part discusses the impact of the shatter zone. It will show that geography and climate influence human settlement patterns and their political organisations. Knowing these characteristics is crucial in understanding the dynamic process of the Arab Muslim conquests and their areas of political control in Bactria.

¹²⁷ Abū al-Qāsim b. Hawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ* (Beirut: Manshurāt Dār Maktaba al-Ḥayāt, 1992), 376.

¹²⁸ The term "Shatter Zone" has been utilised by Luce in his study of the Umayyad Khurasan (Luce, "Frontier Process," 4).

I shall start by enumerating the various sources consulted for this chapter. Information on Bactria prior to the conquest is scattered in different documentary and literary sources, in numismatics studies, and in archaeological reports. Synthesising this information allows us to envision a clear picture of the region. Only a concurrent reading of these sources brings out the shatter zone characteristics and a full appreciation of the frontier zone's function that explain the specific socio-political situation in Bactria on the eve of the conquests.

1.1. Geography of Bactria

1.1.1 Name and location

Throughout its history, the region this dissertation calls Bactria has been referred to by different names. Despite this lack of consistency, it can be roughly described as comprising the lands between the Marw al-Rūd river in the west to Badakhshan in the east, the Hindukush to the south and the Hisar mountains to the north, with the Amu Darya flowing through the middle of it (Figure 3). The city of Balkh forms the main settlement and political centre. A discussion on the name and location of Bactria clarifies why this study calls this region Bactria.

The name of Bactria came to us via the Greek *Βάκτρα* (with the variants *βακτρία* *βακτριανή*).¹²⁹ It was already known in Old Persian (*Bāxtri*) itself as an adaptation of the Median (*Bāxθrī*). The Median *Bāxθrī* is derived from the proto-Bactrian *Bāχδī* attested in the *Avesta*.¹³⁰ The proto-Bactrian *Bāχδī* was the name of this region, but gradually developed to *βαχλο*. Then, *βαχλο* became the name of the main city in Bactria.¹³¹ The term *βαχλο* and its Middle Persian form *B'hl* may have led to the Arabic and the New Persian name of Balkh.¹³² Hence, the proto-Bactrian *Bāχδī* was the source of all other forms in different languages.¹³³

Bactria as a region with Balkh as its main political centre was known in the Achaemenid period (550–330 BCE). Bactria was a satrapy (*Bāxtri\خشاحاپāvā*),¹³⁴ and the authority of its

¹²⁹ Burzine Waghmar, “Between Hind and Hellas: the Bactrian Bridgehead (with an Appendix on Indo-Hellenic Interactions),” in *Indo-Hellenic Cultural Transactions*, ed. Radhika Seshan (Mumbai: The K. R. Cama Oriental Institute, 2020), 187.

¹³⁰ Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Bactria-Balkh: Variation on a Place-Name,” in *Acta Iranica: Études de Linguistique Iranienne in Memoriam Xavier Tremblay*, ed. Eric Pirart (Peeters, 2016): 273. Waghmer argued that Bactria could either mean “share” or the “land belonging to the *bāxδra* river.” (Waghmar, “Between Hind and Hellas,” 188).

¹³¹ A Bactrian document produced in the late fourth century refers to the city of Balkh as *βαχλο* (Bactrian document no. cd in Nicholas Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 74–75).

¹³² Sims-Williams, “Bactria-Balkh,” 274.

¹³³ Sims Williams, “Bactria-Balkh,” 273.

¹³⁴ Darius Inscription at Behistun, Column 3, Lines 11–19. For the full text, see <https://www.livius.org/sources/content/behistun-persian-text/behistun-t-24> (accessed on 15 May 2023).

satrap, who resided in Balkh, reached both southern and northern parts of the Amu Darya. Some Aramaic documents produced in Achaemenid Bactria attest to this.¹³⁵ They refer to Bactria as *bahtry* (ܒܗܬܪܝ). The same name is applied to the city of Balkh.¹³⁶ Similar information about Bactria is echoed in the works of Greek and Roman historians. They situated Bactria between the Hindukush and the Amu Darya (Oxus in Greek).¹³⁷ However, sometimes, they included northern parts of the Amu Darya as part of Bactria, for example, in Strabo's writings.¹³⁸ These reports imply that Bactria was controlled through Balkh.

While Bactria remained famous among Roman historians who wrote about the eastern Iranian regions, a new toponym appeared in Bactria. It was not a local name (like proto-Bactrian *Bāχδī*), nor was it associated with this region (like Greek *βακτρία*). In the first century BCE, new groups of people, known as Tukhari, conquered Bactria and settled there.¹³⁹ They gave their name to the areas they settled, and that was likely limited to the eastern parts of Bactria. These groups later established the Kushan Empire (first century BCE-third century CE).¹⁴⁰ The evidence for the name Tukharistan (*τοχουαρσταν*) used in this period comes from an inscribed silver dish presented by Nukunzuk to the Kushan King Kanishka I (r. early second century CE) after the king returned from his Indian campaign.¹⁴¹ Tukharistan is also mentioned in two Bactrian documents produced in Rob in southern Bactria in the fifth century when the Hephthalites (late fifth to late sixth century) controlled the region.¹⁴² Beyond the general observation that the Tukharians took control of the area and introduced the name Tukharistan to the region, the silver dish and the Bactrian documents do not describe the geography of

¹³⁵ The Aramaic document no. A4 [Khalili IA 1] shows that Akhwamazda (ruling in the fourth century BCE), the Achaemenid satrap of Bactria, ruled the region from Balkh. Further information can be found in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, ed., *Ancient Aramaic Documents from Bactria (fourth century B.C.E). Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Part 1: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran* (London: The Khalili Family Trust, 2006), 93–99.

¹³⁶ Aramaic documents no. A8 [Khalili IA 11] and no. C1 [Khalili IA 21]. See Naveh and Shaked, ed., *Ancient Aramaic Documents*, 108–116, 174–185.

¹³⁷ These are Herodotus (fifth century BCE), Strabo (62 BCE–24 CE), Arrian (c. 86–160), Pliny (c. 23/24–79), Ptolemy (c. second century), and Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 330–395).

¹³⁸ All these reports can be found in William Smith, ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* (London: Walton and Maberly, 1854). It is available online: www.perseus.tufts.edu

¹³⁹ P. Leriche and Frantz Grenet, “Bactria in the Avesta and in Zoroastrian tradition,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bactria#pt2> (accessed on 28 November 2022).

¹⁴⁰ The chronology of the Kushan dynasty is disputed. However, there is a consensus that the Kushans ruled between the first century BCE and the third century CE. See Joe Cribb, “Numismatic evidence and the date of Kanishka I,” in *Problems of Chronology in the Gandhāran Art*, ed. Wannaporn Rienjang and Peter Stewart (Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2018), 7–34.

¹⁴¹ Nicholas Sims-Williams, “A new Bactrian inscription from the time of Kanishka,” in *Kushan Histories: Literary Sources and Selected Papers from a Symposium at Berlin, December 5 to 7, 2013*, ed. Harry Falk (Bremen: Hempen Verlag, 2015), 261.

¹⁴² See Bactrian documents, no. eh and jb in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 122–23, 126–27. For the Hephthalites, see Aydogdy Kurbanov, *The History and Archaeology of the Hephthalites* (Bonn: Habelt Verlag, 2013).

Tukharistan, nor do they tell us about its political boundaries. Most probably, Tukharistan was confined to the eastern parts of Bactria.

A helpful description of Tukharistan in the early seventh century is presented in Chinese records. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (600–662) visited it in 629–30 on his way to India.¹⁴³ According to him, the *Tuhuolu*, the country of Tukharians, was 1,000 in 3,000 *li* (a Chinese measure possibly equal to 300 meters). The T'sung-ling mountains (Pamir mountains) formed its eastern boundary, and in the west, it touched *Po-li-sse* or Persia. The great “snowy mountains”, meaning the Hindukush, were located to the south and to the north, the “Iron Gates” formed its border. The Amu Darya flowed through the middle of this country.¹⁴⁴ Xuanzang refers to Balkh (*Poho/Fuhe*) as Rājāgriha or the royal city.¹⁴⁵ A century later, the Korean Buddhist pilgrim Hye Ch'o, who visited this region around 725–26, made a similar description of it and situated Tukharistan between Bamiyan to the south, Badakhshan to the east, and Persia to the west.¹⁴⁶ In his account, Balkh (*Fudiye*) was the capital of this region.¹⁴⁷

From these reports, we might ask the question of why the seventh-century Chinese reports call it the land of Tukharians and not Bactria. The reason is that the Chinese traditionally used the term “Daxia” (大夏) for the Amu Darya region. It is already mentioned that the Tukhari people settled in this region and formed the Kushan empire. From the Yuan Wei period (386–535), the Tukhari people were called *Tuhuolu* (吐火羅). Then, in the Tang period (618–927), the region of Daxia was identified with *Tuhuolu*. In other words, *Tuhuolu* became a popular reference for the region where the Tukhari people lived.¹⁴⁸ When Xuanzang and Hye Cha'o visited Bactria, they simply called it *Tuhuolu*, which was already known to them. Their transcription of Balkh (*Fuhe*, *Fudiye*) corresponded to how they pronounced “Balkh” with an additional suffix.¹⁴⁹ Associating Bactria with certain people was not confined to the Chinese. It is also echoed in the Middle Persian and Armenian sources. From the third century, the Sasanians identified Bactria as the country of the Kushans (*Kūshānshahr*) and Balkh as their

¹⁴³ For his biography, see Benjamin Brose, *Xuanzang: China's Legendary Pilgrim and Translator* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2021).

¹⁴⁴ *SI-YU-KI*, 37.

¹⁴⁵ *SI-YU-KI*, 44; Sims-Williams mentions that *Fuhe* represents Bactrian βαγδο (Sims-Williams, “Bactria–Balkh,” 279).

¹⁴⁶ *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 51–52.

¹⁴⁷ *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52; According to Sims-Williams, *Fudiye* also represents βαγδο (Sims-Williams, “Bactria–Balkh,” 279).

¹⁴⁸ Yu Taishan, “The Earliest Tokharians in China,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 204 (2010): 7–13.

¹⁴⁹ Sims-Williams, “Bactria–Balkh,” 279.

political centre.¹⁵⁰ This definition was adopted in the Armenian sources.¹⁵¹ The seventh-century historian Sebeos called Bactria the country of the Kushan with the city of Balkh as its political centre. He identified Tukharistan only with the eastern parts of Bactria.¹⁵² In these reports, the land of the Tukharians or the country of the Kushans is the same, and that is Bactria. Balkh was its political centre.

With the Arab Muslim conquests of the eastern Iranian regions and the formation of Umayyad Khurasan, Tukharistan was identified with the eastern parts of Bactria. It was not used as a toponym for the entire Bactria. The Arabic geographic accounts compiled in the early Abbasid period divided Bactria into two distinct parts: Balkh and Tukharistan. Each of them had its administration (*al-dawāwīn*). They also used Balkh as a specific name for the city (*madīna*) of Balkh.¹⁵³ The combination of Balkh and Tukharistan formed a great *kūra* also called Balkh.¹⁵⁴ Al-Ya‘qūbī described it as “Greater Balkh” (*Balkh al-‘uẓmā*), which covered all lands between the Marw al-Rūd and Badakhshan.¹⁵⁵ Thus, Balkh became a toponym for the entire region of Bactria and a specific name for its political centre, which was the city of Balkh. Tukharistan was the eastern part of the greater Balkh.

The combination of all these reports shows continuity in undersetting Bactria. More or less, these reports describe Bactria as a region covering both parts of the Amu Darya. They all

¹⁵⁰ Touraj Daryaei, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History* (California: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 3–4, 13.

¹⁵¹ Josef Marquart, *Ēranšahr: nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorena‘ci* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901), 49–66; For more detail on this text, see A. de Jong, “The Beginning and the End of the Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71: (2008): 53–58.

¹⁵² R. W. Thomson, trans., *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, commented by James Howard-Johnston and Tim Greenwood, Part I. The Translation and Notes (Liverpool University Press, 1999), 15, 52–53.

¹⁵³ For instance, in his report about the east (*khavar al-mashriq*), Ibn Khurdhādhbih (fl. 300/913) mentioned that Balkh and Tukharistan were part of the same quarter (*rub*) during the Sasanian period (Ibn Khurdhādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 18). We will see in chapter three (3.1.1) that the Sasanian Khurasan was divided into four administrative quarters (*arbā*), and Balkh was one of them that included Tukharistan. Equally, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Faqīh al-Hamadānī (fl. second half of the third/ninth century) ascribes Balkh and Tukharistan forming one region (Abī Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hamadānī (Ibn al-Faqīh), *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. De Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 321–22). Al-Ya‘qūbī expanded Balkh to the cities of Tukhairistan and put all of them in one region (al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 115–122). Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Istakhrī (fl. 300/912) wrote that Tukharistan is related to Balkh (*yattaṣilu bihā*). Though he adds that they had different administrations, he does not explain the administrative differences between the two districts (Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fārsī al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir ‘Abd al-‘Al al-Ḥinī and Muḥammad Shafīq Gharbāl (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1381/1961), 145, 155). A similar report is given by Ibn Ḥawqal (d. c. 367/977). He describes Tukharistan as part of Balkh despite having different administrative units, cities, and areas (Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 361). Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī (second half of the tenth century CE) describes Balkh and Tukharistan together, indicating his understanding of them as one region (Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Madbūlī, 1411/1991), 295–296).

¹⁵⁴ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 145.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 66–70.

refer to Balkh as the political centre of Bactria. The Sasanian *Kūshānshahr* (and its Armenian form) or Chinese *Tuhuolu* associated Bactria with the Tukhari people who settled and ruled there. They did not create a new name for the region. Similarly, the Arabic reports did not invent any name for Bactria but simply called it Balkh, which was already known. They also clarified that Tukharistan was in the eastern part of Bactria. Hence, the current study does not use *Tuhuolu*, *Kūshānshahr* or Tukharistan for this region but calls it Bactria. Two reasons can be mentioned here. The term Bactria is linked to the proto-Bactrian *Bāχδī*, which is the root of all other names like *baḥtry*, *bāxtri*, *B'hl*, *baxl*, and Balkh. It is not an exonym but a name that originated in Bactria. Secondly, Bactria is a well-known name in modern scholarship and using it prevents any confusion. This study describes Bactria as a region stretching from the Marw al-Rūd river in the west to Badakhshan in the east, the Hindukush to the south and the Hisar mountains to the north, with the Amu Darya flowing through the middle of it. It uses Balkh to refer to the main city in Bactria. Establishing the name and location of Bactria paves the way to discussing its geography.

1.1.2 Bactria as part of a shatter zone

The historical Bactria discussed earlier was located in the eastern part of the Amu Darya Basin, which itself is part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone.¹⁵⁶ This shatter zone runs “from the southwest to the northeast, stretching from the Indian Ocean to the steppes of China.”¹⁵⁷ A shatter zone is a geological terminology that applies to a region with extreme geographical diversity. The shatter zone is created by tectonic collisions that form a “massive system of mountain chains” and the resulting “volcanic activity rifting and fracturing” it further.¹⁵⁸ As a result, a landscape with extremely different natural elements fragments it geographically. Being part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone, the region that hosted historical Bactria has the geographical characteristics of a shatter zone as well. In this region, high mountains, long and narrow valleys, deserts, oases, marshy areas near the rivers, and low hills are all situated in a close geographical space. The extreme geographical differences affected human activities such as food production, settlement patterns, social interconnections, relations with other regions, trade networks, and political organisations. In the seventh century, the Arab Muslims entered

¹⁵⁶ The western part of the Amu Darya Basin runs to the Khwarazm region.

¹⁵⁷ Luce, “Frontier Process,” 4–5.

¹⁵⁸ Sophia R. Bowlby and Kevin H. White, “The Geographical Background,” in *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period*, ed. Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond, rev. ed., ed. W. Ball (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 16–17.

this region that was geographically diverse and politically divided. The complicated geography and political divisions influenced their activities in Bactria.

Geographically, the region of Bactria can be divided into five areas. These are western Bactria, Bactria proper, southern Bactria, eastern Bactria, and northern Bactria (Figure 3). The reason behind such division is that the natural landscape of each of these areas is different. Similarly, each of these areas was controlled by different political groups, which will be discussed in the next chapter (2.1). Recognition of these five areas helps to identify those different political groups and their interactions with the Arab Muslims discussed in this dissertation (chapters three, 3.3, and four, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3). To recognise these areas, this present section consults various sources, such as Arabic and Persian geographical descriptions. The importance of these reports is that most of the Muslim geographers mentioned in this chapter visited Bactria, and there is a consensus in their reports. However, the problem with their work is that they pay more attention to the cities and roads connecting them and occasionally discuss the countryside. The satellite images and contemporary geographical descriptions are also added because the natural features have not changed much, and they confirm most of the historical descriptions.

1.1.3 Western Bactria

Western Bactria consisted of all the areas between the Marw al-Rūd river (Per. Marvab or Marw river) and Balkh.¹⁵⁹ Geographically, western Bactria is characterised by high mountains to the south and the Kara-Kum Desert to the north. In this region, a very high elevation suddenly drops “between four and six thousand feet into a stony plain about twelve hundred feet above the sea level.”¹⁶⁰ The Marw river (and its tributaries) originates from the high mountains to the south and passes through the narrow valleys before reaching the Kara-Kum desert, which creates the large inland delta in Marw.¹⁶¹ It stops after creating this massive inland delta that is extensively cultivated. In Badghis, where the Marw river crosses towards

¹⁵⁹ Al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 148; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 365; Nabī Sāqī has kindly informed me that Marvab is also mentioned in a Persian document from pre-Mongol Ghur (personal communication, 2020).

¹⁶⁰ Luce, “Frontier Process,” 39.

¹⁶¹ For detail on Marw inland delta, see Barbara Cerasitti, “Remote Sensing and Survey of the Murghab Alluvial Fan, Southern Turkmenistan: The Coexistence of Nomadic Herders and Sedentary Farmers in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age,” in *Proceeding of the 7th International Congress on Archaeology of the Ancient Near East 12 April-16 April 2010, the British Museum and UCL, London. Volume 2 Ancient & Modern Issues in Cultural Heritage Colour & Light in Architecture, Art & Material Culture Islamic Archaeology*, ed. Roger Mathews and John Curtis (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 539–58.

the north, the high mountains of Tirband-i Turkistan are located. The two small rivers of Shirin Tagab and Sar-i Pul, which originate in the Hindukush mountains, form two small oases at Andkhuy and Shaburghan but soon disappear in the desert.¹⁶² The Amu Darya becomes very narrow at Kalif, an area located northeast of Andkhuy, creating a natural crossing point. Hence, nature has formed distinctive areas in western Bactria: high mountains and plains. Badghis and Gharchistan are characterised by high mountains and narrow valleys. Guzgan has both mountains and plains. It can be divided into two parts: Lower Guzgan and Upper Guzgan.¹⁶³ The Lower Guzgan is closer to the Kara-Kum desert, while the Upper Guzgan is distinguished by its green hills and high mountains to the south (Figure 4).

The Arabic and Persian geographical accounts from the Abbasid period described the geography of western Bactria and are similar to the above-mentioned observation. The fourth/tenth-century anonymous writer of *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam min al-mashriq ilā al-maghrib* (“Boundaries of the World from the East to the West”) written in Persian in Guzgan mentions that this region was called Guzgan in his time, and that it was a vast region between the city of Balkh and the area called Gharchistan. The Amu Darya was to the north of it, and the Ghur region was to the south.¹⁶⁴ Arabic geographical accounts described Guzgan (Ar. *al-Juzjān*) as a vast area (*al-nāḥiya*) between Balkh and Gharchistan, but they did not expand it to Ghur.¹⁶⁵ However, they all agree that Badghis, Marw al-Rūd, and Gharchistan and Guzgan were the main areas in western Bactria.

The Muslim geographer described Badghis as a mountainous area (*‘alā jabal*). This area had few rivers. Only the lower areas that had access to rivers produced agricultural products. The cultivated lands on the slope of the mountains were rain-watered (*mabākhis*). The bigger cities were in the plain areas, and the smaller ones were in the mountains. All buildings were constructed with mud brick (*tīn*).¹⁶⁶ The people of Badghis were warlike.¹⁶⁷ Like Badghis, Gharchistan (*gharj al-shār*) was a mountainous area (*al-jibāl*). However, the

¹⁶² P. Leriche and Frantz Grenet, “BACTRIA,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bactria> (accessed on 13 October 2021).

¹⁶³ R. Hartmann, “Djuzdjan,” *Encyclopedia Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/djuzdjan> (accessed on 9 October 2021).

¹⁶⁴ Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭīhrānī, ed., *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam min al-mashriq ila al-maghrib* (Tehran: Maṭba‘a-yi Majlis, 1352/1073), 59.

¹⁶⁵ See, for instance, al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 148, 152–53; Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 116; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 365–70; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 398.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Istkhārī refers to eight cities in Badghis (al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 152); *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 57; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 368–69; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 308; ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. Nūr al-Dīn (Abū al-Fidā), *Taqwīm al-buldān*, ed. Mc. Guckin de Slane (Paris: A L’imprimerie Royale, 1840), 455.

¹⁶⁷ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* mentions that Badghis had 300 villages (*Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 57).

rivers allowed cultivation on lands around them. It produced rice (*arz*) and raisin (*zabīb*) that were exported to Balkh and all over Khurasan.¹⁶⁸ The people of Gharchistan were farmers and conducted animal husbandry.¹⁶⁹ Marw al-Rūd was in the lower area (*dāman-i Kūhistān*).¹⁷⁰ The Marw river watered gardens and agricultural fields (*basātīn wa kūrūm*). It was a prosperous area, and its cities and villages were in plain areas near the river.¹⁷¹ Guzgan had both mountains and plains. The lower area produced agricultural products, and its desert dwellers had many camels and sheep. The hilly areas provided grassland for horses. It had more cities and villages than Badghis, Gharchistan, and Marw al-Rūd. Buildings were constructed with mud bricks. The bigger cities were in plain areas near the rivers.¹⁷² The people of the mountainous areas were warlike (*jangī*), and the people of the plain areas were peaceful (*sāda dīl*).¹⁷³ These reports show that Muslim geographers observed different landscapes and their impact on the human settlement patterns in western Bactria.

1.1.4 Bactria proper

Bactria proper contains the Balkh oasis, located between the sharp cliffs to the south and the Amu Darya to the north. Several natural splits in these cliffs allow the rivers of Balkh and Khulm to enter the northern plain and form the oases of Balkh and Khulm. A strip of the Karakum Desert, which reaches this region, does not let the Balkh and Khulm rivers join the Amu Darya. The strong winds move the sand of the deserts south of the Amu Darya, creating temporary mounds that do not allow any kind of human settlement, including the building of irrigation canals between the oases and the Amu Darya. The Balkh oasis is the gift of the Balkhab or Balkh river originating in the Hindukush mountains and “debouches onto the Bactrian piedmont. Here it has formed a huge alluvial fan of more than 2,000 km², on which it splits into divergent arms so as to form a real inland delta.”¹⁷⁴ This wide alluvial fan is known

¹⁶⁸ Al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 153; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 371; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 309.

¹⁶⁹ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 58.

¹⁷⁰ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 58.

¹⁷¹ Al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 152–53; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 369; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 314.

¹⁷² *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* refers to fourteen cities in Guzgan (*Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 59–61); Al-Istkhārī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 153; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 398; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 370.

¹⁷³ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 59–61.

¹⁷⁴ D. Balland, “Balkhāb,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/balkab-the-river-of-balk> (accessed on 17 January 2020).

as the *hazhdah nahr* or eighteen canals.¹⁷⁵ The Balkh river fed a network of irrigation canals providing an extensive agricultural space.¹⁷⁶ To the east of Balkh, the small oasis of Khulm is located. This small oasis is fed by the Khulm river, which originates in the Hindukush and passes into the narrow and long gorge of Khulm. The location of Khulm near the natural pass makes it the main gateway to southern and eastern Bactria (Figures 5–8).¹⁷⁷

The Arabic and Persian geographic accounts reflect similar information. The *Hudūd al-‘ālam* mentions that the Balkh river originates in Bamiyan and flows towards Balkh. Before reaching the city, it divides into twelve canals that carry water to all villages of Balkh. The oasis of Balkh produces sugarcane, lotus flowers, and some tropical fruits.¹⁷⁸ The city of Balkh was located in this oasis (*fī mūstawā*), and the nearest mountain was to the south. Balkh was a great city, protected by defensive walls (*al-sūr*). The desert to the north of the oasis was difficult to cross because it was dry and sandy (*al-rumāl*), and buildings in the area were made of mud bricks. The city of Balkh had a large population. It was a great trade centre located in the middle of Khurasan (*wasat Khurāsān*), and traders brought to it commercial things from all other regions.¹⁷⁹ In contrast to Balkh, Khulm was a small oasis. The river of Khulm was divided into various canals that watered the villages. It did not have a great city like Balkh.¹⁸⁰

1.1.5 Southern Bactria

Southern Bactria is covered by mountains.¹⁸¹ The density of mountains did not allow any substantial space for agriculture except on the riverbanks, which formed the scarce cultivable lands in this region. Even today, almost all the villages and towns are located along small rivers. Only in the open valley of Samangan was more cultivation possible, which provided space for

¹⁷⁵ In the pre-Mongol period, the Balkh river had twelve branches, but possibly after the Mongol invasion, six new branches were added (*Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61); For the change in the direction of the Balkhab and its canals, see Étienne de la Vaissière, “Early Medieval Central Asian Population Estimates,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60, no. 6 (2017): 788–817; Ilhāmīh Miftāḥ gives similar discussion. S. Ilhāmīh Miftāḥ *Gughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkh-i Balkh, Jayhūn va Muẓāfāt-i ān* (Tehran: Pazhūhishgāh-i ‘Ulūm-i Insānī va Muṭālī‘āt-i Farhangī, 1376/2000), 47.

¹⁷⁶ For further information, see Éric Fouache, Philippe Marquis, and Roland Besenval, “Novuelles découvertes en Bactriane 2007–2009,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 153, no. 3 (2009): 1033–1044; Paul Wordsworth, “The hydrological networks of the Balkh Oasis after the arrival of Islam: a landscape archaeological perspective,” *Afghanistan* 1.1 (2018): 182–208.

¹⁷⁷ Barthold, *Turkestan*, 67.

¹⁷⁸ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61; Ibn Hawqal also mentioned the tropical fruits (Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 376).

¹⁷⁹ Al-Istakharī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 155; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 373–74; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 295–302; Abū al-Fidā, *Taqwīm al-buldān*, 461; Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 115–16.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303; *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

¹⁸¹ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

developing small towns. The narrow valleys to the south of Samangan did not allow the development of cities, but many fortresses were built in the mountains (Figure 9-10).¹⁸²

The Arabic and Persian documents do not offer much information about southern Bactria. The reason is that the writers paid attention to the main urban areas, and southern Bactria did not have large urban centres. These accounts often refer to southern Bactria as al-Rub wa al-Samanjan. Al-Istakharī and al-Ya‘qūbī mention it without any details.¹⁸³ Only al-Muqaddasī says that Samangan did not have many agricultural areas but had animals for hunting (*ṣayd*).¹⁸⁴ He does not refer to any specific area, but the fourth/tenth century Ghaznavid historian Abū al-Faḍl al-Bayhaqī mentions that Piruz Nakhchir (modern Piruz Nakhchir) in Samangan was a great hunting area.¹⁸⁵ The main source of information on southern Bactria is the Bactrian documents. They show that agricultural production was not abundant in this area. The main towns were in lower areas around the river, and smaller settlements in the form of fortresses were scattered in the mountain areas.¹⁸⁶

1.1.6 Eastern Bactria

Eastern Bactria contains all areas from the Hindukush mountains to the Amu Darya in the east of Balkh. Similar to western Bactria, eastern Bactria has high mountains, low and green hills, and plains. The natural division in this area starts between the Khulm river and the west of the Surkhab river (modern Kunduz river), where a range of lower hills gradually reaches the high mountains.¹⁸⁷ The rivers of eastern Bactria -Surkhab, Kokcha, and Panj- join the Amu Darya. The Surkhab river is the longest and biggest river that originates from the Hindukush. The Khanabad river joins it. The Surkhab, Kokcha, Panj, and Khanabad rivers irrigate major agricultural areas in this region. The Kara Kum Desert reaches here, but it cannot prevent the Surkhab river from joining the Amu Darya. The desert did not allow the development of any major urban areas between Khulm and Qala-yi Zal, or from Qala-yi Zal to Imam Sahib. In general, eastern Bactria is characterised by densely cultivated areas in Talaqan, Kunduz,

¹⁸² Personal observation, 2002 and 2006.

¹⁸³ Al-Istakharī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 155; Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 122.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303.

¹⁸⁵ Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar Fayyāz (Tehran: Dānishgāh-i Firdausī, 1383/ 2005), 252, 524.

¹⁸⁶ See chapter two, section 2.1.1.

¹⁸⁷ Shushin Kuwayama, “The Hephthalites in Tukharistan before 558,” in *Across the Hindu Kush of the First Millennium: A collection of the Papers* (Kyoto University: Institute for Research in Humanities, 2002), 125.

Baghlan and Imam Sahib; low hills that separate these agricultural areas from each other; high mountains to the east of it; and the rivers that join the Amu Darya (Figure 11).

Eastern Bactria is the area that the Muslim geographers identified as Tukharistan. They recognised its complex geography and divided it into two parts: Upper Tukharistan (*al-‘ulyā*) and Lower Tukharistan (*al-sufḷā*).¹⁸⁸ Ibn Khurdhādbih and al-Ya‘qūbī mention that Upper Tukharistan was near Badakhshan.¹⁸⁹ Al-Istakharī, al-Muqaddasī, and Ibn Ḥawqal’s reports describe it as an extensively cultivated area (*zuru‘un kathīra*).¹⁹⁰ The biggest cities of Tukharistan were located in this part.¹⁹¹ The Lower Tukharistan extended to the high mountains. Baghlan was its major agricultural area. Al-Muqaddasī noticed that the mountains divided Baghlan into two parts of Upper Baghlan and Lower Baghlan.¹⁹² Lower Tukharistan had lesser and smaller cities that were in the mountains. The *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* mentions that Tukharistan produced grain, fruits, flocks of sheep and good horses. Different groups of Turks lived around urban areas.¹⁹³ Apart from its geographical features, the Muslim geographers noticed interconnectivity within the cities in Tukharistan, Tukharistan’s connection to the rest of Khurasan, and with the Kabul region. To them, eastern Bactria was between Khurasan and India.

1.1.7 Northern Bactria

The areas to the north of the Amu Darya are different from the southern parts. A quick look at satellite images from this region shows that the Hisar mountain range stretches in an east-west direction and continues to the south dropping in elevation before it ends near the Amu Darya. The rivers of Surkhan Darya, Kafirnihan, Wakhsh, and two other smaller rivers of Qizilsu (meaning red-water) and Shirabad, originating from the Pamir and Hisar mountains, are all north-south oriented and join the Amu Darya. The modern Surkhan Darya and Khatlan provinces form northern Bactria (Figure 12).

¹⁸⁸ Al-Hamadānī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 321–22; Modern scholars followed the same logic of dividing this region (Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 428; Barthold, *Turkestan*, 68–69).

¹⁸⁹ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 122; Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 34.

¹⁹⁰ Al-Istakharī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 156; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303; Agricultural activities, urban development, and pastoral life were practised since ancient times in eastern Bactria. See Francfort, et al., “The Development of the Oxus Civilization,” 117–125.

¹⁹¹ Al-Istakharī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 156.

¹⁹² Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303.

¹⁹³ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

The Surkhan Darya Valley is the biggest part of this region. To the west of it, a natural split in the mountains allows the Shirabad river to pass it and forms the main gateway to the Qarshi region. The historical Chaghaniyan was located in the Surkhan Darya Valley.¹⁹⁴ The gorge which allows the Shirabad river to pass the mountain was called the Iron Gate (*bāb al-ḥadīd*) in historical and geographical sources. It was a strategic gorge that connected Bactria to Sogdiana.¹⁹⁵ To the west of it, mountains create natural high walls, and to the east of it, lower dry hills separate it from the historical Quwadhiyan (modern Qubodiyon). A strap of hills also ran in the middle of the Surkhan Darya Valley. The historical Shuman and Akhrun were located in the north of this valley.¹⁹⁶ The southern part of the Surkhan Darya allowed the development of Tirmidh (modern Termez): a large urban area located immediately on the bank of the Amu Darya. To the west of the Surkhan Darya Valley, modern Khatlan is located. The historical Khuttal (also called Khatlan) was located in this province. Unlike western and southern Bactria, northern Bactria has no deserts or oases. Instead, it has broad and green valleys and plain areas irrigated by the rivers. The plain areas are excellent spaces for agriculture.¹⁹⁷

The Arabic and Persian geographical accounts describe northern Bactria as a green region with many rivers. Al-Istakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal refers to five rivers originating in the Pamir and Hissar mountains that joined the Amu Darya (*al-jayhūn*). They mention that the Amu Darya does not benefit any agricultural areas in Bactria, but waters the lands in Khwarazm.¹⁹⁸ Al-Istakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal and al-Muqaddasī divide northern Bactria into two main areas: Khuttal (*al-Khuttal*) and Chaghaniyan (*al-Ṣaghāniyān*). Chaghaniyan was located to the west of Khuttal. A portion of a mountain continuing to the Amu Darya separates the two areas. Chaghaniyan was the name of the area and also the main city in this area. The rivers allowed densely cultivated areas and also provided suitable areas for birds that were hunted by locals. Most of the cities were located in plains, and the important building was made of brick (*al-ājur*).¹⁹⁹ Chaghaniyan produced saffron and furs that were exported all over Khurasan.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 394.

¹⁹⁵ *SI-YU-KI*, 36; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 423; Al-Ya'qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 70.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 373, 393; *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 71–72; Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167.

¹⁹⁷ For instance, the Panj river that cultivated from an ancient time. This area was a meeting point between peoples of this region with those who came from India already in the Bronze Age (Henri Paul Francfort et al., “The Development of the Oxus Civilization north of the Hindu Kush,” in *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period*, ed. R. Allchin and N. Hammond, rev. ed., ed. W. Ball (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 159).

¹⁹⁸ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 393.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsim*, 283.

²⁰⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 387.

Chaghaniyan was a strategic place. The Iron Gate was located in the west of this area.²⁰¹ It connected Bactria to Sogdiana and was described by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang who visited it in 630. Xuanzang mentions that this gorge had walls and “double wooden doors, strengthened with iron and furnished with many bells hung up”.²⁰² Thus, it was a strategic location. Any army that wanted to pass the Iron Gate to reach Sogdiana required either the cooperation of the king of Chaghaniyan or control of the area militarily. The Umayyads understood the value of this strategic place and kept good relations with its local king, which will be further discussed in chapter four (4.1.3). The Muslim geographers described Khuttal as a mountainous area (*bi ajm‘aūhū jibāl*). However, except Iskandara, all other cities were in plain areas (*fī mustawā*). The buildings were made of mud bricks. They mention that Khuttal had many rivers that irrigated lands and gardens (*dhawāt anhār wa ashjār*). It produced good horses and flocks of sheep (*mawāshī*).²⁰³ Hence, Chaghaniyan produced more agricultural products, and Khuttal produced more fruits and cattle.

The Muslim geographers located Tirmidh to the south of Chaghaniyan. It was a great urban centre on the bank of the Amu Darya. The city was densely populated, had many markets, and was protected by defensive walls (*al-sūr*). The area of Tirmidh was watered not by the Amu Darya but by the river coming from Chaghaniyan.²⁰⁴ Two smaller areas of Shuman and Akhrun were located in the north of Chaghaniyan. They were smaller than Tirmidh but were rich cities because they exported saffron.²⁰⁵ The historical Guftan may have been located in this area.²⁰⁶ Al-Muqaddasī mentions that Quwadhiyan was near Chaghaniyan and located north of the Amu Darya. Quwadhiyan had many settlements (*shadīd al-‘imāra*), and the mountains were around this area.²⁰⁷ In general, Chaghaniyan and Khuttal formed northern Bactria. It was a prosperous area.²⁰⁸ There was no desert in northern Bactria. Most cities were interconnected and located in the plains. Northern Bactria was connected to the rest of Khurasan, Sogdiana, and Tibet.

The above-mentioned description of the five areas shows geographical diversity in Bactria. The Muslim geographers noticed the region’s complex landscape. They highlighted

²⁰¹ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 70; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 423.

²⁰² *SI-YU-KI*, 36.

²⁰³ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 374; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 390–91.

²⁰⁴ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167.

²⁰⁵ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 284; Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167.

²⁰⁶ Barthold, *Turkestan*, 74.

²⁰⁷ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 390.

²⁰⁸ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 71–72.

the impacts of different geography and climates on human settlement patterns and political organisations. They also recognised Bactria's interconnectivity and its multireligious society. Though they described different landscapes in each of the five areas in Bactria, they categorised the entire region of Bactria into two climate zones: cold (Ar. *bilād al-šūrūd*; Per. *sardsīr*) and hot (Ar. *bilād al-ḥār*; Per. *garmsīr*). They also categorised the human settlement patterns into two main areas related to the mountains (Ar. *jibāl*; Per. *kūh*) and plains (Ar. *ṣaḥrā*; Per. *dasht*). The plains included the oases (Ar. *mustawā*; Per. *hāmūn*). In terms of roads and trade networks, they described the whole of Bactria as one single economic zone connected to the rest of Khurasan, Sogdiana, India, and China. The combination of all these unique features in one region made Bactria different from the rest of Khurasan or other parts of the Islamic empire.²⁰⁹ The sources discuss the relationship between geography, climates, and their impacts on settlement patterns which themselves influenced political organisation in Bactria, and depict a clear picture of what kind of region the Arab Muslims conquerors entered in the seventh century. This is beneficial to recognise how these areas came under Arab Muslim rule later in the eighth century. This part follows the categories mentioned by the Muslim geographers and views the whole of Bactria as one great region.

1.2. Impacts of the shatter zone

As it is mentioned earlier, the Arabic and Persian reports show that Bactria had two different climates: hot and cold. The deserts and the oases had hot climates, and the mountain areas had cold climates.²¹⁰ Satellite images attest that western parts of Bactria have features of arid zones, where the dry land is more and precipitation is less. In contrast, eastern and northern Bactria have characteristics of semi-arid zones with more grassland and rainfall that covers all regions from the east of the Aral Sea to the northwest of the Indian subcontinent.²¹¹ The high mountains of the Hindukush, Hisar, and Pamir play vital roles in the pattern of temperature and precipitation. Most rainfall happens between October and April in the lower areas, and snowfall

²⁰⁹ The Muslim geographers' descriptions of Iraq, Syria and Egypt differ from Bactria. Their reports show that none of those regions have the complex geography of Bactria.

²¹⁰ Al-Muqaddasī compares the weather in Balkh with Iraq saying they are similar. The hot climate and abundant water in Balkh Oasis were the reason for tropical products and lotous flowers reported by Xunzang in 630, and then by Ibn Ḥawqal in the fourth/tenth century (*SI-YU-KI*, 44; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 376).

²¹¹ For detail information about the Arid Zone, see David S. G. Thomas, ed., *Arid Zone Geomorphology: Process, Form and Change in Drylands*, 3rd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

occurs in the high mountains. All rivers of Bactria originate from these mountains.²¹² Hence, Bactria has both arid zone and semi-arid zone climates.

The climate and the distribution of resources were directly related as they affected the agricultural possibilities and wildlife. The physiography of Bactria is such that the plain, oases, foothills, marshy lands around the rivers, and the high mountains situated at a close distance provided space for agricultural life in the plains, oases, and low hills, and pastoral communities fringing the mountains.²¹³ The Muslim geographers' reports attest to this. They mention that the majority of the irrigated lands (*mazāri* ' , *basātīn*) were in the plain areas, oases, and around the rivers. In these areas, different varieties of agricultural products were harvested. In contrast, the mountain areas produced less grain. The cultivated lands on low hills depended on rainwater (*mabākhis*).²¹⁴ The grazing areas in the foothill of the mountains provided pastures for flocks of sheep.²¹⁵ In short, the geography and climate of Bactria provided habitation for both sedentary and nomadic populations.²¹⁶

1.2.1 Settlement patterns: sedentary and pastoral life

The climate, geography, and resources impacted settlement patterns in Bactria. Because the plains and oases had bigger surface areas and could produce more food resources, they had larger populations.²¹⁷ The majority of cities and villages were thus located here.²¹⁸ The Muslim geographers often refer to these areas with the term *shadīd al- 'imāra*, meaning densely constructed. In contrast, the mountain areas had fewer and smaller cities and thus smaller populations. The Muslim geographers add that buildings were made of mud bricks (*tīn*), and

²¹² In the spring and early summer, the rivers reach their highest flow and look muddy. Floods and erosion happen at this time of the year, affecting the areas around the river's course (Bowlby and White, "The Geographical Background," 18–20). It is worth noting that by the middle of the summer, the water runs slower again, and it becomes cleaner.

²¹³ Bowlby and White, "The Geographical Background," 15–19.

²¹⁴ See, for instance, Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 376; Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 150–158.

²¹⁵ *Ḥudūd al- 'ālam*, 60–62.

²¹⁶ The semi-steppe conditions with its grazing lands in eastern and northern Bactria attracted people from the steppe beyond the Syr Darya River throughout the ages. For the nomads' interaction with sedentary areas in central Asia, see János Harmatta, B. N. Puri and G. F. Etemadi, ed., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 2: *The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.C. to A.D. 250* (Paris: UNESCO, 1994); For instance, the Balkh oasis was created by the ever-flowing Balkhab river, which formed a vast alluvial fan of more than 2,000–2,700 km² that could be extensively cultivated. La Vaissière proposed the population to have been about 300,000 to 400,000 for the Balkh oasis, which could have even been 500,000 in its heyday (La Vaissière, "Early Medieval Central Asian Population," 805).

²¹⁸ The people of the plain areas as the *Ḥudūd al- 'ālam* mentions were mostly farmers, traders, or had industries. They were peaceful people (*sāda dil*). However, most people in the mountain areas were warlike (*jangī*). The *Ḥudūd al- 'ālam* does not explain any reasons for it.

the cities were protected by defensive walls (*al-sūr*).²¹⁹ Xuanzang's report about the massive defensive walls of Balkh that stand to this day, and the remains of great walls around almost all pre-Islamic cities in Bactria, show that building walls around cities was an old practice in the region. Not only the cities but the entire oasis of Balkh was protected by walls from attackers and also the desert's moving sand.²²⁰ These mud-brick walls confirm the Muslim geographers' observation (Figures 13–15). The material for them was easier, cheaper, and quicker to produce than baked bricks.²²¹ Though the buildings made of mud bricks are warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, they are vulnerable to heavy rain and flood.²²² Once the buildings are destroyed, they turn into dust; it is not feasible to restore them. Remains of ruins near each other in Bactria show that people abandoned the cities if they were destroyed by natural calamities or war and constructed a new place near the older settlements.

1.2.2 Interconnectivity

The Muslim geographers highlighted the interconnectivity between the cities in Bactria. Almost all of them described the distance between the cities. However, they do not offer much information about the cities' relationship with their hinterlands. They show that the cities were located near each other and one could travel from one city to another.²²³ Their reports describe

²¹⁹ See, for instance, al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, 66–7.

²²⁰ Étienne de la Vaissière, Philippe Marquis and Julio Bendezu Sarmiento, "A Kushan military camp near Bactra," in *Kushan Histories: Literary Sources and Selected Papers from a Symposium at Berlin, December 5 to 7, 2013*, ed. Harry Falk (Bremen: Hemen Verlag, 2015), 242–254.

²²¹ Production, transportation, and the use of mud brick are more accessible and faster to work with than stone. Therefore, mass production of mud brick in various sizes was possible. For instance, the mud bricks used in the defensive walls of Qala-yi Zal in eastern Bactria are 40 by 40 cm. A mud-brick building resists the winter cold and the summer heat; thus, it was used for centuries as the primary building material in Bactria. Though the mountains were nearby, Bactrians hardly used stone for construction. Even today, people who live in villages in northern Afghanistan have to make sure that their houses (made of mud bricks) have a fresh layer of insulation made of mud mixed with straw (*kāhgil*). This insulation protects the building from rain and snow.

²²² Despite all its benefits, mud brick is fragile to water and can be destroyed by floods. For instance, the Amu Darya changed its course in the northeast of Ai-Khanoum and created many smaller streams that joined each other near the Greek city of Ai-Khanoum. This river destroyed half of the Kohna Qala (personal observation, July 2004). Similarly, the shift of the river caused the destruction of the fortified city of Tirmidh and the small islands that once existed in the river. Like floods, earthquakes could reshape the landscape. An Arabic report mentioned by Qudāma b. Ja'far shows that a water spring was created by an earthquake in 203/819 near Balkh. The water was enough for irrigation, and a new village was formed around it (Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Al-kharāj*, 107); Rocco Rante has recently argued that the same thing happened in Bukhara Oasis in the course of time (personal communication, Leiden University, 22 August 2023).

²²³ For instance, al-Istakhrī mentions that in his time, travelling from the Marw al-Rūd to the city of Balkh would take twelve days through the cities of Talaqan, Faryab and Shaburghan. Then, two days from Balkh to Khulm; from there to Samangan two days; from Samangan to Baghlan two days. From Balkh, one could go to Tirmidh in two days and then travel to Chaghaniyan in four days. One could continue travelling to Shuman, which would take two days or return to Tirmidh and go to Qawadhiyan, which would take two days (al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 158, 160, 189–90; Similar report is reflected in Ibn Khurdhādhbih, *Kitāb al-masalik wa al-mamālik*,

the city of Balkh as an intercepting point in Bactria. For instance, Abū al-Fidā clarifies the centrality of Balkh further. He mentions that Balkh is in the middle of Khurasan (*wasat Khurāsān*) and is interconnected to all cities around it.²²⁴ The *Hudūd al-‘ālam* calls Balkh the trade port of India (*bārkada-yi Hindūstān*).²²⁵ Al-Ya‘qūbī depicts the whole of Bactria as one region (*Balkh al-‘uzmā* or greater Balkh) when it comes to trade, and says that the main overland trade routes between Marw to India, Marw to Tibet, and Sogdiana to India all crossed through Bactria.²²⁶ The interconnectivity within Bactria and Bactria’s connection to India and China was not confined to Muslim geographers’ reports. Xuanzang’s description of the Bactrian cities and their close distance are similar to the Arabic reports. He travelled from China to India by crossing Bactria in 630.²²⁷ A century after him, Hye Ch’o crossed Bactria from India to China.²²⁸ Thus, Bactria was part of a great regional overland trade network, and this allowed different groups of people and materials to move in and out.²²⁹ These reports recall Joseph T. Arlinghaus’ argument that a shatter zone is a “route area”.²³⁰ Though the rugged terrain and many mountains created small pockets of human settlements, it did not prevent their connection.

1.2.3 Religious diversity

The geographical location of Bactria between Sogdiana, India, China, and the western parts of the Iranian plateau had a significant impact on this region.²³¹ It turned Bactria into an

32–34); Similar description is given in Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 378, and al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 344–49.

²²⁴ Abū al-Fidā, *Taqwīm al-buldān*, 461; Similar report is given in al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 65–71.

²²⁵ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

²²⁶ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 65–71.

²²⁷ *SI-YU-KI*, 36–49.

²²⁸ *The Hye Ch’o Diary*, 39–58.

²²⁹ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 57–62; The connection between Bactria and other neighbouring regions date to the ancient time. The archaeological excavations from various confirm that the ‘Oxus Civilisation’ (2500 BCE to 1400 BCE) was contemporary to the ‘Indus Civilisation’ and they developed symbiotic economic and cultural relations. At the same time, Bactria had relations with the Kopet Dagh region, the Aral Sea area, the steppes, the Caspian region in Iran, the northwest of India and Baluchistan, the Indian Ocean zone, and Mesopotamia (Francfort et al., “The development of the Oxus Civilization,” 157–58). The excavations conducted by the Soviet-Afghan archaeological team in Tilliya-Tepe in western Bactria revealed a connection between Bactria, the Steppe and India and China (see Sarianidi, *Bactrian Gold*). The excavated conducted by DAFA in the Greek city of Ai-khanoum in eastern Bactria revealed a great Greek city that was connected with India and also Greece (see Paul Berard et al., “Campagne de fouille 1978 à Ai-Khanoum (Afghanistan),” *Bulletin d’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient* 68 (1980): 1–104).

²³⁰ Cited in Luce, “Frontier Process,” 4.

²³¹ Bowlby and White, “The Geographical Background,” 25.

‘interlocutor space’ connecting these regions.²³² As a result, migrants, travellers, merchants, missionaries, and armies crossed or settled in Bactria throughout history.²³³ The constant movement of people created a colourful human mosaic in the region. At the same time, as noticed by Haug, the tectonic collision turning the area into a shatter zone created a complex geographical configuration with natural barriers between the region’s inhabitants, allowing for the “creation of a variety of ethnic, linguistic, social and ideological differences within a small space.”²³⁴ As a result of the constant traffic of people from neighbouring places and the existence of settlements separated from each other, Bactria had always had a diverse population. Different groups of people who spoke different languages and followed different cultural traditions lived in this region.²³⁵ This is reflected in Muslim and non-Muslim sources related to Bactria.

²³² Apparently, an interlocutor space is a more convenient term than ‘crossroad’ for Bactria. For a discussion on Central Asia as an interlocutor space, see Prajakti Kalra, “Locating Central Eurasia’s inherited resilience,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2022): 235–255.

²³³ See Holly Pittman, “Bronze Age interaction on the Iranian Plateau: From Kerman to the Oxus through seals,” in *The Iranian Plateau during the Bronze Age: Development of Urbanization, Production and Trade*, ed. Jan-Waalke Meyer, Emmanuelle Vila, Marjan Mashkour, Michèle Casanova and Régis Vallet (Paris: Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2019), 267–288; Jan-Waalke Meyer, Emmanuelle Vila, Régis Vallet and Marjan Mashkour, “The urbanisation of the Iranian Plateau and adjacent areas during the Bronze Age: Concluding thoughts,” in *The Iranian Plateau during the Bronze Age: Development of urbanisation, production and trade*, edited by Jan-Waalke Meyer, Emmanuelle Vila, Marjan Mashkour, Michèle Casanova and Régis Vallet (Paris: Maison de l’Orient et de la Méditerranée, 2019), 347–56; B. A. Litvinsky et al., ed., *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996); For relation between India and central Asia, see Jos Gommans, *Indian Frontier: Horse and Warband in the Making of Empires* (London: Routledge, 2017).

²³⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 26.

²³⁵ Bactria was a microcosm reflecting a much bigger world that stretched from India and China to Macedonia. Concrete evidence for this connectivity and diversity comes from documentary and literary sources, numismatics, epigraphy and archaeological finds. For instance, Aramaic documents, Greek textual items, Bactrian documents, Sogdian written works, Middle Persian and Arabic documents, Hebrew, Judeo-Persian, and New Persian texts and inscriptions have all been found in different areas in Bactria. They attest to the diversity of Bactria’s population. For Aramaic documents, see Naveh and Shaked, *Ancient Aramaic Documents*; For Greek documents, see Laurianne Martinez Sève, “The Spatial Organization of Ai Khanoum, a Greek City in Afghanistan,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 118, no. 2 (2014): 267–283; The Sogdian name is attested in Bactrian documents (Bactrian documents no. X. W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 136–141, Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 212); For Middle Persian in Bactria, see Dieter Weber, “The Pahlavi letter Doc. 129 of the Khalili collection,” in *Studies in the Chronology of the Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, with contributions by Harry Falk and Dieter Weber, ed. Nicholas Sims-Williams and François de Blois (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2018), 99–108; For Arabic documents, see Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan*; For Judeo Persian and New Persian, see Ofir Haim, “What is the ‘Afghan Genizah’? A short guide to the collection of the Afghan Manuscripts in the National Library of Israel, with the edition of two documents,” *Afghanistan* 2, no.1 (2019): 70–90; Khwāja Muhammad, Mirzā and Nabī Sāqī, *Barghā-yi az yak Faṣl yā Asnād-i Tārīkh-i Ghur* (Kabul: Intishārāt-i Sa’id, 1388/2010); Said Reza Huseini, “The *Muqaddam* Represented in the pre-Mongol Persian Documents from Ghur,” *Afghanistan* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 2021): 91–113; Similarly, coins with different scripts represent traces of different communities in Bactria (see Klaus Vondrovec: *Coinage of the Iranian Huns and their Successors from Bactria to Gandhara (4th to 8th century CE). Studies in the Aman ur Rahman’s Collection* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014).

Muslim geographers describe Bactria as a multi-religious region. Al-Muqaddasī mentions that followers of various schools of Islam (sing., *madhhab*), many Jews (*yahūd kathīra*), some Christians (*naṣārā qalīla*) and followers of different schools of Zoroastrianism (*aṣnāf al-majūs*) lived in Bactria. Apart from them, there were people whose religion was considered heretical (*al-zandiqa*). The administration of each area was based on the religious regulations of its inhabitants (*al-‘amala fī hādhihi al-mawāḍ‘ ‘alā madhhabihim*). Each group had its jurists, meaning there was religious autonomy. In some places like Gharchistan, the king (*al-shār*) prayed twice during Eid, each time according to a different *madhhab* to represent his subjects. In case of disputes between any religious groups, the rulers interfered to control the situation.²³⁶ Al-Muqaddasī’s report indicates that the rulers in Bactria did not unify the region under one specific religion, but rather patronised all of them.

The coexistence of various religious groups was not new to Bactria, nor was it confined to the fourth/tenth-century Muslim geographers’ observations. Religious diversity already existed when the Arab Muslims entered Bactria. Followers of Buddhism, Iranian religions, Christianity and Judaism lived in Bactria. A brief explanation of these different confessions and the areas where they were practised is warranted. Likewise, it enables us to recognise which religious groups interacted with Arab Muslims.

1.2.4 Buddhism

Buddhism was popular in seventh-century Bactria. Many *stūpas* and *vihāras* existed within and outside urban areas.²³⁷ Xuanzang reported the existence of active Buddhist communities in different areas of Bactria when he visited them in 630. His report shows that to the north of the Amu Darya, except in Wakhsh and Khuttal where worshipping Zoroastrian and old Iranian deities were popular, Buddhist communities lived in Chaghaniyan, Kulab, and Quwadhiyan.²³⁸ However, Hye Ch’o’s report on Khuttal and archaeological excavations show that both Wakhsh and Khuttal had Buddhist communities during the seventh and eighth centuries. For

²³⁶ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 323, 336; Other authors also confirm existing of different religious groups in Bactria. See *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 58, 59; Al-Istakharī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 153.

²³⁷ See Boris A. Litvinsky and Tamara I. Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa, Tajikistan: History and Art of Buddhism in Central Asia* (Rome: ISIAO, 2004).

²³⁸ *SI-YU-KI*, 39–40; The Buddhist sites in northern parts of the Amu Darya are largely excavated. See for instance, IPAEB Preliminary Report of International Pluridisciplinary Archaeological Expedition to Bactria undertaken between 2007–2012. The reports are available online, <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/handle/2445/11504> (accessed on 1 December 2022); Kazim Abdullaev, “The Buddhist Culture of Ancient Termez in Old and Recent Finds,” *Parthica* 15 (2013): 157–187.

instance, Ajina Tepe preserved the remains of a great monastery based on a four *iwān* layout, and Kafyr Kala and Khisht Tepe had smaller temples.²³⁹ Xuanzang mentions that Tirmidh had ten *sanghārāma* or Buddhist monastery with 1000 monks altogether.²⁴⁰ To the south of the Amu Darya, Guzgan, Gaz, Balkh, and Samangan also had Buddhist communities.²⁴¹ The city of Balkh was the leading Buddhist centre in Bactria. According to Xuanzang, it had 100 convents and 3,000 monks altogether who studied the religious teachings of *Hīnāyāna* Buddhism.²⁴² The *Hīnāyāna* encouraged its followers to seek individual salvation by following the teachings of Buddha.²⁴³ The words of the Buddha and their commentaries are important for this group. Outside the city's southern wall,²⁴⁴ a great Buddhist complex existed that is known as the Naw Bahar.²⁴⁵ The main monastery, called *navasanghārāma*, hosted a grand statue of Buddha and a specific hall for the relics attributed to Buddha. People visited them and offered

²³⁹ Litvinsky and Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa*, 181–84.

²⁴⁰ *SI-YU-KI*, 39, 49; For archeological excavations in Buddhist sites, see IPAEB Preliminary Report; Pierre Leriche, Sakirdzan Rasulevic Pidaev et al., *Mission archéologique franco-ouzbègue de Bactriane septentrionale. Rapport 10 (2002)*, Halshs-00604184, <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/hashs-00604184> (accessed 12 October 2021).

²⁴¹ *SI-YU-KI*, 39, 49; Archaeological surveys and excavations in the region confirm Xuanzang's reports about the presence of Buddhist monuments. See Paul Bernard, Roland Besenval and Philippe Marquis, "Du 'mirage bactrien' aux réalités archéologiques: nouvelles fouilles de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (DAFA) à Bactres (2004–2006)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 150 e année, n. 2 (2006): 1217–1229; The ruins of stupas are visible in different places in Balkh, Dawlatabad, Chahrkint and Marmul (Personal survey 2004–2009).

²⁴² *SI-YU-KI*, 44; *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52.

²⁴³ Renato Sala has argued that not all Buddhist sects, but only a few of them gained ground in the eastern Iranian regions. These were namely *Sarvāstivāda*, *Mahāsāṃghika*, *Dharmaguptaka*, and *Śaṃmitīya*. Sala adds that the *Sarvāstivāda* focusses on "the *Abhidharma* and supports the existence of all phenomena" in the past and present, which makes it realistic towards existence. The *Sarvāstivāda* spread towards Bactria during the Kushans, and quoting Sala, it "played the central role in the diffusion of Buddhism in Central Asia." (Renato Sala, "The spread of Buddhism from Gandhara to South, West and East Central Asia (I BC–XIV AD)," in *Religions of Kazakhstan and Central Asia on the Great Silk Road. Materials of the International scientific and practical conference 12–13 June 2017* (Almaty: Service Press, 2017), 250). Sala adds that the *Dharmaguptaka* is derived from the *Mahāsāṃghika* and emphasises the supramundane nature of the Buddha. Magic and esoteric rituals and venerating relics and stupas are important in this sect. It existed in Central Asia from the first century CE and remained there till the eighth century. The *Śaṃmitīya* preached the restoration of the concept of the soul. Among these sects, the *Sarvāstivāda* was most popular in Bactria (Sala, "The spread of Buddhism," 250).

²⁴⁴ See Rony S. Young, "The South Wall of Balkh-Bactra," *Journal of Archaeology* 59, no. 4 (1955): 267–276.

²⁴⁵ This Buddhist complex was known the Naw Bahar in Arabic and Persian sources. For the Arabic sources, see Jalīl al-ʿAṭīyya, *Akhbār al-Barāmika: li muʿallif min al-qarn al-rrābiʿ al-hijrī/al-ʿāshir al-mīlādī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa li al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashar, 1427/2006); For the Persian sources, see Muḥammad Šādiq Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Doctor Maḥmūd Afshār, 1385/2006). The *barmak* (Sanskrit. *parmakh*, *parmukha* meaning chief) was the keeper of the Naw Bahar and managed its financial affairs. According to Ibn al-Faqīh, the Persians (*ʿajam*) compared the Naw Bahar with the Kaʿba and the *barmak* with the leader of the Quraysh tribe. People visited the Naw Bahar, offered donations, covered the grand stupa with silk fabric, and put flags on it. Local kings of the region also visited Naw Bahar and prostrated before the great statue. There were 360 chambers around the stupa where the servants and the guardians of Naw Bahar resided, and they served according to their tenure (Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, 323). Naw Bahar, in particular, and Buddhism, in general, continued to operate in Bactria after the Arab Muslim conquests. The Korean Buddhist monk Hye Ch'o, who visited Bactria in 725, mentions that the country was under the Arabs, but the locals were predominantly Buddhist (*The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52).

their donations. Xuanzang noticed that in this Buddhist complex, there was an old monastery that hosted various groups of people. There were scholars who authored books and reproduced the *śāstra* or commentaries on *sūtra*. Apart from them, there was a group of the *arhat*, or the great master, who possessed four degrees of holiness and performed miracles by exhibiting their spiritual capabilities.²⁴⁶ Beside them, there were priests who were busy with their daily duties in the monastery. The Buddhist priests were known for their knowledge of Buddhism and medical expertise.²⁴⁷ Apart from this complex, there were other Buddhist monuments in the Balkh oasis where statues of Buddhas and donors were erected (Figures 16).

Xuanzang reports that the Buddhists of Balkh linked their community directly to the Buddha. They claimed that two Bactrian merchants visited the Buddha and received his teachings. The authenticity of this story is not certain, but it clearly shows that Buddhism has been practised for a long time before he visited Balkh.²⁴⁸ It also shows that Buddhists of Balkh claimed a direct relation with the Buddha in the early seventh century. The same mechanism can be observed to be at work in the Islamic period too. The pre-Mongol author of *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* claimed a direct connection between Balkh and the Prophet Muḥammad and his successors.²⁴⁹ When Bactrians accepted a religion that originated outside of Bactria, they tried to internalise it by imagining a direct connection with its origin.

1.2.5 Worshipping Iranian deities

Worshipping the images of old Iranian deities was popular in seventh-century Bactria.²⁵⁰ Making the images of gods and placing them in a temple called *baglan* (βαγολαγγο), “the image

²⁴⁶ The *arhat*, as Dāryūsh Shāyḡān argued, was not only about individual salvation, but it was a tradition to free humans from all kinds of worldly things and adorn them with heavenly qualities. The *arhat* willingly accepted to suffer by performing difficult practices to purify his soul (Dāryūsh Shāyḡān, *Adyān va Maktabha-yi Falsafi-yi Hind*, 7th ed. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1389/2010), 9); Azad suggested that the existence of many *arhats* in *navasanghārāma* and people's high respect for them indicates that the *Śrāvakayāna* was practised in *navasanghārāma* (Azad, “The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan,” 53); The *Śrāvakayāna*, meaning “listeners”, was a name given to those who listened to the Buddha's teachings and practised them to become an *arhat* (see “Śrāvakayāna,” *Oxford Reference*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com> (accessed on 28 December 2021)).

²⁴⁷ At least two Bactrian documents produced in c. 700 in Guzgan reflect this. These address a Buddhist monk called Rahulabhadra as a revered doctor (πιζαγγο), knowledgeable (λαβδδιλανι), wise (πιδοβασιο), and the one who possessed Shamanic (βμαναγγο) power. Although this document does not deal with healing the sick, these titles suggest that monks were expected to have that power (Bactrian document no. Ji in Sims-Williams, *DBII*, 138–139).

²⁴⁸ DAFA excavation in Tepe Zargarān has revealed the remains of an old Buddhist stupa. See Roland Besenval et Philippe Marquis, “Le rêve accompli d'Alfred foucher à Bactres: nouvelles fouilles de la DAFA 2002–2207,” in *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Letters* 151, no. 4 (2007), 1847–1874.

²⁴⁹ See al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 11–26.

²⁵⁰ I use worshippers of old Iranian deities rather than Zoroastrians. The reason is that the gods mentioned in the documents were not Zoroastrian deities. There is no evidence showing how a Bactrian at this time defined his

shrine”, was an old tradition in Bactria.²⁵¹ Information on this image cult mostly comes from Bactrian documents. They show that different Iranian deities such as Wakhsh (οαχβο), Ramset (ραμοσητο), and Zhun (ζονο) that were non-Zoroastrian deities were worshipped in western, southern, and eastern parts of Bactria. Their names are mentioned in some legal documents produced between 659–747 CE.²⁵² Their images were made and kept in *baglan*.²⁵³ The deities’ names were also popular personal names among Bactrians.²⁵⁴ People visited the temples, worshipped the images of gods, and possibly delivered donations.²⁵⁵ Bactrian documents refer to some gods that were widely worshipped in seventh century Bactria.²⁵⁶ Wakhsh was one of

faith to the followers of other faiths. However, there are written sources about other regions. See, for example, A. de Jong, “Zoroastrian Self-Definition in Contact with Other Faiths,” in *Irano-Judaica, V. Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, ed. by Shaul Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2003), 16–26.

²⁵¹ Frantz Grenet has suggested that the *baglan* was, in fact, the *bagina* or the image shrine borrowed from Mesopotamia, becoming the dominant form of eastern Zoroastrianism in Bactria after the Greek conquests (Grenet, “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” 130–131); The Bactrian term *baglan* mentioned in the Kushan inscriptions found in two monumental royal Kushan image temples of Rabatak and Surkh Kotal are located in present-day Samangan and Baghlan. See Nicholas Sims-Williams and Joe Cribb, “A New Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/96): 75–142.

²⁵² Bactrian documents no. O, P, Q, R, S, Ss, Tt, Uu, V, U in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83, 84–87, 88–91, 92–93, 94–95, 96–97, 104–105, 112–15, 116–125, and see Bactrian document no. ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 138–39.

²⁵³ Bactrian documents no. P, Q, Tt, V, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91, 112–15, 116–125, 126–135.

²⁵⁴ Nicholas Sims-Williams, *Bactrian personal names. Iranisches Personennamenbuch. Band II, Mitteliranische Personennamen. Faszikel 7* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 65–66.

²⁵⁵ Paying money to the temple is mentioned in Bactrian document no. al in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 164–65.

Four terracotta painted panels now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art show images of the Iranian and Indic deities Shiva/Wesh, Farr, and Ohrmuzd. The provenance of these panels is unknown, but they may have been from Bactria and date to the third century CE. They contain holes in their corners, meaning they were originally part of a temple’s interior wall decoration (Kathryn Calley Galtiz, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Masterpiece Paintings* (New York: The Met, 2016), 121).

²⁵⁶ The Bactrian documents are limited. Therefore, the names of the gods mentioned in them do not cover all Iranian gods that were worshipped in Bactria. The Kushan coins are the best sources of information on the Iranian gods known in Bactria. The names and images of αρδοχβο, ατβο, λοορασπο, μαναβαγο, ορλαγνο, οαδο, φαρρο, ωρομ, βαορηορο, ριβτι, οανινδο, τιρο, οαχβο (the god of the Amu Darya), and ιαμβο (the god of the underworld) are depicted on Kushan coinage. See Grenet, “Zoroastrianism Among the Kushans,” 219–221; Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images*, 129, 166–67; At least four great Kushan image temples are known from Bactria. The Rabatak and Surkh Kotal were built on natural hills in eastern Bactria and had monumental inscriptions with the names of Kushan emperors and deities. Grenet has shown that the temple in Rabatak was dedicated to ομμα and vava, the goddesses venerated by the Kushans, and hosted other gods as well, including Iranian and Indian gods. He argued that among the seven gods mentioned in the Rabatak inscription, ομμα and μοζδοοαβο were Scythian; vava was originally the Babylonian Ishtar introduced to Bactria in the Achaemenid period, representing Avestan Anāhitā; αορομοζδο, οροφαρδο, vαρασao, μιπο were Zoroastrian gods (Grenet, “Zoroastrianism Among the Kushans,” 211–212, 229, and Grenet, “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” 131). D.T. Potts rejected Grenet’s identification of vava with the Babylonian Ishtar. According to Potts, the Bactrian vava was not the diffusion of Ishtar, but instead, she was the diffusion of Mesopotamian Nana, who became prominent in Bactria by the end of the third millennium BCE and remained very prominent in Bactria to the Kushan period. Potts refers to Victor Sarianidi’s excavations in Tillya-Tepe in western Bactria, in which a golden belt with images of Nana unearched was found. It indicates Nana’s importance among the royal families in Bactria (D. T. Potts, “Nana in Bactria,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7 (2001): 23–35); In regard to the Scythian root of μοζδοοαβο Humbach has suggested that μοζδοοαβο could have been a tribal god of the Kushan (cited in Nicholas Sims-Williams, “A Bactrian God,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and Africa Studies* 60, no. 2 (1997): 336–338); It is worth noting that Grenet added that the temple in Surkh Kotal was initially dedicated to οηβο, the deity known from the Kushan coins. Two other older temples of Wakhsh in Takht-i Sangin in present-day Tajikistan and the

them and is often called the “king of gods” (*βαγανο βαο*).²⁵⁷ He was the god of the Amu Darya and had an old temple near Quwadhiyan.²⁵⁸ A Bactrian land sale contract produced in 436 of the Bactrian calendar, corresponding to 659 CE, in Guzgan in western Bactria refers to Wakhsh as “the wonderful, the granter of favours (and) granter of wishes, whose renown have reached the whole earth.”²⁵⁹ Expanding Wakhsh’s grace to the whole earth in this praising formula does not mean this god was a universal deity, but indicates that Wakhsh was a great deity in Bactria. The fact that his name appears in legal documents made in Guzgan, Rob, Kadagstan, Kalf, and Warnu shows he was widely worshipped in Bactria. The name of Wakhsh mentioned in the opening part of the legal documents produced between 659–729 CE may indicate his importance as the guardian of promises made between the different parties.²⁶⁰

Ram-set, the “spirit of Ram” was another god worshipped in Bactria. His name appears only on three Bactrian documents. Two Bactrian legal documents produced in the Marogan market in Samangan between 660–689 CE,²⁶¹ and a document made in a market at Amber in Guzgan.²⁶² These documents create the impression that a specific place made for this god within market spaces. It was called *nishalm/nashalm* (*νιβαλμο/ναβαλμο*). The different functions of the *baglan* vis-a-vis the *nishalm* are not understood.²⁶³ Having a special place within the market also creates the impression that Ram-set was associated with the commerce. Apparently, the Sogdian community of Bactria worshiped Ram-set.²⁶⁴

Zhun was another deity in Bactria. His name was commonly used for personal names. For instance, Zhun-lad (“given by Zhun”) and Zhun-bandag were personal names in Bactria.²⁶⁵ The mural known as Dukhtar-i Naushirwān (also known as Nigār), located in present-day

Hellenistic temple in Delbarjin in the north of Balkh may have turned into an image temple during the Kushan period (Grenet, “Zoroastrianism Among the Kushans,” 220–230).

²⁵⁷ Bactrian document no. O and Tt in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83, 104–105.

²⁵⁸ It is located in Takht-i Sangin in Tajikistan. See Grenet, “Zoroastrianism Among the Kushans,” 219–221; Shenkar, *Intangible Spirits and Graven Images*, 129, 166–67.

²⁵⁹ Bactrian document no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74.

²⁶⁰ Bactrian documents no. Nn, O, P, Q, R, S, Ss, Tt, Uu, V, U in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79, 80–83, 84–87, 88–91, 92–93, 94–95, 96–97, 104–105, 112–15, 116–125, and see Bactrian document no. ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 138–39.

²⁶¹ Bactrian document no. P in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87.

²⁶² Bactrian document no. Ss in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 96–97.

²⁶³ Bactrian documents no. P, Q, Tt, V, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91, 112–15, 116–125, 126–135.

²⁶⁴ Ryoichi Miyamoto has suggested that the Sogdian community who settled in Bactria in the seventh century brought the cult of Ram-set to Bactria (Ryoichi Miyamoto, “Notes on the Bactrian contract mentioning God Wakhsh and God Ram-set” Presentation at 10 European Conference for Iranian Studies (ECIS 10), Leiden University, 22 August 2023).

²⁶⁵ Sims-Williams, *Bactrian personal names*, 65–66.

Samangan, which was part of the kingdom of Rob, is said to have been the image of Zhun.²⁶⁶ This deity was allegedly also worshipped in Kabul. There was a temple made for him at Khair-Khana in Kabul before 603 CE, however, when the Alkhans led by Mihirakula returned to Kabul from Kashmir after they were defeated by the Indian forces, the temple lost its importance.²⁶⁷ Instead of Zhun, the cult of the sun god Surya became important. Apart from Kabul, Zhun was important in Zabulistan when the Arab Muslims arrived in that region. Historians reported that they entered Zhun temple and harmed his statue by removing the gemstones decorating the statue's eyes.²⁶⁸

1.2.6 Christianity and Judaism

A Nestorian Christian community lived in western parts of Bactria. Christianity spread to Bactria via Herat and Marw because of the existence of the bishoprics in these cities.²⁶⁹ Herat was a bishopric mentioned in the Counciliar Acts of the Nestorian Christian Church from 424 to 585 CE, becoming a metropole and organising its bishoprics into Badghis and Bushanj (in western Bactria) controlled by the Hephthalites. Upon the Christians' request, the Hephthalite king asked the Sasanian king and the Patriarch Mār Aba I (in office from 540–552) to send one

²⁶⁶ Markus Mode argued that the painting in Dukhtar-i Naushirwān is dedicated to the god Xurmazd/Ohrmazd and was executed by the Sogdians, who traded in the region and moved between Sogdiana and India in the late seventh and early eighth centuries (Markus Mode, "The Great God of Dokhtar-e Noshirwān (Nigār)," *East and West* 42, no. 2/4 (December 1992): 473–483). However, it is not necessary to look for a foreign identity for this god. Sims-Williams identified the meaning of Kamird as "chief, head" as a title for Zhun (Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 197). The god Zhun was worshipped in this region in 700 and is reflected in a Bactrian legal document (Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103). Hence, I think if we consider the fact that Nigār is far from Sogdiana and the god Zhun was worshipped in the Rob region where the mural is made, it is difficult to accept Mode's suggestion. Possibly, the god of this painting should be Zhun and not Xurmazd/Ohrmazd.

²⁶⁷ Minoru Inaba argued that the lower part of the Khair-Khana temple was made for Zhun. Later, the upper part was built for Surya (Minoru Inaba, "Revisiting Khair Khana: a consideration on the history of 6th–7th centuries in Afghanistan" Presentation at 10 European Conference for Iranian Studies (ECIS 10), Leiden University, 22 August 2023).

²⁶⁸ Sims-Williams, "Nouveaux documents sur l'histoire et la langue de la Bactriane," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1996): 647–648; Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs: From the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Ṣaffārids (30–250/651–864)*, (IsMEO-Rome, 1968), 34–35.

²⁶⁹ Christianity found a home in Sasanian Khurasan, and the Church of the East sent missionaries to these regions as early as ca. 334 CE. Clifford Edmund Bosworth argued that the migration of Christians towards the eastern regions of the Sasanian empire accelerated after the split within the Eastern Church in the middle of the sixth century "into Monophysite or Jacobite and the Nestorian factions, each with a different view of the human and divine attributes of Christ" and the fall of the Nestorian centres like Edessa to the Jacobites. Bosworth added that the Christians of Khwarazm celebrated Hazirān to commemorate the coming of Bār Shabbā to Marw, who converted a Sasanian princess and wife of the *marzbān* of Marw. The *marzbān* was the Sasanian title for the margrave in the frontier region of Khurasan. The Chalcedonian Christians or Melkites also had a community in Khwarazm (Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 8–9). Also, see the discussion about Christianity in Bactria in Litvinsky and Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa*, 173–74.

of his priests to Bactria.²⁷⁰ Apparently, that further spread Christianity in the region. Later, during the war between the Sasanian king Khusrow II (r. 590–628) and Wahrām Chubīn (d. 591), who rebelled against the king, the Christian Hephthalite soldiers who joined Wahrām had crosses on their forehead; this astonished Theophylactus Simocatta (fl. 620) who reported it.²⁷¹ Likewise, from the middle of the sixth century to the middle of the eighth century, the Christian authorities in Marw sent missionaries to other cities in the east. These Christian missionaries converted many Turks.²⁷² All this information that comes from the historical narratives indicate that the Nestorian community lived mainly in Badghis. So far, no archaeological excavation has been conducted to find traces of churches in Bactria. Therefore, we cannot assume that other areas in Bactria had a Nestorian community.²⁷³

The reports of the fourth/tenth-century Muslim geographers highlighted the existence of a Jewish community in Bactria. Almost all reports on Khurasan mention the city of *al-yahudiyya*, located between Faryab and Shaburghan in the Guzgan region.²⁷⁴ The sixth/twelfth-century geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī identified this city with Maymana in Faryab. He added that it was called *Jahudān al-kubrā* or the great Jewish city, but the Muslims called it *al-maymana*, meaning the blessed city. He mentioned that the Jews came to this region before the Islamic period. Yāqūt also refers to Jahudhanak, an area in Balkh that was named after its Jewish residents.²⁷⁵ These geographical reports do not provide details about this community, but they reflect the reality that Jewish community was big enough to have a city named after

²⁷⁰ Nicholas Sims-Williams, “The life of Baršabbā,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barsabba-legendary-bishop-of-marv-and-founder-of-the-christian-church-in-eastern-iran> (accessed on 12 October 2018).

²⁷¹ Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 8–9.

²⁷² More information is given by Barbara Kaim and Maja Kornacka, “Religious Landscape of the Ancient Merv Oasis,” *Iran* 54, 2 (2016): 47–72; G. Koshelenko, “The Beginnings of Christianity in Merv,” *IA* 30 (1995): 55–70; Also, see Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). A number of Turkic tribes had also converted en masse to Nestorian Christianity (see D. Wilmschurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East and West, 201); C. Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of the Assyrian Church* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

²⁷³ We also do not know anything about the plan and structure of churches in Bactria. Some ostraca, with middle Persian texts from Marw, show that a local church received materials from the local people who lived around it. A similar situation could have existed in western Bactria, where the Christian community lived. For the church in Marw, see A. B. Nikitin, “Middle Persian Ostraca from South Turkmenistan,” *East and West* 42, no. 1 (1992): 114–116. It is worth noting that the Christians used Syriac for religious texts but also employed Sogdian and Middle Persian for translations, commentaries, and discussions among Christians in the East (Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, “The Languages of Christianity on the Silk Road and the Transmission of Mediterranean Culture into Central Asia,” in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 206–215).

²⁷⁴ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 153; Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 65; *Ḥudud al-‘ālam*, 60; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 370.

²⁷⁵ Yāqūt b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1397/1993), 2: 193–94.

them. They also show that Jews lived mainly in the cities of Maymana and Balkh.²⁷⁶ One more religious group might have existed in Bactria at this time: that of the Hindus. Material evidence of their presence remains unpublished and unstudied.²⁷⁷

The combination of the above-mentioned Arabic and non-Arabic sources highlights Bactria as a multi-religious region. The non-Arabic reports show that in the early seventh century, the Buddhist community lived on both sides of the Amu Darya in the different areas of Guzgan, Gaz, Balkh, Samangan, Tirmidh, Chaghaniyan, Wakhsh, Khuttal and Quwadhiyan. They had their stupas and monasteries, and Buddhist monks were associated with writing commentaries, healing the sick, performing miracles and preaching asceticism. The worshippers of Iranian deities existed in various areas in Guzgan, Gaz, Rob, Kadagstan, Kalf, Warnu, Wakhsh and Khuttal. They had their image shrines, but whether they produced religious texts or preached asceticism is unknown. Only a document from Kadagstan, dating 700 CE, shows a priest (*κηδο*) was expected to heal the sick.²⁷⁸ The Arabic geographic reports show that a Jewish community lived in Balkh and Faryab. A Nestorian community existed in Badghis. Details about their religious activities are unknown. Interestingly, Muslim geographers do not refer to any Buddhist community. That might indicate that they did not see any active Buddhist community when they visited Bactria. However, they encountered Zoroastrian community. Apart from these reported communities, we do not know much about other religious communities existed in Bactria. It is possible that a community of Manicheans lived in Bactria too as we have a reference about Tish the king of Chaghaniyan who sent a Manichean *mōčak* (lit. teacher) in 719 as his ambassador to China. *Mōčak* was the title given to a high-ranking figure in the Manichean religious organisation. That also shows the

²⁷⁶ There is more information about the Jewish community living in Ghur and Bamiyan. A short Judeo-Persian inscription in Tang-i Azao, an area to the southeast of present-day Chisht dating to 752–53, confirms that Jews lived in this area. It highlights that they spoke Persian but used Hebrew script for writing (W. B. Henning, “The Inscription of Tang-i Azao,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 20, no. 1/3, Studies in honour of Sir Ralph Turner, Director of the School of Oriental and African Studies 1937–57 (1957): 335–342). Many Hebrew burial inscriptions and Judeo-Persian documents from Ghur and Bamiyan show that Jews had large populations in the region. They may have had relations with the Jewish community in Maymana and Balkh. For details about the Hebrew burial inscriptions, see Erica C. D. Hunter, “Hebrew-script tombstone from Jām, Afghanistan,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* LXI, no. 1 (2010): 72–87; For the Judeo-Persian documents, see Haim, “What is the “Afghan Genizah?” 70–90.

²⁷⁷ The unpublished reports of Brahmi inscriptions from a cemetery in Badghis show that a Hindu/Buddhist temple possibly existed in this region, and later its materials were displaced and reused. At least one stone beam bears Brahmi and Arabic inscriptions. Probably, the temple was still in place in the Islamic period, and people added an Arabic inscription to it. In addition, several column bases with Arabic inscriptions are existed but have not been published. Thanks to Jonathan Lee, who showed me his photographs of these unpublished materials (personal communication 8 October 2021).

²⁷⁸ Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103.

connection between Manicheans and local rulers.²⁷⁹ Apart from that a Bactrian document from Turfan has information about Manicheism.²⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the areas they lived and how they organised their community are unknown.

1.2.7 A place for all religions

The reports discussed so far reflect the presence of various religious communities in Bactria. As it is already mentioned, al-Muqaddasī's report shows in fourth/tenth century Bactria, each religious group was free to follow its regulations. He gives the example of the king of Gharchistan who- instead of imposing one *madhhab* in his area- prayed twice to satisfy different religious groups in his domain.²⁸¹ This attests to the fact that followers of two different *madhhabs* lived together and the king respected them. Not only a geographic report but also two Bactrian documents support the idea of coexistence of various religious groups. These documents related to land sales produced in the Rob region in 729 and 747 CE clearly mention that the buyers have the right to build a monastery or temple, place of burial or crematorium on the purchased land, and no one could object to it. The local authorities witnessed and sealed them, representing their approval.²⁸² Sectarian conflicts and the disruption of religious places or communities might have happened, but our sources do not show any examples. Thus, it is possible to use the term religious "openness" in its loose meaning in the Bactrian context, unless new evidence comes forwards attesting to the opposite.

The policy of religious openness reported by the Muslim geographers and mentioned in Bactrian documents was not new to Bactria. It was an old tradition at least going back to the Kushan period in which the Kushan kings patronised all religious communities in their territory.²⁸³ This policy could have been the outcome of three factors: a) the shatter zone that created natural division and maintained different communities in their respective areas; b) the nomadic rulers, like the early Kushans or the Turks, did not impose their traditions on people;

²⁷⁹ Litvinsky and Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa*, 171.

²⁸⁰ Nicholas Sims-Williams has discussed this document in his talk "Manichaeism in Bactria," Presentation at 10 European Conference for Iranian Studies (ECIS 10), Leiden University, 22 August 2023.

²⁸¹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 323.

²⁸² Bactrian documents no. V, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 116–125, 126–135; Bactrian document T shows that Bag-azyas asks Kamird-far to perform service to god Kamird and also other gods. However, the document does not reveal the names of these gods (Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103).

²⁸³ For discussion on Kanishka's religious policy, see Litvinsky and Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa*, 146–47. I do not agree with their conclusions on the Kushans' religious policy, interpreting it as a way to attract trade with other regions because the Kushans unified the eastern Iranian regions with norther India and controlled the overland trade routes between Iran, India, and China.

and c) they accepted and respected this diversity by manifesting themselves as protectors of all religions.²⁸⁴ There is no evidence reflecting Kushans and Turks to have been forced any specific religion in Bactria or other parts of their empire. This situation was temporarily interrupted by the Sasanian attempts to impose their form of Zoroastrianism in Bactria.²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, it survived and continued in the region,²⁸⁶ lasting until the Islamic period despite regime changes. Religious openness likely provided harmony between different religious groups and created spaces for syncretism, blending different religious elements. Hence, it is not surprising to see various deities in the image temple of Rabatak in Bactria, Greek and Iranian gods joining the Buddha in Gandharan art, or the images of many different deities appearing on Kushan coinage.²⁸⁷ This makes Bactria different from other regions like Sogdiana that had not much knowledge of Buddhism,²⁸⁸ or western parts of the Sasanian empire in which

²⁸⁴ Jos Gommans and I reached the same conclusion in two related articles about the Mughals (Jos Gommans and Said Reza Huseini, “Neoplatonic Kingship in the Islamic World: Akbar’s Millennial History,” in *Sacred Kingship in World History: Between Immanence and Transcendence*, ed. Azfar Moin and Alan Strathern (Columbia University Press, 2021), 192–222, and “Neoplatonism and the Pax Mongolica in the Making of *Ṣulḥ-i Kull*: A View from Akbar’s Millennial History,” *Modern Asian History* (2022): 870–901).

²⁸⁵ The Sasanian attempted to impose fire worship in Bactria, which was not free from violence. Touraj Daryaei called the early Sasanian attempt to impose its religious view “militant piety”, which changed later to religious tolerance (Touraj Daryaei, “Ardaxšīr Pābagān and Early Sasanian Militant Piety,” Paper Presented at the “Ninth European Conference of Iranian Studies (ECIS 9)” Institute of Iranian Studies, Freie University, Berlin, September 9, 2019); The inscription of Kerdīr, the highest Zoroastrian authority in the early Sasanian priestly association, proudly refers to the victory of Mazdayasnism and the destruction of other religious places. See Philippe Gignoux’s articles, “Le mage Kirdir et ses quatre inscriptions,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 133^e année, no. 3, (1989): 689–699, and *Les Quatre inscriptions du mage Kirdir. Textes et concordances*, *Studia Iranica*. Collections des Sources pour l’Histoire de l’Asie Centrale pre-islamique. Serie II. Vol. i. Studia Iranica, Cahier 9. (Paris, Association pour l’Avancement des Etudes Iraniennes, 1991); For Grenet’s discussion on Kerdīr’s propaganda, see Frantz Grenet, “Religions du monde iranien ancien,” *Annuaire EPHE, Section des sciences religieuses*, t. 111 (2002–2003): 153–158; The Sasanian soldiers possibly left the Middle Persian graffiti in the Buddhist complex at Qara Tepe in Tirmidh (B. Staviskii and T. Mkrtichev, “Qara-Tepe in Old Termez: On the History of the Monument,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 10, *Studies in Honor of Vladimir A. Livshits* (1996): 226–228); The DAFA excavations conducted in 2004–2006 in Tepe Zargaran in Balkh unearthed the remains of Buddhist monuments destroyed and later used for making water canals within the city of Balkh. See Besenval et Marquis, “Le rêve accompli d’Alfred foucher à Bactres,” 1849–1866; The Sasanian added new chambers for the sacred fire to the Kushan image temple in Surkh Kotal and the temple in Delbarjin in Balkh. For more details, see Grenet, “Zoroastrianism in Central Asia,” 140; A. D. H. Bivar discussed two small fire altars found in Balkh that may be from this period (A. D. H. Bivar, “Fire-Altars of the Sassanian Period at Balkh,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17, 1/2 (1954): 182–183).

²⁸⁶ Fabrizio Sinisi discussed the way the Sasanian redressed the local gods in Sasanian iconography (see Fabrizio Sinisi “The Deities on the Kushano-Sasanian Coins,” *Electrum* 22 (2015): 201–225). However, the Kushano-Sasanian kings did not necessarily disturb the religious composition in the region. The same coins of the Kushano-Sasanians show that those deities rendered in the Sasanian style were already part of the Kushan pantheon. They adapted to eastern Iranian society by recognising their local gods, but only now re-dressed them in the Sasanian style. Possibly, the Sasanians realised that they had to compromise with local religious views if they wanted to rule over Bactria.

²⁸⁷ See Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans*, 60–172.

²⁸⁸ Xuanzang does not refer to any Buddhist community in Sogdiana (*SI-YU-KI*, 32–35); Similar observation can be found in *The Hye Ch’o Diary*, 54.

there was Christian martyrdom and the persecution of Manicheans.²⁸⁹ The legacy of Kushan religious tolerance continued in Bactria even after this region became part of the Umayyad and then the Abbasid empire. Al-Muqaddasī's report reflects this legacy.

1.2.8 Political organisation

It is already mentioned that diversity in geography and different climates had impacts on settlement patterns in Bactria. The plains and oases hosted a higher number of populations, and the mountain areas had fewer inhabitants. Each of these areas developed a different political organisation. The idea of “plain and mountain” as two distinct zones of political power is proposed by Jürgen Paul in his study of the Seljuq empire under Sultan Sanjar (r. 1096–1157 CE). Paul argues that Sanjar's empire was not centralised but was an amalgamation of various zones of power, in which the plain and the mountain areas had different political and military leadership.²⁹⁰ Similar patterns of fragmented political control can be observed for an earlier period in Bactria.

In Bactria, the oases formed a large state. They were the hub of agricultural production capacity based on the development of an advanced irrigation system. That capacity allowed them to become wealthy because they “were large enough to produce sufficient surpluses for a large state to base its power on the revenue derived from them”, quoting Paul.²⁹¹ The attachment of people to the land, and the government's control over it, particularly through water management projects, enabled the government to maintain and expand production. The government maintained its stability through administration and protected the cities with massive defensive walls. However, the oasis cities were subject to raids and conquests, which affected their administrative operation differently. If conquered, they were often integrated into the more extensive administrative system by the stronger political powers.²⁹² However, if the conquering powers were nomadic invaders who often lacked administrative systems like those developed in the oasis, then the urban areas in the oasis continued the earlier administrative

²⁸⁹ Perhaps for this religious tolerance, we see the Manicheans migrating towards the east. This idea comes from the Q&A session with La Vaissière (Étienne de la Vaissière, “Manichean Road,” Online presentation, After Rome and Further East Seminar organised by Oxford University (13 May 2021).

²⁹⁰ Jürgen Paul, “‘Abbāsīd Administrative Legacy in the Seljuq World,” Working Paper Series of the ERC Project The Early Islamic Empire at Work: The View from the Regions Towards the Centre, No. 1 (Hamburg, 2015): 1–18.

²⁹¹ Paul, “‘Abbāsīd Administrative Legacy,” 13.

²⁹² The integration of Bactria into the Achaemenid, Hellenistic and Sasanian empires can be mentioned here. The Aramaic documents, Greek and Middle Persian documents from Bactria support this idea.

regulations to serve the new power.²⁹³ Control of the oasis cities was important for any political power invading Bactria. Anyone who could control the oasis cities in Bactria could control the overland trade routes that connected Bactria to India, China, and Sogdiana.

The mountain areas with many narrow valleys did not have much space to develop or expand urban areas. Life in the mountain areas was “seasonal sedentarism”, in which many people moved to the higher areas in the summer to feed their animals and returned to the lower areas in the villages in the winter.²⁹⁴ The villages often formed along the rivers and had small populations, and minor agricultural production provided fewer taxes to be dispatched. However, this way of life would allow people to escape the summer heat and the winter cold. Apparently, this lifestyle has affected the political order gradually and created the idea of having winter and summer capitals in the region.²⁹⁵ The political situation was different in the mountains. Paul has argued that the mountain areas had their own military and political leadership. Unlike the urban centres in the oasis, the mountain areas were controlled by local rulers who had roots in those areas. They were not necessarily appointed by the rulers of the urban centres or by imperial administrations, but they held hereditary rule and possessed skills for cultivating land (though not much).²⁹⁶ Unlike the urban centres, these local rulers were autonomous and had their fortresses in the mountains.²⁹⁷ The network of fortresses with local lords would not allow the kind of unified political situation as it applied to the urban centres in the oases.²⁹⁸

From an imperial perspective, control of the urban centres in oases was crucial, but controlling the mountain areas was less important. The political model of rule in the regions like Bactria and the whole eastern Iranian region was similar to the “Swiss cheese” model proposed by Thomas Barfield for modern-day Afghanistan, and was discussed by Haug for

²⁹³ The Chionites, Kushans, Hephthalites and Western Turks can be mentioned as examples. For the organisation of nomadic states, see David Sneath, *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentation of Nomadic Inner Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

²⁹⁴ Ghur provides a good example. See David Colin Thomas, *The Ebb and Flow of an Empire: The Ghūrīd Polity of Central Afghanistan in the twelfth and thirteenth century* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2018), 72–106.

²⁹⁵ Al-Muqaddasī mentions that the kings of Guzgan moved to Garzivan (Ar. *al-Jurzawan*) in the summer and returned to Amber in the winter (al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 370). This practise continued in the region. The Ghurids spent their summer in Firuzkuh and winter in Zamin Dawar (see Thomas, *The Ebb and Flow of an Empire*, 21).

²⁹⁶ Paul, “‘Abbāsīd Administrative Legacy,” 16.

²⁹⁷ For instance, al-Muqaddasī mentions that the king of Gharchistan stayed in his fortress and ruled independently (*mustaqillia bi nafsihā*). His fortress was in the mountains (al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 309).

²⁹⁸ Paul, “‘Abbāsīd Administrative Legacy,” 14–16; Later Persian sources report the coexistence of many independent local rulers in mountainous areas in Guzgan and Ghur (*Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 59–61, Minhāj al-Dīn ‘Uthmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Juzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, ed. Capitan William Nassau Lees and Mawlawis Khadim Husain and ‘Abd al-Ḥai (Calcutta: College Press, 1864), 30–67, 347–49).

pre-Mongol Khurasan.²⁹⁹ Haug suggested that it is essential to understand “the state perspective” in which the productive regions, those that can deliver more taxes, were worth controlling, and other areas with less economic value could be left to themselves.³⁰⁰ He adds that though the mountain areas were counted as part of the domain of the rulers, who conquered the region and were stationed in the oasis, they remained under the actual control of local rulers. The circle of control was limited to the urban centres in the plains and the oases. Taxing the mountain areas could have been more expensive and riskier.³⁰¹ Thus, the mountain areas were often left to their original rulers. Chapters three (3.3.6) and four (4.2.2) will show that the Arab Muslims focussed only on taking the oasis cities and left the mountain areas to their local rulers.

The diverse geography, different climates, and their impacts on human settlements and political organisations discussed so far highlight two crucial issues. The first is that various groups of people who followed different religious traditions lived together in Bactria. The second is that political organisations were different in the plain and mountain areas. As Haug has argued, shatter zones were usually locally divided and caught in the middle of conflicts between the more significant political powers around it.³⁰² In other words, it functioned as a frontier region in which different political powers contested its control. In such a complex situation, one local political group could not control all political and economic affairs alone, but different confederations had to be formed. In other words, if any state is formed, it is a ‘stockholding’ cooperation.³⁰³ This will become clearer in chapter two (2.1) when we see how different principalities ruled their respective areas in Bactria and interacted with more considerable political powers in general. Chapter four (4.2, 4.3) will then show how the Umayyads incorporated Bactria into Umayyad Khurasan, and the way Bactrian rulers dealt with the Arab Muslims in particular.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted Bactria’s geographical features and their socio-political impacts. It showed that Bactria’s physiography is part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone located between Iran, India, the steppe, and China. The shatter zone, which was created by tectonic collisions,

²⁹⁹ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 408.

³⁰⁰ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 31.

³⁰¹ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 31.

³⁰² Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 26–27.

³⁰³ Thanks to Petra Sijpesteijn for explaining this specific form to me.

created intensive geographical diversity in the region. The idea of a shatter zone helped us to recognise five areas in Bactria with different geographical features. It also showed that Bactria had the conditions of arid and semi-arid climates that allowed sedentary life in the plain areas and pastoral life in the mountains.

Bactria was a well-connected region. Though it had a diverse landscape, it never halted interactions between its inhabitants with those in neighbouring regions. Over time, different groups of people settled in different areas in Bactria, mixed with other communities that already existed, and gradually created a diverse population in the region. The people of Bactria followed different religious orders and cultural traditions that developed in the region or were brought to Bactria from other regions. Diversity in populations and religious orders created harmony and religious tolerance in Bactria. The rulers of Bactria patronised different religions in their territories.

The diverse geography influenced political organisation in Bactria. The plains and oases produced more agricultural resources and had higher populations. The agricultural surplus supported the central government in expanding the urban areas protected by defensive walls. However, these cities were often raided and conquered by other bigger political powers. In contrast, the mountains had less agricultural surplus and smaller populations. They provided fewer taxes compared to the plain areas. Their rulers were personally rooted in the areas they oversaw, lived in their fortresses, and were not disturbed by the conquerors who imposed their control over the oases cities. Thus, this system continued for a long period, spanning the pre-Islamic and post-conquest periods. The next chapter will examine who were the local rulers in the plains and mountains of Bactria when the Arab Muslims entered Bactria.

Chapter Two: Bactrian Local Rulers and Overlords

From many centuries past, the royal race has been extinct. Several chieftains have, by force, contended for their possessions and each held their own independently, only relying upon the natural division of the country. Thus, they constituted twenty-seven states divided by natural boundaries, yet as a whole dependent on the *Tuh-kiueh* tribes.³⁰⁴

Introduction

The chapter presents the political structures existing in early seventh-century Bactria. It argues that these took the forms of local autonomy and overlordship. This political structure was made of several layers of political power functioning in the region. The first layer consisted of local elite members, and households that played an important role in the local administration, tax collection, justice system and the like. The position of these households was based on their members' wealth, social status, and role in administration and law. They executed the orders of the 'local rulers' who made the second layer of this system. The local rulers belonged to elite families and retained a degree of autonomy in their areas. Third, there was a 'local overlord' (e.g., *yabghu* of Tukharistan) who resided in Bactria. In the fourth layer, there was a far-off major political power that can be called the 'ultimate overlord' (e.g., Sasanian *shāhān shāh*, Turkic *qaghān*, and to some extent, the Chinese emperor) whose suzerainty was recognised by the local overlord and local rulers in Bactria. In this system, the local and the ultimate overlord did not impose direct rule in Bactria, and thus the local rulers retained their autonomy in internal affairs.

This was the political structure in place when the Arab Muslims arrived in Bactria. They first followed this model, but then they broke this system to impose their direct rule in Bactria. That caused severe political unrest among Bactrian local rulers, and pushed them to create a regional alliance and unite with the anti-Umayyad forces to stop the Umayyads. This was one of the main reasons that slowed down the pace of the Arab Muslim conquests in Bactria. It created a great challenge for them to control the region, and will be further discussed in chapter four (4.2, 4.3).

The current chapter attempts to unknit this complex political system. It recognises various areas of political control and their local rulers. To do so, it discusses these areas and

³⁰⁴ *SI-YU-KI*, 37–8.

their rulers in three parts. The first part describes the local autonomous rulers and their areas of political control. The second part addresses the reasons behind the formation of this system. The final part discusses local Bactrian rulers' interactions with their overlords. This chapter is primarily based on analysing Bactrian documents and numismatic evidence, along with Chinese, Arabic, and Persian reports. The combination of these different sources shed light on the local political autonomy and overlordship in Bactria.

2.1. Local autonomy in Bactria

In the early seventh century, many different principalities controlled their respective areas in Bactria. These principalities had autonomy in their local affairs, such as civil and fiscal administration and legal systems. They also commanded their military forces. However, none of these local rulers could unify the entire Bactria under a singular authority.³⁰⁵ Instead, they recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Western Turks to whom they paid tributes.³⁰⁶ This situation is reported by Xuanzang, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited Bactria in 630; we already met him in the previous chapter. He reports about Bactria:

From many centuries past, the royal race has been extinct. The several chieftains have by force contended for their possessions, and each held their own independently, only relying upon the natural division of the country. Thus, they have constituted twenty-seven states divided by natural boundaries, yet as a whole dependent on the *Tuh-kiueh* tribes [Turks].³⁰⁷

Xuanzang's report highlights an important point. It shows that the local rulers controlled areas that were divided by natural boundaries. These comprised parts of a larger political structure in which the *qaghān* of the Western Turks was the overlord. However, Xuanzang does not explain how the city-states worked within this structure. Likewise, he does not mention how the Western Turks naturalised their authority in the region. This section will explore available sources to explain it.

³⁰⁵ Local political autonomy in which power is not centralised in the hands of one political party is also known as political fragmentation. However, I do not use that term in this study because autonomy is more in line with our sources. For a definition of political fragmentation in a modern context, see Gregory R. Weiher, *The Fractured Metropolis: Political Fragmentation and Metropolitan Segregation* (State University of New York Press, 1991), and Richard H. Pildes, "The Age of Political Fragmentation," *Journal of Democracy* 32, no.4 (2021): 146–159.

³⁰⁶ *SI-YU-KI*, 28; For the Western Turks, see Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road*, 112–140.

³⁰⁷ *SI-YU-KI*, 37–8; For further information on the book, see Ulrich Theobald, "Da-Tang xiyu ji 大唐西域記," *Chinese Knowledge-de*, <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/datangxiyuji.html> (accessed on 20 November 2022).

Despite its limits, Xuanzang's report is significantly important. It reflects the political structure made up of local rulers and their overlords. In other words, Bactria was divided into various areas of political control on the ground. By various areas of political control, I refer to specific geographical areas ruled by certain political groups who controlled the economic resources, kept local administrations and military forces to defend the area, and maintained law and order. These areas of political control were in five regions of western Bactria, which was itself divided into four politically controlled areas: Bactria proper, southern Bactria, eastern Bactria, and northern Bactria, which already appeared in the previous chapter as forming distinct geographical zones. Their administrative and political characteristics will be discussed in this section. After this, I will explain the reasons behind political autonomy and overlordship in Bactria.

2.1.1 Areas of political control in Bactria

2.1.2 Western Bactria

Western Bactria consisted of four areas of political control. These areas were Badghis, Marw al-Rūd, Gharchistan, and Guzgan. Each of these areas had different rulers. In the early seventh century, Badghis was controlled by the rulers known as the *nizak tarkhān* in the Arabic narratives.³⁰⁸ The *nizak tarkhān* is not a personal name, but a title referring to a high military commander.³⁰⁹ The origin of the *nizaks* has been discussed by various scholars; some claimed they were Turks (speaking Turkic languages), others that they were Hephthalites (of Hunish origin speaking Iranian languages), or they were a group that came from the south of Hindukush.³¹⁰ However, after analysing the Chinese sources and the Arabic narratives relating

³⁰⁸ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 208–209; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 420; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1184–85; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 150.

³⁰⁹ We do not know their personal names. Minoru Inaba argued that *nizak tarkhān* combined Turkic and Iranian appellations, which was common by that time. He gives the example of the *nizak shāh*, the local kings who ruled the areas in the south of Hindukush. According to Inaba, the *nizaks* were given “the Hephthalites appellation because they were a tributary state.” (Minoru Inaba, “Nizak in Chinese Sources,” in *Coins, Art and Chronology II: The First Millennium C. E. in the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, ed. Michael Alram, Debrah Klimburg-Satler, Minoru Inaba and Matthias Pfisterer (Wien: Logo des Akademieverlags, 2010), 199–200); For the political situation in the south of Hindukush in this period, see Minoru Inaba, “From Kesar the Kābulshāh and Central Asia,” in *Coins, Art and Chronology II: The First Millennium C. E. in the Indo-Iranian Borderlands*, edited by Michael Alram, Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Minoru Inaba and Matthias Pfisterer (Wien: Logo des Akademieverlags, 2010), 443–55; Minoru Inaba, “The Identity of the Turkish Rulers to the South of Hindukush from the 7th to the 9th Centuries A. D.,” *Zinbun* 38 (2005): 1–19.

³¹⁰ Emel Esin, “Tarkhan Nizak or Tarkhan Tirek? An Enquiry concerning the Prince of Badghīs Who in A. H. 91/A. D. 709–710 Opposed the 'Omayyad Conquest of Central Asia,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, no. 3 (1977): 323–332; Frantz Grenet, “NÉZAK,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/nezak> (accessed on 31 October 2021); For the Hephthalites, see Kurbanov, *The History and Archaeology of the Hephthalites*; Étienne de la Vaissière, “The Steppe World and the Rise of the

to Herat and the Badghis region, Frantz Grenet argued that the *nizaks* were the Hephthalites whose main political centres were in eastern Bactria, but they controlled Badghis as well.³¹¹ Grenet's argument can be supported by Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī (fl. third/ninth-century) in a report in which he associated the *nizak tarkhān* with Badghis. Al-Kūfī calls this title *nizak al-Barghashī* which is the corrupted form of *nizak al-Bādghīsī*.³¹² The *nizaks* of Badghis were formidable foes to the Arab Muslim conquerors, first in 651–52, then in 710 when the famous *nizak tarkhān* (d. 91/710) led a large-scale revolt against the Umayyads, which will be discussed in detail in chapter four (4.2.1). Hereafter, I will refer to the *nizak tarkhān* simply as the *nizak* of Badghis who had his fortress, led his military forces, and controlled the economic resources of his region.

The Hephthalites had a long political history in Bactria, which explains their objection towards any encroaching political power in Bactria, including the Arab Muslims. Knowing their background helps to understand their interactions with Arab Muslims, reflected in the conquest narratives (*futūḥ*) explained in the next chapters.

The Hephthalites came to power during the Sasanian conflicts with the Chionites.³¹³ The Chionites, who later came to be known as the Kidarites,³¹⁴ entered Bactria when it was part of the territories of the Kushano-Sasanian rulers (c. 230–365).³¹⁵ The Kidarites may have

Huns,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. M. Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 175–192; Étienne de la Vaissière, “Is there a Nationality for the Hephthalites?” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute, New Series* 17 (2003): 119–132.

³¹¹ Frantz Grenet, “Regional Interaction, in Central Asia and Northwest India in the Kidarite and Hephthalite Periods,” *Indo-Iranian Languages and People, Proceeding of the British Academy* (The British Academy, 2002): 214–216; The Hephthalites controlled Herat before 651 CE as well (Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 15).

³¹² Ibn al-A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 148.

³¹³ The Chionites fought the Sasanians over control of the eastern region. The Chionites are identified differently. For instance, see Frantz Grenet, “KIDARITES,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/kidarites> (accessed on 19 December 2018); Rezakhani, “From the Kushans to the Western Turks,” 205; The Chionites may have been part of the Hunish groups, who were, in turn, part of a great wave of mass migration in the middle of the fourth century. La Vaissière proposed that different groups of people known later as the Kidarites, the Hephthalites and the Alkhans came from this massive migration (cited in Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians*, 88). Those mass migration currents put pressure on the Sasanians and the Romans (James Howard-Johnston, “The Sasanians’ Strategic Dilemma,” in *Commutatio et Contentio: Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East in Memory of Zeev Rubin*, ed. H. Börm, J. Wiesehöfer (Düsseldorf: Wellem Verlag, 2010), 43).

³¹⁴ Kidarite is a dynastic designation derived from their king Kidara. See E. V. Zeimal, “The Kidarite Kingdom in Central Asia,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al., (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 123–124.

³¹⁵ The Kushano-Sasanian dynasty was a branch of the Sasanian royal house that ruled Bactria.

initially served the Kushano-Sasanians,³¹⁶ but gradually replaced them.³¹⁷ To remove the Kidarites from Bactria, the Sasanian king Yazdgird II (r. 439–457) personally organised several military campaigns between 442–450 to push back the Kidarites, but he suddenly died, bringing these efforts to a halt.³¹⁸ Moreover, his campaign remained unfinished due to the war of succession between his sons Hormizd III and Peroz in 457–459.³¹⁹ To win the war of succession, Peroz united with the Hephthalites who already were settled in Bactria (probably in eastern areas) and possibly served the Kidarites.³²⁰ They helped him to weaken the Kidarites and then marched with his Hephthalite allies to claim his father's throne, which he occupied in 459. In return, Peroz gave the region of Marw al-Rūd, including Badghis, to the Hephthalites.³²¹ Possibly, they served Peroz as subordinate rulers for a while.

The Hephthalites were as ambitious and expansionist as the Sasanians. They did not remain subordinate rulers to Peroz for a long time. They killed him in 484–485 and turned the Sasanian empire into a tributary state.³²² Only with the help of the Western Turks³²³ did the

³¹⁶ Grumbates, the king of the Chionites, helped Shapur II (r. 325–379) in his attack on the Romans and the capture of Amida (Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 16–17; Rezakhani, “From the Kushans to the Western Turks,” 206). Helping the Sasanians may have allowed the Chionites to consolidate their power in Bactria and restore the earlier political order, with Balkh as their capital. For more details, see Grenet, “KIDARITES,” and Rezakhani, “From the Kushans to the Western Turks,” 205.

³¹⁷ Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians*, 87.

³¹⁸ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 57.

³¹⁹ Zeimal, “The Kidarite Kingdom,” 130.

³²⁰ La Vaissière mentions that the Hephthalites were in Bactria a century before they dominated the region (La Vaissière, “Is there a Nationality for the Hephthalites?” 122).

³²¹ Zeimal, “The Kidarite Kingdom,” 129–130; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*, 24.

³²² B. A. Litvinsky, “The Hephthalite Empire,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al., (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 142; Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 61.

³²³ The Turkic empire was first established in 553 and lasted until 682. According to Denis Sinor, it was the first time a nomadic empire bordered simultaneously on the three major sedentary civilisations of Iran, China, and Byzantium (Denis Sinor, “The Türk Empire, Part One: The First Türk Empire (553–682),” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al., (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 327). The Turks were a composition of various nomadic groups that lived from pastoral activity, fishing, and hunting. However, besides these activities, many of them also worked as iron suppliers to Juan-juan rulers, who used that iron for their weapon production (S. G. Klyashtorny, “The Türk Empire, Part Two: The Second Türk Empire (682–745),” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al., (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 331; Nicola Di Cosmo, “The Relations between China and the Steppe: From the Xiongnu to the Türk Empire,” in *Empires and Exchange in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 50). The Turks tried to buy silk from China and thus enter this prosperous trade, but they were refused by the Chinese in 545. However, in 552, the western Wei successfully invaded the Juan-juan, which allowed Bumin (r. 551–552), the leader of the Turks, to establish his rule there, but he died shortly after. The emergence of the Turks created fear in China and forced them to pay a tributary of 100,000 bales of silk annually to keep the Turks at bay (J. Harmatta, “Tokharistan and Gandhara under Western Türk Rule (650–750), Part One: History of the Region,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. 3: *The Crossroad of Civilizations: A.D. 250–750*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky et al., (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), 359). Since they now had large amounts of silk and military power, the Turks decided not only to trade it but also to try and take control of the trade routes that crossed the Hephthalites' territories towards India. Hence, a Turkic empire

Sasanian king Khusrow I (r. 531–579) defeat the Hephthalites and conquer Bactria in 560.³²⁴ The Western Turks were a confederation of various Turkic-speaking groups who lived in the steppes and had interest in transregional trade with India and Iran. To connect to these regions, the Western Turks had to face the Hephthalites getting in their way. Despite their defeat, the Hephthalites were not completely removed from the region.³²⁵ They remained in Badghis and some areas in eastern Bactria. They were reduced to subordinate rulers and recognised the suzerainty of the Western Turks.

The political alliance between the Sasanians and the Turks did not last long, and that provided an opportunity for the Hephthalites to rise again. The Sasanian presence in Bactria did not allow the Turks to connect to India. Thus, the Turks removed their Sasanian allies from Bactria.³²⁶ In between, the Hephthalites tried to free themselves from the Turkic suzerainty by rebelling against them in 581–82, but failed. To revive their power, the Hephthalites united with Wahrām Chubīn (d. 591),³²⁷ the Sasanian general who defeated the Turks, but then the Hephthalites changed sides and joined the Turks to invade Sasanian Iran in 615.³²⁸ The Hephthalites attempted to keep their control in western Bactria, and for that, they participated in the assassination of Wahrām Chubīn and later Wisthām (d. 595–96), the Sasanian general.³²⁹

interested in transregional trade appeared between Sasanian Iran and Tang China (Sinor “The Türk Empire, Part One,” 327; Klyashtorny, “The Türk Empire,” 332). The Turks had to invade the Hephthalites and take Bactria to connect to India.

³²⁴ The defeat of the Hephthalites was significant for the Sasanians. They minted gold dinar with the standing image of Khusrow I, decorated with Middle Persian legend “*gyh 'n 'pybym krt' l Khusrau, the maker of the world without fear*”. Possibly, these coins were distributed among the Sasanian nobles to celebrate their victory (Touraj Daryaei, “The maker of the World without Fear: Observation on the Gold Coin of Khorsow I,” *Ancient Iranian Numismatics* (2020): 193).

³²⁵ In the upper Amu Darya region, the Hephthalite local rulers paid tribute to the Turks (Litvinsky, “The Hephthalite Empire,” 147). Some local rulers, like the king of Tirmidh (Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 2: 525), and Gatifar, the local king of Bukhara, continued minting their coins (Michael Fedorov, “On the Hephthalites King Gatifar,” *Iran* 51, no. 1 (2013): 247–248). This means they did not totally lose their autonomy. The narrative related to Gatifar is also mentioned in the *Shahnāma* (see Abu'l-Qāsim Firdausī. *Shahnāma*, ed. Jalāl Khāliqī Muṭlaq (California: Mazda Publisher, 1375/1997).

³²⁶ In order to open this route, the Turks did not invade the Sasanian territory directly but allowed the remaining Hephthalites to initiate the attack. In 588, the Hephthalite local lords attacked the Sasanians and pushed them back to Herat, thus creating space for the Turks to capture Bactria around 590. For details, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 67.

³²⁷ The victories of Wahrām in the East were not tolerated by the Sasanian emperor, who publicly humiliated Wahrām and caused the latter's rebellion in Khurasan. Consequently, with an army now reinforced by Turkish and Hephthalite troops, Wahrām marched towards Mesopotamia against the Sasanian king, who was killed in an internal rivalry in court even before Wahrām's arrival. Wahrām declared himself king of kings, the saviour of Iran and announced the Sasanians as usurpers and illegitimate rulers. See A. Sh. Shahbazi, “Bahram VI Čōbīn,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bahram-06> (accessed on 30 January 2019).

³²⁸ Howard-Johnston, “The Sasanians' Strategic Dilemma,” 63.

³²⁹ Harmatta, “Tokharistan and Gandhara,” 360–61; Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 110–112.

Even one of the Hephthalite local rulers, the *nizak*, took part in the clash with the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III (r. 632–651), which led to the king's assassination in Marw in 651.

All these show that the *nizaks* of Badghis were of Hephthalite origins. They were subordinate rulers serving the Sasanian king of kings, but then rebelled and removed the Sasanians from the region. They were the overlords in Bactria from the fifth to the middle of the sixth century. They had great military careers. They killed two Sasanian emperors, fought the Western Turks, and invaded Sasanian Iran but were still subordinate to the Western Turkic *qaghān*. However, they began rising again and expanding to Sasanian Khurasan after the death of Yazdgird, but the Arab Muslims arrived and prevented their expansion. This explains their resistance against the Arab Muslims advancing towards the East. The Arab Muslim conquests became real in Bactria only after they killed the *nizak* and removed his local allies.

The second political area of control was Marw al-Rūd. However, unlike Badghis, the Marw al-Rūd did not have a Hephthalite *nizak* but a *marzbān* (Lit. margrave). In 652, a certain Badhān was the *marzbān* of this area whose ancestors had served the Sasanian kings. The *marzbān* was under the authority of *spāhbed*, the Sasanian governor of Khurasan who served the Sasanian king of kings. Conversely, Badhān had no obligation towards the Sasanians after the death of the Sasanian king Yazdgird III in 651 in Marw. Despite his title, which indicates submission to the Sasanians, Badhān most probably had political autonomy. He was the highest administrative person in the Marw al-Rūd region, possessed personal properties, had a fortress, and commanded local forces. I will discuss Badhān and his political situation in detail in chapter three (3.2.3) because he is an important political figure between Sasanian Khurasan and the *nizak* of Badghis, and the information about him almost exclusively comes from the Arabic narratives.

The third area of political control was Gharchistan, an area to the east of Badghis at the head-waters of the Marw al-Rūd.³³⁰ The Marw al-Rūd crossed through the middle of this region. Al-Muqaddasī mentions that the king of this area was called *al-shār* in his time, and one could not enter his domain without his permission. According to al-Muqaddasī, this area was called the *gharj al-shār*, or 'King's Mountain'. However, he adds that local people called their region "Gharchistan", meaning mountain area.³³¹ The Arabic *gharj al-shār* could have been the translation of Bactrian *garig-shah* (*γαριγοβαο/γοριγοβαο*) mentioned in some

³³⁰ Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 415.

³³¹ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 309; The *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* also mentions that the king of Gharchistan was called the *shār* (*Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, 58).

Bactrian coins and documents produced in Guzgan.³³² Whether the *al-shār* was a Turk or Hephthalite is unknown. Similarly, whether Gharchistan was part of the domain of the *nizak* or what other relation might have existed between the *al-shār*, the *nizak*, and the *marzbān* remains unknown. Al-Muqaddasī's report about existing of a sophisticated legal system supervised by the *al-shār* indicates that Gharchistan had its local administration. The sources do not discuss the king's military capacity, but we can assume he could mobilise local forces because entering Gharchistan required his permission.

Guzgan, the fourth and final political region, was a kingdom that stretched from the east of the Marw al-Rūd to Balkh. The king of Guzgan was called *malik al-juzjān* in Arabic.³³³ Possibly, he was called *guzgān-khudā* before the conquests because Ibn Khurdhādbih listed this title for the kings of Guzgan in the past.³³⁴ Moreover, the term *khudā*, meaning lord or ruler, was not a personal name, but was a title that resembles the Middle Persian *xwadāy* and the Bactrian *χοδδηο*.³³⁵ The term *khudā* was also the title of the kings of the Bukhara region and Chaghaniyan. Arabic and Persian sources do not tell us whether the kings of Guzgan were of Guzgan Turkic or Iranian linguistic groups, and how they controlled their areas. Bactrian documents produced in Guzgan fill this gap. They reveal some information about the identity of the local kings, fiscal administration, judicial system, and local military forces. They show that all of these worked under the authority of the kings of Guzgan.

A royal family called *guzgan* (γοζγογανο) ruled over the region of Guzgan. The kings of Guzgan recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Western Turks.³³⁶ From the numismatics and Bactrian documents, we can identify at least four kings of Guzgan. These are Kanag Guzgan (r. 659–?), Skag Guzgan (r. 675–695), Besut (695–699), and Zhulad Guzgan (699–711).³³⁷ Except for Besut, the other three kings used *guzgan* as their family name,

³³² Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 71–72; Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”

³³³ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 66; *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 50–61.

³³⁴ Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 40.

³³⁵ This can be seen in Bactrian documents no. N, V, X, T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 68–73, 98–105, 116–125, 136–141.

³³⁶ Bactrian documents no. Nn, O, R in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79, 80–83, 92–93; La Vaissière remarked that the rulers of Guzgan had their eye on Balkh or had a connection with it. It is unknown if they arranged any military operation to capture Balkh, but they struck coins in the last decade of the seventh century, calling themselves Bactrian kings or kings of Bactria (La Vaissière, “De Bactres á Balkh,” 525; Étienne de la Vaissière, “The Last Bactrian Kings,” in *Coins, art, and chronology II: the first millennium C.E. in the Indo-Iranian borderlands*. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse; 412. Bd. Veröffentlichungen der Numismatischen Kommission; 50, ed. Michael Alram, Deborah Klimburg Salter, Minoru Inaba and Matthias Pfisterer. Denkschriften (Wien: Logo des Akademieverlags, 2010), 213–217).

³³⁷ Sims-Williams has suggested different chronologies for the kings of Guzgan. He suggested Besut (r. 689–692), Skag (692–695), and Zhulad (692–694). He mentions that different local rulers possibly controlled Guzgan at the same time. Apparently, Skag, Zhulad and Besut simultaneously ruled. He adds that Guzgan may have been divided

indicating that they may have been from the same royal family.³³⁸ Three Bactrian documents mention Wakhsh, the god of the Amu Darya, in relation to individuals bearing the name *guzgan*.³³⁹ A legal Bactrian document produced in Kalf (possibly modern Keleft on the left bank of the Amu Darya) in 440 of the Bactrian calendar, equal to 662 CE, mentions that certain fines should be paid to the treasury of the “lords of Guzman” (γωζογανοχοηαγγο). While the ‘lords of Guzman’ could, in theory, be a different group of politically dominant figures in the region, it is likely that it refers to lords of the *guzgan* family. This document also shows that Kalf was part of the territory of Guzman. Zhulad, the ruler of Pidud that is mentioned in this document, could have functioned under the authority of the king of Guzman.³⁴⁰ Importantly, the fact that coins and Bactrian documents were produced in Guzman suggests that the kings of Guzman were local lords whose connection to the region they ruled was firmly established. They are called by the family name *guzgan*, which reflects their connection to the region of Guzman, while they also refer to Guzman as their territory.

The king of Guzman was above other local elites who managed the local administration. Each area had a local authority called a lord (χοηο). For instance, a Bactrian document produced in 705, in Lizg an area in Guzman, mentions that Aspring Kanduran Urbiyan, the lord of Lizg (λιζγο χοηοο) awarded some people in return for their service (ασπασο). The document refers to a certain Hilitber as “the leader of the people of Lizg” (λιζγο καροοαλο) who represented people of Lizg and witnessed the deal with a group of freemen. Based on the use of the title, he was below Aspring in administrative rank, because Aspring is called the lord of

between two or more rulers and possibly one of them turned to Arab Muslims to seek their help to overcome his rivals. Though this is a great hypothesis and works well with the local political situation in Bactria, it is difficult to support it because of the lack of evidence (Sims-Williams, “The Arab-Sasanian and Arab-Hephthalite Coinage,” 119–120). Here, I follow Cribb’s chronology. Cribb mentioned that the coins of Zhulad were discontinued in 711, and that aligns with the Arabic narratives saying that the king of Guzman passed away in 711 after Qutayba suppressed the rebellion of the *nizak* in Baghlan (personal communication with Joe Cribb SOAS, London, October 2018; Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”).

³³⁸ Malik says that there is a silver dirham with Besut’s name in Bactrian and a legend in Sogdian. He adds that the word Guzman is also mentioned in Bactrian (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 2: 428–29); La Vaissière suggested that Besut might have been the father of Chiqān Chūr Bilgā, the prince of Panjikent. Perhaps Besut’s coins with Sogdian legend mentioned by Malik support La Vaissière’s idea (La Vaissière, “The Last Bactrian Kings,” 214); Sims-Williams suggests that Guzman was the dynastic name (Sims-Williams, “The Arab-Sasanian and Arab-Hephthalite Coinage,” 118).

³³⁹ Three Bactrian documents bear the name of god Wakhsh and the names of Kanag Guzman, Zhulad and Yan Guzman. This raises the possibility of assuming that this family worshipped Wakhsh (Bactrian documents no. Nn, Tt, Uu in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79, 104–105, 112–115); Joe Cribb also reflected this idea (personal communication at SOAS, London, October 2018).

³⁴⁰ Bactrian document no. O in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83.

Lizg.³⁴¹ The *karval* (καροοαλο) mentioned in this document was an administrative position in Lizg known from at least 659.³⁴² Most probably, the *karval* functioned at the district level.

A legal document from Lizag produced in 722 provides more details about the administrative hierarchy in this area. It refers to a certain Rahul as the *karval* of Lizag and then mentions the name of Wiyus the foreman of Wulakh (οολαχο καροδαρο). The fact that Wiyus' name and title appear after that of Rahul's shows that *karval* was higher than *kardar* (καροδαρο). It is reasonable to infer that Wulakh was either a village or part of Lizag. This document does not clarify the responsibility of the *karval* and the *kardar*.³⁴³ However, the *Hudūd al-'alam*, written two centuries later in Guzgan, mentions that the *kardar* was a person who collected taxes for the Farighūnid ruler of Guzgan. The fact that *kardar* mentioned in Bactrian documents and a geographical text produced in Guzgan may create an impression that the Bactrian *kardar* may refer to the same office of a local dignitary who was involved in fiscal administration in Guzgan. It also shows that the title of *kardar* continued to be used in Guzgan after the conquests.³⁴⁴

The same document from Lizag mentions that Lizag had a *tudun* (ταδοβο). The *tudun* was a Turkic title of an officer who was sent by the *qaghān* of the Turks to supervise the tributes paid by local rulers.³⁴⁵ However, in 722, the Arabs had already pacified most of Bactria, and thus, the *tudun* of this document could not have been a Turkic representative anymore.³⁴⁶ It is likely the *tudun* became the title of a local fiscal officer serving the local ruler. This document indicates that the *karval*, the *kardar* and the *tudun* worked under the authority of Yan-Guzgan, the king of Gar. It is uncertain, but this Yan-Guzgan may have been from the *guzgan* family.

The kings of Guzgan had control over the fiscal administration. It can be seen in Arab-Sasanian coins countermarked by their names and *tamgha*, a stamp associated with the royal

³⁴¹ Bactrian documents no. Tt in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 104–105.

³⁴² Bactrian documents no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79.

³⁴³ Bactrian documents no. Uu in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 112–115.

³⁴⁴ *Hudūd al-'alam*, 59–60.

³⁴⁵ For discussion on *tudun*, see Jonathan Karam Skaiff, "Western Turk Rule of Turkestan's Oases in the Sixth through Eighth Centuries," *The Turks* (2002): 364–72.

³⁴⁶ Bactria was part of the Turkic empire, at least from 590. Ishbara, the son of Tardushad, ruled Bactria with the title *yabghu*. His overlordship was acknowledged as far as Herat in 643. His coins call him *MLKA* or king in Middle Persian and *yabghu*, which may have depicted him as king of both the Turks and Iranians. Vondrovec has published the coins that bear the title of *yabghu* minted on the Sasanian model with the Middle Persian legend *yabgh bahlk'n* (Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 2: 527–28). After his death in 650, the Turks could not unify their forces anymore. So, they looked towards Tang China for help, and in return, the Chinese emperor confirmed the authority of Wu-shih-po of the A-shih-na dynasty (Harmatta, "Tokharistan and Gandhara," 363). Most probably, the Bactrian rulers were still loyal to the A-shih-na dynasty and the *qaghān* mentioned in our documents after 650 refers to the A-shih-na ruler.

family. The countermark revalidated the coins circulating in Guzgan markets.³⁴⁷ The payment of fines to the ‘lords of Guzgan’ was mentioned above, which points to another administrative office functioning on behalf of the king. Apart from them, taxes were an important source of income. Two types of taxes, called *tog* (τωγο) and *harg* (vapγο), were collected from the households. Possibly, the *harg* was the “land tax”,³⁴⁸ and the *tog* was the “poll tax”.³⁴⁹ Apparently, the *tog* appeared in Bactria during the Hephthalites, who collected it in cash (in the form of coins) and kind (in the form of sheep).³⁵⁰ Collecting the *tog* in cash continued under the Western Turks. A land sale contract produced in 659 in Lizg mentions that a household had to sell its land to provide money to pay their *tog* belonged to the *qaghān* (χαγαναγγο τωγο) and the *harg* money to the local ruler (χοηοαγγο vapγο).³⁵¹ The document does not say who collected the taxes but shows that taxes were levied on households and paid in cash.

Guzgan had its local army led by a military commander called the *spalbed* (σπαλοβιδο). In 675, a certain Kul-waraz was the commander of the army of the Garokan (γαρωκανο σπαλοβιδο) in Guzgan and interacted with the *ṭarkhān* (ταρχανο) a Turkic title meaning commander.³⁵² After the domination of the Western Turks in Bactria around 590, the *qaghān* of the Western Turks tried to expand his authority over the region. He sent several representatives to the local rulers to ensure payment of the tributes.³⁵³ The *ṭarkhān* mentioned in the letter exchanged between him and Kul-waraz, and the *tudun* mentioned in other documents should be understood in this context.³⁵⁴ The Western Turks did not establish military garrisons in the region, probably because of their nomadic nature, and stayed outside of the cities. The same letter mentions that the *ṭarkhān* requested a hayfield from the *spalbed*, but the rest of the letter has not survived.

The sources discussed so far show that western Bactria had four main areas of political control. These were Badghis, Marw al-Rūd, Gharchistan, and Guzgan. All these areas had

³⁴⁷ Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”; The name of Skag Guzgan with his countermark appear on the Arab-Sasanian coins too. I noticed it on the silver coin no. AR. 1. 35 57.2 Catalogue Number 126 the British Museum (personal fieldwork, October 2018); Malik has published the coins minted in Balkh by the Umayyad authorities but countermarked by Skag and Zhulad (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 2: 462–63).

³⁴⁸ The *harg* is derived from the Babylonian *iku*, meaning land tax, and it can be seen in several Aramaic documents from Bactria. See Nava and Shaked, *Aramaic Documents*, 30, 71; Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 272.

³⁴⁹ Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 227.

³⁵⁰ Collecting taxes in the form of dinar and sheep was appropriate for the Hephthalites’ warlike nature, who had a long history of war with the Sasanians, as discussed in chapter one. Cash would provide salaries and sheep were essential food material for the moving armies.

³⁵¹ Bactrian documents no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79.

³⁵² Bactrian document no. jg in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 134–135.

³⁵³ Skaff, “Western Turk Rule,” 371.

³⁵⁴ Bactrian documents no. S, Uu in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 94–96, 112–115.

different rulers who controlled local economic resources, had their fortresses, and commanded their local forces. The *marzbān* of Marw al-Rūd and his ancestors served the Sasanian emperor (*shāhān shāh*). However, he functioned autonomously after the death of Yazdgird in 651. It is unclear if the *al-shār* of Gharchistan was a Turk or Iranian and to whom he sent his tributes. The *nizak* was a Hephthalite who ruled Badghis, who was ambitious and sought to expand into Sasanian Khurasan. The kings of Guzgan were from a local family, but whether they took the identities of Turk or Iranian is unknown. The *nizak* and the kings of Guzgan recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Western Turks, and the latter were politically represented by a military commander (*tarkhān*) and a fiscal officer (*tudun*). These individuals were to receive tributes collected for the *qaghān*. The Turks did not build garrisons in western Bactria.

2.1.3 Bactria proper

Bactria proper contained the oases of Balkh and Khulm and the area of Gaz, located between Balkh and Bamiyan. Balkh was known as the “Mother of Cities” (*umm al-bilād*) to Muslim geographers.³⁵⁵ It was the capital of mighty kings (*mustaqarr-i khusruvān*), before Muslims conquered it. It was a heavily fortified city which derived its wealth from agriculture and regional trade.³⁵⁶ Al-Ya‘qūbī describes it as the most significant and most valued city (*‘aẓīmat al-qadr*) of Khurasan, and al-Muqaddasī mentions that Balkh was praised as the “Beautiful Balkh” (*Balkh al-bahīyya*) in Persian books.³⁵⁷ It was not only the Muslim geographers who described the city as such, but also the inhabitants of Balkh, such as al-Balkhī, the author of the *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, who were also aware of the strategic location of Balkh on the trade routes between India, Sogdiana, and China along with its agricultural prosperity.³⁵⁸

Although there was no local king, the sources discuss some other important figures of authority found in Balkh at this time. Xuanzang’s narrative highlights the significance of the Buddhist monastery of Naw Bahar in Balkh. From the Arabic narratives, we learn that two different political figures ruled over Balkh: the *barmak* or the chief of Naw Bahar, and a *spāhbed*, who was a military commander. The *barmak* is a well-known character thanks to his

³⁵⁵ Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 420.

³⁵⁶ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 155–56; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 373–74; *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

³⁵⁷ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-budlān*, 66; Al-Muqaddasī’s description matches the description of Balkh in the *Avesta* (al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 301–2).

³⁵⁸ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 43–52.

progeny, the *barāmika*, who left a visible footprint in the history of the early Abbasid era.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, some words on these figures are essential to know their position when the Arab Muslims arrived in Bactria.

The *barmak* (Sanskrit. *pramukha* meaning chief) was an important religious figure in Balkh.³⁶⁰ His personal name is unknown, but his family was the keepers of Naw Bahar, the most important Buddhist complex in the eastern Iranian regions. According to Ibn al-Faqīh, the *barmak* family (*al-barāmika*) were people of dignity (*ahla sharaḥ*) whose religion was idol worshipping (*‘ibādat al-authān*), which may refer to Buddhism. The *barmak* was *sādin al-akbar*, or great custodian of Naw Bahar and regional rulers as far as China and Kabul, who were Buddhists, all respected the *barmak*.³⁶¹ The representatives of those rulers visited Naw Bahar, prostrated before the great statue, and kissed the hand of the *barmak* (*faṣayyiru li al-barmak*).³⁶² All these show the importance of the *barmak* in pre-Islamic Balkh.

The *barmak* controlled the financial issues relating to Naw Bahar and managed its agricultural areas. Ibn al-Faqīh mentions that the *barmak* possessed large estates in a district (*al-ruzdāq*) called Ruwan in Tukharistan, where its people were slaves (*‘abīd kulluhūm*).³⁶³ Ibn al-Faqīh does not clarify to whom these slaves belonged. However, from Hye Ch’o’s reports on donating villages and their inhabitants to a Buddhist monastery in early eighth-century Kashmir, we can derive a parallel example and infer that donating villages and their people to Buddhist monasteries was a common practice in Kashmir and Bactria.³⁶⁴ This assumption can be supported by Ibn al-Faqīh’s report that the *barmak* who allied with the Umayyads had grown up in Kashmir after his father was killed probably by the Hephthalites.³⁶⁵ In any case, the

³⁵⁹ See Kevin van Bladel, “Barmakids,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/barmakids> (accessed on 24 June 2023).

³⁶⁰ Bosworth has suggested the term *barmak* had derived from Sanskrit *pramukha* (Bosworth, “The Appearance and Establishment of Islam in Afghanistan,” in *Islamisation de l’Asie centrale. Processus locaux d’acculturation du VIIe au XIe siècle*, ed. Étienne de La Vaissière (Paris: Association Pour L’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2008), 101).

³⁶¹ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 322.

³⁶² Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 323; Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 422.

³⁶³ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 323–24; Ibn al-Faqīh does not provide any information on the location of Ruwan, but there is an area called Rustaq in the Takhar province. La Vaissière mentions that Ruwan was situated in the oasis of Imam Sahib in present-day Kunduz in northern Afghanistan (La Vaissière, “De Bactres á Balkh,” 519). For more detail on the *barmak*, see La Vaissière, “De Bactres á Balkh,” 520–533; Arezou Azad and Hugh Kennedy, “The Coming of Islam to Balkh,” in *Authority and Control in the countryside: From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th–10th Century)*, ed. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 299–300.

³⁶⁴ *The Hye Ch’o Diary*, 47.

³⁶⁵ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 324.

barmak was a respected person who managed estates in Balkh, and eastern Bactria belonged to Naw Bahar.

The important position of the *barmak* was linked to various factors. He was the keeper of Naw Bahar, physically over the great Buddhist complex, and also fiscally by managing its financial affairs. These elements and the political situation in the early seventh century led to the rise of the *barmak* as an acting ruler in Balkh. La Vaissière has shown that the political vacuum created by the conflicts between the Sasanians and the Western Turks over control of Bactria provided space for the rise of this family to become rulers of Balkh.³⁶⁶ The fall of the Sasanians, the disintegration of the Turkic empire, and the coming of the Arab Muslims allowed the *barmak* and his sons to act as the actual political authority in Balkh at least from 650 to 725. Moreover, managing these estates required knowledge and administrative skills that the *barmak* must have possessed.³⁶⁷

Despite its privileges, the *barmak* did not command any standing military forces at the time of the Arab Muslim conquests. Instead, it seems that the *barmak* had diplomatic skills. He established a good relationship with local and regional rulers within Bactria, like the king of Chaghaniyan, and outside Bactria, such as the kings of Bukhara, Kabul, and Kashmir. Ibn al-Faḳīh says that the *barmak* married the daughter of the king of Chaghaniyan and received a lady from the king of Bukhara.³⁶⁸ This means that in times of danger, the *barmak* depended on the protection given by stronger rulers who were not necessarily Buddhist but respected the *barmak* and Naw Bahar. Xuanzang reports that the dethroned *yabghu qaghān* Si attacked Balkh in the past, intending to plunder Naw Bahar's wealth and possibly establish his own rule in Balkh, but he died suddenly.³⁶⁹ Similarly, Ibn al-Faḳīh mentions that a ruler called the *nizak tarkhān* also attacked Balkh and killed the father of the *barmak* (called the *barmak*) and most of his sons after he allied with the Arab Muslims. These reports show that the wealth of Naw Bahar was an element that attracted other rulers to attack Balkh.³⁷⁰ Hence, to protect his position, the *barmak* had to keep good relations with other regional rulers.

³⁶⁶ La Vaissière, "De Bactres á Balkh," 524–25.

³⁶⁷ Jonathan Silk has shown the financial affairs managed by the monks in north Indian Buddhist monasteries. That helps to understand the administrative role of the *barmak* in Balkh (Jonathan Silk, *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)).

³⁶⁸ Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 324.

³⁶⁹ *SI-YU-KI*, 45.

³⁷⁰ La Vaissière, "De Bactres á Balkh," 525.

The *spāhbed* of Balkh is a lesser-known figure. The *spāhbed* is a title referring to a military commander.³⁷¹ The office of the *spāhbed* could have remained in Balkh from the Sasanian period when they controlled Balkh, before they lost it to the Turks.³⁷² Information about him appears only in Arabic narratives relating to the rebellion of the *nizak* in 90/710 in Balkh, discussed in chapter four (4.2.1). The identity of this *spāhbed* is unclear, but he might have been a local elite person who supported the *nizak* against the Umayyads. It is possible that the *nizak* had appointed the *spāhbed*. Ibn ‘Atham al-Kūfī identifies him as al-Shāh b. Nizak, and al-Balkhī refers to him as the *dihqān* of Balkh.³⁷³ Possibly, al-Shāh and the *dihqān* were the same person: the *spāhbed*. The *spāhbed* submitted to the Umayyads in 91/711, and after that, we do not hear about him anymore. The relation between the *barmak* and the *spāhbed* is unknown.

Khulm was a small oasis which was known for its farms and gardens.³⁷⁴ The political situation in Khulm is not discussed in our sources. What is known is that the land tax in Khulm was based on the amount of water used to grow crops.³⁷⁵ That indicates the existence of a water management system that must have been controlled by the government. Traditionally, Khulm was controlled by the ruler of Balkh, and most likely, it was part of the domain of Balkh in the early seventh century; otherwise, our sources would discuss it.

It is likely that Gaz was the area to the south of Balkh. The gorge of Chishma-yi Shafa allowed movement between Bamiyan and Balkh.³⁷⁶ In 630, Xuanzang went to Bamiyan via Gaz and described it as a sandy, hilly, and mountainous area with a bad climate, aggressive people, and robbers who killed passengers for their goods. Nevertheless, Gaz had ten Buddhist monasteries and 200 monks who followed *Sarvāstivāda* tradition.³⁷⁷ Later, in 675, Gaz was part of the territory of Skag the king of Guzgan.³⁷⁸ Apparently, it came under the authority of the Turks because a Bactrian document dating to 693 refers to the *ser* of the Turks who

³⁷¹ Rika Gyselen, “Spāhbed,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, www. iranicaonline.org/articles/spahbed (accessed on 2 September 2022).

³⁷² Under the Sasanians, Balkh had officials like the *shahrab*. See A. B. Nikitin, “The Sasanian Šahrab of Balkh,” *Ancient Civilizations* 1, no. 3 (1994): 365–68; For the Sasanian administration, see Rika Gyselen, *La géographie administrative de l’Empire sasanide: les témoignages épigraphiques en moyen-perse* (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 152; Daryaei, *Sasanian Persia*, 123–133.

³⁷³ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 32; Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 154.

³⁷⁴ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303.

³⁷⁵ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 61.

³⁷⁶ The Afghan government changed Gaz to Shulgara as part of its Afghanisation of the Balkh region. For more details, see Mukhtār Vafāyī, *Darra-yi Gaz-i Bastān: Nīm Nigāhī ba Vulusvālī Shulgara Vilāyat-i Balkh* (Kabul: Dustān, 1394/2015).

³⁷⁷ *SI-YU-KI*, 49.

³⁷⁸ Bactrian document no. R in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 92–93.

controlled Gaz. The *ser* was a title meaning ‘ruler’. It had a *tudun* or tax-collector and a treasurer. The military situation in Gaz remains unknown.

The above-mentioned reports show that Bactria proper had two areas of political control. The *yabghu* of Turks claimed overlordship in Balkh, while the *barmak* and the *spāhbed* were the actual local authorities. Probably, Khulm was part of Balkh’s political jurisdiction. Gaz was controlled by the kings of Guzgan but then came under the authority of the *ser* of Turks, who functioned under the suzerainty of the Turkic *qaghān*. The relation between the *barmak*, the *spāhbed*, the *ser* of Turks is unclear.

2.1.4 Southern Bactria

All mountainous areas from the north of Bamiyan up to Samangan were within the territory of the kingdom of Rob. Rob’s kingdom and political situation are now known thanks to a cache of Bactrian documents. This part analyses these documents to provide an image of Rob’s political structure and administration.

In the early seventh century, Rob was ruled by the Shaburan family, an old local elite family whose name appears in several Bactrian letters and legal documents. These documents show that this family controlled the region on and off from at least ca. 462 to 747.³⁷⁹ A Bactrian legal document dating to 407 of the Bactrian calendar, equal to 629 CE, produced in Samangan, mentions that Fruma-rizm Shaburan was the ruler of Rob. He had the Turkic title *tapaghliḡ iltābir* meaning ‘respected chief’, indicating that he recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Turks.³⁸⁰ The local rulers of Rob did not have a good relationship with their neighbours, the Hepthalites, who controlled Baghlan in eastern Bactria. Their hostility escalated in the early seventh century, pushing the king of Rob to help Qutayba b. Muslim invade eastern Bactria and kill the *nizak* in 709–710, discussed in chapter four (4.2.1).

The king of Rob was called the *Rob-khar* (ρωβοχαρο).³⁸¹ The *khar* was from a noble family and possessed properties such as irrigated land, cattle, markets, and servants.³⁸² He

³⁷⁹ Bactrian documents no. cl, xd, xr in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 88–89, 144–45, 166–67, and documents no. L, N, P, Q, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 58–65, 86–73, 84–87, 88–91, 126–135.

³⁸⁰ Bactrian document no. N in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 86–73.

³⁸¹ It is important to note that the *khar* derived from the Old Persian *xšāθriya*, meaning king (Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 231). The *shar* mentioned for Gharchistan is also dialectical variant of the same word. It is unknown when and how the title of *khar* was introduced in Rob, but it continued to the early Islamic period (Bactrian documents no. F, Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 38–41, 142–43).

³⁸² Bactrian documents no. J, L, P in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 48–55, 58–65, 84–87; Also, see document no. dc, jb, cl, ck in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 102–103, 126–127, 88–89, 88–89.

controlled his kingdom with the help of other local elite families. The courts of the *khar* were in Samangan from 629 to 671 and in Malr in the mountains of southern Rob from 517 to 712–713, indicating the existence of two capitals.³⁸³ For unknown reasons, the *khar* did not issue coins in his name but possibly imported coins minted in Balkh and other areas because they had better quality. The Bactrian documents from Rob often refer to fresh and good-quality Persian silver dirhams minted outside of Rob.³⁸⁴ The *khar* of Rob's authority was based on a sophisticated administrative system that is known only from the Bactrian documents. This detailed information is not available for any other parts of Bactria, and for its relevance to explain the layers of political powers that formed the political structure in Bactria, I shall discuss it here. It helps us to understand the way the rulers of Rob controlled their region.

The Bactrian documents show that the region of Rob had several administrative divisions. These are the “city” (*ḥarpo*), the “district” (*oḍaḡo*), the “citadel/fort” (*liḥo*), and the “borough” (*avḍaḡo*).³⁸⁵ In addition, “village” (*ouaḡo*), the smallest unit in the administrative division, should be mentioned.³⁸⁶ The origin of this administrative division is unknown, but it continued into the early Abbasid period, as Arabic documents from Rob followed it as well.³⁸⁷ Possibly, other parts of Bactria had the same administrative division because documents from Guzgan, Kadagstan, and Warnu refer to cities and districts the same way they were mentioned for Rob.

The *khar* of Rob controlled his kingdom through a set of offices located in the cities, districts, villages, and fortresses. The civil administration within the city or in the district was organised by the *framalar* (*φραμαλαρο*) or the steward. This title is known in Bactrian documents from ca. 350 and survived to the year 712 during the Umayyad period.³⁸⁸ The *framalar* worked under the authority of the *khar* and did not possess any military powers. Earlier documents dating from the fourth-century show that the *framalar* often made requests to the commander of the fortress (*liḥoβido*) if he needed their support to enforce regulations.³⁸⁹

³⁸³ Ryoichi Miyamoto suggested that Malr may have been added to the sphere of the authority of the *khar* of Rob before 629 (Ryoichi Miyamoto, “Étude préliminaire sur la géographie administrative du Tukhāristān,” *Studia Iranica* 48 (2019): 7–8).

³⁸⁴ For example, see Bactrian document no. P in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87.

³⁸⁵ Miyamoto, “Étude préliminaire,” 1.

³⁸⁶ Miyamoto does not include the village, but the Bactrian documents show it was part of the administrative divisions. See, for example, Bactrian document no. V in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 116–125.

³⁸⁷ This continuity is noticed by Miyamoto; Also see Arabic documents no. 11, 16, 17, 24 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 112–113, 122–23, 124–25, 138–39.

³⁸⁸ Bactrian document no. bb in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 54–55, and document no. U. in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 106–111.

³⁸⁹ Bactrian documents no. bb, bc in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 54–55, 56–58.

The *framalar* was informed about the situation in his area by lower administrators and used the post network (*φρητιγο*) for communications.³⁹⁰

Another administrative position was the *sharab* (*βαοραβο*). The term *sharab* is mentioned in a Bactrian document from 350 and remained an important office till 705, possibly continuing into the early Abbasid period. Bactrian documents show that the *sharab* was an elite person who owned properties and had relations with the ruler.³⁹¹ It is usually combined with the term “Pars” (*παρσαβαραβο*), meaning Persian, but it is unknown whether this was a linguistic or political identification.³⁹² The Bactrian *sharab* recalls the Middle Persian *shahrab* in the early Sasanian administrative system, which was a title given to the city governor³⁹³ or sometimes applied to the governor of a province.³⁹⁴ It is not certain, but the Bactrian *sharab* may have had an office in the city. The head of the borough was called the *andagbed* (*ανδαγοβιδο*). Possibly, he worked under the authority of the *framalar* of his district. He was recognised as a local authority and witnessed legal documents.³⁹⁵ Bactrian documents do not elaborate more on this.

A village (*ουαγο*) was the smallest unit in the Bactrian administration system.³⁹⁶ Linguistically, it may have derived from *wyaka*, and it is presented in Sogdian as *wy'k*, meaning place.³⁹⁷ The village authorities were fundamental as they connected the village to the rest of the system and collected taxes from their areas. In the middle of the fifth century, *sarlar* (*σαρλαρο*) referred to a person who had property, horses, donkeys, and servants in his household. In times of need, he carried missions with other *sarlar*.³⁹⁸ In Rob, a *sarlar* was responsible for the tax collection from his respected area and the delivery thereof to the *framalar* of his region. That means the *sarlar* was an authority in the village.

The kingdom of Rob had a *lezbed* (*λιζοβιδο*), meaning commander of the fortress who functioned under the authority of the *khar* of Rob. The *lezbed* could have played the role of today's local police. It is known only from the Bactrian documents dating to the fourth century.

³⁹⁰ Bactrian documents no. ca, cp, xc in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 68–69, 94–96, 142–43.

³⁹¹ Bactrian documents no. bg, xn, xr, xk in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 64–65, 158–59, 166–67, 154–55, and document ag in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 156–57.

³⁹² Bactrian documents no. ag, al in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 156–57, 164–65. For *parsig*, see Sims-Williams, *DBII*, 217.

³⁹³ Nikitin, “The Sasanian Šahrab of Balkh,” 376.

³⁹⁴ Touraj Daryaei, “The Effect of the Arab Muslim Conquest on the Administrative Division of Sasanian Persis/Fars,” *Iran* 41, no. 1 (2003): 198–99.

³⁹⁵ Bactrian document no. A in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 26–29.

³⁹⁶ Bactrian document no. V in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 116–125.

³⁹⁷ Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 213.

³⁹⁸ Bactrian document no. xe in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 146–47.

In this period, the *lezbed* possessed properties like cattle, and he came from a noble family. He had relations with the *khar*'s family. The *lezbed* controlled all movement coming in and going out with his armed guards and could arrest, detain suspects, and punish them.³⁹⁹ He supervised chiefs of the fortress guard (*λιζοβιδιγο*), whom each had ten guards (*λασοβιδιγο*) under their command.⁴⁰⁰ This decimal organisation may reflect the old Iranian military system existing in the Sasanian army.⁴⁰¹ Like other higher authorities, the commander was assisted by a scribe (*λαβιπο*) to deal with administrative issues. He was expected to be a just man (*μαρδο λαδιγηιο*). He heard complaints and decided to release, fine, or punish the culprits.⁴⁰² It is unknown if this local force continued to the Islamic period.

Rob had a *ṭarkhān* in the seventh century. He represented the authority of the Turkic *qaghān*. The position of the *ṭarkhān* could have been inherited from father to son.⁴⁰³ In 629, a Turkic military commander named Khul-Khan was the *inal ṭarkhān* in Rob. Possibly, *inal* means a trustworthy chief.⁴⁰⁴ Khul-Khan was the lord of a certain estate called Wilagaran in Rob, showing how he possessed personal properties in Rob.⁴⁰⁵ Whether the Turks had a military garrison in Rob is not known. In any case, the presence of the *ṭarkhān* means the *khar* of Rob recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān*. Bactrian documents from Rob show that the kingdom of Rob had its local rulers supported by a sophisticated administration system that was filled largely by local elites.

2.1.5 Eastern Bactria

It is difficult to provide a clear picture of the political areas in eastern Bactria in the early seventh century. Possibly, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Kadagstan were the main areas of political control. The Hephthalites and the Turkic *yabghu* of Tukharistan were the dominant political groups. After their empire collapsed, the Hephthalites retained some of their military power and their political autonomy under the Turkic overlordship in this region. The areas such as

³⁹⁹ Bactrian documents no. bb, bc in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 54–55, 56–58.

⁴⁰⁰ Bactrian document no. al in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 162–163.

⁴⁰¹ A. Sh. Shahbazi, “ARMY i. Pre-Islamic Iran,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/army-i> (accessed on 30 December 2022); Also, see Eduard Aloff, “Studies on Mounted Warfare in Asia I: Continuity and Change in Middle Eastern Warfare, c. ca. 550–1350- What Happened to the Horse Archer?” *War in History* 21 no. 4 (2014): 423–444.

⁴⁰² Bactrian document no. ba in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 52–54.

⁴⁰³ Bactrian documents no. P, Q in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91.

⁴⁰⁴ For discussion the meaning of *inal* see, <https://www.cgie.org.ir/fa/article/> (accessed on 8 June 2023).

⁴⁰⁵ Bactrian document no. N in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 68–73; Vondrovec mentions that *ṭarkhān* was higher in rank than the local ruler of Rob, but Bactrian documents do not show this (Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 2: 530).

Warlu (*οαρλο*) that probably correspond to Chinese *Huolu* were under the Hephthalites.⁴⁰⁶ The plain of Ghuri in present-day Baghlan is also said to have been a Hephthalite-dominated area.⁴⁰⁷ The Ghuri area is well irrigated and extensively cultivated and still shows the remains of strong defensive walls that once surrounded the cultivated areas from the south and the west. The Hephthalites also had settlements in Ishkashim in Badakhshan, and Nahrin to the southeast of Baghlan, and used the pastures in those areas. The Hephthalites controlled the main overland trade route from India to the north, which crossed their territory. They had many fortresses that allowed them to control all the main roads between Bamiyan and Tukharistan too. However, they did not have friendly relations with the *khar* of Rob, who controlled the trade route from Bamiyan to Balkh that crossed Samangan.⁴⁰⁸ Kunduz may have been controlled directly by the *yabghu* of Tukharistan. Tardushad, the *yabghu* of Tukharistan, resided in Tukharistan. He was the representative of Tong-yabghu, the *qaghān* of the Western Turks who stayed in the Suyab region far to the north in Sogdiana.⁴⁰⁹

The location of Kadagstan is unknown. However, it could have been an area to the east of Baghlan. Whether the rulers of Kadagstan were Hephthalites is not known. However, several Bactrian documents produced after 700 CE show that the Turks controlled this region.⁴¹⁰ The administration in Kadagstan is partially known from the Bactrian documents. In Kadagstan, the highest political figure was the *kadagbed* (*καδαγοβίδο*), meaning the “lord of the household, governor, steward”, which was the title of the ruler of Kadagstan.⁴¹¹ He recognised the authority of the *qaghān*. It is likely that he served the *yabghu* because the *yabghu* was in eastern Bactria and represented the *qaghān*. No coins with the title *kadagbed* have been found so far, suggesting that he did not issue coins just like the *khar* of Rob.

⁴⁰⁶ For further explanation on Warlu, see Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 242.

⁴⁰⁷ Shushin Kuwayama suggests that “Huolu” of the Chinese sources refers to the Ghuri in Baghlan. See Kuwayama, “The Hephthalites in Tukharistan,” 132. However, identifying *Huolu* with Ghuri is not plausible.

⁴⁰⁸ Grenet, “Regional Interaction,” 214–215.

⁴⁰⁹ Kuwayama, “The Hephthalites in Tukharistan,” 132; For more information on Suyab, see Gregory Semenov, “Suyāb,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/suyab> (accessed 25 July 2022).

⁴¹⁰ Bactrian documents no. T, X, Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103, 136–141, 142–43.

⁴¹¹ Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 197. Several Bactrian letters issued between 420–462 call Keraw Ormuzdan the *kadagbed* (Bactrian documents no. da, db, dc, dd, de in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 100–105). However, three Bactrian documents issued between 475 and 772 in Kadagstan call the *kadagbed* “king of people of Kadag” (*καδαγαβο φαιο*). Possibly, earlier, the *kadagbed* was the title of the governor, and then it became the title of the local king. See Bactrian documents no. ed, ja in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 114–15, 124–25, and document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103.

The *kadagbed* was the local ruler of Kadagstan. He had his court (*αλβαρο*) located in a fortress (*λιζο*),⁴¹² and possessed the authority to judge and issue legal decrees.⁴¹³ He controlled his area through an administration that is known mostly from the documents produced in the fifth century. Possibly, the form of this local administration continued because we hear the same administrative titles and procedures in later documents. In any case, the *kadagbed* was helped by *nabargbed* (*ναβαραγοβιδο*), a quartermaster.⁴¹⁴ The latter could issue letters and answer petitions on behalf of the *kadagbed*. Probably, his authority came from the *kadagbed*. Apart from the quartermaster and the scribes, the *kadagbed* had a record-keeper (*σιρδαρο*) for specific issues assumed to have been secret.⁴¹⁵ In ca. 430, another administrator called “the counsellor of the elderly” (*καβοονανδαρζοβιδο*) functioned in Kadagstan.⁴¹⁶ It is not sure if he was an old person with knowledge and experience, or if he represented an actual council consisting of several experienced people. A Bactrian protection letter produced in 549 of the Bactrian calendar corresponding to 772 CE in Kadagstan refers to the *kardar* (*καρδαρο*) translated by Sims-Williams as “foreman”, which is the same as the *kardar* operating in Guzgan.⁴¹⁷

In Kadagstan, the financial issues were organised by the *hamargar* (*νομαογαρο*), meaning accountant or treasurer (with variation *ahmarkar* *αυμαροκαρο*). The *hamargar* had his own seal and worked with the *kadagbed* and could be a witness to a legal or economic document. He had the authority to judge and decide about some issues, like witnessing an undertaking of peace or arbitrating a dispute. This position continued to function until 772 in Kadagstan.⁴¹⁸ The Bactrian *hamargar* recalls the Middle Persian *āmārgar* (accountant) in the Sasanian administration, who worked in provinces, cities and districts. He had his seal and kept financial counts.⁴¹⁹

Kadagstan had its local forces commanded by a *spalbed* (*σπαλοβιδο*). In 700, the *spalbed* of Kadagstan (*καδαγοστανο σπαλοβιδο*) was commissioned by the Queen of Kadagstan to supervise a deed of a gift given to a local priest.⁴²⁰ This shows the *spalbed* had a connection

⁴¹² Bactrian document no. F in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 38–41.

⁴¹³ Bactrian document no. ea in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 108–109, and document no. Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 142–43.

⁴¹⁴ Bactrian document no. ed in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 114–15.

⁴¹⁵ Bactrian documents no. dd, de in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 104–105.

⁴¹⁶ Bactrian documents no. xm in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 156–57.

⁴¹⁷ Bactrian document no. Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 142–43.

⁴¹⁸ Bactrian documents no. X, Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 136–141, 142–43.

⁴¹⁹ Daryaee, “The Effect of the Arab Muslim Conquest,” 201.

⁴²⁰ Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103.

to the royal family beyond his military work. In any case, the information about eastern Bactria shows that Kadagstan, Baghlan, and Kunduz were the main areas of political control. Baghlan was controlled by the Hephthalites, who recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān* who resided somewhere in Tukharistan. Kadagstan was controlled by a *kadagbed* who was loyal to the *qaghān*.

2.1.6 Northern Bactria

In northern Bactria, the main political areas were Chaghaniyan, Guftan (Kaftan), Shuman, Akhrun, Quwadhiyan, Khuttal, and Tirmidh. In the early seventh century, this region knew several local kings who recognised the suzerainty of the Turkic *qaghān*.⁴²¹ The king of Chaghaniyan, known as the *Chaghān-khudā*, resided in the upper part of Chaghaniyan.⁴²² The *Chaghān-khudā*'s personal name is not given in the Arabic narratives, but the wall painting at Afrasiab in Samarkand commissioned by Varkhuman, the king of Samarkand between 648–651, has a Sogdian inscription on the garment of the *Chaghān-khudā*'s ambassador.⁴²³ It says that Turantash, the king of Chaghaniyan (*cy'nkwxwβw*), sent the embassy with gifts to Varkhuman. Turantash is a Turkic name and could have been a Turk, but this (possible) Turkish king still had diplomatic relations with the king of Samarkand.⁴²⁴

Shuman and Akhrun had local kings in 629–30. These rulers were often at war with the *Chaghān-khudā*.⁴²⁵ This hostility played a crucial role in forcing the *Chaghān-khudā* to unite with the Umayyads and invite them to his region to overcome his local enemies, which is discussed in chapter four (4.3.1). Khuttal had a different local ruler who used the Turks to settle local conflicts.⁴²⁶ Guftan and Tirmidh had their own local kings. The king of Tirmidh was

⁴²¹ This is reflected in a letter written by the brother of *yabghu* of Tukharistan to the Chinese emperor discussed earlier.

⁴²² Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Rulers of Chaghāniyān in Early Islamic Times," *IRAN* XIX (1981): 1.

⁴²³ For detail on text and images of these wall-paintings, see C. Silvi Antonini, "The paintings in the palace of Afrasiab (Samarkand)," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 63 (1989): 109–144; Boris Marshak, "Le programme iconographique des peintures de la 'Salle des ambassadeurs' à Afrasiab (Samarkand)," *Arts Asiatiques* XLIX (1994): 5–20; Frantz Grenet, "What was the Afrasiab painting about?" in *Royal Naurūz in Samarkand. Proceedings of the Conference held in Venice on the Pre-Islamic painting of Afrasiab*, ed. M. Compagnon and É. de la Vaissière, supplément à *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 78 (2005), (Rome, 2006), 43–58.

⁴²⁴ Vladimir Livshits, "The Sogdian Wall Inscription on the site of Afrasiab," *Rivista degli studi orientali* (2006): 59–74.

⁴²⁵ Bosworth, "The Rulers of Chaghaniyan," 1.

⁴²⁶ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 72.

called the *Tirmidh-shāh*, whose title appears on coins struck in the Sasanian style.⁴²⁷ The identity of the kings of Tirmidh is unknown, but the Arabic narratives on the conquests of Tirmidh show that some local elites were against the king and helped the Arab Muslims to remove the king in the late seventh century. However, Tirmidh came under the *Tirmidh-shāh* shortly again, but it was finally incorporated into the Umayyad empire in the early eighth century.⁴²⁸ Not much is known about the political structure and administration in northern Bactria.

The documentary and literary sources discussed in this part show that many different principalities controlled seventh-century Bactria. The local rulers had different titles, belonged to noble families and managed their areas through administration filled by local elite families. They controlled local economic resources, maintained law and order, and some of them commanded local forces. In other words, they had local autonomy. However, none of these local rulers tried to dominate the whole of Bactria under their rule. Instead, they recognised the suzerainty of an overlord. Except for the *marzbān* of the Marw al-Rūd and possibly the king of Gharchistan, the rest of the Bactrian rulers recognised the suzerainty of the *qaghān* of the Western Turks who resided outside of Bactria. The *qaghān* was represented by the *yabghu* of Turks who resided in Tukharistan and functioned as the local overlord in Bactria. A *ṭarkhān* or military commander and a *tudun* or fiscal officer were sent to different areas in Bactria to receive the tributes paid by local rulers. Our sources do not show if the Turks built any military garrisons in Bactria. If there were any Turkic garrisons in Bactria, then they would resist the Arab Muslims, and we would hear about it from Arabic narratives. The absence of Turkic military garrisons indicates that the Turks did not impose direct control over Bactria. After entering Bactria, the Arab Muslims had to deal with a politically diverse region with many autonomous rulers who recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān* (Figures 17–18).

This above-mentioned local political autonomy and overlordship did not denote anarchy or political chaos. Local rulers operated according to systems of planning, decision-making, and strategic thinking. They just did so on their own terms and to serve their own needs. Local rulers' political priorities varied, and they also responded to external powers in accordance with these particular socio-political interests. The actions in response to external

⁴²⁷ See the coins of the *Tirmidh-shāh* with Bactrian inscription and *tamgha* <https://data1.geo.univie.ac.at/projects/dasantlitzdesfremden/coins/coin155%3Flanguage=en.html> (accessed on 2 November 2021).

⁴²⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 418–19; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, 8: 1148, 1159–1161, 1180.

powers could thus differ from one ruler to the next and from one region to the next. Chapters three (3.2.1) and four (4.1.3) will show that local rulers did not hesitate to unite with an external power to overcome their neighbouring rival. At the same time, local rulers sometimes formed a regional alliance to defend Bactria against an invading external power or asked an outsider to help reduce the influence of another external power. This political structure creates several questions. How did this political structure develop in Bactria? Was it an old or a new phenomenon? The next section will provide some answers.

2.2. Background of local autonomy in Bactria

The reports discussed so far reflect the existence of many different principalities in seventh-century Bactria. Local rulers controlled their local affairs, such as civil administration, fiscal and legal system, and commanded local forces. This situation has been noticed by Chinese Buddhist travellers who visited the region, and Muslim historians and geographers who narrated the conquests and their aftermath. However, only the Chinese attempted to explain the reasons behind it. In this part, I will discuss the Chinese observation by adding numismatic data and inscriptions to provide an explanation behind this form of the political structure in Bactria. Adopting a comparative approach, I present Sogdiana and Armenia as parallel examples that had a similar situation.

Xuanzang provides an explanation for the political autonomy and overlordship in Bactria. According to him, this form of political structure was caused by two reasons. The first reason was the absence ‘for many centuries’ of a strong king who was able to unify the region under his command.⁴²⁹ Xuanzang, operating on the basis of the Chinese imperial power structure of his time, assumed the premise of dynastic rule.⁴³⁰ In his model, once, many centuries ago, such a single ruler did control the area. The second reason was the geography of Bactria, which created natural boundaries between these petty states. What is important here is that Xuanzang noticed the relation between geography and politics in Bactria and recognised the regional political division. The geographical diversity of the Bactrian landscape and its impact on social organisation was the subject of the previous chapter. We learned that the Muslim geographers noticed how the natural landscape impacted human settlement patterns

⁴²⁹ *SI-U-KI*, 37–8.

⁴³⁰ For Chinese imperial power structure, see Ch’ien Mu, *Traditional Government in Imperial China: A critical Analysis*, trans. Chün-tu Hüeh and George O. Totten (Hongkong: The Chinese University, 1982), 37–44.

and political organisation in Bactria. Xuanzang asserts that this was a centuries-old issue in Bactria, but did not elaborate further.

The antiquity of this political tradition is reported by another Chinese historian. Sima Qian (d. 86 BCE), in his *Shi ji* (“Records of the Grand Scribe”), mentions that Zhang Qian (d. 114 BCE), an army general, was sent as part of a diplomatic mission by the emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) to the western regions to convince the chieftains of the *Yuezhi* people, who were settled in Bactria, to help the emperor against the *Xiongnu* who threatened the Han empire.⁴³¹ In his mission, Zhang Qian found out that a significant political power did not control *Daxia*, but that many minor local chiefs ruled in this area.⁴³² *Daxia* was the Chinese name for Bactria.⁴³³ Sima Qian’s report almost echoes the same situation reported by Xuanzang. The *Yuezhi* were a confederation consisting of five groups, each ruled by a *yabghu*. The *yabghu* of Guishuang attacked the rest of the four and established the Kushan empire (first century BCE–third century CE).⁴³⁴ However, the rise of the Kushan did not remove the *Yuezhi* confederation. The Kushan coinage and their inscriptions refer to Kushan rulers as the *shāhān shāh* (*ṣaovavo ṣao*) or ‘king of kings’⁴³⁵ indicating that the Kushan emperor was the overlord to other kings in their empire. Bactria was the core part of the Kushan empire as the Kushan king of kings built his dynastic temples in this region.

This form of political rule was possibly already in place before the Kushan period. We can see it in a Greek inscription from Kuliab in northern Bactria in which Euthydemus (c. 230–200 BCE) is called “the greatest of all kings” (πάντων μέγιστον Εὐθύδημον).⁴³⁶ This title does

⁴³¹ For the *Xiongnu* empire, see Ursula Brosseder, “The Xiongnu Empire,” in *Handbook of Ancient Afro-Eurasian Economics*, ed. Sitta von Reden (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019), 193–203.

⁴³² Kuwayama, “The Hephthalites in Tokharistan,” 126; Also, see Ma Yong, “Zhang Qian,” *Zhongguo da baike quanshu, Zhongguo lishi* (Beijing/Shanghai: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1992), 3: 1504. [馬雍, 張, 中國大百科全書, 中國歷史].

⁴³³ Huang Jing, “Daxia,” *Zhongguo da baike quanshu, Waiguo lishi* (Beijing/Shanghai: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1992), 1: 186. [黃靖, 大夏, 中國大百科全書, 外國歷史]. Shushin Kuwayama has argued that the absence of a unified political power in Bactria is also reflected in *Han Shu* (Kuwayama, “The Hephthalites in Tokharistan,” 126).

⁴³⁴ Warwick Ball et al., “From the Kushans to the Shahis,” in *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period*, ed. Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond, rev. ed., ed. W. Ball (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 345–469; The early history for the Kushans is reflected in Chinese sources. See Yu Taishan, “The Origin of the Kushans,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 212 (2011): 1–22; Also, see Joe Cribb, “Rediscovering the Kushans,” in *From Persepolis to the Punjab—Exploring Ancient Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan*, ed. Elizabeth Errington and Vesta S. Curtis (London: British Museum Press, 2007), 179–210.

⁴³⁵ Sims-Williams and Cribb. “A New Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” 80; Razieh Taasob, “Language and Legend in Early Kushan Coinage: Progression and Transformation,” *Dabir* 5 (2018): 71–84; The king of kings political model was already known in Iran from the Achaemenid period as it is attested in the Behistun Inscription.

⁴³⁶ Shane Wallace, “Greek Culture in Afghanistan and India: Old Evidence and New Discoveries,” *Greek and Rome* 63. no. 2 (2016): 211–213.

not compare him to kings outside the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom, which covered both parts of the Amu Darya and expanded to Gandhara but reflects him as *primus inter pares* within the region.⁴³⁷ The Graeco-Bactrian coinage shows that several rulers often coexisted and controlled the kingdom while one of them claimed to be the king of kings (*ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ*).⁴³⁸ The Greek inscription and coinage show that political autonomy and overlordship were old phenomena in the region.⁴³⁹

If we combine the Greek, Bactrian, and Chinese evidence, it becomes clear that Bactria had not been a politically unified region under one single command, but always housed multiple petty states whose local rulers recognised the overlordship of an overlord. The question is, what can explain this situation? Among our sources, only Xuanzang argued that this situation was the result of the absence of a great king; this allowed local rulers to control their areas independently. In other words, no great king imposed direct control on local rulers. He adds that geography created natural boundaries between these local rulers and helped them to continue their rule. Xuanzang thus suggests that geography and politics caused this situation. His argument is plausible.

The geography of Bactria, as Xuanzang has noticed, is an important element. As discussed extensively in the previous chapter (1.1.2), the physiography of Bactria, which is part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone, created a diverse landscape. This shatter zone and the resulting diversity in geography, population, and cultural tradition would not allow one single political group to control all political and economic issues. The diverse landscape helped the local rulers to maintain autonomy in their areas.

The absence of a great king, reported by Sima Qian and Xuanzang, had roots in the political situation. Bactria was an interlocutor space between India, China, Iran, and the steppes. Likewise, it was an important part of a great trade network that connected all these regions. The political and military expansions of greater political powers, such as the

⁴³⁷ A. K. Narain, *Indo Greek* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1957); Joe Cribb, “The Greek Kingdom of Bactria, its Coinage and its Collapse,” *Afghanistan, ancien carrefour entre l’est et l’ouest*, 2005, available online, www.academia.edu (accessed on 7 September 2022).

⁴³⁸ Taasob, “Language and Legend in Early Kushan Coinage,” 73; Most probably, Bactria had many minor states in this period because we find a reflection of such a political situation in the work of the Greek geographer Strabo, who reproduced parts of *The Parthia* (*Παρθικά*), written by Apollodorus of Artemia. He describes Bactria as *ἐγκρατίδαν γοῶν πόλεις χιλίας* “land of a thousand cities” (Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1928; repr., 1961), 7: 4–5).

⁴³⁹ See Lauren Morris, “Central Asian Empires,” in *Handbook of Ancient Afro-Eurasian Economics*, ed. Sitta von Reden (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019), 53–93.

Sasanians, the Chionites, the Hephthalites, and the Western Turks (and later the Tibetans and, to some extent, the Chinese), would have effects on Bactria. All these powers tried to control this region, and that turned the region into a contested military frontier region. However, controlling a frontier region that had difficult geography and diverse populations was not easy. It required the cooperation of local rulers to maintain the authority of the bigger political powers. At the same time, the local rulers could benefit from the bigger political powers by joining them. Hence, the political rivalries between bigger powers and their need for local allies created a space for the local rulers to retain their autonomy but recognise the suzerainty of the overlords outside of Bactria.

The mixture of the political situation and geographical conditions developed this form of rule, with regional political autonomy combined with overlordship. No great political power disrupted this political structure to impose its direct control over Bactria. We will see in chapter four (4.2.2) that it was the Umayyads who broke this system to keep Bactria under their direct control. The importance of this realisation cannot be underestimated. Acknowledging this helps us understand Bactria's interaction with Arab Muslims. It also emphasises the unique experience of Bactria's incorporation into the Islamic empire, the process of the conquests, and the naturalisation of Islamic rule, which are the topics of the next chapters.

Political autonomy and overlordship were not confined to Bactria. Apparently, regions with a similar situation to Bactria had the same conditions. Sogdiana and Armenia in the seventh and eighth centuries confirm this idea. These parallel examples also support the explanation behind this situation in Bactria provided earlier. I will briefly discuss these two regions without entering into much detail, as a fuller account is beyond the aim of this dissertation.

Sogdiana was a vast region located to the north of the Amu Darya along the Zarafshan River. The Bukhara region, with an arid zone climate, and the Samarkand region, with a semi-arid zone climate, formed Sogdiana. Like Bactria, Sogdiana's geography and climates provided ideal conditions for sedentary and pastoral life. It was an important part of the trade network between India, China, and Iran. Like Bactria, Sogdiana was part of the frontier region between various empires. In terms of political structure, Sogdiana was politically divided. La Vaissière has utilised the term "fragmentation territoriale" for Sogdiana, where several city-states operated independently. However, these city-states recognised the suzerainty of the *qaghān* of

the Western Turks.⁴⁴⁰ Local Sogdian rulers had different titles like *khuv* (*xwβw*), *afshun* (*'pš'wn*) and *ikhshid* (*'xšyδ*). These local rulers commanded their troops called *chakar* in Sogdian and paid by taxes collected from their regions. However, none of these local rulers could unify Sogdiana under one rule. The *khuv* or the local noble formed the foundation of Sogdian nobility, and the kings of Sogdiana, particularly its eastern parts, came from this background.⁴⁴¹ In other words, the Sogdian king was the local overlord of a group of *khuv*, but himself recognised the suzerainty of the *qaghān*. Local Sogdian elites were, however, not always loyal to their king, as they did not hesitate to revolt against him.⁴⁴² That means overlordship was not permanent and peaceful.

Armenia had a similar situation. It was part of Transcaucasia and contained mountain ranges and rich fertile plains. Like Bactria and Sogdiana, the Armenian landscape allowed both sedentary and pastoral life and attracted nomadic warbands from the northern steppe to cross Armenia for Anatolia or Iranian regions. In late antique Armenia, the *nakharar*(s) or local princes, were well established, controlled their areas and used their local resources.⁴⁴³ Though they had their castles and commanded local forces, none of them could alone unify the region under its control. The Armenian nobilities were mostly Christians but were part of the Iranian world and had to deal with both Roman and Iranian influences. The Armenian nobility's priority was to maintain their local socio-political power in their areas, and they were resistant to higher authority from within and without who would impose direct control over them.⁴⁴⁴

In the seventh century, Armenia was a frontier region between the Romans and Sasanian Iran. The Sasanians and the Romans tried to control the region, and that forced the Armenian kings to somehow operate between them, cooperating with one power against another, or serving both powers at the same time.⁴⁴⁵ Local Armenian kings recognised the overlordship of the Sasanian or Roman emperors. Controlling Armenia was vital for the Sasanians to guard the mainland against the nomadic invasions coming from the region beyond Transcaucasia. To keep the region under control, both the Sasanians and the Romans required the cooperation of

⁴⁴⁰ La Vaissière's proposed term "fragmentation territoriale" is similar to the term "local political autonomy" I suggest for Bactria.

⁴⁴¹ Étienne de la Vaissière, *Samarcande et Samarra : Élités d'Asie Centrale dans l'Empire Abbasside* (Paris : Association pour l'avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2007), 23–36, 68–75.

⁴⁴² Gibb, *The Arab Conquests*, 8–9.

⁴⁴³ For list of local rulers, see *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*, translated with notes, R. W. Thomson, Historical commentary, James Howard-Johnston, assistance from Tim Greenwood, Part I. Translation and Notes (Liverpool University Press, 1999), 138.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Armenian History*, xiv.

⁴⁴⁵ *The Armenian History*, xi–xiii.

the local Armenian kings and that prevented these bigger powers from imposing direct control over Armenia, which allowed local kings to retain their position. The Armenian local king established good relations with the Sasanian king of kings and often served him by providing his own military forces to fight for the Sasanians. For instance, their soldiers fought against the Hephthalites on behalf of the Sasanian king in 615. The Armenian general Sambat Bagratuni (d. 616–617), who was appointed over Khurasan by the Sasanian king, marched towards Bactria with other *nakharar*(s) and their forces, defeated the Hephthalites and captured Balkh.⁴⁴⁶ Like Bactria and Sogdiana, the Arab Muslims faced many local Armenian kings and had to incorporate them into the Islamic empire. It was a process which was slow and difficult, like Bactria and Sogdiana.⁴⁴⁷

The Chinese reports about Bactria and the parallel examples from Sogdiana and Armenia explain the reasons behind local political autonomy and overlordship. They show that a frontier region with diverse geography and populations could experience this situation. Local rulers would retain their civil and fiscal administration, legal system, and command over their local forces. Their overlords did not impose direct rule over these regions, and that helped local rulers to maintain their power. The existence of overlords in this situation raises several questions. What was the nature of overlordship? What mechanisms implemented it? How did the local rulers and their overlords interact? The next part provides some answers.

2.3. Overlordship in Bactria

This part discusses overlordship and its mechanisms of implementation in Bactria. It first provides definitions and components of overlordship. Subsequently, it describes how

⁴⁴⁶ *The Armenian History*, 44–46.

⁴⁴⁷ The Arab Muslim conquests of Armenia have not received much attention, and a proper comparison between Transcaucasia and the eastern Iranian regions needs to wait for future research. However, this dissertation may help historians of late antique Transcaucasia to find a similar example for a comparative study. I am grateful to Alison Vacca for sharing the draft of her article on Armenia and informing me about the relevant sources. Apart from Sebeos and other local sources, there are a few studies on the process of the conquests. See, for instance, H. Manandyan, “Led invasions arabes en Arménie (notes chronologiques),” *Byzantion* 18 (1948): 163–195; N. F. Posner, “Whence the Muslim conquests of northern Mesopotamia?,” in *A Way prepared: Essays on Islamic Culture in honor of Richard Bayly Winder*, ed. Farhad Kazemi and R. D. McChesney (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 27–52; Alison Vacca, *Non-Muslim provinces under early Islam: Islamic rule and Iranian Identity in Armenia and Caucasia Albania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Alison Vacca, *Buldān al-Rān: the many definitions of Caucasian Albania in the early Abbasid period*, in *From Albania to Arrān: the East Caucasia between Ancient and Islamic World (ca. 330BCE–1000 CE)*, ed. Robert Hoyland (Gorgias Press, 2020), 37–84. Alison Vacca, “The Armenian Sources of al-Baladhuri’s *Kitāb Futuh al-buldan*: A Study of the Islamic Incursions into Armenia, Georgia and Albania (22–24 AH/642–645CE),” in *Islam on the Margins: Studies in Memory of Michael Bonner*, ed. Robert Haug and Steven Judd (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 21).

overlordship worked in Bactria. Since we considered the model of political autonomy and overlordship to have been a feature of Bactria's political organisation, which itself came from its geographical condition and subsequent social organisation, we will use examples from earlier periods, namely from the Kushans, Sasanians, Hephthalites, and Western Turks. This part includes Bactrian documents and Chinese, Arabic, and Persian reports to show that this model of rule continued in Bactria despite changing overlords throughout its history, mainly because Bactria remained a frontier region between different political powers.

2.3.1 Overlordship: definition and components

Overlordship refers to a situation in which some kings accept the authority of another king.⁴⁴⁸ That authority was accepted through peaceful submission or was imposed by military conquest. Historically, overlordship was used as an effective mechanism to unify various regions under one political power. It reduced the injury to the local kings, whom the overlord would benefit from their cooperation.⁴⁴⁹ Concurrently, the local lords could profit from being part of a larger political organisation. The idea and practice of overlordship in different temporal and spatial contexts is a known subject among historians.⁴⁵⁰ The shared ancient Iranian, Turkic, and medieval European concepts of overlordship are more relevant to our discussion. They provide a helpful framework for understanding overlordship and recognise its components in Bactria.

The idea of overlordship has been studied within the context of Iranian kingship.⁴⁵¹ In this framework, the king of kings (*shāhān shāh*) was the supreme authority in the political

⁴⁴⁸ For detail, see "Overlord," Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/overlord> (accessed on 27 Jun 2023).

⁴⁴⁹ See Azar Gat, "Rural Petty-State and Overlordship. Missing Links in the Evolution of the Early State," *Anthropos*, Bd. 98, H. 1. (2003): 127–142.

⁴⁵⁰ For instance, see Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, ed. *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁴⁵¹ For the Iranian kingship, see Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Sacral Kingship in Sasanian Iran," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 2 (1988): 35–52; Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley: University of California, 2009); Scott Mcdonough, "The Legs of the Throne: Kings, Elites, and Subjects in Sasanian Iran," *The Roman Empire in Context: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (2011): 290–321; Touraj Daryaei, "Sasanian Kingship, empire and Glory: Aspects of Iranian Imperium," in *Ranj-o-Ganj: Papers in Honour of Professor Z. Zarshenas*, ed. V. Naddaf, F. Ghoshtasp and M. Shokri-Foumeshi (Tehran: Institute for Humanities, 2013), 11–22; Dariush Borbor, "The Role of the King of Kings: An Interpretation in Historiography," in *In Quest of Identity: Studies on the Persianate World*, ed. Mirosław Michalak and Magdalena Rodziejewicz (Warsaw: Dialog, 2015), 13–39; Touraj Daryaei, ed., *The King of Seven Climates: A History of the Ancient Iranian World 3000 BCE–651 CE* (California: UCI Jordan Centre for Persian Studies, 2017); Geo Widengren, "The Sacred Kingship of Iran," in *The Sacral Kingship*, ed. Carl-Martin Edsman (Leiden: Brill, E-Book, 2018), 242–257. The Iranian concept of sacred kingship is like the Chinese divine kingship. For details, see Michel Putt, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nichole Brisch (Chicago: The

structure. The king of kings' divine glory (*farr*), lineage, and connection to specific deities shown on their coins, inscriptions and rock reliefs distinguished him from the subordinate kings. The king of kings has been viewed as the sacred being, the performer of justice, and the protector of the empire. Local kings who came from local elite families acknowledged his overlordship by seeing themselves as servants (*bandag*) of the king of kings, paying homage, presenting gifts and tributes, accompanying him in his hunting and drinking parties, and providing him with military aid. While, in theory, the king of kings was considered the highest authority in the Iranian empire, he did not interfere with local kings' internal issues. Hence, the local kings controlled their areas.

The nomadic empires like the Turks also had the concept of overlordship. For instance, the Western Turk empire had several layers of power. The *qaghān* (also called *yabghu-qaghān*) was the supreme ruler in the power structure. The *shad* and *tegin*, who were the Turkic princes, and other officials called *iltābir*, *tudun*, *tutuq*, and *tarqan* were under the authority of the *qaghān*.⁴⁵² The Western Turks were a nomadic confederation, often imposing indirect control on conquered regions. The *qaghān* sent his representatives to secure tributes from local rulers who recognised his suzerainty. In some cases, the *qaghān* bestowed Turkic titles to the local rulers and sent them royal brides to incorporate them within the Turkic confederation.⁴⁵³ Like the Iranian cases, the *qaghān* did not interfere in local rulers' internal affairs. That allowed the local rulers to control their areas. We will see that Bactria was part of the Iranian and Western Turkic empires in different periods, and thus experienced both Iranian and Turkic overlordship.

The medieval European overlordship should be understood within the European context. However, it reflects some similarities to the Iranian overlordship that help us recognise different types of overlordship.⁴⁵⁴ In the medieval European context, the pope was the overlord to many local kings. The relations between the kings and the pope have been defined with the

Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 199–212, and Andrew Eisenberg, *Kingship in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

⁴⁵² For the Turkic political structure, see Gaybullā Babayarov, "The Imperial Titles on the Coins of the Western Turkic Qaghanate," in *History of Central Asia in Modern Medieval Studies: In Memoriam of Professor Roziya Mukhinova* (Tashkent: Yangi Nashir, 2013), 330–348.

⁴⁵³ See Skaff, "Western Turk Rule of Turkestan's Oases," 364–72.

⁴⁵⁴ See, for instance, Benedict Wiedemann, "Papal Overlordship and *Protectio* of the King, c. 1000–1300" (PhD diss., UCL, 2007); Robin Frame, "Overlordship and Reaction, c. 1200–c. 1450 (2009)," in *The North Atlantic Frontier of Medieval Europe: Vikings and Celts*, ed. James Muldoon (London: Routledge, 2009), 103–122; Alice Taylor, *The Shape of the State in Medieval Scotland 1124–1290* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Rebecca Thomas, "Three Welsh kings and Rome: royal pilgrimage, overlordship, and Anglo-Welsh relations in the early Middle Ages," *Early Medieval Europe* 28, no. 4 (2020): 560–591; Benedict Wiedemann, *Papal Overlordship and European Princes, 1000–1270* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

terms *feundum* and *vassalus*. The local kings offered their kingdoms to the pope and became his vassals (feudal-lordship), and that allowed the pope to gain symbolic rights over their kingdoms. Nevertheless, the pope could not change anything in those regions. Similarly, if the local kings put themselves under the protection of the pope (protection-lordship), the pope still had no right to interfere in their local affairs or change the local kings. Theoretically, the pope looked like the supreme authority, but in practice, the local kings were the authority in their areas. In both cases, the local kings viewed the pope as a sacred figure (Christ's representative) and a judge, acknowledged the pope's superiority, paid homage, presented gifts and tributes, and provided him with military aid in case of need. Local kings under the pope's protection could legitimise their rule by being loyal to the pope and using the pope's power to condemn or remove their internal rivals. Hence, overlordship benefitted both local kings and the pope.⁴⁵⁵

The above-mentioned cases show that overlordship was common in sedentary (Sasanian, medieval European) and nomadic (Western Turks) political structures. The *shāhān shāh*, the *qaghān*, and the pope were the supreme authority. The local kings submitted to them and came under their protection. The local kings recognised the overlord's suzerainty by performing rituals like paying homage and presenting gifts and tributes. They also rendered services like providing military aid to the overlord. Though the overlord was the supreme authority, he did not impose direct control over local rulers' areas. Similarly, he did not change local kings or interfere in local rulers' internal issues. This form of overlordship was practised in Bactria before the Arab Muslims conquered the region and introduced direct control, which was fundamentally different. The Arab Muslim control is discussed in chapter five (5.1, 5.2). We should know how overlordship was practised in Bactria to comprehend this difference.

2.3.2 Rituals of overlordship

Bactrian local rulers acknowledged their overlords by performing certain rituals and rendering services. The ritual included recognising the overlord in administrative letters and legal documents produced in their areas, visiting the overlord, attending his drinking party, and offering money as a mark of honour, prostrating before him, and kissing his hand. Rendering services included providing military aid. Each of these methods requires some explanation.

Bactrian local rulers recognised the suzerainty of their overlords in words. Acknowledging the overlord is often expressed in specific formulas regularly mentioned in the

⁴⁵⁵ This summary comes from Wiedemann, "Papal Overlordship and *Protectio* of the King".

opening part of administrative letters and legal documents produced in Bactria. A few Bactrian letters and legal documents produced during the Sasanians, the Hephthalites, and Western Turks' domination in Bactria clarify this point.

A letter issued by Kerdir-Wararan, the ruler of Rob, possibly in 458, elucidates his relations with the Sasanian king of kings Hormizd III (r. 457–459). In this letter, Hormizd is (spelt as Ohrmuzd in the document) praised with the formula “glorious through Ohrmuzd” (*ωρομοζδοφαραχο*).⁴⁵⁶ However, once Hormizd was defeated by his brother Peroz (r. 459–485) in the war of succession, the local kings of Bactria recognised Peroz as their new overlord. In a letter to some officials issued in 239 of the Bactrian calendar (461–62 CE), Meyam, the king of Kadagstan, referred to himself as “the king of the people of Kadag, the governor of the famous and prosperous king of the kings Peroz.”⁴⁵⁷ In this letter, Meyam is called king (*βαιο*), but he recognised Peroz as the king of kings (*βανανοβαιο*). Similarly, in 465, Kerdir-Warhran, the *hasht-walg* (*αβτοοαλγο*) of Rob, recognised the overlordship of Peroz in his letter by adding the formula “true to Peroz” (*παρωζοραβτο*), showing his loyalty to the Sasanian king.⁴⁵⁸ Kerdir-Warhran was not the king of Rob, but the *hasht-walg*, an official title known from the Kushan inscription of Rabatak.⁴⁵⁹ These letters show that the local king and other high officials recognised the Sasanian emperor in their letters.

The regime change did not stop recognising the overlords in official documents. Bactrian letters used the same formula to acknowledge the overlordship of the Hephthalites after they defeated Peroz and killed him in 485. In the same year, Kilman, who succeeded Meyam as the king of Kadagstan, recognised Hephthalite overlordship. In his letter, Kilman is praised as “the king of the people of Kadag, the governor of the famous (and) prosperous *yabghu* of Hephthalites” (*ναμοοινδαδο αβζοδο ιηβαδαλο ιαβγο, καδαγοβιδο, καδαγανο βαιο*).⁴⁶⁰ Kilman was a local king (*καδαγανο βαιο*), but he was called the governor of the Hephthalite *yabghu*. In the same year, Sart-Khwadewbandan, the ruler of Rob, recognised the overlordship of the Hephthalite *yabghu* in his letter by adding the formula “the glorious *yabghu* of Hephtal” (*φαραχο ηβοδαλο ιαβγο*).⁴⁶¹ He is called the ruler of Rob and the scribe of the Hephthalite lords

⁴⁵⁶ Bactrian document no. cl in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 88–90; The same formula for Hormizd is mentioned in another document. See Bactrian document no. cm in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 90–91.

⁴⁵⁷ Bactrian document no. ea in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 108–109.

⁴⁵⁸ Bactrian document no. ck in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 88–89.

⁴⁵⁹ Nicholas Sims-Williams, “The Bactrian Inscription of Rabatak: A New Reading,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, New Series 18 (2004): 58.

⁴⁶⁰ Bactrian document no. ja in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 124–125.

⁴⁶¹ Bactrian document no. jb in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 126–127.

(*ηβοδαλοχοροαγγο λαβιρο*). Possibly, he served the *yabghu* as a personal scribe, which was an honour to be mentioned in his letters.

Once the Hephthalites were defeated by the Sasanians and the Western Turks, Bactrian local rulers acknowledged the *qaghān*'s overlordship. At least two legal documents reflect this situation. The first is a contract of undertaking produced in Samangan in 407 of the Bactrian calendar, corresponding to 629 CE. It shows the relation between Fruma-rizm Shaburan, the ruler of Rob and the *qaghān*. The *qaghān* is praised with the formula "prosperous in glory" (*ιαβζοδοοφαρανο χαγανο*).⁴⁶² In the second legal document dating to 669, the *qaghān* is again praised with the formula "prosperous in glory."⁴⁶³ These letters show that this praising formula remained the same.

Bactrian rulers viewed the king of kings as the ultimate judge. They visited the overlord to solve their problems in case of a quarrel. For example, a Bactrian letter, possibly written in 350 in the Rob region, explains that two hostile local lords had to visit the court of Ohrmizd (perhaps the Kushano-Sasanian king) for judgment. This required taking an oath that they would not harm each other or destroy their cities.⁴⁶⁴ The negotiation between these local lords did not solve the problem, and only the overlord's decree could be the solution to end their quarrel.

Recognising the overlord required visiting him, paying homage, and presenting gifts. Some evidence from the Kushan, Hephthalite and early Islamic periods shows its continuation despite the regime changes. The first evidence is a Bactrian inscription on a silver dish that mentions that Nukunzuk visited Kanishka -after the king's return from his campaign in north India- and presented him with the silver dish.⁴⁶⁵ The second one is a Bactrian document produced possibly between 465–484 in Kadagstan when the Sasanians and the Hephthalites contested the region. It is a list of expenditures belonging to an elite person with the authority to hand over a city. This person visited a high authority in a drinking session and paid eight dinars as an "offering and mark of honour" (*ναμωσογανο οδο πιδοφαρο*).⁴⁶⁶ The identity of this high authority is not clear. It could have been a Sasanian or a Hephthalite king. Bactrian rulers continued this tradition after the Arab Muslims arrived. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that local elites of

⁴⁶² Bactrian document no. N in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 68–73.

⁴⁶³ Bactrian document no. P in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87.

⁴⁶⁴ Bactrian document no. xp in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 162–163.

⁴⁶⁵ Sims-Williams, "A new Bactrian inscription from the time of Kanishka," 257.

⁴⁶⁶ Bactrian document no. al in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 164–165.

Balkh and the king of Chaghaniyan visited the Arab Muslims and recognised their overlordship by paying homage and giving them gifts and tributes.⁴⁶⁷

Prostration before the overlord and kissing his hand is reported by al-Ṭabarī. In his narrative related to Qutayba b. Muslim's conflict with the *nizak tarkhān* in 91/710, al-Ṭabarī mentions that the *nizak* and some other rulers called *al-subl* and *al-shud* (a corrupted form of Turkic title *shad* and *sülü*) visited the *yabghu* of Tukharistan. While Qutayba was witnessing, *al-shud* called himself the servant of the *yabghu* ('*abduhū*'), prostrated and kissed his hand. Then, he kissed the hand of *al-subl*. The *nizak* kissed the hand of *al-shud*. This report shows that the *yabghu* was the overlord, and prostration was performed explicitly for him.⁴⁶⁸ That was already known in Bactria because a few Bactrian documents show that prostration (*σapro vaμωσο*) before the king was common in Bactria.⁴⁶⁹ Bactrian rulers continued this tradition later for their Umayyad overlord. Again, it is al-Ṭabarī who explains that local rulers from Bactria and Herat prostrated before Asad al-Qasrī (d. 120/738), the Umayyad governor of Khurasan and praised him as their overlord.⁴⁷⁰ Apart from this ritual, Bactrian kings rendered service to the overlord, which is the subject of the next section.

2.3.3 Rendering service to overlord

Collecting and delivering tributes to the overlord's representative was a type of service (*ασπασο*). At least three Bactrian documents mention that taxes (*τωγο*) were collected for the Hephthalite *yabghu* and then later for the Turkic *qaghān*.⁴⁷¹ These could have been poll taxes collected in cash because some households sold their land to provide money. Apparently, local authorities collected taxes and delivered them to the overlords' representatives. On some occasions, the local rulers also sent their representatives with tributes to the court of the overlord. In his description of the Hephthalites in eastern Bactria, the Chinese traveller Sungyun (fl. sixth century) mentions that the Hephthalite king received tribute from more than forty

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2903; Also, see al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, 9: 358.

⁴⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1224; Interestingly, there is evidence from the *yabghu*'s side that reflects his position in this system. It is the Chinese translation of a letter possibly written in 718 by the younger brother of the *yabghu* of Tukharistan to the Chinese emperor. According to the letter, Bactria had different local rulers who recognised the authority of the *yabghu*. The letter adds that the *yabghu*, his father and grandfather were the overlords in the region. The *yabghu* himself recognised the suzerainty of the Chinese emperor. The *yabghu* sent gifts to the emperor, and in return, the emperor honoured the *yabghu* with a special decree to legitimise his rule over Bactria. The emperor also gave a high title to the *yabghu*'s brother to show his kindness to him (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*, 200–201).

⁴⁶⁹ Bactrian documents no. bg, jb, jh in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 64–65, 126–27, 136–37.

⁴⁷⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1636–38.

⁴⁷¹ Bactrian documents no. I, J, Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 44–47, 48–55, 74–79.

countries, from Khotan to Sasanian Iran. Sung-yun adds that the representatives of these regions brought tributes and visited the Hephthalite king, whose throne was on a large carpet. Possibly, they prostrated before the king after their names and titles were announced.⁴⁷²

This system of local autonomous rulers in relation to overlords also existed at a higher political level.⁴⁷³ The regional overlords, such as the Kushano-Sasanian rulers and the Hephthalites before their rise to power, were themselves in a dependency relationship with greater powers such as the Sasanians. Features of this relationship would have echoed the relation between local Bactrian rulers and their regional overlords as well. Supporting the overlords in their wars was part of the services expected from the overlord's subjected allies. The Kushano-Sasanian king Peroz and, later, the Chionite king Grumbates accompanied the Sasanian emperors in their war against the Romans. Similarly, the Hephthalites first recognised the overlordship of the Sasanian king Peroz and helped him in his war of succession. The Hephthalites and other local kings in the east had light cavalries that were very mobile on the battlefield and helped the Sasanian heavy cavalries in the war against the Romans.⁴⁷⁴ However, the Hephthalites stopped paying service to the Sasanians after they defeated and killed Peroz. With their victory, Bactrian local kings shifted their sides and acknowledged the Hephthalite's overlordship. That means overlordship was not permanent but depended on the overlord's actual military power.

The ritual of overlordship described so far invites an important question. How did the overlords treat the Bactrian local rulers? That is not well known. However, as pointed out, the *qaghān* sent officials like the *ṭarkhān* and *tudun* to ensure the payment of tributes. The *qaghān* bestowed Turkic titles like *tapaghliḡh iltābir* to local rulers.⁴⁷⁵ This means that the *qaghān* treated Bactrian rulers like tribal chieftains incorporating them into the Turkic political structure. Another piece of information comes from the letter of the *yabghu*'s brother to the Chinese emperor mentioned earlier. It says that the emperor was kind to the *yabghu* and sent him a decree to legitimise his rule in Bactria. The emperor bestowed a Chinese title to the

⁴⁷² *SI-UY-KI*, xc–xcii.

⁴⁷³ The Sasanian rock relief at Rag-i Bibi in Baghlan shows a Kushan local king standing before the horse of his overlord the Sasanian king Shapur I (r. 240–270). Possibly, he offers an arrow to the king (personal observation, September 2006); Also, see Frantz Grenet, Jonathan Lee, Philippe Martines and François Ory, “The Sasanian relief at Rag-i Bibi (Northern Afghanistan),” in *After Alexander Central Asia before Islam*, ed. Joe Cribb and Georgina Herrmann (The British Academy, Oxford University Press, 2007), 243–256.

⁴⁷⁴ Shahbazi, “Army,”

⁴⁷⁵ Inaba has argued that *iltābir* was the Turkic title given to the Turkic tribal leaders (Inaba, “The Identity of the Turkish Rulers,” 1–19).

yabghu's brother symbolising the incorporation of the *yabghu*'s brother into the imperial structure.⁴⁷⁶

The examples from the Iranian, Turkic, medieval European, and Bactrian documents and Arabic narratives clearly explain overlordship. Overlordship refers to a situation in which a political power establishes dominance in a region, imposes its suzerainty over local lords, and demands tribute from them. It also applied to the condition when local lords voluntarily submitted to another lord and accepted his suzerainty. In both cases, the local rulers performed certain rituals and rendered services to the overlord. They praised the overlords in their letters and defined their relation as subordinate rulers to the overlords. They visited the overlords in person, sent letters and embassies with gifts, and attended the overlords' courts (and drinking parties). They collected tributes from their areas and, in return, delivered them to the overlords. In times of need, they mobilised local military forces to help the overlord in his war in other regions. The overlord bestowed titles to the local rulers to bring them into a larger political structure. Some local rulers used the overlord's power to legitimise their rule or remove their internal enemies. Hence, overlordship benefitted local rulers and the overlords.

In the case of the Bactrian region, the overlords did not impose direct control over Bactria. The overlords did not appoint or change local rulers, nor did they interfere in local rulers' internal affairs. As a result, the local rulers retained their autonomy. Except for the Sasanians, who fought the Chionites that, required building massive defensive walls and garrisons in Bactria, the Turks did not establish any military garrisons in the region.⁴⁷⁷ Perhaps, this is one of the reasons that we do not hear anything about the Turks defending Bactria against the Arab Muslims. In any case, the local rulers also understood the importance of being part of a larger system at the regional and imperial levels. Being related to a more significant power far away from their areas would give them political prestige and facilitate their economic incomes because the local and international traders would move between these regions.⁴⁷⁸ This

⁴⁷⁶ Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*, 200–201.

⁴⁷⁷ Haug has argued that the Sasanians invested in massive military defensive projects that had to be paid for by the imperial treasury (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 57); Also, see V. A. Gaibov, G. A. Koshelenko, and G. V. Terebeleva, "Material for the archaeological map of northern Afghanistan: The Murghab River Valley," *Afghanistan* 2, no. 2 (2019): 195–232; I think, the fort of Qala-yi Zal may have been built in this period.

⁴⁷⁸ The *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* describes this situation in fourth/tenth century Guzgan. It says that Guzgan was controlled by some local rulers who recognised the overlordship of the Farighūnid king Muḥammad b. Aḥmad and paying taxes to him. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad was the regional overlord in Guzgan but recognised the suzerainty of the Abbasid caliph (*mawlā amīr al-muʿminīn*) as the ultimate overlord (*Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, 52, 59–60). The *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* mentions the same situation for northern Bactria. It says that local elites of each area followed their local ruler (*andar farmān-i amīr-i nāḥiyyat-i khīshand*), and the local ruler obeyed the Samanid king, who was the region overlord (*Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, 72). The Samanid kings recognised the authority of the Abbasid caliphs on their

model of overlordship was practised during the domination of the Sasanians, the Hephthalites, and the Western Turks in Bactria. The following chapters will show that the Arab Muslims broke this system to impose their direct control over Bactria.

Conclusion

More than ten local principalities coexisted in early seventh-century Bactria. These were the principalities of Badghis, Marw al-Rūd, Gharchistan, Guzgan, Gaz, Rob, Kadagstan, Chaghaniyan, Quwadhiyan, Akhrun, Shuman, Guftan, Tirmidh, and Khuttal. Balkh was a separate case. There was apparently no local king, but as a Buddhist shrine city, it was controlled by the *barmak*, the keeper of Naw Bahar, and a *spāhbed* who was a military commander. Except for the rulers of Marw al-Rūd and Gharchistan, other local kings recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of Western Turks. The *qaghān* did not reside in Bactria, but his *yabghu* stayed in Tukharistan. A military commander (*tarkhān*) and a fiscal officer (*tudun*) were sent to different areas in Bactria to receive tributes collected by local authorities. Due to their nomadic nature, the Western Turks did not build any military garrison in Bactria.

The relations between local rulers and their overlords are defined by acknowledging the overlords in official letters and legal documents, paying homage, and rendering services to the overlords. The overlords did not appoint them or remove these local rulers, but enforced a hierarchical relationship in existing local power structures. That means the overlords did not disturb local political autonomy in Bactria, and also did not interfere in internal power relations in the region. Hence, the local rulers retained autonomy in their civil administration and legal system and commanded their forces. The overlordship was not permanent, and local rulers also rebelled against their overlords. This was the condition when the Arab Muslims entered Bactria

coins in their Friday prayer sermons and sent gifts to the caliph. The obverse of the Samanid coins shows this hierarchy. The name of God is above the text, followed by the Prophet's name, then the caliph, followed by the name of the Samanid king. For the coins, see https://en.numista.com/catalogue/samanid_dynasty-1.html (accessed on 14 June 2023); For general information, see C. E. Bosworth and Yolande Crowe, "Sāmānids," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/samanids> (accessed on 14 June 2023). The caliph legitimised the Samanid power by sending them a robe of honour, flag and official decree. In the case of conflicts among the Samanid rulers, they accepted the caliph's judgment. For discussion on the caliph's relation with the Samanid kings, see Jahānbakhsh Thavāqib, "Sāmāniyān va Niẓām-i Khilāfat-i 'Abbāsi," *Kayhān-i Andīsha* 83 (1378/2020):138–152. These examples are significant. They show that recognition of the authority of an overlord was necessary for being part of a larger political structure on a regional and imperial level.

in 652. The next chapter will answer the questions of what brought the Arab Muslims to Bactria, and how Bactrian rulers received them.

Chapter three: Conquests Through Negotiation: the First Fifty Years (31–86/651–705)

The *kanārang* was the king of Khurasan in the past. He sent a letter and his representative to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir. Then, they [the Arabs] came, and he facilitated the conquest of Khurasan.⁴⁷⁹

Introduction

This chapter covers the first fifty years (31–86/651–705) of the Arab Muslim presence in Bactria. It discusses the Arab Muslim conquests in the region from a local perspective. It reveals that the Arab Muslims did not have any pre-planned ambition to conquer Bactria, but that their presence in Bactria was the result of complicated local politics in the broader region. At this time, Bactria was not firmly under Sasanian control. Bactria had its own local rulers who controlled their areas autonomously and recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān*. Elsewhere in Khurasan were different local rulers who were under Sasanian overlordship. Once they were established in Sasanian Khurasan, the Arab Muslims moved to Bactria, and they mostly interacted peacefully with its local rulers and used Bactria as a safe passage to raid Sogdiana. Thus, the Arab Muslim presence in Bactria should be understood within the bigger political context of Sasanian Khurasan. By recognising this political complexity, we comprehend better the reasons behind the coming of the Arab Muslims to Sasanian Khurasan in the first place and their presence in Bactria thereafter.

An analysis of this political complexity helps us understand the dynamic process of the conquest. It shows that the Arab Muslims’ victory over Sasanian Khurasan was not simply a series of ‘sequential events’ as articulated in the Arabic narratives related to the conquests (*futūḥ*); modern historians have often repeated these claims. In reality, these narratives oversimplified the complicated political situation in Khurasan and projected an ‘idealised’ and simplified image of the conquests in which some Arab Muslim leaders conquered the vast and diverse regions of Khurasan within two years (31–33/651–653). This chapter will show that such an idealised image was not the case on the ground. Instead, the conquests were the outcomes of a very complicated political situation in the frontier region of Khurasan.

The political context for this, especially the internal conflicts between local rulers within Sasanian Khurasan, instigated and facilitated the Arab Muslim conquests. The rivalry

⁴⁷⁹ Al-Hākim al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202.

between local rulers provided space for the Arab Muslims to interfere and participate in this local political game. In the beginning, the Arab Muslims were treated as an outside power by the local rulers, but after they became familiar with the local politics, the Arab Muslims began to play a role as internal political claimants. In the course of time, they managed to conquer eastern Iranian regions and incorporate their local rulers into the political structure of Umayyad Khurasan. At the same time, some Arab tribal leaders became part of local politics in Khurasan by establishing *de facto* rule in turn and challenged the Umayyads. This interpretation offers a new characterisation of the conquests as a very complicated and dynamic process.

Before examining this political complexity and its contribution to bringing about the conquests, I should add some words about the sources consulted for this chapter. To provide a better understanding of the local political context in which the conquests happened, I will collate all available sources. In addition to the Persian and Chinese narratives, Bactrian documents, and numismatic evidence from which previous chapters have drawn, I here consult ‘Arabic traditional histories’. While most of these Arabic narratives reflect a general image of the conquests, some of them, like al-Ṭabarī’s, preserved local voices, which is crucial to our discussion. I will consult the Arabic narratives alongside non-Arabic sources as much as possible throughout this study. The combination of these different sources creates a dialogue to understand the conquests better, and adds other voices to the dominant narrative of the conquests as the actions of a few triumphant Arab generals. Taking an inclusive view provides a more reliable narrative of the conquests. It allows us to see how Arab Muslims engaged with the local political situation.

This chapter attempts to explain the processes of the conquests in three parts. In the first part, I will discuss the local political situation in Sasanian Khurasan prior to the conquests. In the second part, I will discuss the reasons behind the coming of Arab Muslims to Sasanian Khurasan and its impact on the region. Finally, I will focus on Bactria to see how the Arab Muslims interacted with local rulers.

3.1. Sasanian Khurasan on the eve of the conquests

3.1.1 Sasanian Khurasan's geography and politics

Sasanian Khurasan was a vast region extending from Qumis to the Amu Darya.⁴⁸⁰ Etymologically, Khurasan means “East, rising sun”, and that comes from the Middle Persian *Xwarāsān* with the same meaning.⁴⁸¹ The geography of Khurasan is very diverse. It is often defined as “Inner Khurasan” and “Outer Khurasan” to understand the geography of political events in the region. Inner Khurasan is more mountainous and covers all areas between Qumis and Badghis regions, with Nishapur, Tus, and Herat as its major cities. In contrast, Outer Khurasan is within the Kara-Kum Desert and includes all areas from the north of the Balkhan mountains to the southeast of Khwarazm, with Marw, Nasa, Sarakhs and Abiward as its major cities.⁴⁸² These two borrowed terms will frequently appear in this chapter and are essential to understand the route of the conquests, the settlement of the Arab Muslims in the region, and their expansion into Bactria.⁴⁸³

Khurasan was one of the four quarters of the Sasanian empire.⁴⁸⁴ After the Hephthalites defeated the Sasanians, followed by political chaos in the Sasanian court, the Sasanian king Kavād I (r. 473–531) and his son Khusrow I (r. 531–579) undertook a series of military and administrative reforms.⁴⁸⁵ They reorganised the empire into four military zones, to facilitate the empire's defense on its different frontiers and reconquer the eastern Iranian regions.⁴⁸⁶ However, the reorganisation of the empire did not lead to the centralisation of political power in the hands of the Sasanian kings, nor did it remove the local nobilities, particularly the noble families in the east.⁴⁸⁷ These families remained influential even after the Sasanian period.

⁴⁸⁰ Marquart, *Ērānšhr*, 47–70; Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, 382–445. The historical Qumis is identified with Shahr-i Qumis between Semnan and Damghan in Semnan province, Iran.

⁴⁸¹ Khodadad Rezakhani has argued that long before Sasanian administrators or Muslim geographers used this term, the Bactrian *μυποασαβο* meaning “East”, was already known in the region that can be the root of the Sasanian *Xwarāsān* and the Muslim Khurasan (Khodadad Rezakhani, “From Mirosan to Khurasan: Geopolitical Identity in Eastern Central Asia,” *Vicino Oriente* XXXIII (2019): 121–138).

⁴⁸² Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 7–8.

⁴⁸³ Parvaneh Pourshariati, “Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement,” *Studia Iranica* 27, no. 1 (1998): 43–44.

⁴⁸⁴ Daryaee, *Šahrestānīha ī Ērānšhr*, 7–11; Ibn Khurdhābih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 18–19; Rika Gyselen has discussed the four quarters of the empire (Gyselen, *La géographie administrative de l'Empire sassanide*, 127–139).

⁴⁸⁵ Rezakhani reached the same conclusion saying that these reforms were a response to the loss of the eastern Iranian regions to the Hephthalites (Khodadad Rezakhani, “Nobles and Land: The Formation of the South (*Nēmrož*) and the Politics of Elites in the Sasanian Empire,” in *Paleopersepolis: Environment, Landscape and Society in Ancient Fars*, ed. Silvia Balatti, Hilmer Klimkeit and Josef Wiesehöfer (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2021), 241–265).

⁴⁸⁶ It is mentioned in al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, 69.

⁴⁸⁷ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 80–81.

The Sasanians had a sophisticated administration system to rule their empire. After reorganising the empire, the Sasanian king of kings (*shāhān shāh*) appointed a *spāhbed* ‘army commander’ on each quarter. These commanders responded to the *shāhān shāh*. The reorganisation plan divided each quarter into smaller administrative units. Sasanian Khurasan was also divided into four parts.⁴⁸⁸ Each part of Khurasan was headed by a *marzbān*. The *marzbān* is a title meaning border guardian. He had the control of his own troops crucial for defending the empire’s borders. The *marzbān* of each part worked together with the *spāhbed* and with the *marzbān* of other parts, at least in defending the area against outside forces.⁴⁸⁹ However, following the political upheaval in the Sasanian court after the murder of the king Khusrow II in 628, the *marzbāns* started to act as autonomous local rulers in Khurasan. Instead of cooperation, they started jockeying with each other over control of the main cities in Khurasan. This was the situation when the Arab Muslims arrived in the region, which will be discussed in the following sections.⁴⁹⁰

Three main political groups controlled the region in Sasanian Khurasan. The first group was led by the *marzbān* of Tus who was from the *kanārang* family. The second group was directed by Barzān Jāh from the *kārin* family who rivalled the *marzbān* of Tus over control of Nishapur. The third group was led by Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw. Apart from them, the Hephthalites of Badghis were attempting to expand their authority over Sasanian Khurasan. This political situation became further complicated after the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III (r. 632–651) went to Khurasan and attempted to unify the region under his direct control. A brief discussion on the interaction between these groups helps us to understand how the rivalries

⁴⁸⁸ The memory of the Sasanian administration survived into the Islamic period. The third/ninth-century Muslim geographer Ibn Khurdhābih describes the quarters of Sasanian Khurasan: The first quarter was the Marw region, the second quarter was Balkh and Tukharistan, the third quarter was Herat up to Badghis, and the fourth quarter was Transoxiana (Ibn Khurdhābih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 18). I think Ibn Khurdhābih’s division may not have been correct because it does not include Abarshahr and its cities like Tus and Nishapur, which were important parts of the Sasanian Khurasan. Instead, it adds Transoxiana, which was not part of the Sasanian Khurasan. Though Balkh and Tukharistan were part of the Sasanian Khurasan when the Sasanian controlled it, these regions were out of the Sasanian domain in the early seventh century. Ibn Khurdhābih does not explain the reasons for neglecting one region and adding another. In any case, Khurasan was a frontier region, and for this reason, its border shifted with political events. For the shift of borders in Khurasan, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 9–15.

⁴⁸⁹ For detail information, see Rezakhani, “Nobles and Land,” 241–265; Rika Gyselen, *The Four Generals of the Sasanian Empire: Some Sigillographic Evidence* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l’Oriente, 2001); Mohsen Zakeri, *Sāsānid soldiers in early Muslim society: The Origins of ‘Ayyārān and Futuwwa* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 31–48.

⁴⁹⁰ Phillip Gignoux has argued that the *marzbān* is not attested from any Sasanian inscriptions but is mentioned only in the Arabic narratives or geographical records. On the other hand, Mohsen Zakeri asserted that the *marzbān* became significant by the end of the Sasanian period when each quarter acted almost independently from the Sasanian court. He added that the *marzbān* collected taxes from his region (Zakeri, *Sāsānid soldiers in early Muslim society*, 33–40).

between these groups started and how they contributed to the Arab Muslim conquests. I will begin with Outer Khurasan and the activities of the Hephthalites in it, and then move on to explain Inner Khurasan.

3.1.2 Political competition in the frontier region of Khurasan

The political condition in Sasanian Khurasan was complicated in the early seventh century.⁴⁹¹ In this period, Sasanian control of the eastern Iranian regions was limited to Marw al-Rūd, and it did not include Bactria or Sogdiana.⁴⁹² The political order in Sasanian Khurasan was different from the rest of the empire. Unlike the southern regions that hosted most Sasanian cities and often enjoyed political stability, Khurasan was a frontier region. As discussed in the previous chapter (2.1.2), the Sasanians fought the Chionites, the Hephthalites, and the Western Turks from the fourth to the seventh century on Khurasani lands. In Khurasan, the Sasanians built fewer cities but more defensive fortresses, walls, and garrisons filled by soldiers brought from the western parts of the empire.⁴⁹³ The political situation in the frontier region could change rapidly as the region was under pressure, which could have contributed to the importance of the *marzbān*.⁴⁹⁴ The cooperation of the *marzbāns* could protect the empire from invasions led by the Hephthalites or the Turks. Conversely, the *marzbāns* of Khurasan fought each other, and some made alliances with outside powers to further their own position. These kinds of rivalries or alliances were not new, because they were right on the frontier zone where the Sasanian empire had already been fighting the Kidarites, the Hephthalites, and the Turks for years.⁴⁹⁵

The Sasanian authority over Khurasan was limited after they were defeated by the Hephthalites. Sasanian authority in Marw ended after the death of the Sasanian king Peroz in 484–485, after which the Hephthalites took control of the region.⁴⁹⁶ Though the Sasanians

⁴⁹¹ Pourshariati has discussed the political situation in late Sasanian Persia with a particular focus on the role of the local eastern Iranian families in the expansion and decline of the Sasanian empire. Therefore, I benefited from her argument to describe the political situation in Khurasan in this chapter (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 104–112, 130–136, 265–278).

⁴⁹² Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 70.

⁴⁹³ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 82; The Sasanians built the defensive walls of Gurgan and Tamishe to prevent the Hephthalites and the Turks' invasions. For most recent archaeological reports on these walls, see Eberhard Sauer, Jebrael Nokandeh and Hamid Omrani Rekavandi, ed., *Ancient Arms Race: Antiquity's Largest Fortresses and Sasanian Military Networks of Northern Iran: A joint fieldwork project by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organisation and the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham (2014–2016)* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2022).

⁴⁹⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 82.

⁴⁹⁵ For more detail on the political situation, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 54–75.

⁴⁹⁶ Apparently, the Hephthalite's domination of Marw ponded the space for Buddhists to move to Marw. The two Buddhist stupas of Marw were built in this period (Gerent, "Regional interaction," 212).

reconquered Marw later, from 615 onwards, Sasanian control over Khurasan remained weak. From their power base in Baghlan, the Hephthalites in fact controlled the Badghis region. Then the Turks conquered the region, and their overlordship was recognised as far as Herat in 643. Nonetheless, the Hephthalites survived and expanded their authority over Herat and Quhistan in 650.⁴⁹⁷ The presence of the Hephthalites in the region brought the *marzbāns* into contact with them.

The relation between the *marzbāns* of Khurasan and the Hephthalites was even more complicated as it alternated between cooperation and conflict. The third/ninth-century historian Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawārī mentions that Māhūy (Ar. Māhūya) was the *marzbān* of Marw and that he had familial relations with the *qaghān* of the Turks (*kāna Māhūya šāhara khaqān malik al-atrāk*).⁴⁹⁸ Ibn Khurdhādbih's report clarifies that the Turks mentioned by al-Dīnawārī were the Hephthalites. According to Ibn Khurdhādbih, Māhūy's son was called Barāz. He adds that Māhūy was the king of Marw (*malik Marw*), indicating Māhūy was the real ruler of Marw.⁴⁹⁹ Māhūy acted independently from the Sasanian kings in keeping relations with the Hephthalites.⁵⁰⁰ Al-Ṭabarī offers further information on Māhūy's relation with the Hephthalites. He calls Māhūy Abū Barāz 'Father of Barāz'.⁵⁰¹ The Hephthalite lord often used this title.⁵⁰² Christopher Brunner suggested that "the form Barāz shows interference by a much more common honorific, that of Warāz "boar" (one of the shapes taken by the god Wahrām)." ⁵⁰³ As we will see later in this chapter (3.1.3), Māhūy requested the Hephthalite *nizak* to help him against the last Sasanian king Yazdgird, who tried to limit Māhūy's political autonomy.

Inner Khurasan witnessed fierce rivalry between two Iranian families of the *kārin* and the *kanārang* over control of the region. Pourshariati, who discussed this local rivalry in detail,

⁴⁹⁷ See chapter two, section 2.1.2, and chapter three, section 3.1.2.

⁴⁹⁸ Al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, 148; The Arabic term *šāhara* with the same meaning is mentioned in Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawārī, *Faḍl al-'arab wa al-tanbīh 'alā 'ulūmihā*, ed. Walīd Maḥmūd Khālīš (Abu Dabi: Manshūrāt al-Majma' al-Thiqāfi, 1998), 97.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39; Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār al-bāqīya 'an al-qurūn al-khāliya*, ed. C. Eduard Sachau (Leipzig, in Commission bei F. A. Brockhaus, 1878), 101–102.

⁵⁰⁰ Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 34–35.

⁵⁰¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 5 : 2876.

⁵⁰² Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39, 40.

⁵⁰³ C. J. Brunner, "ABRĀZ," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abraz-middle-persian-high-superior-height-old-iranian-uparyank-above-high> (accessed on 27 May 2021); Haug, who has seen the relation between Māhūy and the Hephthalites as an example of complicated local politics in Khurasan, argued that Māhūy might not have had an elite background, and that may explain his ties with the Hephthalites (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 86–89). However, Haug does not explain how a non-elite could marry a Hephthalite lord.

argued that the hostility between these two families was over the Abarshahr region, particularly Nishapur.⁵⁰⁴ Nishapur was an important city at this time.⁵⁰⁵ The *kārin* family was an old noble family with a Parthian lineage.⁵⁰⁶ However, they were not originally from Khurasan but had their lands and power base in the Nihavand region, which was part of the Sasanian quarter of the South. This family was sent to Khurasan by the Sasanian king Khusrow I, and there, they were in charge of provincial affairs.⁵⁰⁷ The *kārin* family had friendly relations with the Hephthalites. Both Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854) and al-Ṭabarī mention that the Hephthalites of Herat were among the first groups who resisted the Arab Muslims on their march towards Abarshahr.⁵⁰⁸ It is possible that the Hephthalites of Herat fought the Arab Muslims to support the *kārin* family in an inter-Khurasani dispute. Further evidence of their relations comes from the rebellion of the *kārin* family after they lost Nishapur to the Arab Muslims. A certain Kārin (Ar. Qārin) mobilised forces from the Hephthalite areas to remove the Arab Muslims and regain the city.⁵⁰⁹

The *kanārang* family is often associated with Tus, an important area in Inner Khurasan.⁵¹⁰ The origin of this family is not known. The *marzbān* of Tus was from this family and is often called the *kanārang* in our narratives.⁵¹¹ The *kanārang* is not a personal name but a title and here I will use it for the *marzbān* of Tus to prevent confusion with other *marzbāns*.

⁵⁰⁴ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 113–114.

⁵⁰⁵ Nishapur had about 10,000 inhabitants at the time conquest (Richard Bulliet, “The Conversion Revisited,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. Andrew C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 71).

⁵⁰⁶ Rezakhani, “Nobles and Land,” 251, 257.

⁵⁰⁷ Pourshariati refers to works like collecting taxes, brokering peace, and waging war (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 113–114).

⁵⁰⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2885; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Taʾrīkh*, 164–165.

⁵⁰⁹ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 86–89.

⁵¹⁰ Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 20–47. The Arabic narratives often call the *marzbān* of Tus *kanārā* or *kanārtak*, which is the corrupted form of *kanārang* (for instance, al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 405; Ibn Khurdhādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39).

⁵¹¹ The *kanārang* is mentioned in two Bactrian documents dated to the fifth century. According to these documents, the *kanārang* owned land and received their share of the products (Bactrian documents no. H, G in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 42–43). The true Bactrian form of this title is *καπαλαργγο* known from the second-century Kushan inscriptions of Rabatak and Surkh Kotal (see Nicholas Simis-Williams and Joe Cribb, “A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/96): 80). Stefan Härel kindly informed me that the *kanārang* of the Sasanian period was the re-forming of the Bactrian *καπαλαργγο*. It was “an attempt to follow the Bactrian semantics using the Middle Persian equivalent term, specially targeted to the office in Khurasan”. The title *kanārang* was equal to that of *marzbān*, who controlled the eastern areas situated close to the former frontier of the Kushans (Härel’s forthcoming dissertation on Kushan history will have more details about it. Online correspondence on 8 January 2024). Similarly, Haug suggested that *kanārang* was the Middle Persian translation of the Kushan *καπαλαργγο*, and it was similar to the position of the *marzbān* (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 83). For detail discussion on the *kanārang*, see Eduard Shahneh Khurshudian, “The Parthian and Sasanian Administrative Institutions” (PhD diss, Leningrad State University, 1990).

In the early seventh century, the *kanārang* commanded his own local forces. A report by Sayf b. ‘Umar (lived in second/eight century), the compiler of narratives on early Islamic history preserved by al-Ṭabarī,⁵¹² provides information about the composition of the Sasanian army in the Battle of Qadisiyya fought in 14/636–637 that may help. In this report, a *kanārang* commanded the light cavalry (*wa kanārā ‘alā al-mujarrada*) and fought alongside the Persian commander Rustam, who was of Khurasani nobility.⁵¹³ The Sasanian army had heavy cavalries, and the light cavalries were sent from the east to help the Sasanians.⁵¹⁴ All this supports the assumption that the *kanārang* had a Khurasani function with a military and administrative role. The *kanārang* had a claim over Nishapur in 650.⁵¹⁵

The hostility between the *kārin* and the *kanārang* families was over control of Nishapur. A certain Barzān Jāh from the *kārin* family fought the *kanārang* of Tus. However, none of these rivals could impose their authority over the region, and they needed an outside power to strengthen their position. Pourshariati has argued that the hostility between the *kārin* and the *kanārang* families resulted from the policies undertaken by the Sasanian kings Khusrow I and Khusrow II (r. 590–628) to weaken the power of the noble families of Khurasan.⁵¹⁶ The policy of divide and rule applied by the Sasanian kings led not only to the weakness of the empire, but it ended the life of the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III, who tried to play with local politics in the frontier region of Khurasan. The case of Yazdgird III shows how the local rulers in Khurasan reacted to an outside power who wanted to interfere in their local affairs. His case is crucial to understand how the Arab Muslims were brought to Khurasan in the first place.

3.1.3 The last Sasanian king and local politics in Khurasan

In 650, the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III arrived in Khurasan in the company of Khurrazād, brother of Rustam, the Persian commander. Khurrazād was the *spāhbed* of Khurasan, had Parthian lineage, and was the main protector of the king.⁵¹⁷ By this time, the Arab Muslim

⁵¹² Sayf b. ‘Umar, *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com> (accessed on 8 June 2021).

⁵¹³ De Goeje’s edition misses the reports from the year 14–17. Therefore, this part is taken from the Cairo edition. See Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abul Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif bi Miṣr, 1387/1967), 3: 510.

⁵¹⁴ Shabazi, “Army,”.

⁵¹⁵ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 267–270.

⁵¹⁶ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 111–115; Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 62–64, 274.

⁵¹⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 318–219; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2873; Similarly, al-Dīnāwarī calls him Khurrazād, brother of the decayed Rustam (al-Dīnāwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 133); Ḥamza al-Isfahānī mentions that Khurrazād, brother of Rustam accompanied the king from Isfahan to Marw. (Ḥamza b. al-Ḥasan al-

forces had already conquered the al-Sawād region in southern Iraq up to Fars and Kirman. They aimed to conquer the Sasanian quarter of the South, the most significant and prosperous part of the empire. The quarter of the south (*kust-i Nēmrōz*) extended from eastern Mesopotamia to Sistan.⁵¹⁸ The first Arab Muslim military garrisons (*amṣār*), Basra and Kufa, were built within this quarter.⁵¹⁹ For Yazdgird III, the loss of the quarter of the south was equal to the loss of his empire, and thus he had to relocate. Being a fugitive king, he was not welcomed by the local rulers of Isfahan, Kirman, and Sistan, who were part of the Sasanian empire but now functioned as autonomous rulers. The reason for rejecting the king was his pressure on the local rulers to deliver him the taxes of their regions.⁵²⁰ In other words, he wanted to impose direct control on those regions and that was not welcomed by the local rulers. Thus, the king moved on to Khurasan.

The local political situation in the frontier region of Khurasan was not in favour of the Sasanian king. The local noble families of *kārin* and *kanārang* were hostile to each other over the control of Nishapur, and Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw, had family relations with the Hephthalites. These local rulers were not interested in the Sasanian king's agenda, which would limit their authority. Likewise, the Sasanian king could not go to Bactria because the principalities of Bactria mostly recognised Turkic overlordship and not the Sasanian king. In short, the local political situation would not allow Yazdgird III to unify Khurasan under his command. Nevertheless, he attempted to impose his authority over the local rulers in Khurasan and contacted the king of Sogdiana, the king of Kabul, the king of the Khazars, the Turks, and the Tang emperor for help to retake his lost empire.⁵²¹ Apparently, none of them helped him.

Upon his arrival in Khurasan, Khurrazād left Yazdgird III to Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw, and returned towards Iraq.⁵²² He resented the king's decision to stay with Māhūy and not go to Tabaristan. Khurrazād made a peace treaty with the Arab Muslims who helped him

Isfahānī, *Ta'rikh sinni Mulūk al-arḍ wa al-anbiyā'* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār Maktaba al-Ḥayāt, 1961), 49); Pourshariati argued that this Khurrazād was Farrukh Hormozd, the brother of Rustam Farrukhzād, the commander of the Persian armies in the battle of Qādisiyya. She adds that Farrukh Hormozd was from the *Ispādbudān* family with Parthian lineage (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 187–88); Haug followed her argument. See Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 82. Here, I keep Khurrazād as it is mentioned in most of the relevant Arabic narratives.

⁵¹⁸ Rezakhani, "Nobles and Land," 243.

⁵¹⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 275–289, 346–376.

⁵²⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 315; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2875.

⁵²¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2876; Yazdgird's communication with the Tang court is recorded in the *Tang Shu*, 110–111; Also, see Liu Yingjun, "Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of Iranian Princes Exiled in Chīn and B.sīlā Depicted in Kūshnāma," *Acta Koreana* 21, no. 1 (2018): 52.

⁵²² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2873.

to take Rayy from the *mihrān* family. Both Khurrazād and the *mihrān* family laid a claim on the Rayy region.⁵²³ With the departure of Khurrazād, Yazdgird III lost his main protector. Shortly after, the *kanārang* of Tus refused to help Yazdgird III. Not only this, but he did not welcome the king because hosting him in Tus would limit his autonomy.⁵²⁴ Probably, his refusal to assist the king had other reasons. As it is said, the king's contact with other regional powers like the Turks would bring their forces to Khurasan. Inner Khurasan, after all, formed the Sasanian defensive line of control against the Hephthalites and the Turks.⁵²⁵ The Turks and the Hephthalites had already experienced a joint military invasion of Sasanian Iran, and all those military movements affected Inner Khurasan. Hence, the emperor's contact with the Hephthalites, i.e., the *kanārang*'s enemies, was alarming for the *kanārang* of Tus.

In Marw, the relation between Māhūy and Yazdgird III also turned sour. The hostility between Yazdgird III and Māhūy is well reflected in the Arabic and Persian narratives. It represents the complexity of local politics in Khurasan. According to al-Dināwarī, Yazdgird III put pressure on Māhūy and asked him to deliver the taxes (*al-amwāl*) he had collected from the region.⁵²⁶ A similar report is given by al-Balādhurī in his *Futūḥ al-buldān*. He mentions that the king ordered his people to ask Māhūy for taxes (*wa sa'alahu 'an al-amwāl*).⁵²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī informs us that the king even wanted to dismiss Māhūy, and that one of Yazdgird's companions asked for permission to kill Māhūy.⁵²⁸ Māhūy might have realised that the king's presence in Marw not only put pressure on his economic resources, but may even cost him his life. Hence, Māhūy refused paying taxes to the king and communicated with his Hephthalite relative, the *nizak*. Together they plotted to defeat the king and plunder his treasures. The helpless king was killed at a water mill in Marw.⁵²⁹ After his death, the king's companions were scattered throughout Khurasan.⁵³⁰

The Arabic narratives highlighted the taxes as the bone of contention between the Sasanian king and Māhūy. However, the fourth/tenth-century Persian historian-cum-minister Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bal'amī (d. 383/994) provides more clarification in his

⁵²³ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 255–262.

⁵²⁴ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 267–270.

⁵²⁵ The Sasanians built the defensive walls of Gurgan and Tāmishe to prevent the Hephthalites and the Turks' invasions.

⁵²⁶ Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 148.

⁵²⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 323.

⁵²⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2877.

⁵²⁹ Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 148–149; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2872–73; Al-Isfahānī, *Ta'rikh sinni Mulūk al-arḍ*, 49; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, 2: 317–319.

⁵³⁰ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 43.

Tārīkhnāma (“Book of History”), which is a free translation of al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rīkh*. While al-Bal‘amī repeats the issue of taxes that put pressure on Māhūy, he also mentions that Yazdgird III commissioned the construction of a grand fire temple (*ātaṣh khāna*) with gardens in Marw for the sacred fire which he brought from Rayy.⁵³¹ This would have been perceived as an unmistakable message that the king wished to stay in Khurasan and unify it under his authority. Al-Bal‘amī’s report comes from Persian sources (*akhbār-i ‘ajam*) that were not included by al-Ṭabarī. The Sasanian royal fire temples were located in the quarter of the South, and Yazdgird’s attempt to build a new royal fire temple reflected his wish to make Khurasan his new home. That would limit the political autonomy of the local rulers of Khurasan. Hence, the death of Yazdgird III was the result of his attempt to change the power balance in the region, which was not acceptable to the local rulers, who saw the king as a severe threat to their political and economic autonomy.⁵³²

The murder of the Sasanian king in Marw in 651 had different consequences. The *marzbān* of Marw and the *kanārang* of Tus were released from the pressure imposed by the Sasanian king. However, the cooperation of Māhūy and the Hephthalite *nizak* must have disturbed the *kanārang* of Tus. Māhūy’s alliance with the Hephthalites allowed them to come out from Badghis and expand their influence in the Marw region. The Arab Muslims facing the Hephthalites in Herat and Quhistan, mentioned earlier, show that the Hephthalites had influence in these regions too. The *kārin* family led by Barzān Jāh was in conflict with the *kanārang* of Tus in Nishapur, where they both controlled part of the city. An alliance between Māhūy, Barzān Jāh, and the Hephthalite *nizak* against the *kanārang* of Tus would certainly seal his fate. Hence, being caught in a dangerous situation, the *kanārang* of Tus searched for an outside force to support him. He required this not only to take Nishapur for himself, but also to protect Inner Khurasan from the Hephthalites. Not surprisingly, the *kanārang* of Tus saw no one better than the Arab Muslim forces to help him. His decision to pull the Arab Muslims into the local politics in Khurasan not only changed the region’s political map, but also had significant social, political, and cultural impacts. The *kanārang* of Tus’ strategy of involving

⁵³¹ Al-Bal‘amī, *Tārīkhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 536–537.

⁵³² Yazdgird’s arrival in Marw, his communication with the court of Tang, and his clash with the local rulers are reflected in the *Tang Shu* (“Old Book of Tang”), which gives almost similar reports mentioned in the Arabic narratives. According to *Tang Shu*, Yazdgird sent an envoy with gifts, including a cyan snake, to the Tang emperor and asked for help. It adds that Yazdgird was weak and exiled by his chieftains, and he fled towards Tukharistan but was killed before reaching there. The *Tang Shu* adds that Peroz went to Tukhara and was allowed by the *yabghu* to stay there, but there are no reports about his marriage (*Tang Shu*, 110–111). Also, see Yingjun, “Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of Iranian Princes,” 52.

the Arab Muslims is the missing piece to understanding the process of Khurasan's conquests and the Arab Muslims' march towards Bactria.

The death of Yazdgird III in Khurasan reveals an important issue about the local politics in Khurasan. The king lost his life in his ill attempt to unify the region under his command. That was against the interests of the local rulers, who did not wish to lose their autonomy. The king did not perform as a traditional overlord or another local player, but wanted to unify the region under his direct and absolute control at the expense of the local kings. However, we will see that the Arab Muslims did not commit the same mistake. They entered Khurasan as an outside power, got involved in local politics as one political party among the many others, did not attempt to impose their rule immediately with force, and then gradually established their regional authority. The next part explains this.

3.2. Arab Muslims and local rulers in Sasanian Khurasan

While the engagement of the Arab Muslims in local politics in Khurasan is the key element to understanding the process of the conquests of Khurasan, it has received the least attention in the existing literature.⁵³³ This part will show that from 31/651 to 51/671, the Arab Muslims played an active role in local politics, leading to their becoming a significant political power in Khurasan. Before discussing that, we first need to have an overview of the coming of the Arab Muslims to Khurasan.

The Arabic narratives related to the conquests (*futūḥ*) present a general image; their shortcomings have already been discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. However, to recapitulate the idea, we should know that the Arabic narratives lionize the third caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–655) and his generals in the story of the conquests of Khurasan. The Muslim historians who compiled their works in the early Abbasid period intended these for an early Muslim audience,⁵³⁴ and wanted readers to believe that the conquests of Khurasan were pre-planned. Modern historians have followed more or less the same view, and that prevented them from looking at the local political context in which the conquests occurred. For instance, Muhammad Shaban argued that the conquest of Khurasan was “an organized campaign and planned to expand Arab rule.”⁵³⁵ He adds that the reason

⁵³³ See the discussion in the introduction, section 1.

⁵³⁴ See the discussion in the introduction.

⁵³⁵ Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 17.

behind sending forces to Khurasan was due to “tensions in Iraq as a result of the continued pressure of the influx of the Arab tribesmen into the two garrison towns of Kufa and Basra.”⁵³⁶ Thus, for Shaban, the conquest of Khurasan was a solution to reduce the pressure on Iraq. Shaban asserts that conquerors did not face any local resistance, but he fails to explain further. Though Shaban fairly refers to the threat of the Hephthalites that forced the *kanārang* of Tus to appeal to the Arab Muslims, he preferred to follow the Arabic narratives and the centrality of the caliph ‘Uthmān in masterminding the conquests.⁵³⁷

The importance of local politics and their contribution to the Arab Muslim conquests of Khurasan is noticed by Pourshariati. In contrast to Shaban, who exaggerated the role of the caliph, Pourshariati argued that the conquests of Khurasan were the outcome of the hostility between the *kanārang* of Tus and the *kārin* family over the control of Nishapur. She added that the *kanārang* of Tus consciously “instigated and facilitated” the conquests of Khurasan to overcome his rival.⁵³⁸ Pourshariati’s interpretation is largely based on the local Persian histories that were lacking in Shaban’s work. However, she does not include the Hephthalites and their relations with those noble families and the *marzbāns*. On the other hand, Haug has discussed the competition among the *marzbāns* within the context of frontier zone politics. He argued that “the direction of the conquest was directed by conflict and competition among the *marzbāns* and the noble Parthian houses”, who took advantage of the arrival of the Arab Muslims to secure their positions.⁵³⁹ However, he does not discuss the roots of these rivalries.

Shaban, Pourshariati, and Haug’s works are constructive. They highlight two different views. The first view suggests that the Arab Muslims planned the conquests of Khurasan as part of a grand plan and campaign drawn up at the caliph’s court. This interpretation presents a top-down approach to the conquests of Khurasan as fitting in an overall military strategy in which the Arab army leaders make all decisions and are the sole movers of historical events. The second view shows that local political rivalries in the frontier region of Khurasan directed the conquests. Therefore, the directionality of this latter approach comes from the bottom-up in which there are two acting parties: local rulers and the Arabs. It does not mean that the Arabs were only able to react without the ability to take strategic decisions. They just did so in reaction to the opportunity presented to them by the local situation, and they were successful

⁵³⁶ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsid Revolution*, 17.

⁵³⁷ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsid Revolution*, 6–9, 17–18.

⁵³⁸ Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 31–52.

⁵³⁹ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 84.

in their responses to it. Involving this second approach makes more sense, as does reading Arabic narratives against the grain and combining the data with information that comes from non-Arabic sources. A critical analysis of these sources offers valuable information on the dynamic process of the conquests. It also helps to see the reasons behind the Arab Muslims' march towards Bactria and their engagement with Bactrian rulers. To understand the process of the conquests that was overlooked in earlier viewpoints, we should take a step back and see what happened after the death of Yazdgird III. The following section explains it.

3.2.1 *The Arab Muslims' participation in local politics in Khurasan*

The death of Yazdgird III in Marw happened after the arrival of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir (d. 59/679) in Fars in the year 30/650. He was a young cousin of the caliph 'Uthmān, and his appointment as governor of Basra brought the Arab Muslim conquests of Sasanian Iran into a new phase. Before he arrived in Fars, the Arabian leaders of Bahrayn and Oman had already crossed the Persian Gulf and raided the region of Fars at their own decision and independent from the Medina regime. However, once Ibn 'Āmir was appointed in Basra, 'Uthmān asked all Arabian leaders who were involved in the war in the Sasanian quarter of the South to follow Ibn 'Āmir. In other words, Ibn 'Āmir became the commander of the armies responsible for conquests in Sasanian Iran.⁵⁴⁰ However, whether Ibn 'Āmir could unite all Arabian leaders under his command is not fully known. In any case, shortly after his arrival, Ibn 'Āmir engaged in war and tried to capture the main cities in Fars that the Arabian raiders could not take earlier. Thus, the Arabic narratives illustrated him as a commander and a diplomat after he was involved in a series of wars and peace treaties with local rulers in Fars.⁵⁴¹

The Arabic narratives depict the conquests of Khurasan as a sequence of related events achieved fast and smoothly. They mention that Ibn 'Āmir and his generals, like al-Aḥnaf b. Qays (d. 67/686) and 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim (d. 72/691), conquered the entire region of Khurasan within two years without much resistance. Al-Aḥnaf from the tribe of Tamīm is presented as the one who conquered Bactria and gathered tributes from the region.⁵⁴² More or

⁵⁴⁰ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, 161; For detail information, see Martin Hinds, "The First Arab Conquests of Fārs," *Iran* 22 (1984): 39–53.

⁵⁴¹ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 61; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 389–391; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 9: 356–367; Guy Le Strange and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, ed. *The Fārsnāma of Ibnu'l-Balkhi* (1921; repr., Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāfīr, 1385/2006), 113–116.

⁵⁴² For instance, see al-Dīnāwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, 149; Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 6–62; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, 163–165; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403–408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2884–88, 2898–2904; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 2: 337–341.

less, the same image is reflected in modern studies on the conquests of Khurasan.⁵⁴³ The main problem with this idealised image of the conquests is that it does not answer a major question: How was Ibn ‘Āmir able to conquer the frontier region of Khurasan in such a short time? How could Ibn ‘Āmir succeed in conquering the region where the Sasanian king Yazdgird III failed?

The answer to this question becomes crucially important if we compare Ibn ‘Āmir with Yazdgird. Both of them entered Khurasan and were involved in local politics. However, the Sasanians had a specific strategy towards the East. They first controlled the eastern regions through Kushano-Sasanians, a branch of the Sasanian royal family. After the Chionites’ invasions, the Sasanians defended their eastern regions through continuous and systematic military operations conducted by an organised army. The Sasanians protected the conquered regions by funding massive construction projects like building defensive walls, forts, and garrisons.⁵⁴⁴ In contrast, the Arab Muslims were not as organised as the Sasanians. Ibn ‘Āmir, with his small army and his limited economic resources, was not equal to any of the Sasanian campaigns in the east. So then, how did Ibn ‘Āmir rapidly conquer the region, which was highly diverse in its geography and people as well as deeply fragmented in its political order?

The Arabic and the Persian sources -if read together- show that the conquests of Khurasan were indeed not the sole achievement of the Arab Muslims. On the contrary, the conquests were joint military operations undertaken by both the Arab Muslims and the forces provided by the local rulers. This military strategy was followed in the east throughout the Umayyad period. The joint operations show that the Arab Muslims had gotten successfully involved in local politics and benefitted from these interactions. The cooperation of the *kanārang* of Tus with Ibn ‘Āmir is the first and the best example of this pattern. It is mentioned in the Arabic narratives related to the conquests of Khurasan and the Persian histories written in Khurasan. To clarify this Arab Muslim and local cooperation, we need to look at these narratives closely.⁵⁴⁵

The earliest Arabic report on the cooperation between the *kanārang* and Ibn ‘Āmir was mentioned by al-Balādhurī. When the caliph ‘Uthmān appointed governors over Kufa and Basra in 30/650, he writes that the *kanārang* of Tus sent a letter to these governors and invited them to Khurasan on condition that if they achieved victory, they must return the governorship

⁵⁴³ See the Introduction, section 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 84.

⁵⁴⁵ Pourshariati has discussed most of these narratives. However, I analyse these narratives to explain the dynamic process of the conquests and the reasons behind the Arab Muslim move towards Bactria.

of Khurasan to him. As a result, Ibn ‘Āmir marched towards Khurasan and performed what the *kanārang* had asked him to do. However, al-Balādhurī refers to some anonymous reports which said that the governor of Kufa did not receive such a letter, but he accepts the communication between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ‘Āmir.⁵⁴⁶

More information on this cooperation comes from the third/ninth-century historian al-Ya‘qūbī, a contemporary of al-Balādhurī. In his *Ta’rīkh*, al-Ya‘qūbī mentions that ‘Uthmān wrote to Ibn ‘Āmir and Sa‘īd b. al-‘Āṣ, the governors of Basra and Kufa, and ordered them to march towards Khurasan. Whoever would reach it first would become the governor of Khurasan (*ayyakumā sabagha ilā Khurāsān, fa huwa al-amīr ‘alayhā*). Al-Ya‘qūbī adds that a member of the *dihqān*, or landed gentry, from Khurasan visited Ibn ‘Āmir, negotiating with him for a reward if he would take the Arab Muslims to Khurasan. Ibn ‘Āmir promised not to take taxes (*kharāj*) from this *dihqān* and his family in exchange for his help. Al-Ya‘qūbī does not identify this *dihqān* and does not question that how Ibn ‘Āmir could ask for taxes at this early stage. After the agreement, the *dihqān* took Ibn ‘Āmir and his forces via a shortcut (*ṭarīq mukhtaṣar*) to Qumis and then they met in Nishapur where they jointly took the city by force (*‘anwatan*).⁵⁴⁷

The identity of the *dihqān* and more details on his cooperation with Ibn ‘Āmir are given by al-Ya‘qūbī in his other book *Kitāb al-buldān* (“Book concerning the Regions”). According to him, Ibn ‘Āmir received a letter from the ruler of Tus (*qad ṣāra ilā ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir kitāb malik Ṭūs*) in which he promised to take Ibn ‘Āmir to Khurasan if the latter would capture Nishapur for the ruler (*‘alā an yumallikunī ‘alā Sabūr [Nishābūr]*). Here, the *dihqān* and the king are the same person, and they refer to the *kanārang* of Tus. Al-Ya‘qūbī ends the narrative by saying that both parties cooperated, and the document of that agreement remained among the offspring of the *kanārang* of Tus to his day.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 334.

⁵⁴⁷ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2: 61–62.

⁵⁴⁸ In Arabic: *fa kataba lahū kitāban wa hūwa ‘inda wuldihi ‘alā hādhihi al-ghāya* (al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 77); Pourshariati argued that this narrative shows that after two and a half centuries, a local family traced its lineage back to the *marzbān* of Tus and revealed the cooperation between him and Ibn ‘Āmir. That means an actual document of the agreement existed, and it was part of the family heritage legitimising their claim over the region of Nishapur now controlled by the Tahirids in the third/ninth century (Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 44–45); To al-Ya‘qūbī, this was not a unique case. He says that a local family in Marw possessed a letter of agreement signed between Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw and the Arab Muslims (al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 78). He gives a similar report in his *Ta’rīkh*, 83; Al-Balādhurī mentions that Māhūy received a document of agreement from the fourth caliph ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661) (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408); The previous chapter showed that some local noble families in Bactria or other parts of Khurasan preserved their social influence for a long time, which makes the continuation of the *marzbān*’s family, not a surprise.

Al-Ṭabarī preserved several reports that elucidate the local political situation in Nishapur and how this city was conquered. His sources on Khurasan vary from ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. al-Madā’inī (d. 228/842–843), the most famous historian on Khurasan, to the locals from Kirman.⁵⁴⁹ Putting these reports together, it becomes clear that Ibn ‘Āmir crossed the great desert of Kirman (*rābar/rāwar*), which was 80 *farsakh* (about 480 km), with the aim to reach Nishapur, the city half of which only was under the control of the *kanārang* of Tus (*kāna al-niṣf al-ākhar fī yad kanārā*).⁵⁵⁰ This is confirmed by Khalīfa b. Khayyāt who added that when Ibn ‘Āmir conquered the city he in fact made peace with the *kanārang* who maintained control over his part of the city which remained as it was (*mā baqiya*); i.e., unconquered.⁵⁵¹ The other half of the city, it is to be remembered, was under the control of Barzān Jāh from the *kārin* family. This family was close to the Hephthalites, who were also allied to the *marzbān* of Marw.⁵⁵² Al-Ṭabarī adds that on their way to Nishapur, the Arab Muslim forces were confronted by the Hephthalites in Quhsitan.⁵⁵³ The Hephthalites, themselves aiming to expand their control over the region, were surprised by the Arab advance, and immediately decided to prevent the Arab Muslims from reaching Nishapur, where they would threaten Bārzan Jāh, their ally’s control over half of the city.⁵⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the Arab Muslims passed Quhistan, arrived in Nishapur, and captured the city by force. While these Arabic narratives describe the coming of the Arab Muslims to Khurasan, they miss a crucial point: How did Ibn ‘Āmir cross the great desert? How did he know to take only half the city of Nishapur, which was not in the *kanārang*’s control? The local Persian histories fill the knowledge gap.

Tārīkh-i Nishābūr (“History of Nishapur”), written by al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī in Arabic in the fourth/tenth-century but only partly surviving in a fourteenth-century Persian translation, provides some details. According to al-Ḥākim, “the *kanārang* was the king of Khurasan in the past. He sent a letter and his representative to ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir. Then, they came, and he

⁵⁴⁹ The importance of al-Madā’inī’s report on the conquests of Khurasan is discussed in the introduction.

⁵⁵⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2885–86; Ibn Khurdhābih gives valuable information on the roads between Iraq and Khurasan (Ibn Khurdhābih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 24–29); Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 145, 154; One *farsakh* was between 5.4 to 6.4 km. Detail information on the length of the *farsakh* in Arabic and Persian sources is given by Albert Houtum-Schindler, “On the Length of the Persian Farsakh,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 9 (1888): 584–588.

⁵⁵¹ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt has a short narrative on this issue without highlighting the role of the *kanārāng*. However, he mentions that the *kanārāng* made peace with Ibn ‘Āmir for the control of half of Nishapur (Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 164–165).

⁵⁵² Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 40.

⁵⁵³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2884–85.

⁵⁵⁴ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, 19.

[the *kanārang*] facilitated the conquest of Khurasan.”⁵⁵⁵ Al-Ḥākim adds that the cooperation between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ‘Āmir was a well-known issue among the trustworthy people (*thiqāt*) of Nishapur. According to them, the *kanārang*, the Zoroastrian governor of Khurasan (*kanārang ki vāli-i Khurāsān būd va ū majūsi būd*), informed Ibn ‘Āmir and Sa‘īd b. ‘Āṣ about the death of Yazdgird III in Marw and invited them to Khurasan (*ba Khurāsān khvānd*) and promised them his assistance. Ibn ‘Āmir and Sa‘īd b. ‘Āṣ informed ‘Uthmān about the situation in Khurasan, and then, ‘Uthmān permitted them to march toward Khurasan. Al-Ḥākim also says that people helped Ibn ‘Āmir’s troops by providing them with wheat (*gandūm*), indicating that the locals gave logistical support to the Arab Muslims right from the beginning of their arrival in Khurasan.⁵⁵⁶

Al-Ḥākim’s report can be completed by the narrative given by al-Bal‘amī in his *Tārīkh-nāma*. Al-Bal‘amī mentions that it was in Kirman where Ibn ‘Āmir received the news of political conflicts in Khurasan that led to the death of Yazdgird III. Only after this news did Ibn ‘Āmir march towards Khurasan.⁵⁵⁷ The significance of al-Bal‘amī’s report, which is not mentioned by al-Ṭabarī, is that the Arab Muslims were already aware of the local politics in the region, and they responded to events there effectively. What remains to be answered is: Who helped the Arab Muslims cross the great desert? To do this as well as passing through the mountains without a local guide and logistics was impossible, even if we think that the Arab Muslims came from the Arabian Peninsula.⁵⁵⁸

A clear answer to this question is provided by Abū Manṣūr Mu‘ammarī, the third/ninth-century compiler of the *Shah-nāma* (“Book of Kings”) produced in 346/957 for Abū Manṣūr ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d. 350/961), the local commander (*sipāhsālār*) from Tus under the Samanid dynasty (819–999).⁵⁵⁹ ‘Abd al-Razzāq claimed to have been the descendant of the Sasanian *spāhbed* and linked his lineage to the *kanārang*.⁵⁶⁰ According to Mu‘ammarī, the

⁵⁵⁵ Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202.

⁵⁵⁶ Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202–204.

⁵⁵⁷ Al-Bal‘amī, *Tārīkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 589.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal crossed this desert twice and described its condition. He says that this desert has no inhabitants and one cannot cross it without local guide (Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 340). Alfons Gabriel crossed this great desert in 1933 and published his observation in *Duerch Persiens Wüesten* (Stuttgart, 1935). He gives similar description. I crossed this desert in 1999 and observed similar situation that was described by Ibn Ḥawqal and Gabriel. Crossing this desert without local logistics and guidance is impossible today.

⁵⁵⁹ Vladimir Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the Shāh-nāma,” *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* II (1956): 59–79; Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, “Az Shah-nāma tā Khudāynāma: justārī dar bāra-yi ma’ākhidh mustaqīm va ghayr-i mustaqīm Shah-nāma,” www.noufe.com (accessed on 28 May 2021).

⁵⁶⁰ Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, “Abū Manṣūr Ma‘ammarī,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-mansur-mamari> (accessed on 28 May 2021); Also, see Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, “ABŪ MANṢŪR ‘ABD-AL-

representatives of the *kanārang* of Tus brought the Arab Muslim forces via a short way across the desert of Kirman to Qumis and then to Abarshahr, where the son of the *kanārang* received them.⁵⁶¹

If we put all these Arabic and Persian narratives together, we see that the delegation sent by the *kanārang* of Tus, who remains anonymous in our sources, met Ibn ‘Āmir in Kirman, gave him his letter, informed him about the political situation in Khurasan, and took the Arab Muslims the short way to Nishapur. Here the *kanārang*’s forces led by his son received Ibn ‘Āmir, and jointly they conquered Nishapur (half of which was controlled by the *kārin* family). This interpretation highlights the importance of the local political situation in the conquest of Khurasan. It changes the traditional view in which the conquests were a pre-planned programme designed by ‘Uthmān and implemented by his generals in the field. It also shows that the Arab Muslims were pulled into the local politics by the ruler of Tus to maintain the power balance in Khurasan. However, once they became part of this system, the Arab Muslims began to carve out their niche in the local politics in the region. Only after the fall of Nishapur did the local rulers of Sasanian Khurasan recognise the Arab Muslim overlordship and pay tribute to them. The fall of Nishapur allowed Ibn ‘Āmir to secure his relations with the local lords, as will be explained next.

3.2.2 *The fall of Nishapur and its impact on the region*

The fall of Nishapur had a great political impact on Khurasan. Nishapur was an important political centre and its control symbolised the control of Khurasan.⁵⁶² Immediately, the local rulers of Khurasan came to pay their respects to Ibn ‘Āmir in person or sent representatives with gifts and tributes.⁵⁶³ They tried not to fight the Arab Muslims but negotiated for peace. In other words, they recognised the Arab Muslims as a capable political and military force. At the same time, through these treaties, Ibn ‘Āmir recognised the political autonomy of the local

RAZZĀQ,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-mansur-mohammad> (accessed on 28 May 2021).

⁵⁶¹ Cited in Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Tus,” 39.

⁵⁶² Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 204.

⁵⁶³ The reports from *Tārīkh-i Marw* (“History of Marw”) written by a certain Ma’dānī preserved in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* (“History of Bayhaq”) compiled by the sixth/twelfth-century Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī b. Zayd, known as Ibn Fanduq. Ma’dānī mentions that Ibn ‘Āmir spent four months in Nishapur, and in this short period, the cities of Khurasan submitted (Abū al-Hasan ‘Alī b. Abī al-Qāsim, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār, with an introduction by Mirzā Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Froughi Publishers, 1361/1982), 26).

rulers.⁵⁶⁴ Thus, the treaties would have created a mutual political understanding between the Arab Muslims and the local rulers and provided room for cooperation.⁵⁶⁵

The peace treaties with the local rulers had economic benefits. Based on the Arabic narratives, Donald Routledge Hill provided a list of the cities and the amounts of tribute. It shows that the Arab Muslims received lots of money and materials from Khurasan. Hill argued that all these were tributes delivered to the Arab Muslims, and there is no evidence that they asked for any land tax.⁵⁶⁶ The tribute was in cash and kind and included silk fabrics, slaves, and animals.⁵⁶⁷ The Arab Muslims did not interfere in how the tributes were raised in the respective kingdoms or any other local business. They received tributes from the local rulers.⁵⁶⁸ Local accommodation was given to the Arab Muslims in Marw and Nishapur to protect them from the cold winter.⁵⁶⁹ The importance of these treaties becomes clear because the Arab Muslims operated far from the Hijaz and Iraq. The regime in Medina or the garrison towns of Basra and Kufa did not provide logistical support or payment to the soldiers in Khurasan.⁵⁷⁰ The tribute would cover the salaries and logistics of the forces.

After the defeat of Barzān Jāh, the Arab Muslims made a peace treaty with the *kanārang* of Tus who controlled one half of the city. Soon, however, the *kanārang* of Tus had control of the entire city – a bone of contention for the *kārin* family that would have consequences for the Arab Muslims, as we will see. Wresting control over the city of Nishapur from the hands of his rival, the *kārin* family, was surely a welcome result for the *kanārang* of Tus due to the arrival of his allies, the Arabs. It was, however, as the reports in Arabic and Persian sources discussed above show, surely not the only motive for the *kanārang* of Tus to call in outside help. Breaking the bond between those threatening the *kārin* family —the *marzbān* of Marw and the Hephthalite coalition— was another motive. As for the Arabs, joining forces with the *kanārang*

⁵⁶⁴ The memory of peace treaties made with the local rulers was also preserved in much later local sources. According to al-Balkhī, the entire region of Khurasan up to Marw al-Rūd made peace with Ibn ‘Āmir (al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 27).

⁵⁶⁵ The Arabic narratives depicted Ibn ‘Āmir as the actual overlord and downplayed the importance of the local rulers. For instance, Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926) reverted the story of the conquest of Nishapur to elevate Ibn ‘Āmir’s position. He depicted Ibn ‘Āmir as the one with actual control of all affairs in Nishapur by saying that Ibn ‘Āmir gave the city of Nishapur to the *kanārang* of Tus because the latter helped Ibn ‘Āmir in capturing the city. However, he still confirms that it was the *kanārang* who sent a letter to Ibn ‘Āmir seeking his help (Ibn ‘Ātham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 1: 337–338).

⁵⁶⁶ D. R. Hill, *Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests A.D. 634–656* (London: Luzac & Company, 1971), 158.

⁵⁶⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410–413.

⁵⁶⁸ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, 21.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibn Fandūq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, 26.

⁵⁷⁰ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, 25.

of Tus held great material advances in the form of tribute from allied rulers, but also support in conquering the remainder of Khurasan. Once established in Nishapur, Ibn 'Āmir sent forces led by al-Aḥnaf b. Qays to raid western Bactria, the territory of the king of Guzgan, which will be discussed next.⁵⁷¹

3.2.3 Entering Western Bactria: from Marw al-Rūd to Balkh

The Arab Muslims' approach to western Bactria was entirely different. The aim was not to help any local Bactrian ruler but to raid the region. Possibly, they wanted to show their presence to the Hephthalites beyond Marw al-Rūd and secure Inner Khurasan. This hypothesis can be supported by al-Ya'qūbī's report that Arab Muslim administrators (*'ummāl*) used to settle in Herat and not in other areas till the Umayyads came to power.⁵⁷² Staying in Herat that was associated with the Hephthalites would stop the Hephthalites from attacking Inner Khurasan.⁵⁷³ In any case, the war in Marw al-Rūd was not easy for the Arabs. The mountainous nature of the region, the Marw al-Rūd river, the narrow passes, the existence of well defended fortresses and its warlike inhabitants were serious challenges. This region had formed the line of control between the contesting empires of the Sasanians, the Kidarites, and the Hephthalites in the past. The Marw al-Rūd region was controlled by a *marzbān* called Badhām (a corrupted form of the Persian name Badhān), who stayed in his fortress near the river. To avoid being trapped by the Hephthalites in the mountains of Herat and Badghis, al-Aḥnaf led his men not from Herat, but through Sarakhs on the way to Marw, then turned south and reached Marw al-Rūd. In other words, they went around the mountain to suddenly enter the enemy's region. This strategic move explains al-Aḥnaf's rapid move to Bactria. This was an excellent military strategy if we consider the difficulty of crossing the mountains of Badghis. His men fought the local soldiers, plundered villages and took people's cattle. Seeing a new force, Badhān decided to make peace and allowed al-Aḥnaf to cross his area on his way to Guzgan. Possibly, he hoped that the western Bactrians would destroy the new force. However, he initiated the negotiation for peace by sending his cousin Māhak to al-Aḥnaf with a letter explaining his conditions for peace.⁵⁷⁴

Badhān's conditions for peace were simple. He suggested paying only 60,000 dirhams as tribute and submitting on the condition that al-Aḥnaf recognises him as the *marzbān* of

⁵⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2897.

⁵⁷² Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 149.

⁵⁷³ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403.

⁵⁷⁴ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 413–414; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2897–99. Taking flocks of sheep should have been for food supply.

Marw al-Rūd, the position he inherited from his grandfather. In response, al-Aḥnaf accepted all conditions but requested Badhān's help for raiding western Bactria. The tribute suggested by Badhān was the lowest amount of tribute the Arab Muslims received from any place in Khurasan. The low tribute agreed upon by al-Aḥnaf and his request for help show that the Arab general was not able to impose his demands by force. Rather, the outcome was based on negotiation, give and take from both sides. This would have especially been true in the frontier region like Marw al-Rūd. It also shows that al-Aḥnaf faced serious opposition, which he could not deal with on his own account: he needed Badhān's support and was prepared to cut his material tribute in exchange. This reconstruction is very much unlike the ideal image of the Arabic narratives. Haug argued that Badhān's decision for making peace with al-Aḥnaf was deliberate. Badhān was already caught between the Hephthalites and other hostile neighbours, and he did not want to fight with a new force. Hence, peace benefitted both sides.⁵⁷⁵

The presence of al-Aḥnaf accompanied by a group of the Sasanian cavalries whom Al-Balādhurī called "the submitted Persians" (*muslim al-‘ajam*) in the strategic region of Marw al-Rūd alarmed the western Bactrian rulers. The identity of this group is unknown, but al-Ṭabarī says that a group of cavalries (*asāwira*) came to Marw with Yazdgird III.⁵⁷⁶ The number of this group matches with the group mentioned by al-Balādhurī. That implies that the remainder of the Sasanian king's cavalries, those who had arrived in Khurasan with him, now joined the Arab Muslims. Soon, the forces of Guzgan and Chaghaniyan arrived, not to join the Arabs, but to fight them. Al-Aḥnaf's men were scared to the extent that some of them asked to return to Marw or Nishapur. Others, however, encouraged al-Aḥnaf to stay put and fight. Eventually, with the advice given by an unknown cook or soldier (*ṣāhib al-khazīra aw al-‘ajīn*), al-Aḥnaf could defeat the enemies.⁵⁷⁷ All this time, Badhān remained neutral, holding on to his tribute and forces to see who would win the battle. Only after the victory of al-Aḥnaf,

⁵⁷⁵ Haug also highlighted these two last points (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 72–73, 75).

⁵⁷⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2876.

⁵⁷⁷ The report adds that al-Aḥnaf killed the king of Chaghaniyan and his drummers (*al-ṭabbūl*) in a heroic action. But that cannot be trusted because Arabic narratives often attribute such actions to the Arab Muslim generals. Both al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī mention that al-Aḥnaf defeated the western Bactrian forces only after he followed the advice of a person who was cooking in the camp. However, they do not identify this person. They do not even bother asking how a regular person could give such precise military advice. It is possible that this person was either a local soldier who had joined al-Aḥnaf or a Sasanian commander who knew the geography of the area and the Hephthalite war. Arabic narratives often glorify the Arab Muslims' achievements under any condition, even if everything was against them (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 413–414); Al-Ṭabarī has no words about the king of Chaghaniyan or the Persian cavalries (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2902).

Badhān sent the tribute to him.⁵⁷⁸ However, it is unclear if he sent his forces to help the Arab Muslims.

The Arab Muslims and the Sasanian cavalries who joined them marched beyond Marw al-Rūd, captured a fortress later called *qaṣr Aḥnaf* or “Aḥnaf’s fortress”,⁵⁷⁹ and entered the kingdom of Guzgan. They raided some cities of Guzgan, in which they lost many soldiers.⁵⁸⁰ Still, al-Balādhurī says that the people of Talaqan and Faryab made peace treaties with al-Aḥnaf and even supplied him with logistical support that enabled al-Aḥnaf to move towards Balkh.⁵⁸¹ Why they helped al-Aḥnaf is unknown. It must have been to do with the local politics in western Bactria. The Arabic narratives do not reveal the identity of the king of Guzgan. However, as explained in the previous chapter, a Bactrian legal document produced seven years later in 659 refers to Kanag Guzgan as the ruler of this region.⁵⁸² Whether Kanag Guzgan sent his forces to stop al-Aḥnaf or made peace with him is not clear, but Guzgan was under the suzerainty of the western Turks at this time. However, the Turks did not react to the Arab Muslims and left the local rulers to deal with them.

With the logistical support from Talaqan and Faryab, the Arab Muslims reached Balkh. The elites of Balkh submitted without any resistance, made peace with al-Aḥnaf and accepted to pay tribute. Al-Aḥnaf appointed his cousin Usayd b. al-Mutashammis to collect this before leaving for Khwarazm. However, it was already autumn, and al-Aḥnaf had to return to Balkh before winter.⁵⁸³ The collection of tribute in Balkh coincided with the *mihragān*,⁵⁸⁴ or the autumn festival in which Usayd received some gold and silver objects, dinars and dirhams, and garments as gifts from the Balkhi elites. Being surprised by that, Usayd was told by the Balkhis that they often present gifts to their rulers on such occasions to make them kind to the people (*bi man wallīyanā nast ‘īfuhu bihi*).⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁷⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2902.

⁵⁷⁹ The term *qaṣr* does not mean palace in this narrative but is an Arabic equivalent for the Bactrian *λιζο*, meaning the fortress. This equivalence is also known from a few Arabic documents produced in Rob (see Khan, *The Arabic documents*, 122–139).

⁵⁸⁰ In Arabic: *maṣāri’ fityatan bi al-Juzjān* (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 407); Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2902.

⁵⁸¹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, 12: 332.

⁵⁸² Bactrian document no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79.

⁵⁸³ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2903.

⁵⁸⁴ According to al-Birūnī, the *mihragān* was celebrated in Khurasan and the kings and people respected it very much (al-Birūnī, *Athār al-Bāqiya*, 222–24); A similar definition for the *mihragān* is given in Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akḥbār*, 509, 520.

⁵⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2903; Al-Balādhurī mentions that al-Aḥnaf received some gifts during the *nawruz* festival but does not clarify where he received them (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, 9: 358).

The reports about Balkh are vital to understand its political situation. Firstly, it confirms that Balkh did not have local troops to defend it, an issue already discussed in the previous chapter (2.1.3). Similarly, it shows that Balkh did not have a king to receive the gifts on the day of the *mihragān*, and the Balkhi elites recognised al-Aḥnaf's overlordship through his cousin. Presenting gifts to the rulers during the festivals and on other occasions was an old tradition mentioned in the previous chapter (2.3.2). Secondly, al-Aḥnaf did not go towards eastern Bactria but went towards Khwarazm, meaning Balkh was the most eastern point they wished to reach. In other words, Balkh was the end of the eastern conquests, which had begun in Nishapur. The Arab Muslims left the region after that (Figure 19).

3.2.4 Return to Iraq

Ibn 'Āmir left Khurasan in 32–33/652–653 to go on hajj to thank God for his fruitful achievements.⁵⁸⁶ The outcomes of his presence in Khurasan were many. He was successfully involved in local politics and appeared as a political leader among other regional rulers. He also managed to keep his forces fighting at a far distance from the Hijaz and Iraq without being dependent on those regions. His departure to Iraq also impacted Khurasan in two immediate ways. First, a certain Qārin from the *kārin* family gathered forces and, with Hephthalite support, tried to take back Nishapur, now controlled by the *kanārang* of Tus.⁵⁸⁷ The few Arab Muslim troops Ibn 'Āmir left behind had to deal with this. Secondly, the Arabian tribal leaders in the armies in Khurasan began fighting each other. 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim -a leader from the tribe of Qays who had come to Khurasan with Ibn 'Āmir -allegedly forged a letter (*ifta'ala'ahdan*) in the name of Ibn 'Āmir, and claimed the leadership of the Arab Muslims left in the region.⁵⁸⁸ The *kārinids* put the Arab Muslims in a difficult situation and almost pushed them out.⁵⁸⁹ However, Ibn Khāzim resisted and eventually defeated Qārin, but fighting with different rival groups continued for a longer period.⁵⁹⁰

The war with the *kārinids* and the tribal rivalry coincided with the first *fītna*, or social disturbance (36–40/656–661), in which caliph 'Uthmān was killed. 'Uthmān was accused of

⁵⁸⁶ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 9: 357; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2904.

⁵⁸⁷ Al-Bal'amī mentions that this Qārin was the *marzbān* of a region between Qumis and Gurgan (al-Bal'amī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 590); Al-Ṭabarī does not call him the *marzbān*, but mentions that his forces came from Tabas, Quhistan, Herat and Badghis the regions defended by the Hephthalites in 651 (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2905).

⁵⁸⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2905.

⁵⁸⁹ Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 15–16.

⁵⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2905–96; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh*, 167.

nepotism, while his attempts to centralise political power and, incidentally, demand a larger slice of the locally raised (and largely spent) income from the provinces met with much opposition.⁵⁹¹ The first *fitna* divided the Arab Muslims around two characters: ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661) who was selected as the commander of believers (*amīr al-mu’minīn*) after the death of ‘Uthmān, and Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–680), the governor of Syria.⁵⁹² Eventually, ‘Alī was killed by a member of the Khārijites, a group that emerged in the course of the civil war, and Mu‘āwiya became the *amīr al-mu’minīn*.⁵⁹³ Mu‘āwiya continued the centralisation of power begun by ‘Uthmān and turned the office of *amīr al-mu’minīn* into dynastic rule that was rejected by some prominent Arabian leaders in the Hijaz and Iraq, and that became the reason for the second *fitna* (61–73/680–692).⁵⁹⁴ The *fitna* and the far distance between Khurasan and the main centres of Arab Muslims’ political power in the Hijaz and Iraq decreased the connection between the troops in Khurasan and the main garrisons in Iraq. That left the Arab Muslim troops in Khurasan on their own. Simultaneously, the kingdom of Guzgan and Balkh denied the payment of tributes that they had agreed to pay. Re-establishing Arab Muslim authority in Khurasan required political stability in the western regions, particularly in Iraq, from where the Arab Muslim forces came. The Umayyads secured this control, who were motivated to master Khurasan fully and absolutely.

3.3. Establishment of Umayyad authority in Khurasan

3.3.1. *The Umayyad’s claim to Khurasan*

The establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) in Syria and its control over Iraq was followed by the Umayyads’ expansion towards the East. Mu‘āwiya appointed ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir over Basra and he sent Qays b. Ḥaytham to Khurasan, possibly with fresh troops from Iraq. In 42/662, the Umayyad forces attacked Guzgan and Balkh, in which parts of the Buddhist monastery of Naw Bahar were purposely damaged.⁵⁹⁵ This was the earliest reported act of

⁵⁹¹ See Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78–140.

⁵⁹² Khaled Keshk suggested a new chronology for the reign of Mu‘āwiya. He proposed the year 24/656 for the beginning of Mu‘āwiya’s reign (Khaled Keshk, “When Did Mu‘āwiya Become Caliph?” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 31–42).

⁵⁹³ Hannah-Lena Hageman, “History and Memory: Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography,” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014), 6, and “Was Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī a Khārijite? Rebellion in the Early Marwānīd Period,” in *Acts of Rebellion and Revolt in the Early Islamic Caliphate*, ed. Petra Sijpesteijn and Alon Dar, Special Issue, *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 445–68.

⁵⁹⁴ Mehdy Shaddel Basir recently discussed the centralisation of political power by Mu‘āwiya in an online meeting on 7 June 2021.

⁵⁹⁵ Al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 409.

Umayyad iconoclasm in the east, which was not accidental, but an act of punishment. Al-Balādhurī mentions that only after this act the people of Balkh asked for peace and accepted the payment of tribute. This report indicates that the leader of Naw Bahar had in fact been rejecting the paying of tribute he had agreed to pay.⁵⁹⁶

The attack on Naw Bahar leads to an important point. It is likely that it was the leader of this Buddhist monastery who denied the payment. This leader could have been no one except the *barmak*, the keeper of Naw Bahar.⁵⁹⁷ The stupa described by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang in 630 seems to have been damaged in this attack. Later, the authorities in Naw Bahar rebuilt the stupa, adding some new buildings for the servants, as mentioned in Arabic and Persian sources.⁵⁹⁸ Once Balkh paid the tribute, the Umayyad troops returned to Inner Khurasan, indicating they did not plan to enter eastern Bactria.

The Arabic reports related to Khurasan between 43–51/663–672 do not offer a clear picture of Bactria in this period. They only speak about the Umayyad raids of some Bactrian cities as far as Chaghaniyan and eastern Bactria.⁵⁹⁹ Raids on settlements in the Ghur mountains are also reported.⁶⁰⁰ Possibly, the raids did not happen in Ghur but in Guzgan and the reporters misunderstood it later.⁶⁰¹ Ghur was a mountainous region to the southwest of Herat, and Muslims did not conquer it until the Ghaznavid period.⁶⁰² Al-Ya‘qūbī clarifies this issue further. He mentions that the Umayyad forces only entered the kingdom of Guzgan, but that they suffered from a shortage of food supplies and had to eat their horses.⁶⁰³ This means the local rulers of Guzgan did not help the Arabs as they had done when al-Aḥnaf came through

⁵⁹⁶ Shaban rejected the authenticity of the reports related to the attack on Guzgan and Balkh. He argued that Qays b. Ḥaytham was sent to Khurasan on the condition that he remains neutral towards the local rulers in Khurasan. In Shaban’s view, the source of this report is a person from the tribe of Qays, and it is evident that the reporter wanted to glorify the achievement of Qays in Khurasan (Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution*, 28–29). However, comparing the reports of Xuanzang and the Muslim geographers about the Naw Bahar shows that the damage happened. For details, see Étienne de la Vaissière et Philippe Marquis, “Nouvelles Recherches Sur Le Paysage Monumental De Bactres,” *CRAI*, n. III (2013):1155–71.

⁵⁹⁷ This was not the first time that the Arab Muslims made a peace treaty with a local religious leader, as they did it with the *herbad*, the high Zoroastrian priest of Darabgird in Fars earlier. But it was the first time they negotiated with a Buddhist leader in Bactria (Hind, “The First Arab Conquests in Fārs,” 48). Later, the Umayyads and the Buddhist community experienced friendly relations in the east. See Derryl N. MacLean, *Religion and Society in the Arab Sind* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

⁵⁹⁸ La Vaissière and Marquis, “Nouvelles Recherches,” 1165.

⁵⁹⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410.

⁶⁰⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 81

⁶⁰¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 84–85, 109–110.

⁶⁰² Gardīzī refers to the Samanid campaigns in Ghur in which only a few fortresses were taken. However, the actual conquest of Ghur happened later during the reign of Sultan Mas‘ūd I (r. 421–432/1030–41) (Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 359); For more information, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, “The Early Islamic History of Ghūr,” *Central Asiatic Journal* 6, no. 2 (June 1961): 116–133.

⁶⁰³ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tarikh*, 2: 131.

with his armies some thirty years earlier. It also shows that the Umayyad forces tried to secure Guzgan on their way to Balkh. These reports only refer to raids and do not report any attempts at a systematic conquest of Bactria. Even in this period, the Umayyad forces did not stay in Bactria but returned to Inner Khurasan after each raid. Then, the political situation changed, which forced the Arab Muslims to deploy many Arab Muslim soldiers from Iraq to Khurasan, which will be discussed next.

3.3.2 *The great migration to Khurasan*

In the year 51/671, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (d. 53/673),⁶⁰⁴ the Umayyad governor of Iraq, sent 50,000 soldiers from the garrisons of Basra and Kufa to Khurasan.⁶⁰⁵ Though the Arabic narratives do not explain the reason behind this, sending such a large army to Khurasan must have been to defend the region from a great threat or was motivated by a desire to incorporate Khurasan into the Umayyad empire. In other words, the decision to undertake a costly and risky conquest of the province would not have been taken lightly and not without thorough deliberation weighing the factors involved, and exhaustive military and organisational preparation.

Modern scholarship has dealt with the Arab Muslim migration to Khurasan, but it fails to provide any satisfying explanation for it.⁶⁰⁶ Shaban argued that this migration resulted from Ziyād's administrative policy in Iraq. According to Shaban, Ziyād reorganised the garrison of Basra and divided it into five parts (*akhmās*). The people of Tamīm, Bakr b. Wā'il, Azd, 'Abd al-Qays, and *ahl al-ʿāliya* (people from Mecca and Medina) settled in these parts. The army register for the stipends (*dīwān al-jund*) was updated, and many tribal warriors were not registered. Thus, they were sent to Khurasan.⁶⁰⁷ However, the Arabic and Persian narratives do not confirm Shaban's argument. Moshe Sharon argued that sending migrants to Khurasan was part of a "premeditated policy of Muslims almost from the beginning of the conquest."⁶⁰⁸ On the contrary, this chapter shows that there was no such policy. Daniel C. Dennet refers to the importance of this migration as it was larger than the number of migrants who moved to Egypt,

⁶⁰⁴ For his political career, see Khurshid Ahmad Fariq, *Ziyād b. Abīh* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966).

⁶⁰⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 69–70.

⁶⁰⁶ Pourshariati has listed the arguments on this subject that were available until 1996 (Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 88–114). I did not repeat them here.

⁶⁰⁷ Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 31–32.

⁶⁰⁸ Cited in Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 91.

but he does not discuss the reasons behind it.⁶⁰⁹ Luce almost repeated Shaban's argument but added that sending forces to Khurasan was Mu'āwiya's decision to reduce the pressure on Iraq because of "overcrowding and population pressure experienced in Basra and Kufa".⁶¹⁰ However, Luce does not give any source for his presumption. To understand the true reasons behind the migration to Khurasan, we need to revisit the primary sources.

Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī provide some information on this migration led by a certain al-Ḥarithī (d. 53/674). The migrants crossed the provinces of Khuzistan, Fars, and Kirman to reach Khurasan. It was a journey of almost 2,500 km via the Zagros mountains and the great desert of Kirman.⁶¹¹ The journey and their settlement in Khurasan took place over more than two years.⁶¹² Pourshariati, who has discussed their settlement in detail, has argued that the migrants did not settle in Inner Khurasan but in Outer Khurasan, where its "topographical characteristics" made it "conducive to a tribal way of life."⁶¹³ Inner Khurasan was not comparable to the fertile inland delta of Marw, which had the capacity of feeding around 500,000 people.⁶¹⁴ Furthermore, the Marw oasis and its main city were heavily fortified, which made it an excellent place to stay for the new forces.⁶¹⁵ The settlement in the Marw region possibly had yet another reason for connecting these events to an earlier discussion in this chapter. Inner Khurasan was the territory of the *kanārang* of Tus, who had an old agreement with Ibn 'Āmir reported by al-Ya'qūbī and other historians mentioned earlier. Probably, they were not supposed to settle in his territory. In any case, the settlement sent a clear message to the locals: the migrants came there to stay permanently. The settlement of the newcomers was not peaceful. The Hephthalites objected to their presence.⁶¹⁶ The migrant forces fought them, particularly with the people of Amul and Zam, the two strategic crossing points on the Amu Darya.⁶¹⁷ Finally, they settled in Outer Khurasan.

A question that remains to be answered: Why did Ziyād send the migrants to Khurasan? Al-Dināwarī reports that Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw, fled to Abarshahr, but its residents did

⁶⁰⁹ Dennet, *Conversion and the Poll Tax*, 106–107. Pourshariati has rejected Dennet's argument (Pourshariati "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 88).

⁶¹⁰ Luce, "Frontier Process," 123.

⁶¹¹ The distance is 2,581 km based on the Google Map (accessed on 22 December 2020).

⁶¹² Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 410.

⁶¹³ Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 116.

⁶¹⁴ La Vaissière, "The 'Abbāsīd Revolution in Marw," 113–119.

⁶¹⁵ Thanks to John Haldon, who highlighted this issue in an online conversation organised by the EMCO team on 23 November 2020 at Leiden University.

⁶¹⁶ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 237.

⁶¹⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410.

not let him in.⁶¹⁸ This happened before the Arab Muslim migrants arrived in the region. Being not welcomed, he decided to negotiate directly with the Arab Muslims. Al-Balādhurī mentions that Māhūy then went to Kufa to meet ‘Alī, who interceded on his behalf, writing a letter to the local elites of Khurasan asking them to cooperate with Māhūy. Al-Dināwarī and al-Balādhurī do not explain why Māhūy left Marw, but their report shows that something important must have happened that forced him to leave Marw. Māhūy’s move to Kufa might also have been related to the return of Yazdgird’s son Peroz, who tried to re-establish the Sasanian empire, at least in the east. Since Māhūy was responsible for Yazdgird’s death, he might have feared the revenge of the Sasanian King’s son. That Peroz’s attempts were partially successful – and Māhūy’s fear of his power not unwarranted – is clear from the re-emergence of Sasanian structures in Khurasan around this time. In 657, some Sasanian administrators (‘*āmīl kasrā*’) re-emerged in Nishapur and the Sasanian administration was re-established in parts of Khurasan.⁶¹⁹ As already mentioned, the *kārinids* rose up against the Arab Muslims around the same time, and Ibn Khāzim had a hard time putting them down. The Hephthalites, allies of the *kāranids*, also supported Peroz.⁶²⁰ Possibly, the Hephthalites decided not to support Māhūy, even though they had worked together with him in the past, because he had made a peace treaty with the Arab Muslims and provided them with local accommodation. This change in the political-military situation in Khurasan surely lies behind Māhūy flight from Marw.

The Chinese sources elucidate the political situation and show why Ziyād sent such an army to Khurasan. The *Tang Shu* (“History of the Tang”) mentions:

In the first year of the Longshuo’s reign [i.e., 661], Peroz sent letters/words [to the Tang court] saying that he was constantly invaded by the Arabs (*Dāshī/Tāzī*), and thus he asked for help. The emperor ordered Wang Mingyuan, the chief of the Nanyan region in the Longzhau district as the envoy to the Western Regions (*xiyu*). Wang set up a new administrative arrangement in the region. He allocated the Ji Ling city [Zaranj in Sistan] as the Persian Protectorate (*dudufu*) to Peroz as the Protectorate General of that region. Since then, Peroz sent embassies several times with tributes to the emperor.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 149.

⁶¹⁹ O. G. Bol’shakov, *Istoria xalifata* (Moskva: Vostochnaja Literatura, 1998), 3: 45. Also, see Domenico Agostini and Sören Stark, “Zāwulistān, Kāwulistān and the Land Bosī 波斯 – on the question of a Sasanian Court-in-Exile in the Southern Hindukush,” *Studia Iranica* 45 (2016): 18; Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 78–79.

⁶²⁰ Grenet, “Regional Interaction,” 210.

⁶²¹ *Tang Shu*, 111–112. Thanks to Shuqi Jia, who read and translated the Chinese text for me. For more information on the Sasanian princes in Chinese records, see Yingjun, “Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of Iranian Princes,” 53, and Paolo Daffinà, “La Persia Sassanide Secondo le Fonti Cinesi,” *Rivista Delgi*

The *Tang Shu* report clarifies that Peroz had been constantly active in the region after his father's death in 651 in Marw, but that he was unable to establish Sasanian authority in Khurasan. Peroz's chance of reviving the Sasanian empire decreased shortly before 661. The downfall of the Western Turks in 661 forced him to appeal to the Tang emperor for help. What kind of assistance he received from the Tang emperor is not clear. Given the far distance between China and Zaranj in Sistan, it is difficult to assume that the Tang forces accompanied Peroz to Zaranj, but it is possible that he was assisted financially. That would have allowed him to recruit local forces for his cause. In any case, it reflects the Tang's interest in keeping the power balance in the region by helping an anti-Umayyad force. Domenico Agostini and Sören Stark, who studied the relevant Chinese chronicles and the Persian apocalyptic texts, argued that Peroz's frequent contacts with the Tang emperor after 661 reflect "his increasingly difficult stand against the encroaching Muslim armies in Sistan."⁶²² Conversely, Ziyād's decision to increase the Arab Muslim military presence in Khurasan, probably responded to Peroz's continuing activities in the east.⁶²³ However, Peroz returned to China in 673 (or 674) and died there in 678.⁶²⁴ His return to China may have been related to the fact that he could not continue fighting the new forces which came from Iraq.⁶²⁵

Ziyād's policy restored Marw's central position in the region. Once again, Marw became the main military commanding zone to defend the empire—this time for the Umayyads—from invasions that came from the northeast. It turned Outer Khurasan into the largest Arab Muslim settlement east of the Euphrates. It facilitated military campaigns in Sogdiana via western Bactria for the next three decades. Ziyād's policy recalls the Sasanian strategy of settling forces to defend the eastern frontier.⁶²⁶ However, Ziyād's policies to take full control of Khurasan for Umayyad strategic purposes, were incomplete by his death in 53/672. Nevertheless, he helped to establish Umayyad authority in Outer Khurasan.

Studi Orientali 57 (1983): 121–170. For discussion on Wang Mingyuan's mission, see Chavannes, "Documents," 156.

⁶²² Agostini and Stark "Zāwulistān, Kāwulistan," 18.

⁶²³ Haug also reached the same conclusion (Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94).

⁶²⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94.

⁶²⁵ Peroz's activities were continued by his eldest son Narse. In 679, the Tang emperor sent him to the western regions with a Chinese army. However, helping Narse was not on the Chinese agenda. The Chinese wanted to destroy the Turkic confederation in Suyab. Being disappointed with the Chinese who withdrew their supports, Narse remained possibly in eastern Bactria till 708. Narse could not make a regional alliance against the Umayyads and had to return to China. Possibly, the Sasanians still had a court in exile in southern parts of the Hindukush until 747, before the Abbasid's takeover of the eastern regions. The Sasanian descendants tried their best to take back their lost empire to the last moment. See Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94; Agostini and Stark, "Zāwulistān, Kāwulistan," 30–33; Yingjun, "Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of," 54.

⁶²⁶ See chapter three, section 3.2.1.

Following the endless back and forth between greater political entities attempting to establish direct control in the region and local rulers desiring political autonomy, local Arab rulers always looked for opportunities to increase their position at the expense of the Umayyad regime. The second *fitna* and the far distance from Iraq and Syria created room for some Arabian tribal leaders who had been settled in Khurasan to establish *de facto* rule in Khurasan.⁶²⁷ Shortly after their settlement, they were absorbed into Khurasan, and created another independently ruled region among many other existing political groups. That is the subject of the following section.

3.3.3 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim's *de facto* independence in Khurasan

Between 53–62/675–681, the Umayyad governors used the new migrant forces to raid the Bukhara region from their base in Marw.⁶²⁸ However, they did not take the short route from Marw to Bukhara for unknown reasons. Instead, they went southward along Marw al-Rūd, traversed the kingdom of Guzgan, Balkh, and crossed the Amu Darya and the Iron Gate in Chaghaniyan. The western Bactrian rulers did not resist the newcomers who crossed into their territories.⁶²⁹ Possibly, the Umayyads' focus on Sogdiana was the reason. Concentrating on Sogdiana was, in fact, shifting the geography of war and raid to the region outside Bactria. Similarly, the focus on plundering Sogdiana required more energy and time, which would divert the Umayyads' attention from establishing any garrison, planning for settlement in Bactria, or fighting with its local rulers. At the same time, the focus on Sogdiana would reduce tribal rivalries among the new migrants in Khurasan as it re-directed their energies and united them for war and raids. But that did not last long.

Serious tensions broke out among the tribal leaders in Khurasan with the second *fitna*. Parties aligned along old coalitions that had existed in the region, combined with rivalries that existed throughout the empire. The *fitna* divided people along the two conflictive poles: that of 'Abd Allāh b. Zubayr (r. 65–73/684–692) centred in the Hijaz, and 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 66–86 /685–705), who was stationed in Syria. In Khurasan, the tensions also had a tribal dimension. The tribal conflicts were between the tribe of Bakr b. Wā'il, who had control of some areas in Herat; the tribe of Qays, that was stationed in Nishapur and had good relations with its local ruler; and the tribe of Tamīm, who had settled in the Marw region. The Azdis

⁶²⁷ Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 101.

⁶²⁸ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 3: 314–316.

⁶²⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410–412.

lived in Marw, but they were a small group. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim represented the Qays but allied with the Tamīm against Bakr and Azd.⁶³⁰ Salm b. Ziyād (d. 73/692) represented the Umayyads. Ibn Khāzim claimed Khurasan and competed with Salm over its control.⁶³¹ So, on the one side, there was Ibn Khāzim with his supporters from Qays and Tamīm. On the other, there were Bakr and Azd, who rivalled Ibn Khāzim. Nishapur, Herat, and Marw, which were areas of political tension earlier, now became areas of political rivalry between Arab tribesmen who settled in Khurasan.

The warriors of Bakr made the first move and objected to Ibn Khāzim, who was in Nishapur. Apparently, he enjoyed the tribute from Nishapur. They allegedly said: “how could he eat Khurasan without us?”⁶³² The people of Bakr fought Ibn Khāzim in Nishapur and then allied with the Hephthalites of Quhistan.⁶³³ That recalls the alliance between the *kārin* family and the Hephthalites against the *kanārang* of Tus discussed earlier. However, Ibn Khāzim ruthlessly destroyed Bakr’s military forces and appointed his son Muḥammad over Herat, which was the territory of the tribe of Bakr.⁶³⁴ Resistance continued and after a series of conflicts, Ibn Khāzim established his authority over the Arabian tribal leaders in Khurasan.⁶³⁵ He also voluntarily supported Ibn Zubayr against ‘Abd al-Malik.⁶³⁶ That dragged Khurasan into a wider conflict.

Though the tribal war between Ibn Khāzim and his rivals mostly engulfed Inner and Outer Khurasan, it also impacted western Bactria. Ibn Khāzim took Balkh in 67–68/686–687 surely to quell opposing powers and confirm his own. However, he did not go beyond Balkh, indicating that the tribal conflicts did not involve the regions beyond Balkh.⁶³⁷ The reaction of western Bactrian rulers to the tribal conflicts among the Arab Muslims is not fully known. A contemporary Bactrian document shows that an anonymous *ser* (σηρο) of the Turks ruled the Gaz region to the south of Balkh.⁶³⁸ Other contemporary Bactrian documents from Rob and

⁶³⁰ For tribal rivalry in Khurasan, see Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, 411–413; Al-‘Afnān, “Al-qabāyil al-‘Arabiyya fī Khurāsān,” 124–126; Luce, “Frontier Process,” 142–144.

⁶³¹ Clifford Edmund Bosworth, “Salm b. Ziyād b. Abīhi,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com> (accessed on 20 May 2021).

⁶³² Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 414; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ahsrāf*, 12: 310–313.

⁶³³ Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 105.

⁶³⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 102–103; Al-Ṭabarī refers to a poem saying that Ibn Khāzim ruthlessly killed 8,000 soldiers from the tribe of Bakr (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 496); Luce mentions that many of the Bakr people fled to Sistan after this massacre (Luce, “Frontier Process,” 143).

⁶³⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 489–490.

⁶³⁶ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2: 168.

⁶³⁷ Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics* 1: 257; Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 103–104.

⁶³⁸ Bactrian document no. S in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 94–96; For the term *σηρο* on coins, see Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 2: 521–22.

Kadagstan show that these regions were ruled by their local rulers without political disruptions.⁶³⁹ However, the numismatic evidence from Guzgan shows that Arab-Sasanian coins countermarked with the name of Skag, the king of Guzgan, circulated in local exchange.⁶⁴⁰ The countermark revalidated these coins and made them acceptable, indicating an economic connection between the king of Guzgan and the Arab Muslims in Khurasan.

The alliance between the Qays and Tamīm did not last long. Ibn Khāzim did not share power with them but kept all matters firmly in the hands of his own tribe of Qays.⁶⁴¹ At the same time, Ibn Zubayr and ‘Abd al-Malik each looked for loyal supporters in the eastern regions. Khurasan had a large Arab Muslim population that could be involved in the second *fitna*. Ibn Zubayr had supporters in the east and Ibn Khāzim had already expressed his support on his own accord.⁶⁴² Once Iraq was secured for ‘Abd al-Malik, he sent a letter to Ibn Khāzim offering him Khurasan’s governorship for seven or ten years in exchange for his support. For Ibn Khāzim, accepting ‘Abd al-Malik’s offer would have been equal to losing his independent position in Khurasan because he had never been appointed by ‘Abd al-Malik. In fact, Ibn Khāzim saw himself as no less important a ruler than ‘Abd al-Malik. Ibn Khāzim rejected it and forced the messenger to eat ‘Abd al-Malik’s letter as a gesture of utter contempt for its sender.⁶⁴³

To expand his influence in Khurasan, ‘Abd al-Malik applied a policy of “divide and rule”. Khalīfa b. Khayyāt mentions that ‘Abd al-Malik next sent a letter to Bukayr b. Washāh (d. 77–78/696–697), saying: “if you kill or oust Ibn Khāzim from Khurasan, then you will be the governor.”⁶⁴⁴ Bukayr was the ideal candidate for that mission. He was from the Tamīm tribe and served as the chief of the guards (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) of Muḥammad, Ibn Khāzim’s son in Herat. ‘Abd al-Malik’s suggestion was a great opportunity for Bukayr. He accepted ‘Abd al-Malik’s overlordship, mobilised the Tamīmīs, and killed Ibn Khāzim in 72/691.⁶⁴⁵ With the

⁶³⁹ Bactrian documents no. Jg and Ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 134–35, 138–39, and documents no. R, S, Ss, T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 92–93, 94–96, 96–97, 98–103.

⁶⁴⁰ This coin has the name of Zhulad as well. Malik, *Arab-Sasanian numismatics*, 2: 462–63; Vondrovec, *Coins of Iranian Huns*, 2: 534.

⁶⁴¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 593–98.

⁶⁴² Numismatics evidence from Fars suggests the local rulers of Fars and Kirman supported Ibn Zubayr. Coins with the Middle Persian language (*’mwl y wylwysnyk’an*), an equivalent for the *amīr al-mu’minin*, were issued in his name in 63/682 (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 28).

⁶⁴³ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 415; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 831; Al-Ya’qūbī mentions that Ibn Khāzim burned the letter and mixed it with water, and then forced the messenger to eat it (al-Ya’qūbī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2: 190).

⁶⁴⁴ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 295; Al-Bal’amī also says that ‘Abd al-Malik asked Bukayr to kill Ibn Khāzim and represent the caliph in Khurasan (al-Bal’amī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 781).

⁶⁴⁵ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 415–416; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 832–34.

death of Ibn Khāzim, his *de facto* independent rule in the region collapsed. Bukayr practically acted as an autonomous governor, though he nominally recognised ‘Abd al-Malik’s overlordship.

The tribal rivalries did not end after Ibn Khāzim’s death. To end the conflicts, some tribal leaders (*wujūh ahl Khurāsān*) informed ‘Abd al-Malik about the political situation and emphasised that Khurasan’s as the eastern frontier (*thaghr al-mashriq*) was precarious, and asked for a Qurayshi leader who could end the tribal conflicts in Khurasan. They expected that a Qurayshi leader, who was not part of the tribal political conflicts in Khurasan, could bring political stability to the region. That means the tribal leaders would not accept the authority of anyone except a Qurayshi leader (*illā rajul min Quraysh*) who was not involved in tribal rivalries.⁶⁴⁶

In response to the Khurasani leaders, ‘Abd al-Malik appointed Umayya b. ‘Abd Allāh (d. 87/706) over Khurasan. Umayya arrested and killed Bukayr in 77/696. Bukayr had been borrowing money from Sogdian merchants in Marw. Fearing that Bukayr was raising money to raid and establish independent rule in Sogdiana with the aid of Arab Muslim forces, this seems to have motivated Umayya’s killing of Bukayr.⁶⁴⁷ At the same time, the Sogdian merchants of Marw saw the presence of Arab Muslims as a unique opportunity to enhance and expand their trade interests in the region by funding the Arab Muslims and encouraging them to conquer Sogdiana.⁶⁴⁸ Bukayr’s death allowed Umayya to establish Marwānid authority in Outer Khurasan, but it did not remove Ibn Khāzim’s family entirely.

3.3.4 The kingdom of Mūsā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim in Tirmidh

Ibn Khāzim’s son Mūsā went to Tirmidh in northern Bactria and founded his independent rule. The kingdom of Mūsā in Tirmidh was the outcome of the political situation in the region. The tribal leaders of Marw had submitted to the Marwānid authority. Marw was not safe for Mūsā after his father’s death, so he moved to Sogdiana with the treasure he carried from Marw. Al-Ṭabarī, whose report is the main source of information on Mūsā, says that Mūsā’s attempt to ally with the Sogdian rulers failed and that Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarkand, did not allow him

⁶⁴⁶ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 416; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 860; Asking for a Qurayshi representative to end the tribal conflicts in Khurasan is highly important for understanding the reason behind sending the Abbasid’s missionaries to Khurasan by the Abbasid Imam Muḥammad b. ‘Alī.

⁶⁴⁷ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 860–62.

⁶⁴⁸ Étienne de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders : A History*, trans. James Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 273–76; Also, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 107.

to stay in his territory. It is said that thieves (*al-ṣ'ālik*) had joined Mūsā, which provided enough reason for Ṭarkhūn to reject him. The report of *al-ṣ'ālik* joining Mūsā can be simply a mechanism to dehumanise the rebellions in the later Arabic narratives.⁶⁴⁹ Al-Ṭabarī also says that a companion of Mūsā killed the Sogdian champion of Samarkand, and that kindled Ṭarkhūn's anger. In any case, Mūsā's attempt to take the city of Kish also failed, but Ṭarkhūn allowed him to go to Tirmidh.⁶⁵⁰

Tirmidh was ruled by the *Tirmidh-shāh*, who had enemies among the local elites in Tirmidh. An unidentified member of the elites from Tirmidh received Mūsā warmly. He wanted to remove the *Tirmidh-shāh* by the hands of Mūsā doubtlessly to further his own interests. With the advice of that elite person, Mūsā visited the *Tirmidh-shāh*, presented him with gifts and acted like a servant, and in return, the *Tirmidh-shāh* invited Mūsā and his men to a banquet arranged in his palace. At the end of the feast, Mūsā refused to leave the palace, defeated the palace guards and forced *Tirmidh-shāh* to leave the city. He then took control of the city. Whether Mūsā and his elite informer continued to work together is not told. The humiliated *Tirmidh-shāh* turned to the Turks who refused to help him. He then turned to Umayya b. 'Abd Allāh the Umayyad governor of Khurasan, who granted his support. However, Mūsā defeated the forces of the governor of Khurasan sent to help the *Tirmidh-shāh*. Seeing Mūsā's victory, the Turks decided to try and take back Tirmidh from Mūsā, but he defeated them too.⁶⁵¹ Mūsā's victories over the Umayyads and the Turks enabled him to turn Tirmidh into his area of political control and continue as the king of Tirmidh for twelve years. The kingdom of Tirmidh is a good example of local power politics in which the Arab Muslims were just another political player. The news of Mūsā's kingdom in Tirmidh and the governor's inability to suppress it echoed in Iraq and Syria and urged 'Abd al-Malik to embark on a new policy that added to the political complexity in Khurasan. That was to send the Muhallabids to Khurasan.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ Hanna-Lena-Hageman discussed the importance of this issue to understand how the Muslim writers looked back at the rebellion that occurred two or three centuries before they compiled their works (personal Communication, 20 December 2020); Peter Webb discussed *al-ṣ'ālik* and its meaning in Arabic poetries (Peter Webb, *The Arab Thieves -al-Maqrīzī's "luṣūṣ al-'Arab" Al-Maqrīzī's al-Ḥabar 'anal-baṣār v, Sections 1–2: The Arab Thieves* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

⁶⁵⁰ Al-Balādhurī does not elaborate on it but gives a short narrative on Mūsā (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417–419); Al-Ṭabarī gives detailed information on Mūsā (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1145–1164).

⁶⁵¹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417–419; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1145–1149.

⁶⁵² I use the Muhallabids for al-Muhallab b. Abī Sufra, his sons and relatives. It is an Anglicised form of the Arabic *al-muhālaba* mentioned by al-Sullāmī (al-Sullāmī, *Akhhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 100).

3.3.5 The Muhallabids between Mūsā and the Umayyads

The political situation in Khurasan motivated ‘Abd al-Malik to appoint al-Muhallab b. Abī Šufra (d. 82/701), a senior leader from the tribe of Azd with solid military and political experience, over Khurasan.⁶⁵³ Al-Muhallab had a long and impressive career. His father is said to have been a Persian weaver from the island of Khark in the Persian Gulf who had migrated to Basra, where he was accepted as an Azdi member.⁶⁵⁴ Al-Muhallab had already served under the governors of Khurasan before the second *fitna* in which he supported Ibn Zubayr.⁶⁵⁵ Later, however, he shifted his loyalty and supported ‘Abd al-Malik. The tribe of Azd remained loyal to the Umayyads and helped them in their difficult times.⁶⁵⁶ He was known for his generosity, loyalty, capability in managing difficult situations, and good relations with ‘Abd al-Malik.⁶⁵⁷ He also was on good terms with al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 95/714) the most famous Marwānīd governor of Iraq.⁶⁵⁸ In al-Ḥajjāj’s words, narrated by al-Ṭabarī, the Muhallabids were the “guardians of the borders” (*ḥumāt al-thughūr*).⁶⁵⁹ ‘Abd al-Malik’s decision to send al-Muhallab, one of his most loyal and capable generals to Khurasan, shows that the political situation was fragile and needed special attention.

Upon his arrival in Khurasan in 79–80/698–699, al-Muhallab went to Balkh, from where he crossed the Amu Darya and besieged the city of Kish, which belonged to Ṭarkhūn the king of Samarkand. The reason behind this campaign is not clear. However, after two years of fruitless fighting in Kish, the threat of the Sogdians, and his hostility with the Muḍr tribe, al-Muhallab was forced to make peace with the ruler of Kish, take tribute (*fidya*) and return to Marw. He died on the way at Zaghul in Marw al-Rūd in 82/701 and was buried there.⁶⁶⁰ On his deathbed, he appointed his son Yazīd (d. 102/720), whose position was confirmed by al-Ḥajjāj.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵³ Al-Dīnāwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 289.

⁶⁵⁴ Patricia Crone, “al-Muhallab b. Abī Šufra,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com> (accessed on 20 May 2021).

⁶⁵⁵ Martin Hinds, *An Early Islamic Family from Oman: Al-‘Awtabī’s Account of the Mullabids* (University of Manchester, 1991), 49; Also, see Syed Muḥammad Yūsuf, “The life of Al-Muhallab b. Abi Šufra” (PhD diss., Aligarh University, 2002).

⁶⁵⁶ Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 400.

⁶⁵⁷ Hinds, *An Early Islamic Family from Oman*, 92–93.

⁶⁵⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1033; For their friendly relation reflected in most recent work, see Petra Sijpesteijn, “Closing Ranks: Discipline and Loyalty in the Umayyad Army,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 469–499, and Hnna-Lena-Haggeman, “Was Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī a Khārijite? Rebellion in the Early Marwānīd Period,” *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 445–468.

⁶⁵⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1033.

⁶⁶⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1040–1041.

⁶⁶¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1085.

Al-Muhallab's campaign in Kish and Yazīd's presence in Khuttal did not effect Mūsā's kingdom negatively. In fact, his power increased over the course of time. Many soldiers of the beaten "Peacock Army" (*jaysh al-ṭawāwīs*), the elite warriors of Iraq led by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath al-Kindī (d. 85/704) in Sistan, joined Mūsā in Tirmidh. These soldiers took refuge in Tirmidh because they refused al-Hajjāj's command to fight the king of Kabul (*al-Rutbīl*). They crossed Herat and Guzgan without being stopped by Yazīd or the local western Bactrian rulers. Some warriors from the Tamīm, Qays, Rabī'a, and Yaman also joined Mūsā. Among them were some people who had fought Mūsā's father but now joined Mūsā to fight against Yazīd.⁶⁶² Two Sogdian brothers named Ḥurayth and Thābit, the sons of Qutba, joined Mūsā with their personal troops, and their Arab allies from Marw. Ḥurayth supported al-Muhallab and helped him in his campaign in Kish, but he was punished by al-Muhallab later in Marw for his secret contact with the Sogdians. Feeling unsafe in Marw, the Sogdian brothers joined Mūsā.⁶⁶³ The coming of all these different people to Tirmidh provided Mūsā with a great military force.

Despite all these developments, the Muhallabids did not bother Mūsā while he was an independent ruler and his kingdom turned into a safe place for anti-Umayyads in the east. Al-Ṭabarī shows that the Muhallabids' reluctance to obstruct Mūsā was not out of fear or respect, but rather had practical reasons. According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Muhallab told his sons that as long as Mūsā was alive, he was considered a threat to the Marwanids, and for that reason, the Muhallabids could continue as the guardians of the frontier region of Khurasan. However, once Mūsā was removed, then the Muhallabids would be dismissed from Khurasan because the anti-Umayyad threat would also disappear.⁶⁶⁴ Whether this event took place or not, al-Ṭabarī assigns al-Muhallab sound political insight, namely that the presence of Mūsā as independent ruler in the region ensured his family's position. They were needed to keep the independent ruler in check to secure the border as long as Mūsā remained an unreliable ally. In other words, Mūsā was a threat to the Marwānid Caliphate, but his existence was an opportunity for the Muhallabids to continue as the governors of Khurasan. Though they were loyal to the caliph, the Muhallabids' political interest was not necessarily the same as that of the caliph's.

The kingdom of Mūsā in Tirmidh ended when Yazīd turned against the Sogdian brothers who had joined Mūsā. For unknown reasons, Yazīd killed relatives of the Sogdian

⁶⁶² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1045–1046, 1055–1105–1125, 1152.

⁶⁶³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1081–1082, 1108–1111.

⁶⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1151–52.

brothers Hurayth and Thābit and seized their properties. Thābit -who had been very respected by the locals, using his name in the taking of oaths- took refuge with Ṭarkhūn the king of Samarkand, who sheltered him. In response to Yazīd's action, Ṭarkhūn called for a regional alliance against Yazīd. As a result, local kings from Bukhara, Chaghaniyan, a certain al-Subul (Tr. *Sülü*), and the Hephthalite *nizak* from Badghis in western Bactria joined Ṭarkhūn. However, Ṭarkhūn did not initiate attacks on Yazīd, but sent the Sogdian brothers and the forces to Tirmidh. At the same time, Mūsā was supported by members from the tribes of the Tamīm, Rabī'a, Qays, and Yaman.⁶⁶⁵ This was the first, but certainly not the last, regional alliance in which the Sogdians, the Hephthalites, northern Bactrians, and some Arabs cooperated to remove the Umayyad governor from Khurasan.

The Sogdian brothers revealed their interest in replacing Yazīd with Mūsā. That the local regional forces joined out of resentment against Umayyad rule would in fact agree that Mūsā become their overlord seems, however, unlikely. The sources place this in the mouth of Mūsā's advisors, who allegedly warned him that even if they defeated Yazīd, then the caliph won't remain silent and would send another administrator to Khurasan. In other words, they should maintain their relations with Yazīd. They also insisted that the Sogdians would not allow Mūsā to rule there anymore if he removed Yazīd. Mūsā followed his advisors and argued that it is better for him to remain in Tirmidh. Mūsā's reluctance to fight Yazīd and his rejection of the Sogdians' plan to replace him with Yazīd reflects his mistrust of the Sogdians. It also shows that Mūsā was aware that Yazīd was not interested to fight him. Remaining neutral was to their benefit. Mūsā's local supporters might have resented his stance, and Ṭarkhūn and other local rulers returned to their areas. Shortly after, internal rivalry broke out between Mūsā and the Sogdian brothers, and the alliance failed. Seeing it as an opportunity, the Hephthalites and the Turks tried to take Tirmidh from Mūsā and in a series of wars, Hurayth was killed. Later, Thābit was murdered in a plot arranged by Mūsā's men against the latter's will.⁶⁶⁶ This created anger among the Sogdian allies of Mūsā.

The Sogdians eventually managed to remove Mūsā with help from Marw. A change in the governorship of Khurasan accelerated it. Shortly after the death of the Sogdian brothers, Yazīd was dismissed by al-Ḥajjāj and his brother al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Muhallab was appointed as governor of Khurasan.⁶⁶⁷ Al-Ḥajjāj was unhappy with Yazīd as the latter often ignored al-

⁶⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1152.

⁶⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1153–1161.

⁶⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1161.

Ḥajjāj because he followed the caliph's orders and not al-Ḥajjāj. Ibn A'ṭham al-Kūfī mentions that Yazīd was a great governor and often rejected al-Ḥajjāj's orders to conquer Sogdiana. He adds that al-Ḥajjāj brought all Arab Muslims of Iraq under his control but failed to impose his will upon Yazīd.⁶⁶⁸ Unlike Yazīd, al-Mufaḍḍal was not able to show strong opposition to al-Ḥajjāj. In contrast, he wanted to show he was the right man for the job and was loyal to al-Ḥajjāj. Hence, al-Mufaḍḍal decided to remove Mūsā.⁶⁶⁹ He dispatched the forces of Khurasan led by 'Uthmān b. Mas'ūd, the cousin of the Sogdian brothers. 'Uthmān was a Sogdian and wanted to take revenge on behalf of his cousins who were killed by Mūsā. Volunteers who joined them from the Marw region were registered in the *dīwān al-jund* (army register of stipends) and received salaries.⁶⁷⁰ Al-Mufaḍḍal also ordered his brother Mudrik who was in Balkh, to join 'Uthmān. Possibly, this was the first time that the forces of Khurasan were led not by an Arab Muslim general, but by a local Sogdian who served the Umayyad governor of Khurasan.

In Balkh, 'Uthmān called for the formation of a regional alliance against Mūsā. Ṭarkhūn and al-Subul joined 'Uthmān, indicating they preferred to join a Sogdian and not assist Mūsā, who was their former ally but refused to act against Yazīd. For unknown reasons, the Hephthalites did not join them. Mūsā's bravery in the war did not help either, and he and many of his Arab supporters were killed by 'Uthmān's men as atonement for the deaths of Thābit and Hurayth. The city of Tirmidh was given to Mudrik, who handed it over to 'Uthmān.

Al-Mufaḍḍal's act against Mūsā was contrary to al-Muhallab's advice, who understood the delicate balance of power in the frontier region of Khurasan. As said earlier, al-Muhallab warned his sons that they must not disturb Mūsā because the presence of Mūsā would justify the continuation of the Muhallabids' governorship over Khurasan. Al-Ṭabarī explains that al-Mufaḍḍal had acted in order to show off his loyalty to al-Ḥajjāj (*arāda al-yahẓi 'inda al-Ḥajjāj*) and his capability as governor to eradicate a rebel.⁶⁷¹ In other words, Mūsā's death was a political gift given by the governor of Khurasan to al-Ḥajjāj. However, we will see that it caused the removal of the Muhallabids from Khurasan. The death of Mūsā was an offer to the Sogdians who wanted to take revenge. Mūsā's removal ended the first Arab Muslim kingdom established in Bactria. It also brought Tirmidh under the control of the Sogdian ally of al-

⁶⁶⁸ Ibn al-A'ṭham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 131.

⁶⁶⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1161.

⁶⁷⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 12: 313.

⁶⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1161–64.

Mufaḍḍal. The story of Mūsā raises an important question. If the Muhallabids were aware of the region's delicate local political situation, how did they interact with western Bactrian rulers? The following section will look at this issue.

3.3.6 *The Muhallabids and Bactrian local rulers*

The Muhallabids followed a general policy towards Bactrian rulers. They wanted local rulers to recognise their overlordship and pay them tribute. Therefore, they did not hesitate to exploit any opportunity provided by local political rivalries that would benefit them. The example of Khuttal shows their policy. As already pointed out, al-Muhallab led a campaign in Kish to the north of the Amu Darya. His presence was seen as an opportunity by some elites in Khuttal, the region located in the northeast of Bactria. According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Subul, the king of Khuttal, had a cousin who wanted to remove the king but needed outside help. So, he visited al-Muhallab and invited him to conquer Khuttal. In response, al-Muhallab sent his son Yazīd with troops to take Khuttal on behalf of the king's cousin.

The king of Khuttal's reaction was a surprise. He knew the Arab Muslims well, their language, war tactics, and was aware of the alliance between Yazīd and his cousin. Therefore, he played a 'game' that must have astonished Yazīd. The king's forces attacked the enemy, consisting of his cousin and Yazīd's men, while shouting the Arabic *takbīr*. The king's cousin assumed that Yazīd had betrayed him and had turned against him. He decided to fight the attackers, whom he assumed were the Muslims of Yazīd's army. He was, however, captured and killed at the king's order. Seeing this situation, Yazīd visited the king in his fortress in Khuttal, where they concluded a peace treaty. The king paid tribute (*fidya*) to Yazīd, who left Khuttal after that.⁶⁷² Perhaps, in Yazīd's view, it did not matter who ruled Khuttal. All he wanted was a local ally who would pay him tribute. The king provided both. At the same time, the king did not want another force in his region, so by killing his cousin and making peace with Yazīd, he prevented Yazīd's interference.

After Khuttal, Yazīd, and his brother al-Mufaḍḍal succeeding him, attacked Badghis with the aim of subduing the *nizak* of Badghis. Their military operations were done when the *nizak* was away from Badghis. In his absence, the Umayyad forces attacked the *nizak*'s fortress,

⁶⁷² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1040–41.

which forced the *nizak* to make a peace treaty with the Muhallabids.⁶⁷³ As a result, the *nizak* paid tributes, and the Arab Muslim forces left his region. This means the Umayyads did not want to engage in war in the mountains of Badghis.

The numismatic evidence confirms the Muhallabids' overlordship in western Bactria. A few silver dirhams produced in Guzgan reflect the overlordship of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab. They are extremely rare and have no parallel in Umayyad coinage.⁶⁷⁴ They have different legends in Arabic, Bactrian, and Middle Persian, and countermarks on their margin. Possibly, they were part of the hoard that showed up in Kabul in the early nineteenth century which then ended up in different museums and private collections in the United Kingdom and France.⁶⁷⁵ On the obverse of the coin, the name of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, and the legend *bism Allāh al-ʿazīm*, "In the name of God, the great", are written in Arabic. The image of the Sasanian king and the Middle Persian legend are also there. On the reverse, the coins have a unique and rather enigmatic Arabic legend: "struck for *jizya* in Juzjan" (*ḍuriba jizyatan bi-l-Juzjān*). Besides the Arabic writing, the name of Zhulad Guzgan, the local king of Guzgan (r. 80–91/699–711), occurs in Bactrian. The date and the place of mint are written in Middle Persian. The coins are countermarked by a *tamgha* or stamp representing the name of the local kings. While the coins make an unambiguous reference to *jizya*, this term could refer to tribute in a more general sense, and could have been paid as a bulk sum, rather than as a poll tax more specifically, which was imposed as a personal obligation. Whether this coin was minted on the order of Yazīd or of Zhulad king of Guzgan for the payment of tribute or taxes is not fully understood.⁶⁷⁶ In any case, with their combination of names and languages the coins minted in Guzgan witness on the one hand the diverse but integrated character of the region, while the name of Yazīd and specific sentences in Arabic as well as the administrative fiscal term indicate the participation of Yazīd as overlord in this fragmented political landscape.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1129–31, 1144; Al-Balʿamī mentions that Yazīd sent some spies to Badghis to see when the *nizak* leave his fortress (al-Balʿamī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 812).

⁶⁷⁴ Two of them were in auction on 22 October 2020, in Sotheby's, in the Upper Grosvenor Gallery, The Aeolian Hall, Bloomfield Place New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA.

⁶⁷⁵ Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."

⁶⁷⁶ Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."; Malik has published this coin, but he does not offer any solution to that (Mehdi Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1, 71–72); For the coins of Zhulad Guzgan, see Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 531–32, Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians*, 180.

⁶⁷⁷ Despite this outstanding reference to *jizya* payments, the Muslim authorities would hardly have tried to enforce a regular and strict tax collection in the mountainous area of western Bactria, where independent rulers remained largely in place. Therefore, these coins cannot be taken as evidence of Umayyad *jizya* imposed on regular people in Guzgan. For Yazīd, this was not only earning income but a prestigious act as he could bring down the powerful local western Bactria princes to their knees. The standing warrior with a spear in full armour on the coin's reverse might represent Yazīd or ʿAbd al-Malik. These coins are very unusual and have no parallel throughout Umayyad numismatic history. Apart from the Guzgan coins, al-Muhallab or his son Yazīd minted an Arab-Sasanian coin in

The Muhallabids commissioned ‘Abd al-Malik’s post-reform coins in Khurasan. Unlike the Arab-Sasanian coins with Sasanian iconography and Middle Persian legend, the post-reform coins had no image and only Arabic text. Joe Cribb, who has studied a coin hoard produced in Guzgan in this period, argued that post-reform dirhams were minted in Guzgan in 79/694–695, precisely one year after these coins were introduced in Syria.⁶⁷⁸ The dirham from Guzgan minted in 79/694–695 has the name of Amber (*αμβηρο*). Possibly, they were minted in Amber, when al-Muhallab was in Khurasan. One year later, the post-reform dirhams were minted in an unknown mint called ‘Tukharistan’ that may not have been a specific location, but perhaps just an indication to imply that the whole region recognised ‘Abd al-Malik’s overlordship. In the year 82/701, post-reform dirhams were minted in Balkh, and this was before the death of al-Muhallab in Marw al-Rūd. Therefore, the post-reform coins must have been minted at the order of al-Muhallab to show his loyalty to the Marwānid caliph only and were not intended to circulate for commercial use. In Cribb’s view, these coins were produced based on copies sent from Syria and were prepared as an “act of prestige”, reflecting the reach of ‘Abd al-Malik’s suzerainty as far as Guzgan and Balkh.⁶⁷⁹ But it is unknown if the actual mint was sent at the request of al-Muhallab, or if the local mint masters produced coins with the names of cities in Bactria.

After all, the Muhallabids’ policy was general. They were not interested in war but invested in infrastructure in Khurasan. They built gardens and palaces and were famous for being generous to the people.⁶⁸⁰ They interacted with local rulers in Guzgan, Badghis, Khuttal, and Balkh, who recognised their overlordship and paid tribute. They did not interfere in local rulers’ internal affairs and often left their areas after taking tributes. The Muhallabids were the true guardians of the eastern borders. During their governorship, Bactria remained in the hands of the local rulers who ruled independently according to the model by now familiar to the region. However, the Umayyads’ policy towards Bactria changed from peaceful cooperation to violent conquest in the second fifty years, which turned Bactrian rulers against the Umayyads. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

78/693 in Marw with a unique legend. Amin Amini, who studied this coin, argued that the Arabic legend “God’s grace” (*barakatun min Allāh*) on the margin replaced *bism Allāh* that used to be added to the margin earlier. The Middle Persian legend “chief of believers” (*rad ī wurrōyišnīgān*) replaced *rad* with *amīr*. Amini adds that this was the last Arab-Sasanian coin minted in Marw (Amin Amini, “Mu’arrifi sikka-yi wizha bā tarāz sikkahā-yi ‘Arab-Sāsānī,” *Shahr-i Kuhan* (2015): 1–2).

⁶⁷⁸ Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”; Al-Dināwarī mentions that ‘Abd al-Malik issued his coins in 74/689–690 (al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 322).

⁶⁷⁹ Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”; Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 338–339.

⁶⁸⁰ Fāmī Hiravī, *Tārīkh-i Herāt*, 7–9.

Conclusion

The first fifty years of the Arab Muslim presence in Khurasan discussed in this chapter can be viewed as a *transitional period* for the conquests of Khurasan. It can be divided into four stages. In the first stage, the Arab Muslims acted as an outside force and were involved in local politics by the *kanārang* of Tus.⁶⁸¹ They restored the *kanārang*'s authority over Nishapur and other areas in Inner Khurasan and received tributes for their achievements. In the second stage, supported by a group of the Sasanian cavalry, the Arab Muslims moved beyond Marw al-Rūd and entered western Bactria. They engaged in war with the Hephthalite forces, but with the help of the locals, they crossed Guzgan and reached Balkh. However, they did not enter eastern Bactria.

The Arab Muslims' involvement in local politics brought them into close contact with local rulers who recognised the Arab Muslims as a potential political and military ally. The peace treaties represented mutual political agreements and provided room for cooperation between them. However, the Arab Muslims did not build any garrisons in the region, and there was no plan for permanent settlement. Unlike in other places in the empire, the Umayyad soldiers did not bring families with them.⁶⁸² Instead, the local rulers in Nishapur and Marw hosted them. Though they changed the local power balance to benefit the *kanārang* of Tus in Inner Khurasan, they did not interfere in Bactrian local politics.⁶⁸³ Hence, there was no reason for the Bactrian rulers to fight them. During these two stages, Khurasan cannot be considered to have been part of the Umayyad empire despite the Arab Muslim presence in the region. Al-Ya'qūbī's list of the provinces that paid taxes during the reign of Mu'āwiya does not include Khurasan, indicating that this was general knowledge.⁶⁸⁴

Numismatic evidence supports this idea. The Arab-Sasanian coins with short legends stating *jayyīd* (excellent, pure, good quality) on the margin were minted in the eastern regions after the death of Yazdgird III. These coins were often said to have been minted in 30/651 in Marw and were taken as a symbol of the conquests of the region.⁶⁸⁵ But, the legend *jayyīd* refers to the quality of the coin and not the authority who minted them. Michael Bates suggested

⁶⁸¹ This supports Pourshariati's argument that the regions controlled by the Parthian nobles did not fight the Arab Muslims. In other words, the Parthians were reluctant to fight the Arab Muslim forces and left the *parsig* rulers of the quarter of the South alone (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 4); Also, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 83.

⁶⁸² Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 78.

⁶⁸³ Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 416–417.

⁶⁸⁴ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 143.

⁶⁸⁵ Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 78.

that the Muslims had no official coins until 35/655, and the first official coins were minted by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir from 42/687 when he was appointed as governor of Basra by Mu‘āwiya.⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, Hodge Mehdi Malik argued that the Arab-Sasanian coins with the name of Ibn ‘Āmir were minted in Marw (*MLW*) in 41/681, which was the second round of his governorship over Basra.⁶⁸⁷ That means Ibn ‘Āmir minted no coins in his name in Khurasan when he was there to help the *kanārang* of Tus. He left Khurasan after that and brought a great amount of tribute from Khurasan. In other words, the Arab Muslims ruled in Marw after they settled there in 51/671 and produced coins. However, they operated as one party amongst many in Bactria and Sogdiana and did not operate as a singular overlord or a sole ruler by minting coins there.

These two stages cannot be called “conquest”. The reason is that the Arab Muslims did not have any pre-planned agenda to conquer Khurasan. They also did not fight with local rulers except in Nishapur, Marw al-Rūd and Guzgan. No garrison was built, no permanent settlement was planned, and no regular taxation was imposed on the locals. The nature of their presence in Khurasan was the result of a “reciprocal agreement” made between them and the *kanārang* of Tus. Instead, they “raided” western Bactria and then “returned” to Inner Khurasan.⁶⁸⁸ These raids cannot be labelled as “conquests”.

The cooperation between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ‘Āmir leads to another significant point: the Arab Muslims’ presence in Khurasan was the result of their playing off local politics well. The Arab Muslim goal was and remained the conquest of the Sasanian quarter of the south, the largest and the richest part of the Sasanian empire. The quarter of the south extended from Iraq to Sistan. The most important battles against the Sasanians happened here, and the Arabians of Bahrayn and Oman also focussed on the Fars region. Sistan was a rich province with access to the southern trade route to India; Khurasan in contrast was far

⁶⁸⁶ Michael Bates, “Coins of ML, 20–32,” published on his Academia.edu page (15 February 2015): 1–6, https://www.academia.edu/6558309/Coins_of_Marw_651_680 (accessed on 7 November 2021).

⁶⁸⁷ Malek, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 253.

⁶⁸⁸ In his PhD dissertation, Luce introduced the term “raid and return” to discuss this period. Luce suggested different stages for the conquest. According to Luce, the “Muslim Umayyad authority in Khurāsān can be divided into three distinctive stages of development. The first stage was one of raids (21–64/641–684) ...its second phase (54–63/673–682) was one of settlement...and third and final stage of development (92–128/715–745) witnessed...a period of misgovernance...”. Luce’s proposed stages help understand the political situation in Umayyad Khurasan. However, he does not consider local politics and its importance in the shaping of the conquest (Luce, “Frontier Process,” 112–113). His terminology “raid and return” was adopted by Haug in his discussion on the conquests of Khurasan. Haug argued that the Arab Muslims did not have an organised and standard army, but various tribal leaders led their men in the battles. Therefore, the nature of the army did not allow any systematic conquests (Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 81); Similarly, Malik argued that the early period was all “raiding expedition designed to secure the payment of tribute.” (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 17).

away and controlled by the Hephthalites and the Turks; fighting them was not easy.⁶⁸⁹ Moreover, the earliest Arab-Sasanian coins were minted not in Khurasan but in Kirman and Sistan in 31/652, and these became the standard for the later Arab-Sasanian coinage in Iran and Iraq supporting the importance of Sistan.⁶⁹⁰ Khurasan became a priority only when Peroz, the son of the Sasanian king Yazdgird III, came to the region to claim his father's lost empire. In response, Ziyād, the governor of Iraq, sent soldiers from Iraq to Khurasan which set in motion the events that led to Khurasan's full submission to Umayyad rule. Once Khurasan became important, Sistan lost its power and became peripheral, allowing the region to become *a centre* for the Khārijites later.⁶⁹¹

In the third stage, the migrants from Iraq were settled in Outer Khurasan. The influx of new people with different languages and cultural identities not only added to the already diverse society of Khurasan, but also allowed the Arab Muslims to become an important political player in the region. At this stage, we can safely speak about the conquest of Outer Khurasan because the Arab Muslims settled not only in the Marw region, but turned it into their centre of power and organised raids from there into Bactria and Sogdiana. However, Inner Khurasan was not marked by the Arab Muslim settlements, though it witnessed tribal wars among the new migrants. Similarly, Bactria was not conquered at this stage but was used only as a safe passage to reach Sogdiana.

In the fourth stage, political tensions increased between the Arabian tribal leaders who had come to Khurasan in the first stage of Arab-Muslim engagement with the region, the tribal leaders who settled there later, and the representatives of the Umayyad empire. Political factionalism and tribal war between the Arab Muslims in Khurasan were the result. The leaders of the tribe of Bakr b. Wā'il allied with the Hephthalites against Ibn Khāzim from the tribe of Qays. Far from the Hijaz, Syria, and Iraq, the second *fitna* and the local politics provided space for Ibn Khāzim and his son Mūsā to establish their rule independent from the Umayyads. Mūsā's kingdom in Tirmidh became a safe place for anti-Umayyad rebels from Sistan and the Sogdians who opposed the Muhallabids. Also, at this stage, Umayyad authority was established by the Muhallabids in Khurasan. However, the Muhallabids' actual control did not extend beyond Marw al-Rūd, meaning even the Umayyads could not really move the Sasanian border

⁶⁸⁹ Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 20–23; Wellhausen also had a similar view and argued that Sistan was the main target of the conquest (Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 413); Also, see Luce, "Frontier as Process," 114.

⁶⁹⁰ Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 21–22.

⁶⁹¹ This issue came out in a personal discussion with Minoru Inaba in October 2019 at Leiden University.

further east. All this shows that the conquests of a frontier region were far more complicated than the way the Arabic narratives (*futūḥ*) framed it.

If, in the first fifty years, Bactria was not conquered, then when was it? The next chapter will discuss the actual conquests of Bactria as they happened during the second fifty years of the Arab Muslim occupation of Khurasan.

Chapter Four: Conquests Through Violence: Second Fifty Years (86–128/705–746)

If you want to be the governor of Khurasan, then mount your horse, hold the lariat strong, beat him so hard that the horse enters the fire, if you can't do this, then go back.⁶⁹²

Introduction

This chapter covers the second fifty years (86–128/705–746) of the Arab Muslim presence in Bactria. This period is characterised by a change in Umayyad policy towards the eastern Iranian regions, namely Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm. Unlike the first fifty years in which the Arab Muslim forces peacefully interacted with local Bactrian rulers and used western Bactria as a safe passage to raid Sogdiana, the new Umayyad policy aimed for direct control over these regions by systematic conquests and their incorporation into the Umayyad empire. The incorporation of these regions would allow the Umayyads to control all main overland trade routes crossed these regions and connect to India, China, and the western parts of the empire. The Umayyads conquered the region by carrying out diplomacy and violence side by side, consolidating their authority by forming a standing army, establishing a network of garrisons within or near the main cities, and appointing administrators in the conquered regions. By focussing on Bactria, this chapter examines how such incorporation was achieved. Similarly, it tries to understand how this new policy interacted with local interests.

Before examining this historical turn, I should add some words about the sources consulted for this chapter. This chapter keeps the areas of political control and local power politics (discussed in chapters two and three) in mind, and I thus rely more on the traditional historical narratives because they allow me to explain the next fifty-year period of the Arab Muslim presence in Khurasan that continued to be fundamentally impacted by local concerns. By reading the Arabic historical narratives with specific attention to the local voices preserved in these reports, I posit answers to the following questions: How did Umayyad policy change towards the eastern Iranian regions, and how did this interact with local interests in creating Umayyad Khurasan?

This chapter attempts to explain the complexity of power dynamics in the region in three parts. I begin with the changes in Umayyad policies towards the East. The new power

⁶⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 52

balance among Arab tribal leaders in Khurasan, the formation of the conquest armies, and the first round of the conquests will be discussed. In the second part, I will focus on Bactrian local rulers' responses to the conquests, and the subsequent Umayyad reaction. In the third part, I will explain the final Bactrian attempts to restore their rule independent of the Umayyads during the political crisis created when the Türgesh Turks went to war with the Umayyads. This part presents the political chaos in which Bactrian local rulers eventually decided to support the caliphate, but not the Umayyad dynasty, and prepared to bring the Abbasids to power.

4.1. The Umayyads' new policy towards the East

In 86/705, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, the governor of Iraq and the East (*al-mashriq*), appointed Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bāhilī (d. 96/715) as governor over Khurasan.⁶⁹³ Qutayba belonged to the tribe of Bāhila, which was part of the Muḍr. Other Arabs considered the Bāhila as an undignified and unworthy tribe.⁶⁹⁴ However, Qutayba's family was known for its loyalty to the Umayyads, and Qutayba's father had helped Ibn Ziyād in Iraq. Before coming to Khurasan, Qutayba proved his loyalty and capability by serving al-Ḥajjāj in Iraq, Sistan, and Rayy.⁶⁹⁵ The appointment of Qutayba with such a background in Khurasan reflected a change in Umayyad policy towards professional administrators who did not have elite backgrounds, but were loyal and capable to carry out administrative duties in Khurasan.⁶⁹⁶ Until that time, the governors of Khurasan had often been relatives of the caliphs or important tribal leaders. Choosing someone solely for his achievements in politics and military affairs started a new chapter. Al-Ḥajjāj was determined to expand the empire in the east and bring local rulers

⁶⁹³ On his biography, see Jean Périer, *Vie d'Al-Ḥadždjād ibn Yousof (41–95 de l'hégire, 661–714 de J.-C.) d'après les sources arabes* (Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, Éditeur, 1904); Shiv Ray Chowdhry, "Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf: an examination of his works and personality" (PhD diss., University of Delhi, 1972); Iḥsān Ṣidqī Al-ʿAmad, *Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, ḥayātih-i wa ārāʾhu al-siyāsīyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Thiqāfa, 1973); Z. I. Oseni, "An Examination of Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī's Major Policies," *Islamic Studies* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 317–327; Pamela Marketa Klasova, "Empire through Language: al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī and the Power of Oratory in Umayyad Iraq" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2018).

⁶⁹⁴ Abī Saʿd ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Samaʿānī, *Al-ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ʿUmar al-Bārūdī (Beirut: Dār al-Janān, 1408/1988), 2: 275.

⁶⁹⁵ J. Hell, "Bāhila," *Encyclopedia of Islam, First Edition*, <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com> (accessed on 16 February 2021).

⁶⁹⁶ Shaban, *The Abbāsīd Revolution*, 63; Appointing Qutayba as the governor of Khurasan shows that the Umayyads changed their policy from relying on high elites to creating a class of professional administrators who did not have an elite background. It recalls the Sasanian reformation and creation of the *dihqān* class. For the Umayyad's policy in bringing up officers from non-elite backgrounds, see Petra Sijpesteijn, "Closing Ranks: Discipline and Loyalty in the Umayyad Army," in *Acts of Rebellion and Revolt in the Early Islamic Caliphate*, ed. Petra Sijpesteijn and Alon Dar, Special Issue, *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 469–499.

residing in it under Umayyad rule. The unification of the eastern regions under the Umayyad banner required both political and military preparations.

The new policy was primarily the result of political stability brought to the western regions of the empire.⁶⁹⁷ The second *fitna* (61–73/680–692) ended with the victory of ‘Abd al-Malik over Ibn Zubayr,⁶⁹⁸ and the suppression of anti-Umayyad rebels in Iraq.⁶⁹⁹ The victory of ‘Abd al-Malik opened a new chapter in the history of the Umayyad period, and this was associated with the physical growth of the empire. To implement imperial expansion in the east and the incorporation of its local rulers, al-Hajjāj sent Qutayba, his most loyal and capable general, to Khurasan.

The expansion of the empire in the east had benefits. It would allow the Umayyads to control the great trade centres in Bactria and Sogdiana. The main overland trade routes between China, India, and Iran crossed Bactria and Sogdiana. Unification of these regions would also bring them within the Umayyad empire and reduce the possibility of any invasions from the steppes that often disturbed the Sasanians in the past. We saw in the previous chapter that the Arab Muslim migration to Khurasan was to secure the region from such kinds of military entrustments. However, achieving these goals was not easy. The conquest of these regions required the loyalty and cooperation of Arab tribal leaders in the frontier region of Khurasan, a standing army, and logistical support. Likewise, consolidating Umayyad authority in the conquered regions and bringing local rulers under Umayyad control needed a network of garrisons. These were significant challenges for Qutayba. In this part, I will explain how Qutayba achieved all these one by one.

4.1.1 Making a new political order in Khurasan

The first challenge was to bring the Arab tribal leaders of Khurasan firmly under the caliphal authority. This required creating a new political order among them to ensure that they did not revolt against the Umayyad caliph. Before Qutayba’s arrival, the Azd and Tamīm were the leading tribes in Khurasan, and they almost exclusively occupied all important offices. In the previous chapter, I explained that the Muhallabids were the most significant obstacle to al-

⁶⁹⁷ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 114.

⁶⁹⁸ For the second *fitna*, see Madelung, *The Succession of Muhammad*; Chase Robinson, *Abd al-Malik: Makers of the Muslim World* (Oxford: OneWorld, 2005).

⁶⁹⁹ For these rebellions, see Ibrāhīm Baydūn, *Min dawlat ‘Umar ilā dawlat ‘Abd al-Malik: dirāsāt fī takawwun al-ijāhāt al-siyyāsiyya fī al-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī* (Beirut: Dār al-Nihdat al-‘Arabiyya, 1411/1991), 250–286.

Ḥajjāj's expansionist aims. The Muhallabids were loyal to 'Abd al-Malik, directly responding to his commands, and ignoring al-Ḥajjāj because they considered themselves senior leaders of the conquests and turned Khurasan into their fiefdom. Moreover, the Muhallabids were not pro-war but pro-peace and supported investment in local infrastructure. Therefore, any political change or military operation in the east had to be done with their consent and cooperation. The death of 'Abd al-Malik and the coming of al-Walīd I (r. 86–96/705–715) to power provided the opportunity for al-Ḥajjāj to take on the Muhallabids because they lost their greatest supporter.⁷⁰⁰ With the help of the new caliph, al-Ḥajjāj managed to dismiss Yazīd b. al-Muhallab from Khurasan and replace him with his half-brother al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Muhallab as a transitional governor. Removing Yazīd from his position allowed al-Ḥajjāj to create a new power balance between the Arab tribes in Khurasan.⁷⁰¹

The success or failure of al-Ḥajjāj's policy of imperial expansion depended on Qutayba's ability to alter the power dynamics in Khurasan.⁷⁰² Before his arrival, the Southern Arabs, namely the tribes of Azd and Tamīm, occupied all important administrative positions and supported the Muhallabids. According to the third/ninth-century local Khurasani historian Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-Sullāmī, the author of *Akḥbār Wulāt Khurāsān* ("Reports concerning the governors of Khurasan"), the Azd and Tamīm were numerous in Khurasan but followed their local interests.⁷⁰³ They could form an opposition to the new Umayyad policy. In contrast, the Northern Arabs, i.e., the tribes of 'Abd al-Qays, Rabī'a, and Muḍr were fewer in number but more loyal to the caliph. To change the tribal power balance, Qutayba had to reduce the power of the Azd and Tamīm and support the Northern Arab leaders. This is the reason that Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī mentions that the leaders of the Azd and Tamīm resented the arrival of Qutayba, but it became a reason for the happiness of 'Abd al-Qays who saw Qutayba as their ally.⁷⁰⁴ Apparently, they knew that he would change the tribal power balance in Khurasan.

To reduce the power of the Azd and Tamīm, Qutayba removed their leaders, particularly the Muhallabids. Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that al-Ḥajjāj ordered Qutayba to arrest al-Mufaḍḍal and the rest of the Muhallabids, and send them to Iraq handcuffed (*fa-yahmiluhum*

⁷⁰⁰ Ibn al-A'atham al-Kūfī has explained the Muhallabids' relation with 'Abd al-Malik and the impact of 'Abd al-Malik's death on them (Ibn al-A'atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 134–135).

⁷⁰¹ Ibn al-A'atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 130–133.

⁷⁰² Al-Sullāmī, *Akḥbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 109.

⁷⁰³ Al-Sullāmī, *Akḥbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 100.

⁷⁰⁴ In Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī's words: *falam yakun bi Khurāsān Qaysīyyun illā istabshara bi wilāyatihi wa lā Yamāni illā karaha dhālika* (Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7:135).

ilayhi fī al-aṣṣād).⁷⁰⁵ A similar report is given in other Arabic sources.⁷⁰⁶ Qutayba arrested the Muhallabids he found in Marw, and destroyed the garden palace that was constructed there by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and turned it into a place for keeping camels.⁷⁰⁷ The removal of the Muhallabids sent a clear message to all tribal leaders in Khurasan that this group was no longer in charge. It also reduced any possibility of an Azdi uprising.

After the Azd, Qutayba turned towards the Tamīm. He arrested ‘Uthmān b. Mas‘ūd al-Tamīmī, who had a family connection to the Hephthalites through marriage. Qutayba sent him to Iraq, where he died in al-Ḥajjāj’s prison in 91/711.⁷⁰⁸ He also dismissed Wakī‘ b. al-Aswad al-Tamīmī from his position.⁷⁰⁹ Qutayba’s harsh attitude towards the Azd and Tamīm scared all other tribesmen and brought them under his command. In other words, in the new political order, the Umayyad imperial representatives took control of political affairs and pushed the local representatives to the corner. The change in tribal political dynamics reflected the Umayyad’s new policy, which was different from the Muhallabid period of governorship. According to al-Sullāmī, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab’s policy was “generosity and tolerance” (*akrama wa-asmaḥa*), but Qutayba changed it to “raid and conquest” (*aghzā wa-aftaḥa*).⁷¹⁰ Qutayba’s presence in Marw showed that the age of peace was over, and the time of war had arrived. Once the tribal leaders came under control, Qutayba started consolidating armies to assist in expanding the empire to the east.

4.1.2 Forming armies of the conquests

The second challenge for Qutayba was to form a large standing army to conquer the eastern Iranian regions. Unlike his predecessors, who often brought new forces from Iraq or Syria, Qutayba did not bring any troops. Instead, he had to form his army by using the existing military forces in Khurasan. On the authority of the Bāhila people, al-Ṭabarī mentions that when Qutayba arrived in Marw, the army was scattered, and there was not much war equipment.⁷¹¹ Though the Bāhilis exaggerated it - the Muhallabids had after all enough forces

⁷⁰⁵ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 82; Al-Ya‘qūbī gives similar narrative in his *Ta’rīkh*, 2: 208.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 133; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, 4: 227.

⁷⁰⁷ Fāmī mentions that when the *marzbān* of Marw objected to him, he said that Yazīd’s father was a gardener (*būstān bān*), but his father was a camel keeper (*ushtur bān*) (Fāmī, *Tārīkh-i Herāt*, 6).

⁷⁰⁸ Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 142–143.

⁷⁰⁹ Later, Waikī‘ b. Abī al-Aswad arranged a plot and killed Qutayba (al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 114–115).

⁷¹⁰ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 103–104.

⁷¹¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1180.

to fight the *nizak* and the king of Guzgan, an achievement that required military prowess - it still shows that the Muhallabids had forces in Khurasan. Nevertheless, these did not number nor were they ready for a systematic conquest.

To create the conquest army, Qutayba had to reorganise the Arab tribal forces and form different divisions. In doing so, Qutayba followed the Basra model of tribal organisation in which the tribesmen were divided into five tribal groups: Azd, Tamīm, Bakr, ‘Abd al-Qays, and *ahl al-‘āliya*. This was the first reorganisation of the army in Khurasan.⁷¹² The new army was small, but gradually enlarged in the course of time after recruiting new soldiers. Al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī mention that the forces of Khurasan exceeded 47,000 soldiers when Qutayba was killed in 96/715.⁷¹³ Did Qutayba begin the conquests with the small reorganised forces he created in 86/705? The answer is negative. He needed more forces.

Whatever form it took, Qutayba’s new army could not fight multiple Bactrian and Sogdian rulers in different geographical conditions. Qutayba’s next move attests that he was aware of the fact that he needed many more men. He started to recruit locals. He recruited *mawālī* and put them under the command of Ḥayyān al-Nabaṭī (d. 102/720–21), a Daylamite by origin. The *mawālī*, as Haug has argued, were not necessarily local Khurasanis who had entered into a dependent relationship (*wilāya*) with the Arabs, but many of them would have come to Khurasan with the Arab Muslims. They spoke different languages and were alien to the region compared to those Arabs who had already settled there.⁷¹⁴ Next, Qutayba began recruiting non-Muslims from Marw and registering them in the *dīwān al-jund*, or the army register of stipends. Al-Mufaḍḍal, when he wanted to remove Mūsā from Tirmidh earlier, had already made a start at this, but Qutayba expanded it to include recruits from Inner Khurasan; namely Abarshahr, Abiward, Sarakhs and Herat. He also introduced a kind of military corvée-labour, forcing non-Muslim local authorities to provide him with a specific number of soldiers to fight in his summer campaigns, then return to their residencies in the winter. These seasonal forces were not registered in the *dīwān al-jund* but possibly received their shares from the war booties and were paid by their local authorities.⁷¹⁵ In the next chapter (5.1.2), I will discuss the army’s organisation in more detail. Once the forces were ready, Qutayba needed to ensure that

⁷¹² Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsid Revolution*, 54–65.

⁷¹³ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 433; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1290–1291; Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 176.

⁷¹⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 115.

⁷¹⁵ Shaban, *The ‘Abbāsid Revolution*, 65.

his army could cross western Bactria safely. That required the cooperation of the western Bactrian local rulers, and this brings us to the third challenge that Qutayba managed to solve.

4.1.3 Interaction with Bactrian local rulers to facilitate the conquests

Qutayba had two routes to reach Sogdiana. The first route connected Marw to the Bukhara oasis via the Kara-Kum Desert, for which the armies had to cross the Amu Darya. It was about a 400 km journey in the desert.⁷¹⁶ The second option was to go along the Marw al-Rūd, traverse Guzgan and Balkh, cross the Amu Darya and the Iron Gate located in Ghaghaniyan, before reaching Bukhara. This route was about a 1,200 km journey long.⁷¹⁷ The Umayyads did not take the first route but constantly used a long route round. The reason for avoiding the first route was possibly because of the logistical challenge of taking along the many supplies that this route would have required such as drinking water, fresh grass for their animals, and food for their soldiers. In contrast, the second route had access to the river, and crossed the plains of western Bactria which provided rich grasslands for the armies.⁷¹⁸ However, crossing western Bactria and reaching Sogdiana required the cooperation of Bactrian local rulers. This necessitated Qutayba's direct interaction with Bactrian local kings. He already had the experience of dealing with local rulers before coming to Khurasan.⁷¹⁹ Here, he had to deal with

⁷¹⁶ This is according to the modern motorway.

⁷¹⁷ This is according to the modern motorway.

⁷¹⁸ The northern Badghis were the ideal grasslands even during the Mongol period (Sayf b. Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Herawī, *Tārīkh-nāma-yi Herāt*, ed. Ghulām Riẓā Ṭabāṭabāyī Majd (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1383/2004), 345, 575.

⁷¹⁹ Qutayba was the first Umayyad governor who came to Khurasan via the Rayy-Nishapur route, about a 1,000 km journey (the modern-day motorway from modern Rey to Nishapur to Merv follows the old route). This route was blocked for almost half a century, and the Arabs often went to Khurasan via the Kirman-Nishapur route (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2839). Qutayba's travels via this route was the outcome of political events that happened shortly before he arrived in the region, and it shows how the Arabs and local rulers cooperated. The fourth/tenth-century historian Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Qummī, in his *Tārīkh-i Qum* ("History of Qum"), mentions that the Daylamites, the inhabitants of the southern part of the Caspian Sea, used to raid Qum. However, in 700–701, a group of the Ash'ariyya people who were harassed by al-Hajjāj for their support of Ibn al-Ash'ath (d. 85/704) arrived in Qum and pushed back the Daylamite attackers. The Zoroastrian elites of Qum, led by Yazdānfādhār, requested the Arabs to settle in Qum and protect them permanently from the Daylamites. In return, the Arabs received some villages and settled there (Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Qummī, *Tārīkh-i Qum*, trans. Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Ḥasan al-Qummī, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭīhrānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tūs, 1361/1982), 242–44; For Yazdānfādhār whose name is mentioned in Middle Persian documents from Qum, see Dieter Weber, *Berliner Pahlavi-Dokumente: Zeugenisse spätsassanidischer Brief-und Rechtskultur aus frühislamischer Zeit, Mit Beiträgen von Myriam Krutzsch und Maria Macuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008). Shortly after, Qutayba was appointed governor over Rayy, the region known for its cooperation with the Arabs from 31/651 (al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 82). In 79/697, the Khārijite leader Qaṭarī b. Fujā'a (d. 79–80/698–699) took refuge in Tabaristan. According to Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Isfandiyār, the seventh/thirteenth-century author of *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* ("History of Tabaristan"), Farrukhān, the *spāhbed* of Tabaristan, sheltered Qaṭarī, but the latter betrayed the *spāhbed* and killed his family members. In response, the *spāhbed* appealed to the Umayyad authority, and soon, the Umayyad forces came to help the *spāhbed*. In a joint operation, Qaṭarī was killed, and the *spāhbed* could return to his region. Ibn Isfandiyār mentions that Qutayba had friendly relation with the *spāhbed*

the *marzbān* of Marw al-Rūd, the Hephthalite *nizak* of Badghis, the king of Guzgan, the authorities in Balkh, and the king of Chaghaniyan.

The local political situation in western and northern Bactria was in favour of Qutayba. Before Qutayba arrived in Marw, the Muhallabids had already imposed their authority on the *nizak* of Badghis and the king of Guzgan and took tribute from them. They also captured Tirmidh from Mūsā, had some forces in Balkh, and made a peace treaty with the king of Khuttal. However, the Muhallabids did not interfere in these kings' internal affairs and did not establish any garrisons in their areas. These local rulers did not fight the Arab Muslims and allowed them to cross Bactria and raid Sogdiana. Upon the arrival of Qutayba, al-Mufaḍḍal, the governor of Khurasan, was preparing to campaign in Shuman and Akhrun in northern Bactria. Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī confirm that the kings of Shuman and Akhrun attacked Bish (Tish of the Chinese sources), the king of Chaghaniyan (*ghazāhu wa ḍayyaqa 'alayhi*). Possibly, the king of Chaghaniyan appealed to al-Mufaḍḍal for help. Seeing such an opportunity, Qutayba personally marched towards northern Bactria to help Bish.⁷²⁰ Apparently, some local elites inclined to help Bish but did not have enough military power. They all needed an external power. In Talaqan, a city in Guzgan, a delegation of elites from Balkh (*'uzamā'uhūm*) received Qutayba and accompanied him to Balkh.⁷²¹ Some local elites of Talaqan also joined them. With the help of these Bactrian elites, Qutayba crossed the Amu Darya for Chaghaniyan.

The king of Chaghaniyan warmly welcomed Qutayba. He presented Qutayba with gifts, including a golden key symbolising his submission. Seeing this, the king of Kaftan, an area near Tirmidh, followed suit.⁷²² Qutayba's presence in northern Bactria, and the changed balance of power his presence represented, made the kings of Shuman and Akhrun decide to

and never tried to disturb him (Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl Ashtiyānī and Muḥammad Ramaḍānī, (Tehran: Kulāla-yi Khāvar, 1320), 179–180). Al-Qummī and Ibn Isfandiyār's narratives show that the local rulers of Qum and Tabaristan had built up good relations with the Umayyads. It was this relationship that explains that Qutayba was able to travel between Ray and Nishapur undisturbed. Qutayba's friendly relationship with locals facilitated faster communication between Umayyad officials in Khurasan and Iraq as well (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1222). Thus, Qutayba was aware of the local political situation and the importance of keeping local rulers close. For the new route, see al-Ya'qūbī, *Tarīkh*, 2: 196.

⁷²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1179–1180; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 419–420.

⁷²¹ Al-Ṭabarī gives a narrative from the Bāhila people, saying that when Qutayba was in Balkh, the people of Balkh fought him, and the Arabs captured the Naw Bahar. Qutayba's brother 'Abd Allāh possessed the *barmak*'s wife and conceived her. When Khālīd b. Barmak became the minister in the time of al-Mahdī, the progenies of 'Abd Allāh claimed to be the relatives of Khālīd (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1180). They possibly made this story to connect with Khālīd, the minister.

⁷²² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1150.

visit him as well, make a peace treaty, and agree to pay him tribute (*fidya*).⁷²³ Al-Balādhurī implies that the submission of Bactrian rulers was not because of Arab Muslim supremacy, but for their internal hostility. Local competition motivated Bish and other local rulers to invite the Arabs to solve their problem.⁷²⁴ This recalls the way the *kanārang* of Tus invited ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir to Khurasan, as was discussed in the previous chapter (3.2.1). In both cases, it was the local rulers who pulled the Arabs into their political rivalries with the aim to restore their own positions. That the Arabs gained a foothold as overlords in the region was an unintended but hugely consequential byproduct of these actions.

The alliance formed between Qutayba and local Bactrian rulers was a win-win deal. On the one hand, it saved the king of Chaghaniyan from the threat of his neighbouring enemies. On the other hand, Qutayba received the tributes he needed for the salaries of his army. The alliance between Qutayba and the king of Chaghaniyan had another great significance: the king of Chaghaniyan became the most loyal Bactrian ally of the Umayyads. In return, the Arab Muslims did not attack Chaghaniyan or establish any garrison there. Chaghaniyan remained independent but very loyal to Arab Muslims and helped them in their difficult days in Khurasan.⁷²⁵ In accordance with his position as overlord, not as a ruler, Qutayba returned to Marw, without engaging in any war or leaving any troops behind in northern Bactria.⁷²⁶ Though the kings of Chaghaniyan and Kaftan recognised Qutayba’s overlordship, these areas were not conquered or incorporated into the Umayyad empire.

The alliance with the northern Bactrian rulers was a diplomatic success. However, it was not enough to initiate the conquests of Sogdiana, which was the main goal of the expansion. To reach Sogdiana, the Arab Muslim forces had to cross western Bactria. Qutayba had to ensure that the Hephthalites of Badghis, and king of Guzgan remained neutral or joined him. The targets were the *nizak* and Zhulad Guzgan (r. 80–91/699–711), the king of Guzgan. Al-Ṭabarī’s narrative shows that Qutayba understood the situation. While in Balkh, Qutayba began exchanging letters with these local kings.⁷²⁷ The king of Guzgan responded positively and sent a delegation to Qutayba to negotiate. However, Qutayba insisted that the king should visit him in Marw. That indicated Qutayba’s plan to bring the king under his overlordship. For

⁷²³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1180.

⁷²⁴ In Arabic: *fadhālika a’lā Qutayba mā a’lāhu wa da’āhu ilā mā da’āhu* (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 419–420); Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1180.

⁷²⁵ The second part of this chapter, section 4.3.2 explained it.

⁷²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1180.

⁷²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1184–85.

unknown reasons, the king accepted it and visited Qutayba in Marw. That may have led to a peace treaty, because we do not hear if the king resisted Qutayba later when he crossed Guzgan for Sogdiana.⁷²⁸

Dealing with the *nizak* was a lot harder. The *nizak* was called Abū al-Ḥayyāj by the Arab Muslims in Khurasan, and he had friendly relations with leaders of the Tamīm and Muḍr, who praised him for being a powerful ruler.⁷²⁹ He also held some Arab hostages in Badghis.⁷³⁰ To bring the *nizak* to his side, Qutayba reached out to local advisors who knew the *nizak*. He sent Salīm, his advisor (*al-nāṣih*), to negotiate with the *nizak*. Haug identified Salīm as a Bactrian, which makes Salīm the earliest known Bactrian character who worked as an advisor for the Arabs.⁷³¹ According to al-Ṭabarī, the *nizak*, who intensely disliked Qutayba's letters, informed Salīm: "It is inappropriate [for an Arab governor] to write such a letter to him."⁷³² That indicates the fact that the *nizak* viewed himself as much higher in station than an Arab governor. Nevertheless, Salīm managed to bring the *nizak* to Marw eventually after much negotiation, where he and Qutayba made a peace treaty.

The peace treaty's conditions between the *nizak* and Qutayba are not fully known. Only al-Ṭabarī mentions that the *nizak* accepted to help Qutayba in his war in Sogdiana on the condition that Qutayba should not enter Badghis under any circumstances.⁷³³ That means that while the *nizak* recognised Qutayba as the Umayyad governor of Khurasan, the latter also acknowledged the *nizak* as an independent ruler. Qutayba's diplomatic acts to bring western and northern Bactrian local rulers to his side were a great success. Tactically, without engaging in any war, he created the safe passage he needed to reach Sogdiana, receive tributes, and reinforce his newly formed armies with local Bactrian forces who were not paid by Qutayba but by their local rulers. Politically, the local kings of Chaghaniyan, Shuman, Akhrun, Kaftan, and Guzgan accepted Qutayba's overlordship by visiting him and paying tributes. Qutayba did not interfere in local rulers' internal affairs, nor did he establish any military garrisons. This form of overlordship was already familiar to the Bactrian rulers discussed in chapter two (2.3). The outcome was the creation of a great regional alliance, and the acquisition of a substantially increased army to support his conquests of Sogdiana. However, his peace treaties with Bactrian

⁷²⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 420.

⁷²⁹ 'Utham b. Mas'ūd al-Tamīmī had familial relation with him (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 151; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 8: 1184).

⁷³⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 8: 1184–85.

⁷³¹ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 120.

⁷³² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 8: 1185.

⁷³³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 8: 1185.

local rulers did not mean that he had brought them under his control. This happened later and will be discussed next.

4.1.4 Qutayba's conquests in Sogdiana and Bactrian rulers' responses

Qutayba began a series of military campaigns from 87–90/707–710 with the explicit purpose to conquer Sogdiana. He targeted only the prominent and wealthy oasis cities in the Zarafshan Valley from Bukhara to Samarkand. Sogdiana was the hub of regional trade. The Sogdian merchants almost exclusively controlled all trading activities in Transoxiana, had expanded their business into northern China,⁷³⁴ and traded with India.⁷³⁵ Qutayba's focus on Sogdiana indicates that the Umayyads wanted to control big cities that were the hub of regional trade in the east.⁷³⁶ Gibb, Wellhausen, Shaban, Luce, and Haug best describe Qutayba's conquests of Sogdiana in detail.⁷³⁷ They highlighted the financial gain of these campaigns; hence, I will not repeat them. Instead, I shall briefly explain what Qutayba did in Sogdiana that caused great resentment among Bactrian local rulers, who subsequently formed a regional alliance to stop the conquests. This issue has not been properly discussed by other scholars.

The first target of the conquests was Paykand (Ar. Bikand), the heavily fortified city of merchants (*madīnat al-tujjār*) whose traders had traded with China.⁷³⁸ To defend their city, the elites of Paykand recruited many soldiers and blocked the roads against Qutayba. They also bribed Qutayba's local spy ('*aynun li Qutayba*'), called Tundar, to mislead Qutayba by saying that the caliph dismissed al-Ḥajjāj and that he should return to Marw.⁷³⁹ However, Qutayba ordered his Persian *mawlā* called Siyāh to execute Tundar. Meanwhile the *fā'ala* or labourers who accompanied the army, tried to destroy the city wall. This forced the elites of Paykand to submit, make a peace treaty, and agree to pay tributes. Qutayba left, leaving his appointee in charge of the city. However, al-Ṭabarī narrates that some elites of Paykand killed Qutayba's

⁷³⁴ See La Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*.

⁷³⁵ Sogdian graffiti surviving in the Swat Valley in modern-day Pakistan supports this idea.

⁷³⁶ A similar issue happened in Sindh. The Umayyads tried to open the route from Sistan to Kabul to reach Punjab, but the *Kabul-shāh* (Ar. *al-Rutbīl*) blocked their way. To reach India, the Umayyads had to look for an alternative route. That was provided by the local Buddhist merchants who sent a delegation to al-Ḥajjāj and facilitated the conquest of Sindh (see MacLean, *Religion and Society in the Arab Sind*; Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*).

⁷³⁷ See Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 29–58; Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 434–446; Shaban, *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*, 63–72; Luce, "Frontier Process," 136–175; Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 11–121.

⁷³⁸ See Rocco Rante, "Paykend," in *The Osis of Bukhara, vol. 1: Population, Depopulation and Settlements Evolution*, ed. Rocco Rante (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 194–230. I have noticed the Chinese coins excavated from the ruins of Paykand in the local museum of Paykand during my fieldwork in October 2018.

⁷³⁹ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī is the only one who says that Tundar was a local Sogdian but worked for Qutayba (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 144).

representative soon after, which brought Qutayba back to Paykand. The Arabic narratives related to the return of Qutayba to Paykand are confusing, and some mix this episode with the conquest of Bukhara.⁷⁴⁰ Though they all talk about the plunder of the city, they do not clarify the reasons behind it. Therefore, I have consulted these narratives alongside the local Persian narratives to depict a better image.

The reasons behind the revolt of Paykand after its residents made a peace treaty is not given in Arabic narratives. There is some information in the *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* (“History of Bukhara”) compiled by the fourth/tenth-century historian Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Narshakhī. He clarifies that the elites of Paykand cut off the nose and ears of Qutayba’s representative after he harassed their women.⁷⁴¹ According to al-Ṭabarī, Qutayba besieged the city a second time and again ordered the *fa‘ala* to undermine the city walls, but this time in order to destroy them by making fire under them. Destruction of the city walls would decrease the possibility of resistance in the future. Demolishing this infrastructure with that purpose was already done by the Arab Muslims in the conquest of Alexandria in 644 after the Greeks recaptured the city and then lost it to the Arab Muslims.⁷⁴² However, in Paykand, Qutayba’s motivation was not only revenge, but to remove the city’s symbols of independence. After capturing Paykand, Arab Muslim soldiers massacred its defenders, and destroyed and plundered the religious places.⁷⁴³ What can explain Qutayba’s response with such violence when he could have renegotiated a peace treaty?

Qutayba’s act can be understood in the context of war. Qutayba could not move on to conquer Bukhara while the enemy was behind him.⁷⁴⁴ In any case, the plunder of Paykand brought enormous booties to the Arabs. Merchants’ properties, including silk fabrics,⁷⁴⁵ precious objects from the temples, weapons, and other war logistics (*alāt al-ḥarab wa ālat al-safar*) were seized from Paykand.⁷⁴⁶ Apart from these, the merchants of Paykand whose families were enslaved had to pay a heavy ransom to free their kin.⁷⁴⁷ This was the first time

⁷⁴⁰ Ibn A‘tham’s narrative is the best example.

⁷⁴¹ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 52–54.

⁷⁴² For the Arab conquest of Alexandria, see Petra Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50–56.

⁷⁴³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1186–1189.

⁷⁴⁴ Al-Ṭabarī adds that Qutayba could not send any messenger to Iraq for several months and that worried al-Ḥajjāj who ordered people to pray for Qutayba (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1186–1189).

⁷⁴⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1186–1189.

⁷⁴⁶ The gemstones from the looted temples were sent to al-Ḥajjāj (al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 54; al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 105–106).

⁷⁴⁷ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 54; Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 146–147.

the Arabs consciously destroyed a western Sogdian merchant city and attacked its religious places.

After Paykand, the conquest army was free to march on toward Bukhara.⁷⁴⁸ Qutayba followed a different policy in Bukhara. He did not attack Bukhara, but fought Khunak the *Wardān-khudā*, or the king of Wardana, an area to the north of Bukhara in response to an appeal from Ṭughshāda, the heir to the throne of Bukhara. Ṭughshāda (lit. lord of flags) was from the house of *Bukhārā-khudā*, or the king of Bukhara, and was the son of a famous queen (*khātun*) of Bukhara who had made peace treaties with the Arab Muslim governors of Khurasan.⁷⁴⁹ Shortly before Qutayba's arrival, Khunak had usurped power from the house of *Bukhārā-khudā* and expanded his authority over the Bukhara region.⁷⁵⁰ The domination of Khunak over the region forced Ṭughshāda, the *Bukhārā-khudā*, to leave Bukhara and appeal to the Arab Muslims.⁷⁵¹ With his Bactrian allies, particularly the *nizak*, Qutayba defeated Khunak and his Turkic supporters⁷⁵² and restored Ṭughshāda to rule over Bukhara.⁷⁵³ Ṭughshāda was indebted to Qutayba, and thus he became a loyal supporter of the Umayyads and even named his son after Qutayba.⁷⁵⁴ To control Bukhara, Qutayba applied a new policy. He forced local merchants to leave their houses and other properties to the Arab Muslim soldiers.⁷⁵⁵ As a result, even the *Bukhārā-khudā* was forced to move outside of Bukhara. This policy, as Haug argued, had a profound social impact as it turned some local merchants into agriculturists because they had to leave their houses and properties to the Arab Muslims and move to the countryside.⁷⁵⁶ Quartering soldiers inside the city walls was also a drastically different policy than establishing garrisons or new quarters outside the existing cities, as had been the Muslims practice like in the Marw region until then.

⁷⁴⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1194–1195.

⁷⁴⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 420; Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 42–43.

⁷⁵⁰ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 8–10; Haug has suggested that the Khunak was a Sasanian descendant (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 115). However, Sören Stark suggested that Khunak may have been a Turk and had good relations with other Turkic groups (Sören Stark, “The Arab Conquest of Bukhārā: Reconsidering Qutayba b. Muslim's Campaigns 87–90/706–709,” *Der Islam* 95, no. 2 (2018): 380–382). Al-Narshakhī clarifies that Khunak was a Turk from Turkistan (al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 9).

⁷⁵¹ Stark, “The Arab Conquest of Bukhārā,” 380–382.

⁷⁵² Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 420; Though al-Ṭabarī praised the Azd and Tamīm for their bravery in this war, he says that the *nizak* was with Qutayba (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1195, 1204); Stark also noticed this issue (Stark, “Arab Conquest of Bukhārā,” 383).

⁷⁵³ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 111–112.

⁷⁵⁴ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 14–15.

⁷⁵⁵ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 57.

⁷⁵⁶ The memory of confiscating locals' properties during the conquests remained among descendants of the conquerors and the locals. It continued to the early Abbasid period (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 116–117).

The conquests of Paykand and Bukhara forced Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarkand, to send a delegation to Qutayba and negotiate for peace to keep the Arab Muslims away from Samarkand. That strategy worked. Qutayba wanted peace and tributes too. Qutayba sent Ḥayyān al-Nabaṭī, the commander of the *mawālī* forces, to negotiate with the Sogdians. According to al-Narshakhī, Ḥayyān used his diplomatic skill to convince Ṭarkhūn to make peace, pay tribute, and give some hostages to guarantee the treaty.⁷⁵⁷ The peace treaty kept the armies of the conquests away from Samarkand. However, al-Ṭabarī mentions that the Sogdian elites resented the peace treaty as they interpreted it as a mark of humiliation. As a result, the Sogdian elites organised a plot and killed Ṭarkhūn, putting Ghūrak in his place on the throne of Samarkand.⁷⁵⁸ After these campaigns, Qutayba did not move to Samarkand but returned to Marw.

From 85–90/705–710, Bactrian local rulers supported Qutayba. The *nizak* and his Hephthalite forces played a crucial role in Qutayba's success. All this time, they did not object to Qutayba's conquests. The reason for it is unknown. Shifting the geography of the conquests to Sogdiana likely kept Bactria safe from war. In addition, Bactrian rulers who joined Qutayba may have received their share of war booties. Similarly, Qutayba did not interfere in the local political situation in Bactria and even agreed not to enter the Hephthalite domain under any circumstances. However, Bactrian rulers could not swallow it all: Qutayba's policies in Sogdiana, namely the massacre and destruction of Paykand, plundering religious places, and building garrisons out of peoples' houses in Bukhara, were too much to bear. These are in addition to all the while confiscating local peoples' properties, and incorporating the family of *Bukhārā-khudā* under the Umayyad rule, and the peace treaty with Tarkhūn. None of the earlier governors of Khurasan had ever done all of these at the same time. These were also against the nature of overlordship Bactrian local rulers knew from the past. Qutayba's policy was a significant threat to the foundation of Bactrian independent rule. Hence, not surprisingly, Qutayba's acts of conquest caused immediate reactions among Bactrian local rulers. The *nizak* was the first Bactrian ruler who tried to stop Qutayba. The rebellion of the *nizak* and Qutayba's response to it is the subject of the following part.

⁷⁵⁷ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 63–65.

⁷⁵⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, 8: 1204.

4.2. Incorporating Bactrian local rulers

The rebellion of the *nizak* that led to the formation of a regional alliance against the Umayyads is a well-known subject in Arabic and Persian narratives relating to Umayyad Khurasan. However, these narratives contradict each other in many places. Among these sources, Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī and al-Ṭabarī give the most detailed information. However, the former does not reveal his sources and uses hostile language towards the *nizak* by calling him an apostate (*murtadd*), the betrayer (*ghaddār*), and an enemy of Islam (‘*aduww li-ahl al-Islām*).⁷⁵⁹ In contrast, al-Ṭabarī reveals his sources and uses neutral language. Here, we should rely more on al-Ṭabarī, who narrates from al-Madā’inī the leading authority on the history of Khurasan. Al-Madā’inī’s reports about Qutayba and the *nizak* combine both Arabic and Persian perspectives. He narrates from the perspective of the Bāhila people, who may have been with Qutayba in Khurasan and were aligned to the *marzbān* of Quhitsu, a region in Inner Khurasan whose local rulers helped Qutayba against the *nizak*. By explaining the revolt of the *nizak*, I will show that it was only after this rebellion that the Umayyads conquered most of Bactria and imposed their authority on Bactrian local rulers.

4.2.1 The rebellion of the *nizak* in Bactria

Distrust between the *nizak* and Qutayba formed during the conquests of western Sogdiana. According to al-Ṭabarī, the *nizak* helped Qutayba, but the *nizak* did not trust the Muslim general. The *nizak* considered Qutayba an angry and unworthy person. The words attributed to the *nizak* show his deep resentment of Qutayba’s policy. In the *nizak*’s words quoted by al-Ṭabarī, “the Arab [implying Qutayba] behaves like a dog. If you beat him, he barks, and if you feed him, he wags his tail.”⁷⁶⁰ To keep a distance from Qutayba, the *nizak* went to Balkh, where he visited Naw Bahar, prayed, and asked for divine blessing. This indicates the possibility that the *nizak* was a Buddhist. Then, he went to Baghlan in eastern Bactria, which was under the Hephthalites’ control.⁷⁶¹ From there, he began to form a regional alliance against Qutayba by communicating with Bactrian local kings.

The *nizak*’s alliance was primarily a western Bactrian coalition. He invited local rulers namely, the *marzbān* of Marw al-Rūd, the *shahrab* of Talaqan, the *tarsul* of Faryab, al-Juzjānī

⁷⁵⁹ Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 150.

⁷⁶⁰ In Arabic: *inna al-‘Arabi bi manzilat al-kalb, iżā ḍarabtahu nabaḥa wa iżā aṭ‘amahū baṣbaṣa* (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1205).

⁷⁶¹ Grenet, “Regional Interaction,” 212–213.

the king of Guzgan and the *spāhbed* of Balkh.⁷⁶² Except for a few of these individuals, the identity of the rest of these rulers is unknown. As already discussed in chapter two (2.1.3), the *spāhbed* of Balkh at this time was not the *barmak*, but it is possible that it was, in fact, the *nizak* who appointed him.⁷⁶³ The *marzbān* of the Marw al-Rūd was Badhān, and as Haug suggested, he was the son or grandson of the famous Badhān, who made a peace treaty with al-Aḥnaf sixty years earlier.⁷⁶⁴ Al-Juzjānī was Zhulad Guzgan. The limits of the *nizak*'s alliance to western Bactria can be understood by the fact that this list does not include the king of Chaghaniyan, the kings of Shuman and Akhrun, the king of Tirmidh, the king of Khuttal, the Turkic *yabghu* of Tukharistan, the *khar* of Rob, or the Bilgā Sāvūg, the Turkic ruler of Kadagstan.⁷⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the *nizak* resided in eastern Bactria and tried to lead his alliance in western Bactria. The *nizak* asked western Bactrian rulers to join him in the spring and dismiss Qutayba (*ilā khal'a Qutayba*). The Arabic term *khal'a* here also means to remove Qutayba from the region. The *nizak* sent his movable treasury to the king of Kabul and requested support in case of need.⁷⁶⁶

The *nizak*'s alliance may have created hope among the western Bactrian rulers who disliked Qutayba's new policy of conquests. However, the *nizak*'s alliance also disturbed the local political order in eastern Bactria, which led to his demise. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that the *nizak* was under the suzerainty of the *yabghu* of Tukharistan (*min 'abīdihī*), but he arrested the *yabghu*.⁷⁶⁷ The *yabghu* had a good relationship with the Arab Muslims. Muḥammad, son of Salīm, the Bactrian advisor of Qutayba, was in the company of the *yabghu*. The *nizak* imprisoned the *yabghu* and expelled Qutayba's representative (*'āmil*).⁷⁶⁸ By these acts, the *nizak* practically rejected both the Turkic and the Umayyad overlordship and declared himself the new overlord in Bactria. The overlordship of the Hephthalite prince of Badghis was not welcomed by the eastern and southern Bactrian rulers, who were loyal to the Turkic *qaghān*, as we will see later.

Qutayba's response to the rebellion of the *nizak* was well planned, showing his awareness of the local political situation in the region. His tactic was not to face the *nizak*

⁷⁶² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1206.

⁷⁶³ Ibn A'tham calls him al-Shāh b. Nizak (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 154).

⁷⁶⁴ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 120.

⁷⁶⁵ Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103. I think he was still the king of Kadagstan in 709–710 because other documents from Kadagstan do not mention other kings at this time.

⁷⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1205–06.

⁷⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1206.

⁷⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1206.

immediately on the battlefield, but to cut off his contacts with western Bactria. In doing so, he sent his brother with 12,000 soldiers from Marw to Baruqan, an area in Balkh that became the main Umayyad garrison in Bactria after this time. Subsequently, he contacted the local rulers of Inner Khurasan to send him their local forces. Soon, the local forces of Nasa, Abiward, Sarakhs, and Herat joined his camp.⁷⁶⁹ Qutayba's alliance with the local rulers of Inner Khurasan reveal two crucial issues. Firstly, he was not able to confront the Hephthalites only with his Arab Muslim forces. Secondly, he could not trust the western Bactrian rulers anymore because they had shifted sides and supported the *nizak* while they had concluded peace treaties with Qutayba. Therefore, once the local forces of Inner Khurasan joined Qutayba, he left Marw for Bactria with a special mission of removing the Hephthalites.

The information on Qutayba's military campaign against the *nizak* and the rest of the western Bactrian rulers was reflected in the Arabic narratives. Among the narrators of these, al-Ya'qūbī, Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, and al-Ṭabarī provide more information. These authors have taken their reports mainly from al-Madā'inī and some other unknown sources. Al-Ṭabarī gives full details on the authority of al-Madā'inī and added some reporters from the Bāhila tribe. Al-Ya'qūbī summarised the event, and Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī reorganised the reports in a way so that his narrative does not look similar to that of al-Ṭabarī's. However, they all agree that Qutayba received help from local rulers of Khurasan and then acted with maximum violence to destroy the *nizak* and his western Bactrian allies. That had no precedent and shook the foundations of the Bactrian local power balance.

According to al-Ṭabarī, Qutayba first turned to the *marzbān* of Marw al-Rūd, but the latter fled to the land of the Persians (*fa haraba ilā bilād al-firus*). Qutayba captured the city, found Badhān's sons, killed them, and crucified their bodies (*fa-qatalahumā wa šullibahumā*) as a sign of punishment. It is difficult to accept that the *marzbān* fled to Persia because at this time, most of the Persian regions were already conquered by the Arab Muslims. Possibly, Badhān fled to Talaqan. Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that Badhān was in Talaqan and captured the city by force (*taghallaba 'alā al-balad*).⁷⁷⁰ Probably, Badhān was not welcomed by the *shahrab* of Talaqan, and so he had to act forcefully. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī and al-Ṭabarī mention that Qutayba massacred a group of thieves (*laṣūṣ, sa'ālīk*) in Talaqan without identifying them.⁷⁷¹ Badhān and his followers possibly were called thieves because they had captured

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1218.

⁷⁷⁰ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 208.

⁷⁷¹ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 153; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1218.

Talaqan by force before Qutayba arrived there. That fact that the *shahrab* did not fight Qutayba can help us infer that he allowed Badhān to be removed by the Arab Muslims.⁷⁷² Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī provides a different narrative about Badhān. According to him, Qutayba found Badhān in Marw al-Rūd and killed him, his eldest son and his younger brother. He hung a severed head on the neck of Badhān’s mother and then ordered her execution which caused anger among the Arab Muslims.⁷⁷³ He does not explain the reasons, but possibly Qutayba’s extreme violence and eradication of the ruling family was not a policy among the previous Arab leaders of Khurasan. Whether or not Badhān was killed in his region or in Talaqan, the important issue is that all the narratives agree that Qutayba eradicated his family. They also mention that Qutayba appointed his brother ‘Amru b. Muslim over Talaqan.

From Talaqan, Qutayba went to Faryab. The *tarsul* of Faryab submitted to Qutayba, thereby saving his life and that of his people. Qutayba appointed a man from the Bāhila on the Faryab and moved to Guzgan where the king of Guzgan fled into the mountains (*kharaja ilā al-jibāl*), but some elites of his region visited Qutayba and surrendered. That saved Guzgan from destruction, and the king later made peace with Qutayba. Qutayba appointed ‘Āmir b. Mālik al-Ḥimmānī over Guzgan.⁷⁷⁴ From Guzgan, Qutayba went further to Balkh. According to al-Ṭabarī, the *spāhbed* of Balkh visited Qutayba and offered his loyalty to Qutayba; thus, having appeased the entire region, Qutayba did not have any reason to remain in Balkh and thus moved towards eastern Bactria.⁷⁷⁵ This was the first time that the Arab Muslim forces entered eastern Bactria.

Once western Bactrian rulers were subdued, Qutayba appointed his brother ‘Amru b. Muslim and other men from his tribe over the region. Appointing these men could not have been without establishing military garrisons in the conquered areas because the local rulers of

⁷⁷² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2: 1218.

⁷⁷³ Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 152.

⁷⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1218; Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 153.

⁷⁷⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1218–1219; The *Faḍā’il-i Balkh* gives different information. According to the *Faḍā’il*, the *nizak* had authority in Balkh, and the *dihqān* of Balkh offered his submission to Qutayba on condition that the *nizak* surrender as well. Qutayba could thus not demand submission but made a treaty with the *dihqān* asking for a certain amount of gold and silver. However, the Arab Muslims demanded more than had been agreed upon in the treaty and even broke down some golden objects. This caused anger among the locals. The *dihqān* of Balkh worded it thus: “Did you bring the army to extract some unworthy objects?” (al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 27). The *dihqān* in the *Faḍā’il* is not identified, but he could be the *spāhbed*. This places the events in Balkh. Possibly, the Arabs remained in Balkh long enough to take the gold and silver objects that may have been brought from Naw Bahar. It is known that the site had wealth (al-Bal‘amī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 818). The *Faḍā’il* adds that Qutayba asked the local elites of Tirmidh, Balkh, and Chaghaniyan to help him against the *nizak*, and they accepted it. This report suggests that the local rulers of these three areas did not, in fact, stand behind the *nizak*’s revolt. Even if they supported the *nizak* initially, they quickly shifted their loyalty and sided with Qutayba once he marched towards Bactria.

these areas had their military forces and could organise attacks on the Arab Muslims. In other words, Arab Muslims military presence was established in the Marwal-Rūd, Talaqan, Faryab, Guzgan and Balkh. This was the beginning of incorporating western Bactrian rulers under Umayyad control. The level of violence applied to western Bactria by Qutayba surprised Bactrian local rulers because no Umayyad governor had ever done this before. Furthermore, the eradication of resisting rulers and crucifying them publicly was new.⁷⁷⁶ I will discuss this process in more detail later, but first I shall explain how Qutayba suppressed the *nizak*.

The situation in eastern Bactria was different and in favour of Qutayba. I already mentioned that the *nizak* arrested the *yabghu* of Tukharistan. This action contributed to his downfall. Qutayba combined the forces of Inner Khurasan with soldiers he brought from Marw and 12,000 soldiers from Baruqān and moved towards Khulm to the east of Balkh.⁷⁷⁷ The Pass of Khulm (*shi' b khulm*) was already blocked by the *nizak*. Here, not only the *nizak* but the geography of Bactria proved to be a significant obstacle for the conquerors. To reach Baghlan, Qutayba had two options: opening the pass by force, or by taking the army via the desert to Qala-yi Zal and from there to Baghlan via Kunduz. However, Qutayba remained stuck because neither route was an option for him. He could not open the pass because it was a very narrow and long gorge with the river flowing through it, and the *nizak*'s soldiers blocked it. He also could not take the long route via Kunduz because it would take a long time and more logistics. Qutayba had no choice except to return, but internal political intentions in eastern Bactria brought him success.

To Qutayba surprise, the *khar* of Rob visited him and promised his support to remove the *nizak*. With the help of the *khar*, Qutayba's army attacked the *nizak*'s soldiers from behind opening the road to Baghlan, where the *nizak* was stationed.⁷⁷⁸ Possibly, Qutayba was hosted by the *khar* of Rob before marching towards Baghlan. Whether the *khar* fully joined Qutayba is unknown, but he must have seen in Qutayba the perfect opportunity to destroy the *nizak*. Indeed, the help that the *khar* offered Qutayba, forced the *nizak* to leave Fanj-jāh in Baghlan for the fortress of Karz (or Kurz/Kuzr) located in eastern Bactria.⁷⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, the main source

⁷⁷⁶ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 153.

⁷⁷⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1218–1219.

⁷⁷⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1219.

⁷⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1219; Fanj-jāh can be identified with the place of Chishma-yi Shir in Baghlan as it matches with the Arabic description. The exact location of this fortress is disputed. Gerent suggested that it was the Kafir Qala in present-day Barfak (Grenet, "Regional Interaction," 217). However, La Vaissière suggested that Karz was not in Barfak but in Namak Valley corresponds to medieval Khost (La Vaissière, "The Last Bactrian Kings," 217). In a personal communication in January 2018 at Leiden University, La Vaissière informed me that the Karz fortress should have been located in this area. Ṭughyān Sākāyī, who is a native of Andarab, informed me

of information on the *nizak*, does not explain why the *khar* of Rob helped Qutayba but says that the two figures met, negotiated and made a peace treaty. From the discussion on local rulers given in chapter two (2.1.4), we learned that the *khar* of Rob did not have good relations with his neighbouring Hephthalites. The Hephthalites controlled the trade routes from Kabul towards the north, and the *khar* of Rob was in competition over control of the trade routes with his Hephthalite neighbours.⁷⁸⁰ In addition, the *nizak* had dismissed the *yabghu*, thereby disrupting the power balance in place in eastern Bactria. Certainly, the *khar* of Rob did not want a powerful Hephthalite prince in his neighbourhood who moved himself to the top of the political hierarchy by arresting the *yabghu* and making himself the new overlord in Bactria. Hence, the *khar* of Rob had both economic and political reasons to act against the *nizak*. Again, this situation recalls the *kanārang* of Tus, or the king of Chaghaniyan, who helped the Arabs to overcome their rival neighbours. To break down the *nizak*'s power, the *khar* of Rob needed external help, and none was better than Arab Muslims who moved in, restored the balance, and became the overlord, but from a distance while satisfied with the incoming tribute.

To end the *nizak*'s revolt, Qutayba used diplomacy and military pressure in tandem. He first besieged the fortress and cut off its lines of food supply. However, Qutayba himself was under pressure because the cold winter was approaching and his Arab Muslim and Inner Khurasani forces had to return to their residences.⁷⁸¹ According to al-Ṭabarī, Qutayba sent Salīm, the afore-mentioned Bactrian advisor, to convince the *nizak* to surrender. Salīm had a personal friendship with the *nizak* and had brought him to Marw to meet Qutayba when Qutayba had come to Khurasan a few years earlier. Qutayba authorised Salīm to give safe conduct (*amān*) to the *nizak* if required so. He also threatened to kill Salīm and crucify him if he failed this mission. The food shortage affected the Hephthalite soldiers, and Salīm took it as an advantage and convinced the *nizak* to submit. Seeing no other way out, the *nizak* put his trust in the *amān* offered to him by Salīm and surrendered. He left the fortress with his relatives and also the hostages. His nephew Shiqrān (who was called 'Uthmān too in the narrative); followed by the *sūlū* or military commander; an individual with the title or name *khanas tarkhān*;⁷⁸² and the head of his guards (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) came out from the fortress. Then came

that Karz in Arabic narrative should be read as Kuzr. He explained that there is a fort east of Baghlan towards Kelagay with the same name, and local people still call it Kuzr because it is located on a cliff. Kuzr is a shortened form of Kuh-i Zur (personal communication in August 2023).

⁷⁸⁰ Grenet, "Regional Interaction," 216.

⁷⁸¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1206.

⁷⁸² Possibly, Khanas is the Arabicised form of Bactrian personal name *χαλασο*. See Bactrian Document no. P in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87.

his hostages including the *yabghu* of Tukharistan, and his representative the *sülü tarkhān*. However, Qutayba betrayed the *nizak* and arrested him despite the *amān* which had been offered in his name. The fortress of Karz was evacuated, and the Umayyad forces plundered it.⁷⁸³

Killing the *nizak* was not as straightforward as that. Before his revolt, the *nizak* had been an important Umayyad ally, and Qutayba's conquest of western Sogdiana was owed mainly to him. The *nizak* had a good relationship with the Arab tribal leaders in Khurasan who supported Qutayba. Both Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī and al-Ṭabarī say that Qutayba asked al-Ḥajjāj about his dilemma in a letter. The latter replied that Qutayba should execute the *nizak*. Nevertheless, it is clear that Qutayba was torn and continued to vacillate. He gathered the Arab tribal leaders to hear their opinions. Here, the Arabic reports are contradictory. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī mentions that the *nizak* was the enemy of Islam and everyone wanted him dead. He adds that the *nizak* was not given the *amān*, and thus his execution was justified. However, Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī contradicts himself here because he also mentions that Qutayba authorised Salīm to give the *amān* to the *nizak*.⁷⁸⁴ In contrast, al-Ṭabarī remarks that some Arab leaders advised Qutayba to leave the *nizak* because he had the *amān*. Eventually, Qutayba followed al-Ḥajjāj's orders, and also knew that he could not control Bactria if the Hephthalites were around. He ignored his *amān* and the advice of some Arab leaders, had the *nizak* and his nephew executed, and crucified their bodies near a spring called Wakhsh-Khashan. The significance of hanging the dead bodies near the spring escapes us now, but it would have had special significance and sent a message. Subsequently, all others surrendered, and the surrendered Hephthalites were massacred.⁷⁸⁵ The death of the *nizak* changed the local political situation in Bactria to benefit the Umayyads and allowed them to incorporate most parts of Bactria into the Umayyad empire. This will be discussed next.

4.2.2 Incorporation of Bactria into Umayyad Khurasan

The death of the *nizak* had a great political impact on Bactria. For the first time, the Arab Muslims conquered western Bactria and established their control there through military presence. They entered eastern Bactria and destroyed the Hephthalites. The process of

⁷⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 8: 1221; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 149; Al-Ṭabarī refers to a poem in which name of the *nizak* and his relatives are mentioned (al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 8: 1226–1227).

⁷⁸⁴ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 149–151.

⁷⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 8: 1218.

consolidation of Umayyad rule followed four main stages: a) the initial destroying of local military forces; b) eradicating local rulers who resisted and making peace treaties with those who wished to submit and cooperate; c) establishing military presence in form of garrisons in the conquered region; and d) appointing Arab Muslim administrators in the region. Here, I will briefly explain these stages.

The revolt of the *nizak* brought the Arab Muslims to eastern Bactria for the first time and enabled them to destroy Hephthalite military power in the latter's homeland. The massacre of the Hephthalite forces in Baghlan reduced the threat of the Hephthalites to a great extent. The Hephthalites had been such a nuisance for the Arab Muslims, because they could simply disappear into the mountains, rapidly re-organise, and attack the Umayyads. The Umayyads had no control over these mountain regions.⁷⁸⁶ The death of the *nizak* annihilated his principality in Badghis, and the Hephthalites of western Bactria were reduced to a small local power. Though they supported an anti-Umayyad rebellion led by al-Ḥārith b. Suryaj (d. 128/746) two decades later, which will be discussed in the next section, they could not directly fight the Umayyads anymore. Gibb argued that as a result of the war against the *nizak*, the Arab Muslims brought Bactria under their control and “for the first time Arab authority was expanded over the Jābghū [*yabghu*] and his immediate vassals in the Oxus Basin.”⁷⁸⁷ However, as Haug has argued although it is true that Qutayba removed the *yabghu* from Tukharistan by sending him to Syria, he replaced the *yabghu* with the latter's son, and thus local politics in eastern Bactria were not fundamentally changed.⁷⁸⁸ Qutayba did not stay in Baghlan, nor did he establish any garrison in eastern Bactria. Likewise, he did not appoint anyone in eastern Bactria. So, it is difficult to accept Gibb's argument that Umayyad authority had expanded to the Oxus Basin. The Bactrian documents from eastern Bactria do not show any sign of the establishment of Arab authority in the region at this time.⁷⁸⁹ What is clear is that the confrontation with the *nizak* placed Qutayba in a position of great political power vis-à-vis the local rulers in eastern Bactria, albeit from a distance. He appointed the *yabghu*'s successor. After Qutayba destroyed the Hephthalite military forces in eastern Bactria, we do not hear of any revolt like that of the *nizak* in our sources anymore.

⁷⁸⁶ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 121.

⁷⁸⁷ Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 81; Interestingly, Shaban had similar idea about it (Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 67).

⁷⁸⁸ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 121.

⁷⁸⁹ The name of local authorities can be found in Bactrian documents no. U, Uu, V in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 106–111, 112–115, 116–125.

The eradication of Bactrian local rulers was reported only for Marw al-Rūd. It is already mentioned that Qutayba killed Badhān, the *marzbān* of Marw al-Rūd and his sons. It is not clear if Qutayba did the same in Shuman. According to al-Ṭabarī, the king of Shuman expelled Qutayba's agent (‘*āmil*’) and refused to pay the tribute he had accepted earlier (*wa mana‘a al-fidya allatī ṣālaha ‘alayhā*). Qutayba sent ‘Ayyāsh al-Ghanawī with another pious man (*min nussāk ahl Khurāsān*) to convince the king of Shuman to respect the treaty he made with Qutayba.⁷⁹⁰ A resident of Shuman, called al-Muhallab, killed ‘Ayyāsh. Killing Qutayba's representative was, in fact, rejecting Qutayba's overlordship and declaration of war.

The news about Shuman forced Qutayba to march again. He crossed Guzgan and arrived in Balkh, which was under his authority by now, went to Shuman via Tirmidh and Chaghaniyan, and besieged the king's fortress. For the first time, we hear that the Arab Muslims used catapults (*al-majāniq*) to destroy a fortress in the east. Earlier, Qutayba used the *fa‘ala*, or local corvée labourers in Paykand, so it is possible that his loyal local allies provided him with the catapults. The use of catapults against the many fortresses in the mountains of Bactria and Sogdiana was a well-established technique, and it is depicted in the Sogdian paintings from early eighth-century Panjikent.⁷⁹¹ Whatever it may be, Qutayba captured the fortress by force (‘*anwatan*’), killed the people of the fortress who resisted him, and enslaved anyone who was there (*fa qatala al-muqātila wa sabiya al-dhariyya*).⁷⁹² The narrative does not say if the king of Shuman was killed. Apparently, he survived the attack or maybe someone from his family continued ruling over Shuman, because we will see later that the king of Shuman helped the Umayyads in Sogdiana. Qutayba did not establish any garrison in Shuman. From Shuman, Qutayba marched to Chaghaniyan and crossed it without war because the king of Chaghaniyan was his ally. From there, Qutayba attacked Kish and Nasaf and burned the city of Farab near the Amu Darya.⁷⁹³ This was the first time the Arab Muslims burnt a city in the eastern regions.

The last western Bactrian ruler who remained to be controlled was the king of Guzgan. It is already mentioned that the king of Guzgan fled to the mountains to save his life from the wrath of Qutayba, while some notables from the city submitted to the Arab general. According

⁷⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1129.

⁷⁹¹ The Sogdian painting from Panjikent shows locals used the catapult (Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Paintings: The Pictorial Epic in Oriental Art*, with contributions by A. M. Belenitskii, B. I. Marshak and Mark J. Dresden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 65); For the image of the catapult in Panjikent, see <http://sogdians.si.edu> (accessed on 10 July 2023).

⁷⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1127–1129.

⁷⁹³ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 420; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1129.

to al-Ṭabarī, Qutayba sent a letter to the king of Guzgan (*malik al-Juzjān*) and asked him for a meeting in Marw. However, the king did not trust Qutayba anymore. To ensure his safety, the king of Guzgan asked for Arab Muslim hostages, and Qutayba sent some of his relatives to Guzgan. Similarly, the king of Guzgan sent some of his family members (*min ahl baytihi*) to Qutayba as hostages. The king sent the Arab Muslim hostages to a fortress in Guzgan, and then went on to meet Qutayba in Marw, where they made a peace treaty. However, on his return to Guzgan, the king of Guzgan died in Talaqan, and the Guzganis assumed that the Arab Muslims had poisoned their king. Out of revenge, they killed the Arab Muslim hostages. Qutayba retaliated by executing the Guzgani hostages, but the violence remained limited to the respective noble families and did not lead to a new war.⁷⁹⁴

Whether the Arab Muslims poisoned the king of Guzgan or not, the fact that Qutayba communicated with the king of Guzgan and made a peace treaty in Marw shows that they did not wish to fight each other. The mountains of southern Guzgan provided a safe place for the king of Guzgan, and Qutayba could not campaign in the high and snowy mountains. The preeminence of the mountains for the king is clear from his title ‘king of the mountain’ (*γαριγο βανο*) that he used on his coins.⁷⁹⁵ At the same time, the king could not wage war against the Umayyads in Marw or even in the plains of Bactria because he fled his capital when Qutayba was going to fight the *nizak* mentioned earlier. Hence, a peace treaty would keep both enemies away from each other. In any case, with the death of the king in 91/711, Guzgan lost its significance as a local kingdom. The discontinuation of the coins of Zhulad after 91/711 supports this idea.⁷⁹⁶ It also shows that Zhulad was the king of Guzgan. The Arab Muslim established their military presence in Guzgan. From 91/711 onwards, the royal family of Guzgan continued as a petty principality, and we will see that the king of Guzgan, who may have been from this family, supported the Umayyads against the Türgesh Turks in 119/737.

An important outcome of the consolidation of Umayyad rule in Bactria was the return of the *barmak*, whose progeny became the most celebrated imperial noble family during the early Abbasid period. Though there is a rich bibliography on the *barāmika*, mostly relating to their role in Abbasid politics, the existing studies missed how this family benefitted from the

⁷⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1225–1227; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī gives a different narrative. He says that the king of Guzgan was killed by one of his own companies. Qutayba arrested that man and burned him (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 153).

⁷⁹⁵ Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 71.

⁷⁹⁶ Cribb, “Coinage in Afghanistan.”

shift in the balance of power in Bactria.⁷⁹⁷ I will briefly address it here because it shows how the power dynamics changed by the Arab Muslim conquests affected the lives of some Bactrian elites who later became part of the Islamic empire. As mentioned in chapter two (2.1.3), the *barmak* and the *spāhbed* controlled Balkh when the Arab Muslims arrived. The *yabghu* of Tukharistan claimed that Balkh was under his overlordship. Then, the Arab Muslims captured Balkh, and the *barmak* allegedly converted to Islam. A ruler called the *nizak* reacted to that by killing the *barmak* and most of his sons between 670–680. Whether the Hephthalites had a role in that is not certain. However, the *barmak*'s wife and one of the sons survived the massacre. She took her son and fled to the Buddhist kingdom of Kashmir.⁷⁹⁸ The son grew up and was educated in Kashmir. While the *barmak*'s son was there, the *nizak* revolted and the Qutayba suppressed his rebellion and with that the *spāhbed* of Balkh surrendered and we do not hear about him anymore. The news of the *nizak*'s death must have reached Kashmir because the *barmak*'s son then returned to Balkh. Upon his return, he married the daughter of the *Chaghān-khudā* and occupied the office of the *barmak* in Naw Bahar. He inherited his father's title, the *barmak*, and became a loyal supporter of the Umayyads. Out of this marriage Khālīd b. Barmak was born in 91/711.⁷⁹⁹ Unlike his father and father-in-law, who supported the Umayyads, Khālīd shifted his loyalty from the Umayyads to the Abbasids and became an Abbasid missionary in the east.

Consolidation of Umayyad control over western Bactria was immediately undertaken after crushing the Bactrian rebels. Qutayba established an Arab Muslim military presence by keeping forces commanded by Arab Muslims in western Bactria. The next chapters (5.1.4, 6.1.2) will discuss the garrison and their military structure in Bactria. To ensure absolute

⁷⁹⁷ Only La Vaissière has noticed this issue but did not elaborate on it (La Vaissière, "De Bactres á Balkh," 525).

⁷⁹⁸ Her move suggests that she had contacts in Kashmir, presumably because she was a Buddhist from Kashmir. After all, she did not go to Tirmidh, the Buddhist kingdom of Bamiyan, nor to Kabul, but preferred to go to Kashmir. This makes sense as the Arabic and Persian sources relating to the *barāmika* mention that the *barmak* was respected by the rulers of northwest India (see Ibn Faṭīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 322). Also, Ibn al-Nadīm, in his *al-fihrist* ("Index"), mentions that the *barāmika* were keen to collect information about India and even sent scholars to India to retrieve it. He adds that Yahyā, the grandson of the *barmak*, commissioned the book *Fī milāl al-Hind wa-adyāniḥā* ("About the People of India and their Religions") in Baghdad (Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 484). This was the earliest Arabic book about India. It shows their connection to India, which is also expressed in their support for translating Indic texts into Arabic. For more information on the Barmakid's role in transforming Indian knowledge into Arabic, see Dominik Wujastyk, "From Balkh to Baghdad: Indian Science and the Birth of the Islamic Golden Age in the Eighth Century," *Journal of History of Science* 51, no. 4 (2016): 679–690; For the *barāmika* and the translation movement, see Demitri Gutas, *Greek Thoughts Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society 2nd–4th/5th–10th c* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 4–129. For Buddhism in Bamiyan, see Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmyān: Buddhist Art and Culture of the Hindu Kush* (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, Dipartimento di studi asiatici; Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989).

⁷⁹⁹ La Vaissière, "De Bactres á Balkh," 526–27.

loyalty and political control over Bactria, Qutayba appointed only his brothers and relatives from the Bāhila tribe in western Bactria.⁸⁰⁰ In essence, he formed a family federation to control the frontier region of Khurasan.

From 91/711 to 96/715–716, most parts of Bactria came under the Umayyad authority. The methods of controlling these areas were different. In western Bactria, all areas from the Marw al-Rūd to Khulm came under Umayyad's direct control. They established a network of military garrisons in or near the main cities, appointed Arab Muslim administrators in these areas and demanded tributes. The Umayyads did not enter any mountain areas in western Bactria and focussed only on the main cities in the plain/oases. It is unknown if the Umayyads conquered Badghis after they crushed the *nizak*. Gharchistan remained untouched, possibly because it was located in the mountains and did not have much to offer. In northern Bactria, the kings of Chaghaniyan, Akhrun and Kaftan submitted paid tributes and accepted the Umayyad's overlordship. Khuttal already had a peace treaty with the Umayyads from the time of the Muhallabids. The Umayyads did not build military garrisons in these areas. Only Shuman was captured by force. Tirmidh had already been under the Umayyad's control and had a military garrison after Mūsā's death. In southern Bactria, the *khar* Rob maintained a good relationship with the Arab Muslims without losing his autonomy in his area. In eastern Bactria, after removing the *nizak*, Qutayba sent the *yabghu* to Iraq and appointed *yabghu*'s son in his position. Kadagstan was left to its ruler. Among all these areas, western Bactria became part of the Umayyad Khurasan because the Umayyads directly controlled it. The northern Bactria was indirectly controlled, and eastern and southern Bactria remained outside Umayyad Khurasan (Figure 20).

4.2.3 The end of the Umayyad conquests in Bactria

The period of the conquests ended with the death of Qutayba in 96/715–716 in the Farghana valley. Qutayba revolted against the caliph Sulaymān (r. 96–99/715–717), who came to power after the death of his brother al-Walīd in 96/715. Shortly after, al-Ḥajjāj died, and Qutayba lost his prominent supporter in Iraq. The new caliph supported the Muhallabids, and Qutayba feared that Yazīd b. al-Muhallab will be appointed in Khurasan and take revenge for what Qutayba did to the Muhallabids. The fear from the new caliph forced Qutayba to rebel against Sulaymān, but the Arabian leaders of Khurasan did not support Qutayba. The leaders from the Tamīm,

⁸⁰⁰ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 105; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1225.

Azd, and Hayyān al-Nabaṭī, the commander of the *mawālī* forces, organised a plot and killed Qutayba.⁸⁰¹ The leaders of the Tamīm and Azd found it a perfect opportunity to remove Qutayba and revive their political authority in Khurasan, which was disturbed by Qutayba's new political order, discussed at the beginning of this chapter (4.1.1). With the death of Qutayba, the chapter on the Umayyad conquests in Bactria was also closed.

The Umayyads' conquests in the east had significant regional impacts. The southern and northern Bactrian rulers who recognised the Umayyads' overlordship continued their cooperation with them. The kings of Shuman and Akhrun joined the governor of Khurasan, Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī (d. ca. 115/735), in his campaigns in Farghana⁸⁰² and in Panjikent, which led to the death of Dewāshṭīch, the king of eastern Sogdiana in 104/722.⁸⁰³ That indicates they supported the expansion of the Umayyads in Sogdiana. Similarly, in 106/724, when the Arab Muslim soldiers from Muḍr and Yaman rebelled in the garrison of Baruqan in Balkh, the king of Chaghaniyan sent his forces to help Naṣr b. Sayyār (d. 131/748), the commander of the garrison. Naṣr faced disobedient soldiers who did not want to go to Sogdiana to fight the Türgesh Turks.⁸⁰⁴ The local troops of Chaghaniyan helped Naṣr subdue the rebels.⁸⁰⁵ The king of Chaghaniyan could have stood with the Türgesh, but his cooperation with Naṣr shows that he preferred the Umayyads over the Türgesh. The rest of Bactria did not object to the presence of the Umayyads. From 96–116/715–734, no resistance against Arab Muslims is reported in our sources.

The expansion to Sogdiana had a different result. It allowed the Umayyads to control the Zarafshan Valley and collect tributes. The Umayyads did not stop there but crossed the Syr Darya River and captured the city of Chach (modern Tashkent).⁸⁰⁶ By crossing the Syr Darya, the Umayyads entered the world of the 'Steppe'. Historically, different nomadic groups erupted from the steppes, attacked sedentary societies, and created nomadic empires.⁸⁰⁷ Soon after

⁸⁰¹ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 111–112; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-budlān*, 434; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1296; Al-Bal'amī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 874–876.

⁸⁰² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1447.

⁸⁰³ For details, see Said Reza Huseini, "Thinking in Arabic, writing in Sogdian: Arab Sogdian Diplomatic Relation in the early eighth-century," in *From the Ruler of Samargand to the Andalusian "Law of the Muslims": Sogdian, Greek and Arabic Documents and Manuscripts from the Islamicate World and Beyond*, ed. Andreas Kaplony and Matt Malczyk (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 67–87.

⁸⁰⁴ Refusing soldiers to fight is a common issue mentioned in Arabic narratives for Iraq and Egypt, and it should not be taken as a topos. It reflects a serious problem in the early Islamic period.

⁸⁰⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1473–75.

⁸⁰⁶ Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 111–137.

⁸⁰⁷ For further information on the nomadic empires, see Cristopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); For the most

Qutayba conquered Sogdiana, the Türgesh, a confederation of Turkic groups, united under the leadership of the *qaghān* Sülū (r. 716–736), and began invading Sogdiana. They defeated the Umayyad forces in the battle of the “Day of Thirst” (*yawm al-‘aṭsh*) in 106/724 and the battle of the “Day of Pass” (*yawm al-shi‘b*) in 112/731.⁸⁰⁸ The Türgesh forces imposed two decades of war, which put enormous pressure on the Umayyad Khurasan and almost captured what the Umayyads conquered in Sogdiana. The endless war with the Türgesh, and caliphal pressure on the Arab Muslims to continue to fight the Türgesh, caused resentment among many Arab Muslim soldiers, including those in the garrison of Baruqan in Balkh that were suppressed by Naṣr b. Sayyār. The resentment among Arab Muslim soldiers provided space for a great anti-Umayyad rebellion led by al-Ḥārith b. Surayj in 116/734 in western Bactria. This rebellion again revealed the complexity of local politics in the region, and how Bactrian local rulers responded to an Arab Muslim rebel, the Umayyads, and the Türgesh. It was the last Bactrian resistance before their final submission to the Umayyads. This will be discussed next.

4.3. The rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj in Bactria

The political order created by Qutayba in Umayyad Khurasan did not last long. Two decades after his death, Khurasan witnessed a great rebellion that changed the political situation in the Umayyad East. Unlike the earlier rebellion led by the *nizak*, this time al-Ḥārith b. Surayj, a notable Arab Muslim leader from the tribe of Tamīm and commander of the Umayyad troops in the garrison of Andkhud in western Bactria, led the rebellion. As explained earlier, the *nizak*’s goals were to remove the Umayyads’ physical presence from Bactria, reduce the Umayyads’ status to distant overlords, and revive the earlier power balance in the region. In contrast, al-Ḥārith wished to form a fully independent Khurasan. Hence, the scope of the second rebellion was more extensive, and its organisation was different. To achieve his goal, al-Ḥārith successfully united the diverse constituencies of Khurasan—including Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs—and allied them to the Türgesh Turks, who were considered to be the strongest enemy of the Umayyads in the east. His rebellion weakened the Umayyads in Khurasan and facilitated the Abbasid takeover of this region a few years after al-Ḥārith’s death.

recent study on this subject, see Warwick Ball, *The Eurasian Steppe: People, Movement, Ideas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

⁸⁰⁸ Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, 126–128, 155–61; Saleh Said Agha, “The ‘Battle of the Pass’: Two Consequential Readings,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 63, no. 3 (2000): 340–355.

Al-Ḥārith's rebellion is a well-known issue in the Arabic historical narratives related to Khurasan and has been studied by modern scholars. I have addressed this rebellion in historical narratives and modern studies elsewhere. I have argued that al-Ḥārith's rebellion was the result of several issues, namely the military pressure put on the Arab Muslims by the Türgesh Turks who competed with Umayyads over the control of Sogdiana. Add to this the mismanagement of the Umayyad governors, particularly their imposing poll tax (*jizya*) on Sogdian converts, and crushing the protests that pushed the converts to appeal to the Türgesh *qaghān* Sülü to protect them from the Umayyads. Al-Ḥārith's interest was in creating an independent rule in Khurasan by establishing the *shūrā*, or an assembly of pious Muslim leaders, to appoint all officials in Khurasan. Al-Ḥārith's rebellion started in western Bactria and expanded all over the region, bringing the Umayyads and the Türgesh forces to fight each other on the Bactrian ground.⁸⁰⁹ That put enormous pressure on the Bactrian rulers, who responded differently to this rebellion. In this part, I will only discuss the Bactrian rulers' position in this rebellion and the way they attempted to use it as an opportunity to restore the old political order that existed before Qutayba's conquests.

4.3.1 Al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and Bactrian local rulers

Al-Ḥārith started his rebellion in 116/734 in the garrison of Andkhud in western Bactria. His message of stopping the caliphal pressure on Arab Muslims by establishing an independent Khurasan from the caliphate was welcomed by the soldiers from the Tamīm and Azd in the Andkhud garrison. Al-Ḥārith marched towards Balkh and attempted to bring the Arab Muslim soldiers of the garrison of Baruqan to his cause. At this time, Baruqan had ten thousand troops from various Arab tribes commanded by Naṣr b. Sayyār. As mentioned earlier, the Arab Muslim soldiers of this garrison were already resisted the caliphal policy of war in Sogdiana and were suppressed by Naṣr. Some Arab leaders of the garrison rejected al-Ḥārith's call, and al-Ḥārith captured Baruqan. Naṣr fled towards Marw, and his absence allowed al-Ḥārith to establish his authority in Balkh.⁸¹⁰

The capture of Balkh was a political and military victory. Al-Ḥārith appointed Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim over Balkh.⁸¹¹ The Ibn Khāzim family was known for their

⁸⁰⁹ Said Reza Huseini, "The Rebellion of Ḥārith b. Surayj (116–128/734–746): A Local Perspective," in *Acts of Rebellion and Revolt in the Early Islamic Caliphate*, ed. Petra Sijpesteijn and Alon Dar, Special Issue, *Al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 30 (2022): 516–53.

⁸¹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1566–67; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 283.

⁸¹¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1568.

anti-Umayyad position, discussed in the previous chapter (3.3.3, 3.3.4). First ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim formed his *de facto* independent rule in the Marw region, and later his son Mūsā established his kingdom in Tirmidh. The Umayyads killed both and imposed their authority in Khurasan. Appointing Sulaymān from this family projected al-Ḥārith’s mission to be sympathetic towards anti-Umayyads’ influential families. It would bring such families to support al-Ḥārith. Al-Ḥārith minted silver coins in Balkh with specific Arabic legends reflecting his rebellion as a movement for justice.⁸¹² The Arab Muslim soldiers of Balkh joined al-Ḥārith, which increased his military forces. However, he could not conquer the Umayyad Khurasan without local support, bringing him into contact with the Bactrian rulers.

The capture of Balkh was significant for the expansion of the rebellion. It allowed al-Ḥārith to establish his position independent from Umayyad rule: he held onto his Arab Muslim forces, minted coins, and appointed representatives. His achievements in Balkh brought him to the attention of Bactrian local rulers, who immediately responded by joining the rebellion. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that the rulers of Guzgan, the *tarsul* (local chief) of Faryab, the *shahrab* or ruler of Talaqan, and Qaryāqis the *dihqān* of Marw joined al-Ḥārith, but he does not explain what motivated them to do that.⁸¹³ However, ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Zāḥāk Gardīzī, who lived in the eleventh century and compiled the *Zayn al-akhbār* (“Ornament of histories”), a Persian chronicle dealing with Ghaznavid history, provides an answer. According to Gardīzī, after capturing Balkh, al-Ḥārith promised to maintain existing agreements with the “protected peoples” (*ahl al-dhimma*).⁸¹⁴ Though the *ahl al-dhimma* is a general term referring to non-Muslims, here, in this context, it refers to the Bactrian local rulers because agreements were signed with rulers and not regular people.

The list of local rulers provided by al-Ṭabarī reveals a crucial point. These rulers were from western Bactria. The rulers of Guzgan, the *tarsul* of Faryab, and the *shahrab* of Talaqan were also mentioned to have supported the *nizak*’s rebellion in 90/710.⁸¹⁵ It is already explained in this chapter that Qutayba killed the *nizak*, conquered western Bactria, and imposed his military control over the region. The royal family of Guzgan, the *tarsūl* of Faryab, and the *shahrab* of Talaqan survived Qutayba’s suppression. Joining al-Ḥārith’s rebellion means these local rulers attempted to retrieve their independence. Apart from these western Bactrian rulers,

⁸¹² Sears, “Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj,” 395.

⁸¹³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9: 1569.

⁸¹⁴ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 257–58.

⁸¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1204–1206.

the Hephthalite groups who were still present in the region joined al-Ḥārith to regain their independence disrupted after the *nizak*'s death.⁸¹⁶ Unlike western local Bactrian rulers who had a direct interest in opposing the Umayyads by helping al-Ḥārith, the rulers of northern, southern, and eastern Bactria were not interested in the rebellion. They had valid reasons not to join al-Ḥārith. Qutayba helped the king of Chaghaniyan to overcome his rival neighbours, and later the king supported Naṣr b. Sayyār to subdue the Arab Muslim rebels in Balkh. The *barmak* of the Naw Bahar monastery returned to Balkh only after Qutayba killed the *nizak*. The *khar* of Rob helped Qutayba against the *nizak* earlier and had good relations with Arabs. The kings of Shuman and Akhrun supported the Umayyad expansion in Sogdiana. These rulers were directly interested in keeping the Umayyads in Bactria because the Umayyads helped maintain the power balance that benefitted them. Hence, the rebellion of al-Ḥārith created a great political dilemma in Bactria and brought these rulers to fight each other.

4.3.2 Bactrian rulers between the Umayyads and the Türgesh Turks

After forming a rebellion army consisting of Arab Muslim soldiers, the Sogdian converts and western Bactrian rulers, al-Ḥārith attacked Marw, the political centre of Umayyad Khurasan.⁸¹⁷ Al-Ḥārith dressed in black and carried black flags; this had cultural and political meaning to his local supporters.⁸¹⁸ Though al-Ḥārith led the coalition forces, he was defeated. The reason behind his failure was said to have been his Arab Muslims' fear of the many non-Muslims who supported al-Ḥārith. Thus, the Azdite soldiers of al-Ḥārith left his camp and joined 'Āṣim al-Hilālī, governor of Khurasan (in office in 116/734) before the battle.⁸¹⁹ Apart from that, al-Hilālī's forces destroyed the dam on the Marw River that flooded al-Ḥārith's camp.⁸²⁰ Shortly after, his Bactrian supporters deserted him. The reason for abandoning al-Ḥārith is unclear.

Al-Ḥārith's attack on Marw reflected the dangerous situation in Khurasan. To suppress the rebellion, the caliph Hishām (r. 105–125/723–742) combined the forces of Iraq and Khurasan under the leadership of Khālīd al-Qasrī (d. 126/743),⁸²¹ and he sent twenty thousand

⁸¹⁶ Their support can be seen from the silver coins countermarked al-Ḥārith's movement financially (Sears, "The Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj," 380).

⁸¹⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1570; Khaleifat, "The Caliphate of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik," 222.

⁸¹⁸ The black colour signified political change, political power, and mourning in the eastern Iranian regions. In an online conversation conducted on 11 October 2021, La Vaissière kindly informed me that this was an important local 'cultural code' in the eastern regions. For his argument on the colour code, see La Vaissière, "The 'Abbāsīd Revolution in Marw," 537–40.

⁸¹⁹ Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, 177.

⁸²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1569–71.

⁸²¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1574–82.

Syrian forces led by his brother Asad al-Qasrī (d. 120/738) to Khurasan. The reason for sending Syrian forces was that the Iraqi forces of Khurasan were not totally faithful to the caliph.⁸²² Upon his arrival in Marw, Asad secured it and defeated the rebels in Marw al-Rūd. Asad's advance towards Bactria pushed al-Ḥārith to Balkh, where he formed his rebellion forces. Although al-Ḥārith resisted, he could not keep the city of Balkh and went to Tirmidh.⁸²³ Once al-Ḥārith left the region, the king of Chaghaniyan and other local elites welcomed Asad and joined him. Al-Ḥārith besieged Tirmidh to create a base in the region, but the people of Tirmidh defeated him.⁸²⁴ Having no chance in Tirmidh, al-Ḥārith sent some of his followers and their families to the Tabushkan fortress in Tukharistan given to him by the *yabghu* of Tukharistan.⁸²⁵ However, Asad sent Juday' b. 'Alī al-Kirmānī (d. 129/746), a senior leader from the Azd who captured the fortress and massacred al-Ḥārith's supporters. To end the rebellion, Asad publicly executed the Arab Muslim elites who supported al-Ḥārith.⁸²⁶ Asad's victory in Bactria pushed al-Ḥārith to seek refuge with the Türgesh *qaghān* and encouraged him to invade Bactria.

Al-Ḥārith's appeal to the Türgesh *qaghān* provided an opportunity for the *qaghān* to invade Bactria. The Türgesh Turks were the strongest rival to the Umayyads in the east because they defeated the Arab Muslims in several battles. To protect the region from the Türgesh, Asad applied a new policy. He shifted the political centre of Khurasan from Marw to Balkh by transporting the official registers to Balkh (*ittakhadha Asad madīnat Balkh dāran...wa naqala ilayhā al-dawāwīn*). He also restored the irrigation system (*al-maṣānī*) in Balkh that likely had been damaged in the war.⁸²⁷ This was not the first time that he paid attention to Balkh. In 107/725 when Asad was the governor of Khurasan, he appointed the *barmak* to restore the city and then moved Arab Muslims from Baruqan to it.⁸²⁸ All these conveyed the message that the Umayyads would not leave Bactria to the Türgesh. However, it did not stop the Türgesh *qaghān*, and he surprised Asad by attacking his forces in Khuttal in 119/737.⁸²⁹

The coming of the *qaghān* and al-Ḥārith created a problematic situation for Asad. Asad's main concern was to keep his Arab Muslim soldier, and local Bactrian forces united. He feared that if some of his Arab Muslim soldiers joined al-Ḥārith or his Bactrian allies would

⁸²² Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, 126–28, 179.

⁸²³ Haug argued that taking Balkh was not easy and the rebels resisted there. He noticed that the Umayyad coins issued in Balkh four years later after al-Ḥārith minted his coins in Balkh (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 142–143).

⁸²⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1582–85, 1590–92; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ahsrāf*, 12: 111.

⁸²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1582–85, 1590–92; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ahsrāf*, 12: 111.

⁸²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1589.

⁸²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1591.

⁸²⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1490.

⁸²⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1592–94.

support the *qaghān*. This is echoed in al-Ṭabarī's report. He mentions that Asad sent a letter to Ibrāhīm b. 'Āṣim, a commander of his forces, saying he will execute Ibrāhīm if he betrays Asad and joins the enemy. The *qaghān* was aware of this situation and tried to create disunity among Asad's forces. Thus, he ordered his forces to fight the king of Chaghaniyan first and then take on the Arab Muslims. He wanted to show the outcome of joining the Arabs. However, he was not successful, and the king of Chaghaniyan fought the Türgesh and lost his life defending Asad. Once the *qaghān*'s victory became clear, he sent al-Ḥārith's people to Asad, saying that the entire region beyond the Amu Darya was part of his territory and he should defend his region. However, he sent his forces from Khuttal to plunder western Bactria, and they reached as far as Marw al-Rūd.⁸³⁰ This invasion turned Bactria into a war zone between the Umayyads and the Türgesh.

The military defeat by the Türgesh forces in Khuttal forced Asad to seek more local support. He understood that his Arab Muslim forces could not defeat the Türgesh.⁸³¹ He ordered to make fire on the city walls to invite people from the surrounding districts (*min al-rasātīq*). Once people joined him in Balkh, he accused al-Ḥārith of bringing the Türgesh forces to destroy people. His message was convincing because the Türgesh forces plundered Bactria, and in some places like Guzgan, they destroyed the local ruler's palace.⁸³² The Türgesh threat was significant, and northern and western Bactria rulers preferred to ally with Asad rather than join the Türgesh *qaghān*. However, the king of Khuttal and the *yabghu* of Tukharistan supported the Türgesh *qaghān*. The position of the *khār* of Rob, and the king of Kadagstan is unknown. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that the *qaghān* asked the local rulers of Tukharistan to join him,⁸³³ but it is not sure if the *khar* and the king of Kadagstan supported him.

The Umayyad and the Türgesh forces fought for the last time in 119/737 at Kharistan, an area in Guzgan. The Türgesh *qaghān* and his allies—including al-Ḥārith, the *yabghu* of Tukharistan, the king of Khuttal, and some Sogdian rulers—met Asad, who led the Umayyad forces supported by some local Bactrian allies like the king of Guzgan. Regarding forces, the *qaghān* was weaker because his main forces were already scattered to plunder the region, and he relied on small forces and his local allies. Thus, the *qaghān* played the same game he did in Khuttal to disunite Asad's camp. He announced that all Guzganis who joined Arabs would be

⁸³⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1594–1601.

⁸³¹ Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, 181.

⁸³² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1603–05.

⁸³³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1604.

massacred if Asad was defeated. At the same time, Asad wanted the Guzgani forces to come forward and fight the *qaghān* while sending some Arab troops to Guzgan to watch the region. The king of Guzgan caught between Asad and the *qaghān*, which must have pressured him to decide. Eventually, he supported Asad and sent his forces, accompanied by Arab soldiers, to attack the *qaghān*'s camp from an area where the *qaghān* did not expect any attacks. The Guzgani surprise attack created chaos in the enemy's camp, helping Asad to defeat them. Thus, the *qaghān* and his allies fled away and returned to their areas.

The *qaghān* and al-Ḥārith returned to the north of Amu Darya and prepared to attack Samarkand. However, the sudden assassination of the *qaghān* by Bugha Kul Cür, chief of the "Yellow Bone clan" failed their plan of attacking Samarkand. The death of the *qaghān* created an internal war among the Türgesh Turks,⁸³⁴ and they could never more challenge the Umayyads. Al-Ḥārith lived among the Turks for two decades and then returned to Marw, where he was killed in 128/746 after organising another rebellion against the Umayyads.⁸³⁵ Al-Ḥārith's rebellion in Bactria shows the power dynamic in Bactria. It reveals that al-Ḥārith had to bring local rulers to his side to fight the Umayyads. Similarly, to suppress the rebellion and fight the *qaghān* Asad needed local support. This rebellion also shows how local rulers responded to different powers. The local ruler's decision to join al-Ḥārith, Asad, and the *qaghān* or to fight them depended on their political priorities. It helps us understand that controlling a frontier region by any political power requires local support (Figure 21).

4.3.3 Re-consolidation of Umayyad authority in Bactria

The battle of Kharistan and the subsequent death of the *qaghān* had a significant impact on Bactria. The rulers of western and northern Bactria remained on his side. Those who helped al-Ḥārith's rebellion, like the Hephthalites and the rulers of western Bactria, submitted to Asad. That helped Asad to remove the last local enemy: the king of Khuttal, who supported the *qaghān*. Asad attacked Khuttal and executed its king.⁸³⁶ He then publicly celebrated the re-consolidation of the Umayyad's authority over Bactria. In 120/738, Asad's overlordship was celebrated during the *mihragān* festival in Balkh. Traditionally, the people of Balkh visited their rulers and presented their gifts during this festival. Asad appeared like a king on a throne and received the local rulers or their representatives from Bactria, Herat, and other areas who

⁸³⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1604–1614; Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, 90.

⁸³⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1917–33.

⁸³⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1630–33.

prostrated before him and presented him with their gifts.⁸³⁷ This ceremony symbolised the final submission of many Bactrian rulers to the Umayyads. Perhaps, for this reason, our sources no longer report any anti-Umayyad uprising or resistance in Bactria. The fact that there are no more revolts means that the local leaders resolved to submit to the Umayyads. Bactrian local rulers, like the king of Guzgan, helped Asad's successor, Naṣr b. Sayyār, to campaign in Sogdiana.⁸³⁸ Asad died in Balkh in 120/738 and was buried there.

The political situation in Umayyad Khurasan entered a new phase after 120/737. The political confusion in Iraq and Syria, and rivalries among Arab Muslim leaders in Khurasan led to political fractionalisation and civil war. The Arab Muslim leaders who were part of the political structure of Umayyad Khurasan were divided into different hostile groups. Naṣr represented the Muḍr, al-Kirmānī led people from the Azd, and al-Ḥārith, who returned from Sogdiana to Marw, led his supporters from the Tamīm. They fought each other over the control of Khurasan. Movement from one side to another was so frequent that one could not make a clear-cut tribal division to define these camps.⁸³⁹ After the defeat of al-Ḥārith, the sources do not provide any information on Bactria because their focus shifted to Marw and the Abbasid Revolution.

During the civil war, Naṣr had to withdraw from Marw to Nishapur. His rivals, al-Ḥārith and al-Kirmānī, fought each other over control of Marw. Al-Ḥārith was killed in Marw in 128/746 as his supporters abandoned him because he entered tribal conflicts. The political chaos in Marw, the death of al-Ḥārith, and the withdrawal of Naṣr made Bactrian rulers realise that the Umayyads could no longer keep the region politically stable. Thus, they had to decide to stay with the Umayyads, or leave them.

In this chaotic situation, a new force appeared in Khurasan to manage the political fractionalisation to its benefit. This was none other than Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī (d. 137/755). In fact, the main reason behind the success of the Abbasid Revolution was Abū Muslim's skilful management of this political fractionalisation. Abū Muslim began his *da'wa*, or mission, precisely in the year 129/746–747 when political fractionalisation was at its peak. He fashioned himself like al-Ḥārith. He dressed in black garments and exalted the black flags, and followed almost the same political issues, including al-Ḥārith's idea of *al-bay'at li-l-Riḍā*, but changed it to *al-bay'at li-l-Riḍā min āl Muḥammad* ('allegiance for the leadership of the

⁸³⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh*, 9: 1636–1639.

⁸³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫh*, 9: 1695–96.

⁸³⁹ Shaban, *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*, 134–135.

Elected One from the Prophet's family'). However, Abū Muslim could not bring Khurasan under his control through a top-down application of force. He was not an Arab tribal leader, nor did he have an army. Thus, he did as al-Ḥārith had done and united Arabs and non-Arabs. For instance, he attracted Arab leaders from Marw and non-Arab elites like Khālīd b. Barmak from Balkh and Muḥammad b. Sūl from Jurjān.⁸⁴⁰ These local elites had been loyal supporters of the Umayyad caliphate, but now turned away and supported Abū Muslim. To conquer Khurasan, Abū Muslim successfully applied a 'divide and rule' policy and removed one rival by the hands of another rival. With this strategy, Abū Muslim managed to secure the Marw region in less than two years, something that Naṣr had not been able to do in a decade.⁸⁴¹ Again, success in controlling Khurasan was in understanding the local situation, including local rulers' rivalries, as Abū Muslim did. The lesson is that only by focussing on the local context is it possible to understand what happened in Khurasan. Far away, political rulers might be assigned instrumental roles by the chroniclers; the local circumstances were the crucial factor.

The triumph of Abū Muslim in Marw had direct consequences for Bactria. Abū Muslim could not see any hostile region behind his back before moving towards the western regions. He sent forces led by a certain Abū Dāwūd to Balkh, where his supporter Khālīd b. Barmak lived. The Umayyad *'āmil* of Balkh fled to Tirmidh, and Abū Dāwūd captured Balkh in 128/747.⁸⁴² Possibly, the Rob region was taken in this year as well. A Bactrian legal document mentions that a family in Rob had to sell their farming land because the Arabs imposed taxes on them.⁸⁴³ It is not clear then what happened to the local ruler of Rob. The Arabic documents from Rob show that this region was under Arab Muslim authority in 755, and the local people paid their land taxes to the Abbasid authorities stationed in Samangan.⁸⁴⁴

The Abbasid forces did not enter eastern Bactria. Kadagstan remained under the control of the Turks and recognised the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Turks till 772. The Turkic ruler of Kadagstan also had influence in the Rob region, which was part of the Abbasid empire. Expansion of the Abbasid empire in this zone was achieved later by Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī (d. 187/803), the great-grandson of the *barmak* of Balkh who now acted as the Abbasid

⁸⁴⁰ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 120.

⁸⁴¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1965, 2000–2001. If we look at Abū Muslim's achievement from a local perspective, then there is no reason to accept the Arabic narratives' exaggeration of the leadership of the Abbasid Imam anymore. The Abbasid Imam may have been influential in Iraq and Syria, but he had no power or resources to manage a rebellion in Khurasan.

⁸⁴² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1965–1997.

⁸⁴³ Bactrian document no. W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 126–135.

⁸⁴⁴ See Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 92–136

governor of Khurasan. Faḍl's grandfather was Khālīd b. Barmak, whose mother was the daughter of *Chaghān-khudā*. The *barmak* and the *Chaghān-khudā* were loyal allies of the Umayyads, but their progenies turned away, joined the Abbasids, and completed the conquests of Bactria a century after the first group of Arab Muslims entered Bactria. Bactrian local rulers recognised the overlordship of the Abbasid caliphate, which had a firm Khurasani root and supported the Abbasids. If the earlier generation of the Bactrian rulers cooperated or resisted the Arab Muslims, it was to maintain their local autonomy, but the new generation of the Bactrian local elites, who were now Muslim, opted for a much bigger aim. They sought to create a new empire: that of the Abbasids.

Conclusion

The conquest of Bactria resulted from a series of diplomatic negotiations and military operations implemented side by side. Local Bactrian elites were instrumental in realising both. For instance, Qutayba was involved in local politics in north and west Bactria and made alliances with local rulers that helped him to expand Umayyad control in Sogdiana. However, Qutayba was not interested in raiding Sogdiana, but systematically conquered and incorporated it into the empire. His violent conquests, destruction of religious places, interference in local politics, and confiscation of local people's houses to settle the Arabs disturbed the local power balance in the region. That was noticed by the *nizak*, who objected to Qutayba's policies and formed a regional alliance against him. Qutayba suppressed the *nizak*'s rebellion only with the help of the local rulers from Inner Khurasan and some of his Bactrian allies, such as the king of Rob. Nevertheless, the rebellion provided an opportunity for Qutayba to conquer western Bactria. The conquest was achieved through ruthless military campaigns, the execution of resisting rulers, the establishment of military garrisons within or outside the main cities in the plains, and the appointment of Arab Muslim administrators in the conquered areas. Considering these elements as the main features of the conquests, we can safely say that western Bactria was conquered in this period. However, Qutayba did not follow the same policy in southern, northern, and eastern Bactria. He attacked Shuman only after the king of Shuman refused to pay tributes, and the Shumanis killed Qutayba's delegation. Qutayba did not establish any garrison in Shuman. Similarly, Gharchistan and Gaz remained outside of his campaigns. The rulers of southern, northern, and eastern Bactria recognised the overlordship of Qutayba by visiting him and paying tributes. Qutayba left these areas to their local rulers. Hence, western

Bactria was conquered and brought under Umayyad's direct control, while southern, northern, and eastern Bactria came under indirect rule.

The rebellion of al-Ḥārith disrupted the new power balance created by Qutayba in the region. This rebellion allowed western Bactrian local rulers who survived Qutayba's suppression to support al-Ḥārith to revive their political autonomy. However, the predominance of local supporters of al-Ḥārith created fear among the Arab Muslims in al-Ḥārith's camp, and the inability of al-Ḥārith to assuage this caused his mission in Marw to fail. Nevertheless, this rebellion was a unique occasion because al-Ḥārith convinced different Muslim and non-Muslim political groups to join him. With this assistance, he captured Balkh, established his government, and attacked Marw, the political centre of Umayyad Khurasan. He eventually joined with the Türgesh Turks to fight the Umayyads. Finally, al-Ḥārith and the Türgesh were defeated in Guzgan, which allowed Asad to re-consolidate Umayyad control in western Bactria. Asad removed the king of Khuttal, but it is unclear if he established any military garrisons there. What is clear is that Asad re-established the Umayyad control in western Bactria and shifted the political centre from Marw to Balkh. However, eastern, northern, and southern Bactria remained under their local rulers, who recognised Asad's authority. After this, Bactrian rulers did not revolt against the Umayyads anymore but assisted them in Umayyad's expansion in Sogdiana. They remained loyal to the Umayyads until Umayyad Khurasan sank into civil war. In this situation, most of the Bactrian local rulers remained loyal to the idea of the caliphate, but in practice, they changed sides and supported the Abbasids. With that, they became part of the makers of the Abbasid empire.

The Umayyads' control was not the same all over Bactria. In western parts, the Umayyads imposed direct control. In northern, southern, and eastern Bactria, the Umayyads applied a different policy and imposed an indirect rule. This creates a question: how and why did the Umayyads enforce these different policies? The next chapter will provide some answers.

Chapter Five: Bactria Under the Umayyads' Control

Qutayba conducted executions, he ordered and scared [them]. He humiliated the Turks to the extent that no one had ever done that before him.⁸⁴⁵

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we looked at the Umayyads' expansion in Bactria through the process of military conquests. We saw that these allowed the Umayyads to oversee western parts of Bactria and the Balkh oasis. They implemented direct control by forceful military operations, eradicating any local rulers who resisted them, establishing military garrisons, and appointing Arab Muslim administrators over the conquered areas. However, the Umayyads followed a different policy in the northern, southern, and eastern parts of Bactria. They did not impose direct control over these areas, or systematically conquer these areas, but often attacked them to punish their local rulers who did not pay tribute. However, once they received payment, the Umayyads left those areas and allowed the local rulers in them to maintain their political position. This means the Umayyads simultaneously applied 'direct' and 'indirect' control over Bactria.

This chapter will discuss how and why the Umayyads implemented these different policies. It traces how changes in caliphal policy towards local rule eventually resulted in a new political power structure in the region. In terms of sources, this chapter follows the same approach undertaken in the previous chapters. It combines documentary and literary sources and reads them together so as to understand how the Umayyads established their control in Bactria. While this chapter focusses on political and military elements, the next and final chapter examines how this political shift affected local social relations.

5.1. The Areas under Umayyad's direct control

5.1.1 *Obtaining political influence in western Bactria*

As the Umayyad forces began to establish their domination over Bactria, they encountered many local rulers who had autonomy in their local affairs. These rulers controlled local economic resources, managed their administrations, and commanded local forces. However, none of them could unify the entire region under his personal control. Instead, they recognised

⁸⁴⁵ Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 153.

the overlordship of the *qaghān* of the Turks and paid him tributes. The *qaghān* did not impose direct control over Bactria, nor did he interfere in the Bactrian local rulers' internal affairs. Thus, Bactrian rulers remained in charge of their areas. In times of political upheavals, these local rulers' military-political alliances with each other and with more considerable regional political powers served one goal: to maintain their independence. This form of political order was in place in Bactria during the first fifty years of the Arab Muslim presence in the region. From 31–86/651–705, the Arab Muslim generals, like al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, and then the Umayyad governors like Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, respected this political order and did not impose direct control.⁸⁴⁶ They often negotiated with local rulers, received tributes, and left the region. However, in the year 90/710, Qutayba b. Muslim broke down this political order and imposed direct control over western parts of Bactria and the Balkh oasis. Nevertheless, he did not follow the same policy of imposing direct control over northern, southern, and eastern Bactria. The difference between respecting local political order earlier and breaking it down later creates several questions. Why did previous generals and governors like al-Aḥnaf and Yazīd not impose direct rule over Bactria while Qutayba later did?

To understand the Umayyad's different policies enforced in Bactria, we should go back in time and see why all the governors before Qutayba respected the local political order in Bactria and did not impose direct control over the region. Several reasons prevented the incorporation of Bactria before Qutayba's governorship. Internal division and strife preoccupied the Arab leadership: there was the breakout of civil war (*fitna*) in the western parts of the empire and tribal conflicts among the Arab Muslims in Khurasan. They were moreover focussed on raiding Sogdiana, which required a safe passage through Bactria, but not the complete occupation of the thoroughfare. These concerns that explain the absence of an Arab-Muslim initiative to bring Bactria under permanent and total control have already been discussed in chapter three (3.3). A final reason which was of crucial importance was the lack of a standing army in Khurasan.

From 31/651, when the Arab Muslim forces led by Ibn 'Āmir arrived in Sasanian Khurasan to help the *kanārang* of Tus, up to 51/671, when a large group of Arab Muslims settled in the Marw region, the Arab Muslims did not have a standing army in Khurasan. Only a small group of soldiers, no more than 4,000 troops, were stationed in Khurasan after the first engagement with Balkh.⁸⁴⁷ This small force was organised into tribal units. Arab Muslim

⁸⁴⁶ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2903.

⁸⁴⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2907.

soldiers were all engaged as infantry. They carried swords and shields and used long spears to push back the horses to defend their lines from the enemy's cavalry.⁸⁴⁸ One of the tribal leaders led the war, but he had to cooperate with the other tribal leaders, who each led a unit to help him.⁸⁴⁹ A group of Sasanian horsemen formed the cavalry in the Arab Muslim army.⁸⁵⁰ The Arab Muslim troops did not even have a garrison, and so the local rulers of Inner Khurasan accommodated the Arab Muslim forces to shelter from the cold winter.⁸⁵¹ The tribal forces were able to raid various areas in western Bactria, but they were not in a position to bring the entire region under permanent control. Hence, the Bactrian rulers' power continued, and in some places like Marw al-Rūd and Balkh, the local rulers paid tributes to the Arabs but they could maintain their status.

The situation changed with the new forces coming from Iraq to Khurasan. In 51/671, many soldiers from the Basra and Kufa garrisons were sent to the Marw region. The newcomers provided fresh military forces to expand Arab Muslim authority in the east. By 77/697, the sources describe an Arab Muslim army in Khurasan of substantial force. The troops formed two parts: the advanced guard (*muqaddima*) and the rear guard (*sāqa*). The advanced guard consisted of several thousand soldiers. In 80/700, the advanced guard of the forces was led by al-Muhallab b. Abī Šufra and numbered 3,000 horsemen.⁸⁵² During the governorship of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab in Khurasan, the army increased to 10,000 soldiers.⁸⁵³ Although these numbers might not be reliable, they reflect an increase in number of troops. Despite having these forces, the Muhallabids did not initiate any systematic conquests in Bactria because they were not interested in war but invested more in infrastructures. The Muhallabids acted as overlords in western Bactria by requiring tribute from the king of Guzgan and the *nizak* of Badghis. However, they did not change any local rulers or build any garrisons in Badghis and Guzgan. Similarly, they did not interfere in local rulers' internal affairs. This form of overlordship was already known to Bactrian rulers, and they did not object to it. Except for capturing Tirmidh from the anti-Umayyad rebel Mūsā, the Muhallabids did not conduct military operations in

⁸⁴⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 495; The Arab Muslim forces went from Iraq to Khurasan, therefore the military organisation in Khurasan was similar to that in Iraq described by Hugh Kennedy (Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 12, 21–22).

⁸⁴⁹ Al-Ṭabarī informs us that though al-Aḥnaf b. Qays was the commander of the forces (*amīr al-jaysh*) sent to Bactria. Still, he had to cooperate with other tribal leaders (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 5: 2898–2902).

⁸⁵⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 413–414.

⁸⁵¹ Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Al-kharāj*, 402; Ibn Fandūq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, 26; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 229–230.

⁸⁵² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8:1023, 1035.

⁸⁵³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8:1107.

northern, southern, and eastern Bactria. The local rulers of these areas continued ruling and maintained their loyalty to the *qaghān* of the Turks.⁸⁵⁴ Hence, before Qutayba arrived in Bactria, the Umayyads had influence in western Bactria up to Balkh and Tirmidh, and the Turks had authority over the rest of Bactria. The expansion of Umayyad influence in western Bactria happened at the expense of limiting the *qaghān*'s overlordship; nevertheless, the *qaghān* did not clash with the Umayyads over control of Bactria in this period. Once the Umayyads attained a toehold in Bactria, the situation was ready for them to bring the region under their control. That happened after some reforms discussed in the next section.

5.1.2 Umayyad political and military reforms

Imposing direct control over western Bactria and the Balkh oasis resulted from the Umayyads' new political strategy in the first half of the eighth century. This imperial strategy was to expand the Umayyad empire in the east and incorporate Bactria and Sogdiana. This imperial agenda was directed by al-Ḥajjāj and implemented by Qutayba. This agenda began with a political and military reform that allowed the Umayyads to impose their control over Bactria.

Political reform was the first item in this imperial agenda. It was related to the Umayyads' understanding of Khurasan. To them, Khurasan was the empire's eastern frontier (*thaghr al-mashriq*).⁸⁵⁵ It was the region that could go out of control. According to al-Ṭabarī, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik understood Khurasan as a frontier region filled with evil (*Khurāsān thaghr al-mashriq wa qad kāna bihi min al-sharr*) that made it difficult to control. This expression is attributed to the caliph after he was challenged by 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim, who formed his *de facto* rule in Khurasan and supported Ibn Zubayr against 'Abd al-Malik.⁸⁵⁶ Similarly, al-Ṭabarī attributes some words to 'Umar II, who said: "there is no greater frontier for me than Khurasan" (*lā a 'ẓama 'indī min thaghr Khurāsān*).⁸⁵⁷ Apparently, the caliph 'Umar said this after he found out about the Sogdian converts' resentment towards the Umayyad policy of taking poll tax from the converts, who eventually appealed to the Türgesh *qaghān* to help them against the Umayyads. The Umayyad caliphs followed two different models to

⁸⁵⁴ This issue is reflected in Bactrian documents no. Nn, O, P, Q, R, S, Ss, T, Tt in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79, 80–83, 84–87, 88–91, 92–93, 94–95, 96–97, 98–103, 104–105, and Bactrian documents no. jf, jg, ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 132–135, 138–139.

⁸⁵⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1366.

⁸⁵⁶ See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 831–35, 860.

⁸⁵⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1366.

control such a challenging frontier region. The first was treating Khurasan as a *separate* province, and the second was treating it as a *dependent* province of Iraq.

The first model was enforced mainly in the first fifty years of Umayyad rule; Khurasan was treated as a separate province. The caliph directly appointed the governor (*amīr*), who was often a close relative to him.⁸⁵⁸ Other elements, such as personal friendship with the caliph;⁸⁵⁹ bribing the caliphal family;⁸⁶⁰ knowledge and experience;⁸⁶¹ or helping the caliph in his struggle for power against rivals, were important criteria for choosing the governor of Khurasan.⁸⁶² It seems that this model of direct caliphal involvement in Khurasan's governance, whereby the province fell under immediate caliphal control, was aimed at leading military operations more quickly in the east,⁸⁶³ maintaining the caliph's authority among Arab Muslims in Khurasan, and suppressing any anti-caliphal rebels amongst the ranks.⁸⁶⁴ In this model, the familial ties with the caliph or the investments they made to gain their position and which formed the basis of their suitability as governors paradoxically also gave the governors certain levels of autonomy. For instance, the governor of Khurasan had the right to appoint (*istakhlafa*) his successor on two occasions: before leaving Marw to lead the war in Sogdiana, and when he was on his deathbed. The caliph confirmed (*aqarra*) his appointee, often the governor's son or relative.⁸⁶⁵ The caliph expected his governor to inform him about the situation in the province by sending him letters and delegations (*sing.*, *wafd*).⁸⁶⁶ The caliph also expected the governor to send him the caliphal share (*khums*) from the provincial income. However, some governors kept all provincial revenue to be spent on their expenses and refused to deliver even the caliph's share.⁸⁶⁷ Some of them openly turned against the caliph.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁵⁸ 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir, 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzim, Sa'īd b. 'Uthmān were either family members or relatives of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. Other governors like 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, Salm b. Ziyād and Umayya b. 'Abd Allāh were the relatives of Umayyad caliphs Mu'āwiya and 'Abd al-Malik. Al-Ya'qūbī shows this issue clearly in his *Ta'rikh*, 167.

⁸⁵⁹ 'Abd al-Malik appointed Umayya b. 'Abd Allāh because he had family relation with the caliph (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 861).

⁸⁶⁰ Junayd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān gained the position of governor of Khurasan after he gave expensive gifts to the caliph's wife (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1529).

⁸⁶¹ Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that Naṣr b. Sayyār knew Khurasan (*lahū 'ilmun bi Khurāsān*) and that helped him to become the governor (al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 84).

⁸⁶² Al-Muḥallab b. Abī Ṣufra had an impressive career. Later, he shifted his loyalty from Ibn Zubayr to 'Abd al-Malik (al-Dīnawārī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-tiwāl*, 281–291); Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī was appointed as governor of Khurasan because he helped the caliph against Yazīd b. al-Muḥallab in the battle of *Yawm al-'aqar* (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1438).

⁸⁶³ The case of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ziyād can be mentioned.

⁸⁶⁴ The case of Bukayr b. Washshāh is a good example.

⁸⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 161, and 8: 1035, 1083 and 8: 1023.

⁸⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1033.

⁸⁶⁷ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 78.

⁸⁶⁸ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 78.

The first model had certain limits. The geographical distance between Khurasan and Syria (almost 3,000 km) and the caliph's unfamiliarity with the complicated political situation in the east could cause problems. This is reflected in some Arabic reports. Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that al-Ḥajjāj argued to the caliph that one could not directly control Khurasan from Syria.⁸⁶⁹ Al-Sullāmī reports that al-Ḥajjāj resented the caliph's policy towards Khurasan and saw it as a great mistake.⁸⁷⁰ These arguments were given when al-Ḥajjāj was struggling to remove the powerful Muhallabids from Khurasan, who did not allow al-Ḥajjāj to interfere in Khurasan. Al-Ya'qūbī and al-Sullāmī do not discuss al-Ḥajjāj's counterargument, but they assert that those governors appointed directly by the caliph from Syria failed in Khurasan.⁸⁷¹ Al-Ḥajjāj's later attempt to bring Khurasan under his direct control shows that he wanted the caliph to leave Khurasan to him. In other words, he wanted to combine Iraq and Khurasan under one single command. That led to the development of the second model.

In the second model, Khurasan was treated as a dependent province. It was part of the administration in Iraq. The governor of Iraq, who acted as the implementor of the caliphal policies in the east, appointed the governor of Khurasan. It reduced the caliph's interference in Khurasan and allowed the governor of Iraq to decide about Khurasan.⁸⁷² This model was primarily applied to expand the empire in the east or to defend and protect it against an external enemy more effectively. We already saw in the previous chapter (4.1) that the expansion of the empire and incorporation of Bactria and Sogdiana happened precisely during the governorship of al-Ḥajjāj. The defense of Khurasan against the Türgesh *qaghān* and al-Ḥārith happened during the governorship of Khālīd al-Qasrī (4.3). In both cases, Khurasan was added to the administration in Iraq.

In this model, the governor of Khurasan was not necessarily the caliph's relative, but a capable commander who reported to the governor of Iraq,⁸⁷³ sent him gifts and caliphal shares,⁸⁷⁴ and benefitted from his political and military support.⁸⁷⁵ As opposed to the first model, in which the governor of Khurasan, who had some ties with the caliph, enjoyed some levels of autonomy by answering in a loose way to caliphal directions (as Umayyad governors

⁸⁶⁹ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 81.

⁸⁷⁰ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 97.

⁸⁷¹ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 84; Even more, al-Ṭabarī mentions that the tribal leaders in Khurasan complained about the governors sent directly from Syria, and called them "donkey riders" (*fajā'u 'ala al-ḥimārāt*) without the characteristics to be the governors (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1461).

⁸⁷² See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1718.

⁸⁷³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1203.

⁸⁷⁴ Al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 109.

⁸⁷⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1186; Stark, "The Arab Conquest of Bukhārā," 367–400.

in general did), in the second model, the governor of Khurasan instead followed direct orders from the governor of Iraq. Combining Iraq and Khurasan under one leader was a significant political reform that led to the imposition of direct control in Bactria.

The second element of this imperial agenda, which had great repercussions for Bactria, was the military reform in Khurasan. Before al-Ḥajjāj sent Qutayba to Khurasan, the Umayyads had military forces, but the Muhallabids did not use them for forceful conquests in Bactria. Qutayba created the conquest army out of Arab Muslim populations in the Marw region, along with the forces provided by the local rulers of Inner Khurasan, and the troops given by the western Bactrian rulers, like the *nizak* of Badghis.

Qutayba's army of conquests was well-organised and had high military capability. It consisted of a central part and two flanks.⁸⁷⁶ It had cavalries (*al-khayl*), infantry (*al-rijāl*), and archers (*al-marāmiya*).⁸⁷⁷ In addition, there were officials called *al-ʿurafāʾ* (sing., *ʿarīf*) who recognised capable soldiers and introduced them to the governor.⁸⁷⁸ Another position was *al-taʿbiya*, the organiser, who arranged the military units before the war.⁸⁷⁹ At the time of Qutayba's rebellion and his death in 96/715, the army in Khurasan had 54,000 soldiers from different Arabian tribes and the non-Arab *mawālī*.⁸⁸⁰ This number is apart from the local forces often provided by local rulers to serve Qutayba. The army in Khurasan was continuously reinforced by fresh forces sent from Iraq and Syria. This pattern continued from 93/712 onwards. Even the Iraqi forces who served in Sindh were sent to Khurasan to serve Qutayba.⁸⁸¹ Later, the caliph Hishām sent a large army (*jaysh ʿazīm*) with war equipment to help his governor against al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and the Türgesh.⁸⁸² In times of emergency, the governor also recruited locals for the army.⁸⁸³

The existence of good horses in Bactria and Sogdiana provided excellent mounts for the cavalry. In 109/728, Ashras al-Sulamī, the governor of Khurasan, established *al-rābiṭa* or 'mobile frontier forces'. The *al-rābiṭa* had two main parts: the heavy cavalry (*al-mujawwafa*) and the light cavalry (*al-mujarrada*).⁸⁸⁴ The horses of *al-mujawwafa* had armour, but the horses

⁸⁷⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1250.

⁸⁷⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1195, 1202, 1242–1243.

⁸⁷⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1243.

⁸⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1609.

⁸⁸⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1291.

⁸⁸¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1267.

⁸⁸² Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 278.

⁸⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1545.

⁸⁸⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1405.

of *al-mujarrada* did not. The horses had stirrups that increased the stability and ability to manoeuvre of the horsemen on the battlefields.⁸⁸⁵ Apart from that, the Umayyad army in Khurasan used catapults (*manjanīq*) to destroy the fortresses of the Bactrian rulers.⁸⁸⁶ They also rented local boats (*safā'in*) to cross the Amu Darya.⁸⁸⁷ All this means that the Umayyad army had different units that worked together. Enlarging the military forces allowed Qutayba to carry out the imperial expansion agenda towards the east. This military conquered and incorporated Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm into the Umayyad empire. Thereby, Qutayba challenged Bactrian rulers and brought them under his control. This control was directly imposed on western parts of Bactria and the Balkh oasis, which will be discussed next.

5.1.3 Imposing direct control over western Bactria

Qutayba's direct control was implemented only in western Bactria up to Balkh and Tirmidh. It was actualised through military conquests, removing local rulers who resisted him, stationing Arab Muslim soldiers in garrisons within or near main cities, appointing Arab Muslim administrators, and demanding tributes from the captured areas. Two reasons may have been behind imposing direct control over western Bactria. The first reason was western Bactria's strategic importance to reach Sogdiana. The second reason was the *nizak*'s revolt supported by the local rulers of western Bactria. During this rebellion, the rulers of western Bactria changed sides, ignored their peace treaties with Qutayba, and united with the *nizak* to remove the Umayyads from the region. Thus, Qutayba had to bring this region under his command to ensure access to Sogdiana and remove any local rulers who could challenge him. We will see later that Asad al-Qasrī almost repeated the same policy and re-established Umayyad's direct control over western Bactria, Balkh oasis, and Tirmidh (Figure 22). These reasons, however, did not apply to other parts of Bactria, and the Umayyads kept those areas under indirect control through their local rulers, which will be discussed later in this chapter (5.2).

The main instrument of direct control was the military garrisons established by Qutayba. They were first established in Balkh and Tirmidh, and then expanded to Marw al-Rūd, Talaqan, Faryab, Juzjan, and Khulm during and after the *nizak*'s rebellion.⁸⁸⁸ The exact location of these garrisons is unknown. However, it is reasonable to infer that they were within

⁸⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1505, 1517, 1542.

⁸⁸⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1288. Also, see 9:1442–46, and 9: 1852.

⁸⁸⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1024.

⁸⁸⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1206, 1218.

or near the main cities in the plain/oases areas and not in the mountains because our sources associate them with certain cities. The exact number of soldiers stationed in these garrisons is also not clear, but from al-Ṭabarī's narratives related to the rebellion of the *nizak*,⁸⁸⁹ and later al-Ḥārith b. Surayj,⁸⁹⁰ we learn that the garrison of Baruqan in Balkh had more than 10,000 soldiers. Other smaller garrisons, like the one in Andkhud, had about 4000 soldiers. Though these numbers are fixed and cannot be fully trusted, they reflect that the Umayyads sent many soldiers to western Bactria. The garrisons in these areas were linked by the *barīd* or post system that facilitated rapid communication between them.⁸⁹¹ The garrisons hosted not only the fighting soldiers (*muqātila*), but also a number of Arab Muslim administrators who managed the issues related to war (*al-ḥarb*), tributes (*al-kharāj*),⁸⁹² prayers (*al-ṣalāt*),⁸⁹³ and jurisprudence (*al-qadā*).⁸⁹⁴ The police (*al-shurṭa*) and bodyguards (*al-ḥaras*) kept law and order within the garrisons.⁸⁹⁵ The in-charges of these garrisons were appointed by the Umayyad governor of Khurasan and responded to him. Establishing the garrisons from Marw al-Rūd to Tirmidh means that these areas were brought under the direct control of the governor of Khurasan, who responded to the governor of Iraq, the main director of the caliphal policies in the east.

The imposition of direct control over western Bactria significantly impacted this region. It limited the autonomy of local rulers to a large extent. The Umayyads either annihilated the local rulers —like Badhān of Marw al-Rūd, the *nizak* of Badghis— or pushed them to the margins like the king of Guzgan who continued in the mountain areas in Guzgan. Once they were sent to the margins, these local rulers lost their main cities and primary economic resources. For instance, the coinage of the king of Guzgan was discontinued after 711, and instead, we see the Umayyads minting silver dirhams in the main cities like Amber and Balkh.⁸⁹⁶ The Umayyads' direct control should have removed or limited the Turkic

⁸⁸⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 8: 1207.

⁸⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 9: 1567.

⁸⁹¹ It was an old Persian system in which a number of stations were made to facilitate rapid communication between different areas. A *barīd* station had building in which horses were kept ready for the couriers. The *barīd* staffs were well-trained riders, knew the roads, and changed horses in each station. See Edmund Clifford Bosworth, "Barīd," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, available online, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barid (access online 21 December 2020); For recent discussion on origin and function of the *barīd* see Didier Gazagnadou, "The Origin of the word *barīd*," *Journal of the Persian Studies* 10 (2017): 49–56.

⁸⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 7: 178. The *āmīl al-kharāj* had the authority to take money from the treasury (*khazāna*) to pay the cheques (see al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 9: 1307).

⁸⁹³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 9: 1307.

⁸⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 9: 1485, and 9:1505.

⁸⁹⁵ There is no report showing that the office of *al-ḥaras* and the *al-shurṭa* overlapped each other. In 119/737, both *al-shurṭa* and *al-ḥaras* joined the army to fight the Türgesh in Guzgan (al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, 9: 1609).

⁸⁹⁶ See chapter four, section 4.2.2.

overlordship in western Bactria. This political change has been reflected in non-Arabic sources. There are some Bactrian documents produced after 700 in Guzgan, such as a Bactrian inscription from Bamiyan possibly dating after 714, and two Chinese reports from 718 and 725. These pieces of evidence require some explanation.

The first important change that our sources reflect is the apparent disappearance of Turkic overlordship from western Bactria. A Bactrian document produced in Guzgan in 659 refers to the Turkic *qaghān* and the tributes collected in his name.⁸⁹⁷ However, we no longer see any reference to the Turkic *qaghān* in later documents.⁸⁹⁸ It is unclear if the Turkic overlordship was totally removed or limited to the rulers who remained in the mountainous areas. Further information about the presence of Arab Muslims as an important political power is reflected in the Bactrian inscription of Tang-i Safidak, an area in the district of Yakawlang in Bamiyan. It was once placed on a small Buddhist stupa (2.5 x 2.5m) commissioned by Alkhis, son of Khuras, the lord of Gazan (*γαζαβο χοδδηοο*) around 714 (or later). It is unclear if Alkhis visited Bamiyan as a pilgrim or fled from the Arab Muslims who dominated Guzgan. According to the inscription, Alkhis commissioned this stupa when there was a Turkic ruler (*δορκο χαρο*) and an Arab ruler (*ταζιγο χαρο*).⁸⁹⁹ The inscription does not identify the Arab and Turkic rulers. However, using the title *khar* (*χαρο*) meaning “ruler”, for both Arabs and Turks reflects Alkhis’ understanding of the two powers. He likely viewed both as important political powers.

The establishment of Umayyad control over western Bactria is also reflected in Chinese reports. In a letter sent to the Chinese emperor in 718, the brother of the *yabghu* of Tukharistan claimed that the *yabghu* was the overlord of all Bactrian rulers, including Guzgan (*hou-che-kien*). He mentions that the Arabs (*ta-che*) attacked the region and put enormous pressure on

⁸⁹⁷ Bactrian documents no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79.

⁸⁹⁸ See Bactrian documents no. O, R, Tt, Uu in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83, 92–93, 104–105, 112–115.

⁸⁹⁹ Jonathan Lee and Nicholas Sims-Williams, “The antiquities and Inscription of Tang-i Safidak,” *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 9 (2003): 169–184; Sims-Williams identified Gazan with modern Ghazni. However, Frantz Grenet suggested that Gazan could have been the name of Yakawlang, where the inscription is found (Frantz Grenet, “The Antiquities and Inscription of Tang-i Safidak,” *Silk Roads Art and Archaeology* 9 (2003): 159–184). Minoru Inaba also suggests that Gazan mentioned in this inscription should be associated with Gaz, an area in Guzgan. He argues that the lord of Gazan here can be interpreted as “lord of the people of Gaz”, and the area of Gaz is known from the Bactrian documents (Minoru Inaba, “Between Zābulistān and Gūzgān: A Study of the Early Islamic History of Afghanistan,” *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 7 (2012): 209–225). Apart from these arguments, one can see that Gaz is a common name in the northern parts of the Hindukush. For instance, Gazan is the name of an area in the east of Baghlan. The area south of Balkh was also called Gaz in Xuanzang’s report and in several Bactrian documents. The name of Gaz is also preserved in the name of modern Darra-yi Gaz in the south of Balkh. There is an old route from Darra-yi Gaz to Bamiyan through Yakawlang, where the stupa of Tangi-Safidak is located. Therefore, it is difficult to identify Gazan with Ghazni (for Gaz in Bactrian documents, see documents no. R, S in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 92–93, 94–97).

the *yabghu*.⁹⁰⁰ However, it is unclear if the Turkic overlordship was recognised in western Bactria when the *yabghu*'s brother contacted the emperor. The reason is that Qutayba already pacified western Bactria, the Balkh oasis, and Tirmidh before 715, sent the *yabghu* of Tukharistan to Iraq, and then appointed the *yabghu*'s son in Tukharistan. Hye Ch'o, the Korean Buddhist monk who visited Bactria in 725 we encountered earlier, provided further information that can clarify the situation. He reports: "At present, the place [Bactria] is guarded and oppressed by Arab forces. The original king was compelled to leave the capital, and he resides in Badakhshan...which is under the authority of the Arabs."⁹⁰¹ Hye Ch'o does not reveal the identity of the Arab ruler or the fleeing king. The Arabic narratives do not help to identify them either. What is important is that his report shows that the Umayyads were identified as victorious over the Turks, even by a Chinese outsider visiting the region. In other words, the Umayyads expanded their control over the region. The Umayyad's control over western Bactria was disrupted by al-Ḥārith b. Surajy, which forced the Umayyads to re-establish their control over this region again, and this time stronger. The following section will elaborate on this issue.

5.1.4 Re-establishing Umayyads' direct control over western Bactria

The Umayyads' direct control established over western Bactria in 90/710 continued until 116/734. However, the rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and the Türgesh invasion of Bactria disrupted it. The previous chapter (4.3.1) explained that al-Ḥārith captured Balkh and interacted with the ruler of Guzgan, the *tarsul* (local chief) of Faryab, and the *shahrab* or ruler of Talaqan, and they all supported him.⁹⁰² The *tarsul* of Faryab and the *shahrab* of Talaqan were local elites who survived after they submitted to Qutayba, after he established military garrisons in Faryab and Talaqan. Qutayba also established a garrison in Guzgan. This report is important because it shows that for two decades (710–734), Umayyad control did not allow the *tarsul* of Faryab and the *shahrab* of Talaqan, or the king of Guzgan to make any move against the Umayyads, and only the rebellion allowed them to appear and fight the Umayyads. It is also important to note that al-Ḥārith's revolt did not remove the Umayyad garrisons from western Bactria, but he became their commander for a while. The Arab Muslim soldiers of these garrisons joined his revolt, but once Asad al-Qasrī, the Umayyad governor of Khurasan,

⁹⁰⁰ Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue*, 200–201.

⁹⁰¹ *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52.

⁹⁰² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1204–1206.

crushed the rebellion, they left al-Ḥārith and joined Asad. Hence, disturbing the Umayyads' direct control over western Bactria and the Balkh oasis was temporary. Asad re-established that control in 120/737.

The re-establishment of the Umayyads' direct control was publicly celebrated during the *mihragān* festival in the autumn of 120/738 in Balkh. That was a historical moment because it happened almost ninety years after Bactrian elites recognised the Arab Muslim overlordship for the first time in such a ceremony in Balkh. However, there was a sharp difference between the two events. When the Balkhi elites visited al-Aḥnaf b. Qays's cousin during the *mihragān* festival in 33/653, the Arab Muslims had not conquered Bactria but just raided it. They had not established garrisons or appointed Arab Muslims over the region. They received the gifts and tributes and then returned to Iraq. However, in 120/738, the Umayyads were an established empire that conquered and incorporated eastern Iranian regions and defeated a great rival like the Türgesh Turks. They had military garrisons and executed any resisting local rulers in western Bactria. Thus, the *mihragān* festival of 120/738 was a sign of Umayyad triumph in Bactria. Reading the report about this event clearly shows it.

Al-Ṭabarī is the only one who provides extensive information about this event. On the authority of al-Madā'inī, al-Ṭabarī depicts the ceremony as follows:

And then, the *mihragān* festival arrived, and he [Asad] was in Balkh. The commanders (*al-umarā'*) and local landed gentry (*al-dahāqīn*) came to him with gifts (*al-hadāyā*), and among those who visited him was Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥanafī his *'āmil* in Herat, [a particular] Khurasānī [?], and the *dihqān* of Herat..., and Asad was on a throne (*al-sarīr*), and the elites of Khurasan were on chairs (*al-kurrāsī*) Then, the *dihqān* rose and gave a speech saying: 'May God keeps the *amīr*'s behaviour correct! We Persians (*ma'shar al-'ajam*) ruled the world for 1,400 years and governed it with affability (*al-ḥilm*), reason (*al-'aql*) and dignity (*al-waqār*) ..., and all these qualities are gathered in you, and you completed the *katkhudāniyya*. You protected your family, your people and those who are related to you (*mawālik*) ... and you met the *qaghān* who was with 100,000 and accompanied by al-Ḥārith b. Surajy, [but you] defeated him'..., and the *dihqān* prostrated before Asad ...⁹⁰³

Though this report exaggerates Asad's army and leadership in the war against the *qaghān*, it reflects significant information about the political situation and Umayyad control in the region.

⁹⁰³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1637–38.

The first issue to note is that the *mihragān* was organised for Asad. The *mihragān* was an important Zoroastrian autumn festival in which Persian elites visited their kings and offered them gifts. Organising the *mihragān* in Balkh shows that this pre-Islamic Iranian tradition continued and was now organised for Asad, an Arab Muslim governor. Asad found it a perfect moment to renew bonds of loyalty with the local elites who came under his control. However, as Haug has noticed, this ceremony was more complicated than it looked. He discussed it as an interplay of “complex interaction[s] between Iranian tradition and Arab Muslim rule.”⁹⁰⁴

The complexity of this issue is revealed if we review the report again through Haug’s analysis. The Arab Muslim commanders and local Iranian elites gathered under the leadership of an Umayyad governor to celebrate a non-Islamic tradition. In this ceremony, the Iranian elites presented gifts of gold and silver and other precious materials like silk fabrics. Then, a *dihqān* compared Asad to the ancient Iranian kings, thereby gently making him part of an old tradition. Subsequently, Asad distributed gifts among Arab Muslim commanders. Thus, the ceremony, as Haug argued, reflects two layers. On the one hand, Asad acted as an actual ruler by receiving gifts from local Iranian elites. However, on the other hand, he represented himself as a tribal *shaykh* who generously honoured his clients by giving them gifts to reward and simultaneously renew their loyalty. The Arabs who received the gifts were representatives of the Qays and Rabi‘a tribes, who rivalled the Yamani tribe from which Asad came.⁹⁰⁵ Hence, by celebrating a non-Islamic tradition, Asad represented his legitimate authority over local Iranian elites and simultaneously showed himself as a tribal *shaykh* who expected loyalty from the Arabs.

Al-Ṭabarī’s report about the set-up of this ceremony reveals crucial information about western Bactria that is not addressed in Haug’s analysis. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that Asad sat on a throne (*al-sarīr*) while the Arab Muslim commanders and local Iranian elites sat on chairs (*al-kurrāsī*) before him. That means the commanders and the local elites were received as equals. However, this report does not identify the local Iranian elites but generally calls them *al-dahāqīn*. The same word is used for the local elite of Herat who accompanied the *‘āmil* of Herat. This report does not refer to the *tarsul* of Faryab, or the *shahrab* of Talaqan, which means they were either removed or had been brought properly under Asad’s control. Whether the king of Guzgan was present is unknown. The *dihqān* who praised Asad and called him *kathhudā* “master of the house”, and prostrated before Asad is not identified. In any case,

⁹⁰⁴ Haug, “The Gifts of Mihragān,” 43.

⁹⁰⁵ Haug, “The Gifts of Mihragān,” 42.

organising the ceremony, sitting on a throne, receiving gifts from local elites, and being called *kathhudā* by the local elites who prostrated before him reflect one message: the region is under Umayyad control. Calling Asad *kathhudā* has political significance as it suggests that the local Iranian elites accepted Asad as their king. Before Asad, only Qutayba was called king (*malik*) by local Iranian elites, indicating a deep political change in the region.⁹⁰⁶

From 120/738 to the end of the Umayyad period, our sources do not discuss any local rulers in western Bactria. Only the king of Guzgan survived, and he served the Umayyads. Possibly, he retained some autonomy because he commanded his military forces and helped Naṣr b. Sayyār in Sogdiana.⁹⁰⁷ Which areas in Guzgan he controlled are unknown, but it is possible that he was in the mountain areas in Guzgan as the Arabs controlled the rest of the Guzgan. The situation in the mountainous area of Gharchistan also remains unknown. What is clear is that three major areas of political control in western Bactria, namely Marw al-Rūd, Badghis, and Guzgan, which had their local autonomous rulers before 90/710, were under Umayyad control in 120/738. Similarly, the Balkh oasis, Khulm, and Tirmidh were under the Umayyads' direct rule in 120/738. However, the Umayyads' level of control was not the same in other parts of Bactria, notably in northern, southern, and eastern Bactria. There, the Umayyads enforced indirect control through their local rulers. The next part will discuss the nature of this indirect control.

5.2. The Areas under Umayyads' indirect control

In contrast to western Bactrian, which the Umayyads systematically conquered and imposed direct control, the Umayyads enforced indirect rule over northern, southern, and eastern Bactria without conquest campaigns. The local rulers of these areas recognised Umayyad authority and continued controlling their areas while paying tribute to the Umayyads and providing military service. This form of indirect rule is known as overlordship, which has been discussed in chapter two (2.3). The Umayyad overlordship was naturalised in two different ways. The first was when a Bactrian local king, who was under pressure from his neighbouring rivals, voluntarily submitted to the Umayyads, and offered his kingdom to obtain Umayyad protection. In this situation, the Umayyads helped the local king to restore his position against his rivals. However, the local king became a servant of the Umayyads, paid tributes and

⁹⁰⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, 8: 1300.

⁹⁰⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, 9: 1693.

provided his local forces when the Umayyads required it. The Umayyads did not interfere in the local king's internal affairs. They did not establish military garrisons or appoint Arab Muslim administrators in the submitted area but allowed the local king to control it.

The second method was different. It was implemented when the Umayyads faced a powerful ruler who could challenge the Umayyad governor. In this situation, the Umayyads utilised a specific mechanism called *fidya-rahn* (ransom-hostage) in the Arabic narratives. In this situation, the Umayyad governor and Bactrian ruler met each other, negotiated for some settlements, and the local ruler accepted to pay the *fidya*, which was certain tributes. This payment of tributes reflected recognition of Umayyad overlordship by the local ruler. Implementing such diverse policies in northern, southern, and eastern Bactria represents political complexity in these areas. This part discusses where and why these two different methods were enforced.

5.2.1 Offering areas to the Umayyads

The rulers of Chaghaniyan and Kaftan in northern Bactria and the *khar* of Rob in southern Bactria willingly offered their areas to the Umayyads. In 86/705, when Qutayba arrived in Khurasan, the king of Chaghaniyan was already at war with the kings of Shuman and Akhrun. When Qutayba went to Balkh, the king of Chaghaniyan personally visited Qutayba and paid valuable gifts (*hadāyā*), including golden keys symbolising offering his kingdom (*fasallama ilayhi bilādihi*). Similarly, the king of Kaftan invited Qutayba to the area of his administration (*fad'āhu ilā bilādihi*) and submitted to him.⁹⁰⁸ They became vassal kings and served the Umayyad governors of Khurasan when required. Our sources do not offer information about the king of Kaftan but give details about Chaghaniyan. For instance, in 106/724, the king of Chaghaniyan helped Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurasan, when Arab Muslim soldiers rebelled in Balkh.⁹⁰⁹ Later, in 116/734, when al-Ḥārith revolted in Andkhud and captured Balkh, the king of Chaghaniyan did not join him. Instead, the king of Chaghaniyan supported Asad al-Qasrī against al-Ḥārith and the Türgesh Turks. His loyalty was to the extent that he lost his life defending Asad.⁹¹⁰ From 86/705 up to the end of the Umayyad period, the royal family of Chaghaniyan remained loyal to the Umayyads.

⁹⁰⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1180.

⁹⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1473–74.

⁹¹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1600–1601.

Possibly, being a loyal vassal king was the reason that the Umayyads did not see any reason to impose direct control over Chaghaniyan. They did not establish any military garrisons or Arab Muslim settlements in this area. They did not interfere in the king's local affairs as they did not appoint any Arab Muslim over Chaghaniyan. Interestingly, our sources do not refer to any tributes paid by the king of Chaghaniyan but only to the gifts and military service. These may have been counted as tribute. Hence, voluntary submission to the Umayyads not only restored the position of the king of Chaghaniyan against his neighbouring rival kings but also saved Chaghaniyan from the Umayyads' direct control. Though Chaghaniyan became a vassal to the Umayyads, its royal family retained some power while still under Umayyad overlordship.

The kingdom of Rob in southern Bactria had a similar situation. In 90/710, the *nizak* of Badghis rebelled against Qutayba, went to eastern Bactria, dismissed and imprisoned the *yabghu* of Tukharistan, and formed an anti-Umayyad regional alliance. In all these, the *khar* of Rob did not join the *nizak*. The presence of the *nizak* in Baghlan was a great threat to the *khar* of Rob, because the *nizak* disturbed the earlier political order by dismissing the *yabghu*, who was overlord in eastern Bactria. The *khar* of Rob willingly visited Qutayba in Khulm and made negotiations that are not explained in our sources. Only al-Ṭabarī mentions that Qutayba promised him what he asked for (*a 'tāhu mā sa'aluhū*) without disclosing what the *khar* requested.⁹¹¹ In any case, the *khar* submitted to Qutayba and supported him against the *nizak* by helping the Umayyad forces to cross the Khulm Pass, enter Samangan, and eventually defeat the *nizak*. Like Chaghaniyan, Qutayba did not see any reason to impose direct control over Rob. He did not establish military garrisons there or appoint Arab Muslim administrators in this area. Whether the *khar* of Rob paid any tributes is not mentioned, but the *khar* retained his position and continued his rule. This can be observed from some Bactrian documents produced in Rob.

The surviving Bactrian documents dating before 700 show that Rob was controlled by its local ruler, who recognised the overlordship of the Turkic *qaghān*. The documents dating to 669 and 671 refer to the *khar* of Rob as *tapaghliḡh iltäribir* of the *qaghān*. They also refer to the *ṭarkhān*, a Turkic military commander in Rob.⁹¹² However, we do not see the Turkic title

⁹¹¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1219.

⁹¹² Bactrian documents no. P. Q in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91; This Turkic title was already known for the king of Rob from 629, meaning Rob was under the *qaghān*'s overlordship at least from 629. See Bactrian document no. N in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83.

tapaghliḡ iltäribir for the *khar* of Rob after 671. The absence of this title is not understood. Similarly, the documents dating from 712 to 747 no longer refer to the *qaghān*. Most likely, the *qaghān* overlordship did not continue in Rob at this time; otherwise, it should have been mentioned. These documents show that the *khar* of Rob continued ruling his area and had his court, servants, and properties.⁹¹³ Rob was eventually brought under direct control in the early Abbasid period.

The case of Chaghaniyan, Kaftan, and Rob shows that the local rulers of these areas willingly recognised the Umayyad authority. It can be called a bottom-up model of overlordship, which is different from the direct control discussed in a previous section (5.1.3). In this model, the Umayyads did not go to Chaghaniyan, Kaftan, or Rob to conquer them -as they did in western Bactria, Balkh, and Tirmidh-, but the rulers of these areas approached the Umayyads as a result of internal pressure. Political competition among local rulers forced a weaker ruler (such as the king of Chaghaniyan and the *khar* of Rob) to ally with an external power (the Umayyads) to overcome his neighbouring rivals. The weaker ruler contacted the stronger power outside the region, sent embassies with letters and gifts, accepted an overlordship offer and invited the dominant force to his area. The weaker local ruler aimed to use the overlord's military power to restore his regional position. He hosted and welcomed the overlord, paid gifts symbolising his subordination, and served the overlord by providing military aid when it was required. Though the local king became a vassal, the stronger power did not impose direct control over the local king's area. The stronger power did not change the local ruler or establish military garrisons. The overlord left the region to the local ruler. The local ruler kept friendly relations with the overlord to ensure he had the latter's support. In this fashion, the kings of Chaghaniyan, Kaftan, and Rob maintained some level of autonomy in their local affairs.

5.2.2 *The fidya-rahn process*

The Umayyads applied the *fidya-rahn* mechanism to expand their authority in those areas in which local rulers had strong military power. They enforced this policy in Shuman and Khuttal in northern Bactria, and in Badghis and Guzgan in western Bactria before the *nizak*'s rebellion. They also implemented this policy in Sogdiana. The *fidya-rahn* mechanism has been discussed

⁹¹³ Bactrian documents no. U, V, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 106–111, 116–125, 126–135.

by Qudāma b. Ja‘far,⁹¹⁴ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt,⁹¹⁵ al-Balādhurī,⁹¹⁶ and al-Ṭabarī as an effective vehicle to expand Umayyad rule in Khurasan and Sogdiana.⁹¹⁷ Describing this process and then analysing it helps us understand why and how the Umayyads enforced this policy.

The process was as follows. First, the Umayyads marched towards an area that had a powerful ruler. Without entering the territory of that local ruler or engaging in war, the Umayyads sent letters or embassies to the local ruler, threatened him, but also invited him to a meeting. During the discussion, they negotiated and settled some issues, and the local rulers agreed to pay the *fidya* in cash or kind, which was part of the negotiation. What exactly was agreed between them and how much was accepted to be paid to the Umayyads are not mentioned in our sources. Then, the Umayyad governors asked for the *rahā’in* (sig., *rahn*), who were family members of the local rulers. Preparing the *fidya* usually required an Arab Muslim person called the *‘āmil* “administrator”, who was appointed by the governor to receive the *fidya* from the representatives of the local rulers. The Arab Muslims kept the hostages until the local rulers delivered the promised payment. The hostages were freed once the payment was made. It is unknown if this was a one-time payment, or if the local ruler was obliged to pay it annually.

Al-Ṭabarī provides details about the enforcement of this policy in Bactria. According to him, in the year 86/705, Qutayba went to Chaghaniyan, where its local king submitted to Qutayba and offered his kingdom. The kings of Akhrun and Shuman had great military power and put pressure on the king of Chaghaniyan, which motivated him to ally with Qutayba. Al-Ṭabarī does not mention if the kings of Akhrun and Shuman personally met Qutayba, but he clarifies that Qutayba negotiated and received *fidya* and then left the region.⁹¹⁸ Before leaving Chaghaniyan, Qutayba sent letters to the *nizak* of Badghis and the king of Guzgan. The text of his letter is unknown, but al-Ṭabarī mentions that Qutayba threatened the *nizak* in it. Allegedly, the *nizak* told Qutayba’s embassy that no one writes to him like that (*lā yaktibu ilā mithli*) reflecting his resentment. In any case, Qutayba and these rulers met in Marw, negotiated for some settlements, and the *nizak* helped Qutayba in his conquest of Sogdiana. Al-Ṭabarī does not mention whether Qutayba received *fidya* from these rulers, but if we consider the case of Shuman, it is reasonable to infer, therefore, that they paid tribute too. Moreover, al-Ṭabarī

⁹¹⁴ Qudāma b. Ja‘far, *Al-kharāj*, 209, 406, 408.

⁹¹⁵ Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh*, 224.

⁹¹⁶ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 411.

⁹¹⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9: 1253.

⁹¹⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1180.

mentions that the *nizak* accepted to help Qutayba only on the condition that no Arab Muslims should enter Badghis.⁹¹⁹ That means these rulers recognised Qutayba as a major political power, but he, in turn, also respected them as autonomous rulers. The Umayyads did not interfere in these rulers' internal local affairs; thus, they continued controlling their areas.

The *fidya-rahn* was a peaceful process as long as both parties kept their word. If they did not, then it led to war between them. For instance, the king of Shuman, who accepted to pay the *fidya*, refused to do that (*mana 'a al-fidya*). He killed Qutayba's *'amil*, who was supposed to receive the *fidya*, and later his soldiers killed the delegation sent by Qutayba to renegotiate with the king. As a result, Qutayba attacked Shuman and captured it by force (*'anwatan*). However, he did not kill the king but let the royal family continue under his overlordship. As overlordship required, the king of Shuman sent his local military forces to fight for the Umayyads in Sogdiana.⁹²⁰

The reports from Guzgan and Sogdiana show that breaking the treaty would cost the life of the hostages. To restore trust between the two parties, not only the local ruler but the Umayyad governor had to give hostages to the local ruler. In 91/712, Qutayba asked the king of Guzgan to meet him in Marw to renegotiate for peace that was broken after the *nizak*'s rebellion. Both parties exchanged some hostages. However, the king of Guzgan died after he returned from Marw. The Guzganis believed that their king was poisoned by Arabs and thus killed Qutayba's relatives, who had been given as hostages to the king of Guzgan. In retaliation, Qutayba executed the Guzgani hostages.⁹²¹ However, the royal family of Guzgan eventually accepted the Umayyad overlordship. They provided military forces to fight the Türgesh Turks and then supported the Umayyad's expansion in Sogdiana.⁹²² A similar situation happened in Samarkand. Tarkhūn, the king of Samarkand, killed the Arab Muslim hostages and threw their bodies into the river.⁹²³ Thus, distrust between the two parties would worsen the condition of the hostages and lead to their execution.

An especially violent episode in the *fidya-rahn* process happened during the war between the Umayyads and Türgesh. In 110/728, the Türgesh forces held some Arab Muslim hostages in Kamarja, an area near Samarkand. The Arab Muslim forces agreed to leave the region, but before that, the Türgesh Turks asked for some hostages to ensure the Arabs would

⁹¹⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1185.

⁹²⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1225–29.

⁹²¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1225.

⁹²² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1609, 1693.

⁹²³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1159.

abandon the region. The Umayyad forces moved out slowly, and that was interpreted by the Turks as a sign of reluctance towards their negotiation. They executed the Arab Muslim hostages. The Arab Muslims retaliated by killing 200 Sogdian hostages.⁹²⁴ The Türgesh then forced the Arab Muslims to evacuate Kamarja and made peace with them. They exchanged some hostages to guarantee the agreement. Al-Ṭabarī's report about these events contains a horrifying situation. Once the Türgesh hostages arrived, the Arab Muslim soldiers held their daggers to the throats of the Turkic hostages while they were walking. The hostages were disarmed and had some clothes to cover their bodies.⁹²⁵ These reports show that the hostages could be massacred if the relations deteriorated between the two parties. It also would prolong the conflict. Similarly, they reflect that making and especially maintaining a peace treaty was not always easy.

The violation of the *fidya-rahn* process allowed the Umayyad's military conquests in some areas, which was followed by the imposition of more conditions on the local rulers. This is not reported from Bactria, but from Sogdiana. Nevertheless, it helps to understand the *fidya-rahn*, particularly the issues related to the payment of the *fidya*. Both Ibn A'ṭham al-Kufī and al-Ṭabarī mention that Qutayba asked for the *fidya* to be paid right after the negotiation for peace in Samarkand.⁹²⁶ Ibn A'ṭham al-Kufī calls it money paid immediately (*dirham 'ājila*). Besides the *fidya* to be paid immediately, the king of Samarkand promised to pay an annual tribute (*dirham fī kulla 'ām*).⁹²⁷ Qutayba also made slaves an essential part of the *fidya* paid by local rulers. In Samarkand, he asked for 30,000 young slaves apart from the money promised to be paid by the king of Samarkand. In Khwarazm, the *fidya* included 10,000 slaves and golden objects.⁹²⁸ Qudāma b. Ja'far interpreted the conditions in Samarkand as violating diplomatic norms, and said that Qutayba betrayed (*ghadar*) local rulers and consciously committed violence in Sogdiana.⁹²⁹ Al-Ṭabarī has similar reports from the Persians, who believed that Qutayba betrayed the local rulers in Samarkand.⁹³⁰ Interestingly, our sources do not report if Qutayba ever asked Bactrian rulers who paid *fidya* to give the slaves. It is reasonable to infer that slaves were generally not part of the *fidya* in Bactria. The reasons for this are unknown.

⁹²⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1520.

⁹²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1524.

⁹²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1180.

⁹²⁷ Ibn A'ṭham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 161.

⁹²⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1238, 1246.

⁹²⁹ Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Al-kharāj*, 408.

⁹³⁰ In Arabic: *inna al- 'ajam yu 'ayyirūna innahū ghadara* (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1246).

The *fidya-rahn* process points to some crucial points. This process is not known from the Arabic narratives relating to the conquests of Iraq, Egypt, Nubia, North Africa, Iberia, Syria, and Palestine. It is related only to Khurasan and Sogdiana. Hill's survey of the Arabic reports relating to the conquests of the former regions shows that the Arabic term *ṣulḥ* is generally used for the peace process. The terms *‘ahd* (agreement), *amān* (protection), and *sharṭ* (condition) clarified the requirements of the process. The conquered people are often called *ahl al-dhimma*, “protected people”, who should pay *jizya* and *kharāj*.⁹³¹ Interestingly, the term *amān* is less mentioned in Khurasan than in Syria, and its meaning differs. The *amān* is often used when the Arab Muslim has superior military power and could impose their conditions on a weaker side. In Syria, it was to protect conquered areas from an external enemy, while in the east, it was not to harm local people.⁹³² That means the Arab Muslims were not yet powerful enough to protect the east from external enemies. No Arabic reports refer to the *fidya-rahn* process elsewhere in Muslim West Asia and North Africa.⁹³³ The Arabs did negotiate for peace, but they did not ask for hostages to guarantee the payment of *jizya* and *kharāj* in these regions.⁹³⁴ In other words, they could impose their terms and conditions over conquered areas. However, the situation was different in the east. If we remember that Khurasan is a frontier region between more considerable political powers, and its local rulers had their military forces, then the *fidya-rahn* process makes sense. The Arab Muslim authorities had to take hostages from local rulers to guarantee that they paid the tributes because the local rulers had their forces and could refuse payment. The local rulers also could ask other regional political powers to help them against the Arab Muslims. Thus, negotiations were part of the conquests everywhere,⁹³⁵ but the *fidya-rahn* process in Khurasan shows that the local

⁹³¹ His survey includes reports from Sayf b. ‘Umar, Abū Mikhnaḥ, al-Madā’inī, al-Baladhurī, Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, al-Wāqidī, al-Dīnawarī, al-Ya‘qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī (Hill, *Termination of Hostilities*, 34–41, 43–44, 54–55, 59–89, 123–126, 144–167). For further information on *ahl al-dhimma* and tax collection, see Robert Hoyland and Hannah Cotton, “The Earliest Attestation of the *Dhimma* of God and his Messenger and the Rediscovery of the P. Nessana 77 (60s AH/680 CE),” in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Context: Essays in honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. Asad Q. Ahmed, Behnam Sadeghi, Robert G. Hoyland and Adam Silverstein (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 51–71; Arietta Papaconstantinou, “Administering the Early Islamic Empire: Insights from the Papyri,” in *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria: A Review of Current Debates*, ed. John Haldon (Ashgate, Farnham, 2011), 57–74; Sijpesteijn, *Shapping a Muslim State*, 173–193.

⁹³² Hill, *Termination of Hostilities*, 173.

⁹³³ That signifies the differences between the western and the eastern regions.

⁹³⁴ Only John of Nikion mentions that Cyrus, the Melkite Patriarch of Egypt who made a peace treaty with Arab Muslims in Babylon in 641, accepted to give 150 militaries and fifty civilians as a hostage (Mentioned by Hill, *Termination of Hostilities*, 41 (for the actual report, see John of Nikion, *Chronique de Jean Eveque de Nikion*, ed and trans. M. H. Zotenberg (Paris, 1883).

⁹³⁵ Malika Levy-Rubin has shown that the negotiation treaties that the Muslims concluded in the conquests are based on Sasanian patterns of conquest. See Levy-Rubin, *Non-Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to Coexistence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

rulers were really quite powerful. The Arab Muslim authorities could not impose any conditions they wished, but they were held to local rulers by the additional element of hostages.

The above-mentioned reports show that the *fidya-rahn* mechanism was used in Shuman, Badghis, Guzgan, and Khuttal. We do not know if the Umayyads enforced it in other areas in Bactria because there is no further information. The local rulers of these areas paid certain tributes to the Umayyads and provided military help when the Umayyads required it. The Umayyads did not attack the local rulers who paid the *fidya*, except if the local rulers broke their promises and refused the payments. In that case, the Umayyads conducted military campaigns and brought the local rulers under their overlordship. The local kings then not only paid the *fidya*, but also provided local military forces to serve the Umayyads. In this case, the Umayyads did not establish military garrisons or appoint Arab Muslim administrators over the region, but allowed the local king or his family to continue under the Umayyads' overlordship. In other words, the Umayyads did not impose direct control in these areas. By the end of the Umayyad period, Bactria would look like the following chart shows:

Western Bactria		
Marw al-Rūd	The <i>marzbān</i> was executed, the military garrison was established, Arab-Muslim administrators were appointed	Under Umayyad's direct control
Badghis	The <i>nizak</i> was executed	Under Umayyad's direct control
Gharchistan	The king submitted and converted to Islam	Under Umayyad overlordship
Guzgan	The king fled to the mountain areas, the military garrison was established in Talaqan, Faryab, Juzjan and Andkhud. Arab-Muslim administrators were appointed on these areas	Umayyad direct control in the plain areas, overlordship in the mountain areas

Bactria Proper		
Balkh Oasis	The military garrison was established, Arab-Muslim administrators were appointed	Under Umayyad's direct control
Khulm	The military garrison was established	Under Umayyad's direct control
Gaz	Unknown	

Northern Bactria		
Tirmidh	The king was removed, the military garrison was established, Arab-Muslim administrators were appointed	Under Umayyad's direct control
Chaghaniyan	The king voluntarily submitted, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Shuman	The king was defeated, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Akhrun	The king submitted, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Qawadhiyan	No military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Khuttal	The king was executed, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship

Southern Bactria		
Rob	The king voluntarily submitted, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship

Eastern Bactria		
Kunduz	The <i>yabghu</i> was sent to Syria, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Baghlan	The Hephthalites were defeated, no military garrison	Under Umayyad's overlordship
Kadagstan	The Umayyads did not enter region	Under Turkic overlordship

Conclusion

As they had done for generations, local autonomous rulers, acknowledging the overlordship of a more significant regional political power, ruled Bactria upon the arrival of the Arab armies. The Arab Muslims began to carve out their niche of political presence in the region in these

circumstances. In the first fifty years, they established friendly relations with the rulers of western Bactria and used western Bactria as a safe passage to raid Sogdiana. However, in the second fifty years, the re-consolidation of the Umayyad empire under the Marwanids allowed them to enforce an imperial expansion agenda in the eastern Iranian regions that would break down the earlier political order in Bactria. It caused a great rebellion in Bactria. The Umayyad forces suppressed the rebels, conquered western Bactria, and imposed direct control over this region by establishing military garrisons, executing resisting local rulers, and appointing Arab Muslim administrators in these areas. The Umayyads' direct control over western Bactria was disrupted by al-Ḥārith's revolt and the Türgesh invasion, but the Umayyads then re-established their direct rule over it that lasted until the end of the Umayyad period.

The Umayyads established indirect rule over Chaghaniyan, Kaftan, and Akhrun in northern Bactria and Rob in southern Bactria. The political rivalries in northern and southern Bactria forced the local rulers of Chaghaniyan and Rob to willingly submit and recognise the Umayyad overlordship. They became subordinate kings who paid gifts and provided military forces for the Umayyads in times of need. The Umayyads did not interfere in the internal affairs of these local kings. They did not conquer these areas or establish military garrisons. These local kings retained some levels of autonomy in their respective areas of control.

The Umayyads applied the *fidya-rahn* mechanism in some other parts like Shuman, Guzgan, and Khuttal. The local rulers of these areas had great military power and could challenge the Umayyad governors. The Umayyad governors directly interacted with these rulers, negotiated for some settlements, and received the *fidya*, which took for the form of specific tribute. The local king gave some of his family members as hostages to the Arabs, and they released them once they received the *fidya*. The Umayyads did not enter these areas unless and until the local ruler refused to pay the *fidya*. Breaking the *fidya-rahn* procedure not only harmed the hostages but brought the Umayyads to these areas to punish the local ruler. It also served to solidify Umayyad overlordship in these areas. The local kings of these areas paid tributes and provided military forces to support the Umayyad war in Sogdiana. Like Chaghaniyan and Rob, the Umayyads did not impose direct control over Shuman and Khuttal. They allowed their local king or their families to retain local positions under Umayyad overlordship. Possibly, the Umayyads did the same in eastern Bactria after they exiled the *yabghu* of Tukharistan to Syria and appointed his son in eastern Bactria. Out of all areas in Bactria, only Kadagstan remained untouched by the Umayyads.

Now that the process of establishing the Umayyads' direct and indirect control in Bactria has been explained, it remains to be examined how this shift in local political orientation affected social conditions in the region. The next chapter will examine the social impacts of the conquests in Bactria that affected the population of Bactria beyond its elite members.

Chapter Six: Social Impacts of the Umayyad Control Over Bactria

The first religious blessing that is specific to Balkh is that the city was restored in the time of Islam. And its people were firm in their belief in Islam.⁹³⁶

Introduction

The previous chapters discussed the Umayyads' military expansion and political consolidation in Bactria. The Umayyads brought western Bactria under their direct control and indirectly ruled southern, eastern, and northern Bactria. This chapter aims to show the social impacts of the Umayyads' control over Bactria. It demonstrates that from the early eighth century, the Arab Muslims settled in Bactria, imposed their form of governance, collected taxes and tributes, introduced the Arabic language and culture, and spread Islamic ideology, institutions, and infrastructure in accordance with religious precepts. Living together in the same area under the Umayyad administration provided intensive social interactions between the Arab Muslims and local people, and this had significant impacts. It allowed for the rise of bilingual individuals who spoke Arabic and local languages and facilitated the expansion of the Umayyad administration in Bactria. At the same time, Arabic contributed to the development of New Persian, which was written in the Arabic alphabet and contained much Arabic vocabulary. However, it was not Arabic but New Persian that became the *lingua franca* in the east and eventually replaced the Bactrian language. Living together under Umayyad rule led to a centuries-long process of social changes that paved the way for the emergence of Islamic Balkh, in which its residents proudly identified themselves as Persian-speaking Muslims.

The current chapter discusses the social impacts of Umayyad control in Bactria in three parts. The first part explores the Arab Muslim settlement pattern in Bactria that allowed intensive social interaction between Arab Muslims and local people. The second part discusses the spread of the Arabic language and culture in Bactria. The final part explains the expansion of Islamic ideology and Arab Muslim fiscal administration in Bactria.

⁹³⁶ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 34.

6.1. Arab Muslim settlement patterns in Bactria

Before addressing the social impacts of the conquests, we should remember that the Arab Muslims faced a region that was diverse in landscapes, populations, religious traditions, and political priorities. The Bactrian geography and different climates allowed sedentary and pastoral life to coexist with nomadic populations around them. Bactria was connected to India, Iran, and China through overland trade routes passing cities like Balkh and Tirmidh. Religious communities such as Christians, Jews, Buddhists, worshippers of Iranian deities, and believers in nomadic cults lived together in Bactria. Among these communities, Buddhism had a prominent presence in the urban areas, and their *stūpas* and *vihāras* were within and outside the main cities like Balkh and Tirmidh. The Buddhist monastery of Naw Bahar had sacred relics and great statues of Buddha that were visited by people who paid homage and donations. Buddhist scholars produced commentaries (*śāstra*) on Buddhist texts and some monks called the *arhat* performed miracles. The worshippers of Iranian deities, like Wakhsh, had their image shrine (*baglan*) and performed their religious rituals. All these religions had their laws and regulations likely implemented by their religious authorities. At the political level, Bactrian local rulers controlled their areas, managed their local resources, used Bactrian as the main administrative language, performed justice among their people, and commanded their local forces. These components attest to the diverse society the Arab Muslims had to deal with.

The period between the Umayyad conquest of Bactria in 90/710 until the end of the Umayyad period in 132/750 is only forty years. This short period was not a peaceful and stable era. It was marked by the *nizak*'s uprising, the rebellion of al-Ḥārith, the Türgesh Turks invasion, the Umayyad war with the Türgesh Turks over control of the East, and the re-establishment of Umayyad rule. These political upheavals led to the movement of armies and various wars on the Bactrian ground. That must have affected particularly the cities in western Bactria, the Balkh oasis, and Tirmidh whose residents were caught between the Umayyads and their rivals. Eventually, the Umayyads captured the centres and re-consolidated their direct control over these areas. The circumstances in northern, southern, and eastern Bactria that were not under direct Umayyad control were different. These areas were overseen by different local rulers who recognised the Umayyad overlordship and paid tribute. The mountain areas in Guzgan controlled by their local king should be added. The Umayyads did not interfere in these areas' internal issues. Given the region's diversity, the slow process of the conquests, and the

political upheavals, one should not expect the Arab Muslims to have had immediate impacts on the lives of regular people. It is a truism that social changes take time.⁹³⁷

Despite being a short period, the Arab Muslims' political control impacted Bactrian society. This period marked the beginning of social changes affected by the Arab Muslims' political, linguistic, and ideological beliefs. This process continued after the Umayyad period. The Arab Muslims incorporated the eastern Iranian regions (Sasanian Khurasan, Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm) and created the Umayyad province of Khurasan. Many Arab Muslims settled in different areas in Khurasan, including Bactria. These people brought the Arabic language, Islamic ideology, their regional cultural traditions, and their tribal rivalries. The Arab Muslims authorities collected tributes and taxes, minted coins with Qur'anic verses written in Arabic script, constructed mosques, and introduced their form of governance and administration. In short, they conquered Bactria and remained there forever.

In such an environment, Arab Muslims and local people were both affected. Some learned Arabic to communicate with the new leaders, worked for the Umayyad administration, and some converted to Islam. Similarly, the Arab Muslim control of Bactria marked the beginning of a centuries-long process of social changes among Bactrians and the Arab Muslims who settled in the region. Many Arab Muslims learned local languages and integrated into the local population through intermarriage. Thus, the conquests and settlements affected the conquerors and the conquered populations.⁹³⁸

The social impacts of the conquests in Bactria have not been fully explored. The main reason for the absence of an in-depth study is the scarcity of primary sources, particularly systematic archaeological excavations. Nonetheless, what this present study has attempted to achieve so far is to see some aspects of the social impacts of the Arab Muslims' rule over Bactria.⁹³⁹ The available sources show that the conquests, followed by settlement and

⁹³⁷ A similar situation can be observed in Ghur, Sistan, and Zabulistan. See Bosworth, "The Appearance and Establishment of Islam in Afghanistan," 103.

⁹³⁸ For social changes among the Arab Muslims in post-conquest Khurasan, see Luce, "Umayyad Khurāsān," 207–253.

⁹³⁹ There are a few studies on the Islamicisation of Balkh, but they lack a systematic discussion on the social impacts of the conquests in Bactria. For instance, the edited volume on Islamisation in Central Asia includes a section on Bactria but does not really discuss the social impacts of the conquests (*Islamisation de l'Asie centrale*, 95–174). However, some other scholars attempted to discuss the process of Islamicisation in Bactria. See, for instance, Arezou Azad, *Sacred Landscape in Medieval Afghanistan: Revisiting the Faḍā'il-i Balkh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Azad, "The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan," 41–55; Arezou Azad and Hugh Kennedy discussed the Arab Muslim settlement in Balkh based on Arabic and Persian narratives and argued that the city of Balkh "spread with the construction of the *rabad* outside the walls of the Bala Hisar at a lower elevation, and again outside the walls of the *rabad*." However, they note that their argument for the expansion of urbanisation in the early Islamic period is entirely based on a limited Arabic and Persian narrative. They added that only

administrative activities, introduced changes in Bactria. This part analyses the sources to understand where and how these changes occurred.

6.1.1 Military garrisons

The Arab Muslim settlement in Bactria was the main vehicle for social changes in the region. The settlement provided space for intensive interactions between the Arab Muslims and local people and allowed them to learn about each other. The Arab Muslim settlement pattern in Bactria has not been studied; nevertheless, there are some general works on the Arab Muslim settlement in Khurasan (although excluding Bactria) that offer helpful insights into the location of Arab Muslim settlements. For instance, Pourshariati has shown that most Arab Muslim migrants settled in Outer Khurasan, namely in the Marw region.⁹⁴⁰ La Vaissière's study on the existence of large Muslim populations in Marw during the Abbasid Revolution confirms Pourshariati's view.⁹⁴¹ La Vaissière also investigated the importance of the *ribāṭ* or military settlement in Sogdiana that gradually became the "very embodiment of Muslim piety" in the region.⁹⁴² The Arab Muslim settlement significantly impacted Dennett's study on taxation, and shows that settlement paved the way for the Islamicisation of Khurasan.⁹⁴³ Kevin van Bladel took a step further, arguing that the settlement pattern was the primary factor for social changes in the conquered regions.⁹⁴⁴ Calling the settlement a 'coexistence' of Arab Muslims and local people under Arab Muslim rule, Azad maintains a similar view of the impact of settlement.⁹⁴⁵ The absence of proper research on the Arab Muslim settlement pattern in Bactria and its vital

archaeological excavation can approve or reject their argument (Azad and Kennedy, "The Coming of Islam to Balkh," 284–310).

⁹⁴⁰ For full discussion on Arab Muslim settlement in Khurasan, see Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 110–146.

⁹⁴¹ La Vaissière, "The 'Abbāsid Revolution in Marw," 120–126.

⁹⁴² Étienne de la Vaissière, "Le *ribāṭ* d'Asie Centrale," in *Islamisation de l'Asie centrale. Processus locaux d'acculturation du VIIe au XIe siècle*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: Association Pour L'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2008), 71–94 ; Minoru Inaba's study on Rabat-i Karwan is important to see Islamicisation process in the central parts of the Hindukush (Minoru Inaba, "Between Zābulistān and Gūzgān," 209–225).

⁹⁴³ Dennett argues that Islamicisation was far more rapid in Khurasan than in Egypt. The reason was the settlement of large Arab Muslim populations outside garrison towns in Khurasan. He also points to the poll tax as the primary motivator because converts would pay fewer taxes (Daniel C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (1950; repr., Idarah-i Adabyat-i Delli, 2000), 106).

⁹⁴⁴ Kevin van Bladel, "Arabisering, islamisering en de kolonies van de veroveraars," in *Mohammed en de Late Oudheid*, ed. Josephine van den Bent, Floris van den Eijnde and Johan Weststeijn (Hilversum: Verloren, 2018), 12; For the English version of this article, see Kevin van Bladel, "Arabicization, Islamization, and the Colonies of the Conquerors," in *Late Antique Responses to the Arab Conquests*, ed. Josephine van den Bent, Floris van den Eijnde and Johan Weststeijn (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 89–119.

⁹⁴⁵ Azad, "The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan," 41.

importance for understanding social changes urges us to start by exploring our sources to see how and where Arab Muslims settled in Bactria.

After they conquered Bactria, the Arab Muslims did not immediately move to cities and live among local people. They established military garrisons from Marw al-Rūd to Tirmidh that were under Arab Muslim direct control. The Arabic historical narratives relating to Bactria offer limited information about the exact location of these garrisons, their populations, and how they were managed. However, they highlight three issues: a) the Arab Muslims who settled in Bactria during the Umayyad period were part of the armies sent from Iraq and Syria to Khurasan;⁹⁴⁶ b) they were stationed in military garrisons;⁹⁴⁷ and c) women and children also lived in the garrisons indicating the fact that many soldiers had their families with them.⁹⁴⁸ The garrisons hosted not only military units but also Arab Muslim government officials. The garrisons and their residents were the main devices to consolidate Umayyad authority and naturalise their rule in Bactria. The Arabic narratives clearly show that the military garrison was the first form of settlement in Bactria. They also create the impression that these garrisons were separate from the local residential areas. This leads to several questions: What was the plan and structure of a garrison? How were they built and managed?

The form and structure of the Arab Muslim garrison depended on geography and political situation; thus, it differed from one region to another. In general, a garrison is a military housing where soldiers could stay and prepare for further military advances. The garrison often has storage for food provision, drinking water, medicine, spoils of war, equipment, and other relevant components. It protects soldiers from surprise attacks. Depending on the local situation and the conditions of the army movement, sometimes soldiers are housed in the captured fortresses or put up tents in the open field where they deem it safe. These soldiers can also use houses taken by force or those deserted by their residents. The temporary camp made of tents can turn into a permanent settlement over time.

The Arabic historical narratives refer to two methods of establishing a military garrison in Khurasan. The first was to make a camp by arranging tents near each other and protecting them by digging a ditch around the camp. This can be recognised as a garrison-camp. Al-

⁹⁴⁶ See the discussion on the Arab Muslims migration to Khurasan in chapter three (3.3.2).

⁹⁴⁷ As pointed out in chapter four (4.2.2), the Umayyad forces led by Qutayba b. Muslim conquered western and northern parts of Bactria between 90–93/709–712. Qutayba established a network of garrisons to control the conquered areas. Different groups of soldiers from Iraq, Syria and the Marw region filled these garrisons.

⁹⁴⁸ See al-Ḥārith b. Surayj's take-over of Balkh and Asad al-Qasrī's decision to make Balkh as political centre discussed in chapter four (4.3.2).

Balādhurī calls it *al-fuṣṭāṭ*,⁹⁴⁹ while al-Ṭabarī calls it *khandaq*.⁹⁵⁰ The *khandaq* comes from Persian *kanda*, meaning “ditch.”⁹⁵¹ Arab Muslims widely used this technique.⁹⁵² For instance, in the tribal war between Ibn Khāzim and the tribe of Bakr b. Wā’il in 65/685 in Herat, the people of Bakr made a garrison-camp and dug a ditch around it.⁹⁵³ Later, Mūsā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim did the same in Kish to fight the Sogdians.⁹⁵⁴ Qutayba b. Muslim was killed in his garrison-camp in Farghana.⁹⁵⁵ These reports show that the garrison-camp was made mostly during military campaigns. The garrison-camp was likely built in an open field where drinking water and food provisions could be supplied from the neighborhood. How did a garrison-camp look like?

Our sources do not discuss the structure of the garrison-camp made by the Umayyad forces in Bactria. However, there is information about the garrison-camps in other regions that can help. Al-Ṭabarī gives some details about the garrison-camp built by Abū Muslim in Marw. His description may reflect the form and structure of the garrison-camps built in Bactria in the Umayyad period. According to al-Ṭabarī, Abū Muslim’s camp was made near villages, protected by a ditch, and had several gates. The ditch protected the camp from surprise attacks. Each gate was guarded by a group of soldiers led by a commander. The soldiers dug a canal to bring water to the garrison-camp.⁹⁵⁶ Building the garrison-camp near the villages indicates the possibility of the local settlements supplying food.

The second structure possibility was to use already existing military structures. In this model, soldiers were stationed in an already constructed fortress. In 32/652, al-Aḥnaf b. Qays captured an old military fortress in Marw al-Rūd and accommodated his soldiers there.⁹⁵⁷ Mūsā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim forcefully occupied the citadel of Tirmidh and housed his soldiers in it. The city of Tirmidh had strong defensive walls. Al-Ṭabarī reports that in 85/705, there were more than 8,000 soldiers from the Rabī’a, Tamīm, Yaman, and ‘Abd al-Qays gathered in

⁹⁴⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 424.

⁹⁵⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 493.

⁹⁵¹ Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs*, 23.

⁹⁵² It was a Persian technique to protect cities from invasions. The Prophet allegedly learned this technique from his Persian companion Salmān al-Fārisī (d. 36/657) when he had to protect Medina during the ‘Battle of the Ditch.’ (al-Bal’ amī, *Tārkh-nāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 3: 203); For details on Salmān al-Fārisī, see Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran*, 61–89.

⁹⁵³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 7: 491.

⁹⁵⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1147.

⁹⁵⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8: 1297.

⁹⁵⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9: 1968–69.

⁹⁵⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 5: 2900.

Tirmidh. Many anti-Umayyad Arab soldiers from Sistan also migrated to Tirmidh.⁹⁵⁸ It is not clear where exactly all these soldiers stayed. Occupying existing structures was not confined to those in the citadels. In Sogdiana, the Arab Muslim soldiers occupied local houses. In Bukhara, Qutayba b. Muslim forced locals to leave their houses to the Arab Muslim soldiers.⁹⁵⁹ He did the same in Samarkand and forced residents to evacuate their dwellings, after which Arab Muslim soldiers moved in.⁹⁶⁰ Apparently, this policy was not enforced in Bactria because there appear to be no records.

The Arab Muslims did not build garrison cities like those of Basra and Kufa in Bactria. If they did, then such projects would have been reported. It is reasonable to infer that the Arab Muslims built garrison-camps during military campaigns and used already existing military fortresses in Bactria.⁹⁶¹ Whether these garrisons developed into cities later is unknown because no archaeological excavations have ever been conducted to study Umayyad Bactria. In any case, the literary sources show that the Arab Muslims created a network of military settlements in Bactria. The following section will provide more details.

6.1.2 A web of military settlements in Bactria

The Arab Muslims often used existing fortresses or other fortified settlements to house their troops, even if this inevitably led to adjustments, enlargements, and additions. The number of troops dispatched to Bactria depended on the Arab Muslims' understanding of the situation in the region. Bactria had a strategic location as it was part of a great frontier region where the Arab Muslims faced local rulers who had their forces, the rebels like the *nizak* or al-Ḥārith, and other powerful rivals like the Türgesh Turks. A web of military garrisons in Bactria was vitally important to keep the Arab Muslim presence in the region. From al-Ṭabarī's narratives related to Qutayba's campaign against the *nizak*, and also the rebellion of al-Ḥārith, and other geographical reports we can understand that the Arab Muslims established their military presence in the form of garrisons. These were headed by Arab Muslim commanders on them

⁹⁵⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1148, 1152.

⁹⁵⁹ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 66.

⁹⁶⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1252.

⁹⁶¹ The Sasanians and the Kidarites invested in military infrastructure by building forts and defensive walls in Bactria. Therefore, when the Arab Muslims arrived there should have been many fortresses in the region for them to use.

from the Marw al-Rūd to Tirmidh.⁹⁶² The location of these garrisons and how they were organised requires some explanations.

The leading Arab Muslim garrison in Bactria was at Baruqan. It was located at two *farsakh* (12 km) from the old city of Balkh.⁹⁶³ The exact location of Baruqan, however, remained unknown to this date due to lack of archaeological excavations. Similarly, when and how this garrison was established is not clear. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that in 85/705, al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Muhallab, the governor of Khurasan, asked his brother Mudrik, who was in Balkh at this time to mobilise his forces against Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim in Tirmidh.⁹⁶⁴ Though al-Ṭabarī does not say it, it is possible that Mudrik and his forces were in Baruqan. In any case, it was an important location in 90/710, because Qutayba sent 12,000 soldiers led by his brother to Baruqan. He then went to Balkh with large forces from the Marw region and the local forces of Inner Khurasan to fight the *nizak*. Whether all these forces were stationed in Baruqan is not known. Baruqan allegedly contained 10,000 soldiers in 116/734 when al-Ḥārith attacked it.⁹⁶⁵ This garrison housed soldiers from the tribes of Azd, Rabīʿa, and Bakr b. Wāʿil, Muḍr, and ʿAbd al-Qays.⁹⁶⁶ Generally, the number of Iraqi forces was more than the Syrians in Bactria.⁹⁶⁷ Though the number of troops in these reports may not be certain, they indicate the relative density of occupation in Baruqan. They also show that the number of soldiers increased during political unrest. Knowing the importance of Baruqan, we should ask how this garrison was planned. How did the Arab Muslims live in it?

The structure of the Baruqan garrison followed the Basra model. This comes from Ṭabarī's report on Asad al-Qasrī after Asad decided to transfer all inhabitants of the garrison to the city of Balkh.⁹⁶⁸ In this model, the garrison was divided into five parts (*akhmās*), each given to a particular group of people. Shaban mentions that this division was a component of Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān's re-organisation programme. Ziyād allocated these five sections to people from the tribes of Tamīm, Azd, Bakr, ʿAbd al-Qays, and *ahl al-ʿāliya* respectively.⁹⁶⁹ In 51/671, Ziyād sent 50,000 soldiers with their families to Khurasan, who settled in the Marw

⁹⁶² Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1206–1207, 1218; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1566–67; Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303.

⁹⁶³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1490.

⁹⁶⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1161–63.

⁹⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1567.

⁹⁶⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1461–77.

⁹⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1590.

⁹⁶⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9: 1490.

⁹⁶⁹ The second model was called the *arbāʿ* or four Arab tribal division and used in Kufa (Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsīd Revolution*, 31).

region.⁹⁷⁰ Most probably, after the conquests of Bactria, the Basra model already implemented in Marw was brought to Bactria. As the *akhmās* model military required, Baruqan's garrison must have had defensive walls with different gates and various living quarters connected by streets and Arab Muslim soldiers and their families lived there. This sounds like a city structure, but the Baruqan garrison was separate from the city of Balkh and did not replace it. We will see later that the residents of Baruqan abandoned it and moved to the city of Balkh. Baruqan remained as military base.

These were smaller garrisons with lesser populations in other areas. Unlike Baruqan, which is known from the sources, there is no information about the structure of these garrisons. From al-Ṭabarī's report relating to the rebellion of al-Ḥārith, we learn that the garrison at Andkhud allegedly housed 4,000 soldiers belonging to the tribes of Tamīm and Azd. In 119/737, there was a garrison in Jizza in Guzgan whose commander was a certain Farrafis. The exact location of this garrison is unknown. Another garrison was located in Shaburghan containing fighting forces (*muqātila*).⁹⁷¹ Al-Muqaddasī mentions that the people from the tribe of Azd were settled in Khulm, and the people from the tribe of Tamīm lived in Samangan.⁹⁷² It is unclear when the Tamīm people settled in Samangan because the narratives related to Umayyad Bactria do not show if the Umayyads established any garrisons beyond the Pass of Khulm. These are all the garrisons mentioned in Arabic reports relating to Bactria.

The number of Arab Muslim troops in Bactria is not known. The Arabic narratives often refer to figures that their accuracy cannot be trusted.⁹⁷³ For instance, al-Ṭabarī mentions that smaller garrisons like Andkhud had about 4,000 soldiers, Baruqan had 10,000 and could host even 12,000. Tirmidh had 8,000 soldiers. However, soldiers were lost in war, died of illness, and could have been transferred from one area to another. Thus, we do not know how many soldiers were stationed in Bactria. What these numbers can tell us is that many Arab Muslims were settled in Bactria. The Arabic narratives that refer to these smaller garrisons create an impression that all these smaller garrisons were separate from the local populations. That means interaction between them and the local people was also limited. Moving to the cities and living with local people began later. The following section will address it.

⁹⁷⁰ Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 110–146.

⁹⁷¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1612, 14.

⁹⁷² Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 303.

⁹⁷³ For discussion on number of soldiers in Arabic historiography, see Lawrence I. Conrad, "Abraha and Muhammad: some observations apropos of chronology and literary *topoi* in the early Arabic historical tradition," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50, no. 2 (1987): 239–240.

6.1.3 Moving into the main cities to live among the locals

There are two short reports about the Arab Muslims moving from the garrisons into the cities of Bactria. Both come from al-Madā'inī preserved by al-Ṭabarī, and relate to the city of Balkh. The first report mentions that Asad al-Qasrī the governor of Khurasan undertook the restoration of Balkh after he led military campaigns to the Namrun area in Gharchistan and Ghur in 107/725. The second report is related to the year 118/736 when Asad was appointed as the governor of Khurasan for the second time. While the case of Balkh is mentioned, there is no information about moving from other garrisons into the cities in other parts of Bactria. Thus, we remain only with one example to study. In any case, reviewing the reports about Balkh helps us understand how and why this happened.

The first report describes the process of moving Arab Muslims into the city of Balkh. According to al-Ṭabarī, Asad transferred whoever was part of the army (*man kāna bi al-Baruqān min al-jūnd*) into the city. Anyone who had a house (*maskan*) at Baruqān was allowed to have one in the city. He first decided to settle the Arab Muslims in the city the way they were at the Baruqān garrison. In Baruqān, members of each tribe lived in a separate quarter (*akhmās*). He wanted to settle them separately according to their quarters, but some unidentified people advised him not to do that because the Arabs had their tribal prejudice (*innahum yuta'aṣṣibūn*) that would lead to internal conflicts. Thus, Asad mixed them (*fakhalata baynahum*). Al-Ṭabarī adds that Asad appointed the *barmak* on this project, and the labour (*fa'ala*) paid by local rulers was used to restore the city. The city was likely restored first, and then the Arab Muslims moved there. Though the report does not say it, the Arabs were possibly given space to build their houses, or there were empty houses in the city. Al-Ṭabarī does not mention if they removed local people and took their domiciles. If that happened as it occurred in Bukhara and Samarkand, where Qutayba forced local people to leave their houses for the Arab Muslims discussed in chapter four (4.1.4), then our report should have included it. Al-Ṭabarī ends the first report by referring to an Arabic poem from a certain Abū al-Barīd in which the city of Balkh was called *al-mubāraka* (the blessed).⁹⁷⁴

The second report related to 118/736 gives information confirming Asad paid more attention to Balkh. At this time, Asad shifted the political centre of Khurasan from Marw to Balkh. He transported the official registers to Balkh and invested in developing the irrigation system that was essential for agricultural activities in the oasis.⁹⁷⁵ Re-settling the Arab Muslims

⁹⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1490–91.

⁹⁷⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1591.

and making Balkh the political centre of Khurasan poses an important question. Why did Asad do that? Why did he not keep Arab Muslims in their garrisons?

To understand the reasons behind moving the Arab Muslims into the city we need to look at the circumstances in which it happened. In 107/725, when Asad moved the Arab Muslims into the city of Balkh, the region of Sogdiana was under the pressure of the Türgesh Turks. As discussed in chapter four (4.3), Asad faced the Türgesh Turks, who rivalled the Umayyads over control of the East. The Türgesh forces defeated the Umayyads and forced them to withdraw from Sogdiana. The pressure was to the extent that many Arab Muslim soldiers refused to go to Sogdiana to fight the Türgesh even after they received their salaries. For instance, in 106/724, the Arab Muslim soldiers of Baruqan rebelled against their commander, who forced them to fight the Türgesh. Their mutiny rapidly became a tribal conflict because the troops were originally from different tribes, lived in separate quarters, and already had internal rivalries.⁹⁷⁶ The Umayyad governor of Khurasan had been said to have forced his soldiers to take an oath not to run away from the war. The oath was to divorce (*ṭalāq*) their wives if they fled.⁹⁷⁷ Therefore, when Asad arrived in Khurasan he had to stay close to Sogdiana and also reduce the possibility of tribal conflicts among the Arab Muslims in Balkh. The solution was to move Arab Muslims into the city and mix them with local people. Similarly, in 117/735, Asad arrived in Khurasan to secure the region from al-Ḥārith and the Türgesh Turks who put pressure not only on Sogdiana but also Bactria. Thus, transforming Balkh as the capital of Umayyad Khurasan signified the Umayyads' position that the region belonged to them and they would remain there.

Living in the garrison and then moving into the city was a significant change. The Arab Muslims, who were previously isolationist, now lived with the local people in the same place. This must have led to an intensive social interaction between them. Living together allowed Arab Muslims and local people to know each other and learn each other's languages and cultural traditions. Local people could convert to Islam and create ties with the Arab Muslims. Living together also naturally would lead to intermarriage and form a mixed society. Making Balkh the capital and transferring the registers would also allow some local people to learn Arabic and work for the Umayyad administration. However, we should keep in mind that the Umayyad authorities did not consciously plan for social changes among the local people, but their activities gradually affected the lives of them. We also need to know that these reports are

⁹⁷⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1473–77.

⁹⁷⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1481–82.

only about the cities, and whether the Arab Muslims settled in the countryside is unknown. Speaking about intensive social interaction that leads people to learn about each other languages and cultures, we should explore our sources to see what they say about linguistic and cultural exchanges in Bactria. The following part will do that.

6.2. Spread of Arabic language and culture in Bactria

Logically, the coexistence of different groups with various languages and cultural traditions in the same place leads to linguistic and cultural exchange. Bilingualism, forming creole languages,⁹⁷⁸ and cultural synchronisation⁹⁷⁹ are the most visible impacts of this coexistence. These elements can be observed in Bactria as well. The evidence for these processes comes on the one hand, from documents which record written (as opposed to spoken) linguistic preferences, and on the other, from anecdotes in historical sources written not contemporary but several centuries after the hybrid period in which these linguistic changes took place. This part provides examples of the spread of the Arabic language and culture by focusing on bilingualism, locals' adopting Arabic personal names, the influence of Arabic in the Sogdian and Bactrian writing system, and Arabic as an administrative language in Bactria. A brief discussion on the contribution of Arabic to the development of New Persian comes at the end of this part.

6.2.1 Bilingualism

Let us start with bilingualism. A bilingual is a person who is able to speak two different languages. Its definition varies from a minimal proficiency in oral communication to an advanced level, in which one can speak two languages as a native-like speaker and read and write in both languages. Bilingualism happens by virtue of growing up learning two languages at the same time (simultaneous bilingualism), or acquiring it after learning the first language (sequential bilingualism). The first can happen at home and the second at school, the workplace, or interaction with people who speak a different language.⁹⁸⁰ In all cases, intensive

⁹⁷⁸ See Donald Winford, "Processes of Creole Formation and Related Contact-Induced Language Change," *Journal Language Contact-THEMA* 2 (2008): 124–145.

⁹⁷⁹ A simple definition of cultural synchronisation is the harmony between diverse groups of people due to intensive interaction. For more detail on this process, see Dierdre Glenn Paul, "Rap and Orality: Critical Media Literacy, Pedagogy, and Cultural Synchronization," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 44, no. 3 (2000): 246–252.

⁹⁸⁰ For a definition and types of bilingualism, see for instance Ben Rampton, "Displacing the "native speaker": Expertise, affiliation and inheritance," *ELT Journal* 44 (1990): 97–101; Carol Myers-Scotton, "Multiple Voices:

contact is *the* key to learning a language. The Arab Muslim conquests, their settlement and political control in Bactria brought them into contact with local people, providing space for the rise of bilinguals who spoke Arabic and other local languages. Many examples of bilinguals who worked for the Arabs or local rulers are reported in the Arabic narratives. However, these reports do not talk about the bilinguals' level of language proficiency. It is reasonable to infer that these bilinguals were able to communicate, and many of those who worked in the Umayyad or local rulers' administration could also read and write.

Most of the relevant reports on Bactria and Sogdiana are preserved by al-Ṭabarī. According to him, in 85/705, the Sogdian merchant leader Thābit, who settled in Tirmidh, employed a spy from the tribe of Khuzā'a who spoke Arabic and Sogdian and sent him to Mūsā's camp to collect information.⁹⁸¹ Qutayba had a spy called Tundar who spoke Sogdian and Arabic. He also had a Persian *mawlā* called Siyāh who guarded Qutayba.⁹⁸² Qutayba also had a local advisor (*al-nāṣih*) called Salīm, who spoke both Arabic and Bactrian. Salīm knew the *nizak* and negotiated with him on behalf of Qutayba.⁹⁸³ The *nizak* was related to 'Uthmān b. Mas'ūd a leader of Tamīm by marriage. The Arab leaders of Khurasan called the *nizak* Abū al-Hayyāj. He had a servant named 'Alī b. Muhājir, who represented the *nizak* before the king of Samarkand.⁹⁸⁴ How 'Alī b. Muhājir came to serve the *nizak* is unknown but he was able to speak for the *nizak* indicating he knew Sogdian.⁹⁸⁵ Not only these characters, but also the *qaghān* of the Türgesh had an Arabic translator in his camp who was associated with al-Ḥārith.⁹⁸⁶ Hence, there were bilinguals serving both Umayyad governors and local rulers.

6.2.2 Adopting Arabic personal names

The second issue to pay attention to is that some local people selected Arabic personal names. For instance, some local Khurasani people named their sons after Salm b. Ziyād, the governor of Khurasan, supposedly because he treated people with respect.⁹⁸⁷ Many people also called their sons Yaḥyā to commemorate the memory of Yaḥyā b. Zayd, who was killed at the age of

An Introduction to Bilingualism," *Applied Linguistics* 28, no. 1 (2007): 155–158; François Grosjean and Ping- Li, ed., *The Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell/John Wiley & Sons 2013).

⁹⁸¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1155.

⁹⁸² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1178.

⁹⁸³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8: 1184, 1220.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 142–143.

⁹⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1159.

⁹⁸⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1537; Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī mentions that Qutayba communicated in Badghisi language with the *nizak* (Ibn A'atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 150). However, no other sources refer to that.

⁹⁸⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 7: 488.

28 by the Umayyad forces in 125/743 in Guzgan. His father Zayd was the famous ‘Alid leader who rebelled against the Umayyads in Kufa in 122/739.⁹⁸⁸ Arabic documents produced in eighth-century Rob reflect that some locals selected Arabic personal names. For example, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭarkhān,⁹⁸⁹ Khālīd b. Slkyān,⁹⁹⁰ Qutayba b. Khudewuy,⁹⁹¹ and al-Ḥasan b. Warāzān.⁹⁹² These men were all adults when they witnessed and sealed Arabic documents; therefore, their parents (or themselves) must have chosen these names earlier. The *barmak* of Balkh named his son Khālīd, and the *Sāmān-khudā* who converted in the hand of Asad al-Qasrī named his son Asad.⁹⁹³ These are the examples mentioned in our sources, but adopting Arabic names that appealed to people could have been much more than these reports.⁹⁹⁴

Another interesting phenomenon is the use of Arabic titles as personal names. The evidence comes from a Bactrian document.⁹⁹⁵ It is produced in Kadagstan in 490 of the Bactrian calendar equal to 750 CE, that is to say, around the same time when the Abbasids took over Bactria. It mentions that Kamird-far had a son who was called Khamir (χαμυρο). Kamird-far was a priest and is known from an earlier Bactrian document.⁹⁹⁶ This is the only Bactrian document in which Khamir is mentioned as a personal name. Khamir is attested also in Sogdian, which Pavel Lurje argued is the equivalent of the Arabic *amīr*.⁹⁹⁷ It seems likely that Khamir is equally a Bactrian loanword from the Arabic *amīr*. Some Arab leaders named their children after their birthplace. For instance, Juday‘ b. ‘Alī, a leader from the tribe of Azd had the *nisba* al-Kirmānī because he was born in Kirman.⁹⁹⁸ Adopting Arabic personal names must have appealed to local people and could encourage them to interact with Arab Muslims further.

⁹⁸⁸ Madelung, W. “Yaḥyā b. Zayd,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, available online, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/yahya-b-zayd-SIM_7957 (accessed on 1 August 2022); Al-Ḍahabī, *Sīyar ‘alām al-nubalā’*, 5: 391.

⁹⁸⁹ Arabic document no. 29 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 152–53.

⁹⁹⁰ Arabic document no. 25 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 141.

⁹⁹¹ Arabic document no. 31 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 158.

⁹⁹² Arabic document no. 1 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 92.

⁹⁹³ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 70.

⁹⁹⁴ Choosing Arabic personal names is also reported from Sogdiana. The Sogdian brothers who helped Mūsā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim in Tirmidh had Arabic names. They also had some Arab Muslim clients associated with them. This means having clients (sing., *mawlā*) was not confined to Arabs. Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, had a son named Yazīd. Ṭughshāda, the ruler of Bukhara, named his son after Qutayba b. Muslim, it was claimed because he owed his throne to Qutayba’s support.

⁹⁹⁵ Bactrian document no. X in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 136–141.

⁹⁹⁶ See Bactrian document no. T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 98–103.

⁹⁹⁷ Pavel Lurje, “Khamir and Other Arabic Words in Sogdian Texts,” in *Islamisation De L’Asie Centrale*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière, Chier 39 (Paris: Association Pour L’Avancement Des Études Iraniennes, *Studia Iranica*, 2008), 29–57.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibn A‘atham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 8: 309.

6.2.3 Influence of Arabic letter writing formulae on Bactrian

The third issue to discuss is that some local rulers and Arab authorities preferred to write letters in the addressees' language. This must have been done by the bilingual scribes who understood both languages and the writing system. For instance, an Arabic document (P. Kratchkovski) from Mount Mugh in modern Tajikistan provides details. Dewāshṭīch (d. 102/721), the ruler of Panjikent and then the king of Samarkand was an Umayyad ally. Before becoming the king of Samarkand, he issued letters in Arabic in 99–101/718–719 to al-Jarrāḥ al-Ḥakamī, the governor of Khurasan (d. 111/730) asking the governor to do him a favour by returning the sons of Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarkand who was killed in an internal plot. His Arabic letter indicating Dewāshṭīch had scribes at his disposal who were well-versed in current Arabic epistolary formularies. After he became the king of Samarkand, the Arabs preferred to write to him in Sogdian. In 102/721, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣubḥ, an advisor to Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, the governor of Khurasan issued a letter in Sogdian to Dewāshṭīch. Conversely, Sa'īd issued letters in Sogdian when addressed to the Zoroastrian chief priest of Samarkand. This means that Sa'īd and 'Abd al-Raḥmān had scribes who knew Sogdian. Apart from knowing languages, these bilinguals were familiar with different social and cultural traditions.⁹⁹⁹

Arabic formulae were adopted in the local letter-writing system. The evidence comes from Bactria and Sogdiana. The Sogdian letter (Mount Mugh Document 1. I) was issued by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣubḥ to Dewāshṭīch, probably in 102/721, uses phrases for the opening and greetings that were not known in the Sogdian letter-writing system but that reflect Arabic epistolary expressions.¹⁰⁰⁰ A Bactrian letter produced in Kadagstan in 549 of the Bactrian calendar corresponding to 772 CE, shows Arabic influence on the Bactrian letter-writing system. It is a protection letter issued by the king of Kadagstan for Mir son of Bek, the resident of Rob region. Unlike all other Bactrian letters, this protection letter opens with the formula "In the Name of God" (πιδο ναμο ιεζιδασο).¹⁰⁰¹ This opening formula is the Bactrian equivalent for the Arabic *bismallah*. The document shows that Arabic penetrated as far as Kadagstan's local administration and influenced the Bactrian administrative letter-writing system. All these letters show bilinguals' importance and the interaction between Umayyad and local administrations. Speaking about the Umayyad administration, it is crucial to see how Arabic became an administrative language in Bactria.

⁹⁹⁹ Huseini, "Thinking in Arabic, Writing in Sogdian," 75–84.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Huseini, "Thinking in Arabic, Writing in Sogdian," 75–78.

¹⁰⁰¹ Bactrian document no. Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 142–143.

6.2.4 Arabic as an administrative language in Bactria

The concrete evidence for Arabic being used as an administrative language in Bactria comes from the Arabic document produced between 147–158/764–774 in Rob region.¹⁰⁰² When these documents were issued, not the Umayyads but the Abbasid-controlled Bactria. They are mostly land tax (*kharāj*) receipts issued for the family of Mir b. Bek, whose name is known from some Bactrian documents.¹⁰⁰³ It is unclear when exactly Arabic began to be used as an administrative language in Bactria. However, issuing land tax receipts in Arabic for local Bactrians should have been the gradual outcome of the Umayyad's decision of using Arabic in the administration, known as Arabicisation of the administration (*ta'rīb al-dawāwīn*).¹⁰⁰⁴ A brief overview of this policy helps to comprehend the relation between them.

Arabicisation of the administration began around 81–82/701 in Syria during the reign of caliph 'Abd al-Malik. He commissioned an Arab Muslim secretary named Sulaymān b. Sa'd to translate the official registers into Arabic.¹⁰⁰⁵ The caliphal policy included his reformed coinage, in which mono-lingual silver dirhams were minted in Arabic script with Islamic legends.¹⁰⁰⁶ Then, around the same time during the governorship of al-Ḥajjāj in Iraq, this policy was followed in Kufa and Basra. In Iraq, the Umayyad administration had two registers. The first one was called *dīwān al-jund* related to the army and kept the records of the soldiers who received stipends. The records of this *dīwān* were in Arabic. The second one was called *dīwān al-kharāj* related to financial issues like taxes and tributes (*li wujūh al-amwāl*) and its records were in Middle Persian. Under al-Ḥajjāj's patronage, Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, an Iranian bilingual *mawlā* of Banū Tamīm, who was already working in the administration directed by a

¹⁰⁰² See Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan*.

¹⁰⁰³ Bactrian documents no. X, Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 136–141, 142–143.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Muḥammad al-Bu 'Alī and Sa'īd Khanāfira Mawaddat, "Junbish-i Ta'rīb wa Naqsh-i Irāniyān dar ān," *Faṣlnāma-yi Tārīkh-i Naw* 17 (1395/2017): 111–132; Kyle Longworth, "Islamic Bureaucratic in Late Antiquity: Administration and Elites During the Umayyad Caliphate (ca. 661–750)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2022), 96–147.

¹⁰⁰⁵ For further information on 'Abd al-Malik's reforms, see Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*; In his PhD dissertation, Nicholas Kyle Longworth has explained Arabicisation of the *dīwān* in Syria and Iraq in full detail. Hence, repeating the same discussion is unnecessary (see Longworth, "Islamic Bureaucratic in Late Antiquity," 102–118).

¹⁰⁰⁶ There is a rich bibliography on 'Abd al-Malik's coinage. See for instance, Michael Bates, "The 'Arab-Byzantine' Bronze Coinage of Syria: An Innovation by 'Abd al-Malik," in *A Colloquium in Memory of George Carpenter Miles (1904–1975)* (New York, 1976), 16–27; Robinson, *'Abd al-Malik*, 71–75; Luke Treadwell, "Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reforms: the Role of the Damascus Mint," *Revue numismatique* 6, no. 165 (2009) 357–381; Jere L. Bacharach, "Signs of Sovereignty: The 'Shahāda,' Qur'anic Verses, and the Coinage of 'Abd al-Malik," *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 1–30; Stefan Heidemann, "Numismatics," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, Volume 1: *The Formation of Islamic World Sixth to Eleventh Century*, ed. Chase Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 648–663.

certain Iranian Zādān Farrūkh translated the Middle Persian registers into Arabic.¹⁰⁰⁷ Probably, Khurasan had similar *dīwān*, but the policy of turning the registers into Arabic was not immediately introduced to Khurasan. Unlike Syria and Iraq, Khurasan was a contested military frontier region, and imposing the central government's policies there was difficult.

Administration in the Umayyad province of Khurasan supervised by the governor of Khurasan. As pointed out in the previous chapter (5.1.2), Khurasan was a frontier region and treated as a *separate* province in times of peace when the caliph directly appointed its governor, and as a *dependent* province being part of Iraq in times of political unrest and the governor of Iraq appointed the governor of Khurasan. The governor of Khurasan resided in Marw and had the authority to appoint the commanders of the garrisons, head of the offices related to war (*al-ḥarb*), tributes (*al-kharāj*),¹⁰⁰⁸ prayers (*al-ṣalāt*),¹⁰⁰⁹ and jurisprudence (*al-qaḍā*).¹⁰¹⁰ He could also appoint the chief of the police (*al-shurṭa*) and the bodyguards (*al-ḥaras*).¹⁰¹¹ Most of these officers were from the Arabian tribal elites of Khurasan. However, when Qutayba was appointed in Khurasan he arrested, tortured, or removed all earlier key administrators appointed by the Muhallabids and replaced them by his men. This harsh attitude became common, as any governor who came to Khurasan did the same to his predecessor's appointees.¹⁰¹² It created unrest among Arabian tribal leaders of Khurasan (*a'yān al-balad*). Therefore, as al-Ṭabarī recorded, these elites decided to keep some official positions, including financial office, in their hands and even warned the governor about it.¹⁰¹³ They introduced their administrators called *'umāl al-'uzr* to the governor, who confirmed their appointment without any objections. They also imposed their control over provincial incomes and refused to send the caliphal share arguing that Khurasan is the frontier region and needs money to safeguard it against the enemies.¹⁰¹⁴ All this time, the local Iranian administrators, including bilingual *mawālī* like Sulaymān b. Abī al-Surī managed most of the administration, particularly financial issues.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰⁰⁷ Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa al-kuttāb*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Siqqā, Ibrāhīm al-'Abyārī and 'Abd al-Ḥafīẓ Shibli (Cairo: Maṭba'a Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Aulāduhu, 1357/1938), 38; Longworth, "Islamic Bureaucratic in Late Antiquity," 27–36.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 7: 178, and see 9: 1307.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1307.

¹⁰¹⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1485, and 9: 1505.

¹⁰¹¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1609.

¹⁰¹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 8: 1253, 1412.

¹⁰¹³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1460, 1481.

¹⁰¹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1461–77, 1481.

¹⁰¹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, 9: 1253, 1421; Sulaymān has worked in different capacities in Sogdiana and Bactria. His name is mentioned in the Arabic letter from Mount Mugh.

Hence, the situation did not provide an opportunity to expand the Arabicisation of the *dīwān* in Khurasan. It had to wait for some more time.

The conditions for Arabicisation of the administration in Khurasan became appropriate after the Umayyads subdued al-Ḥārith rebellion and defeated the Türgesh Turks. As said in the previous section (6.2.3), in 118/736, Asad al-Qasrī made Balkh his capital and transferred the official registers from Marw to Balkh. However, once the war with the Türgesh ended and the Umayyad reestablished their control over the region, Naṣr b. Sayyār shifted the capital back to Marw and returned the official registers there. The political stability allowed Naṣr to undertake his fiscal reforms in 121/738 in Marw. After his reforms, the Muslim landowners were asked to pay the *ushr*, one-tenth of their yield, and those who converted to Islam were exempted from paying the *jizya* but paid their land tax. Non-Muslim chiefs were asked to pay the annual tributes based on their peace treaties.¹⁰¹⁶ It is plausible that implementing the reforms and arranging all relevant records should have taken some years. Around the same time in 124/741, Yūsuf b. ‘Umar al-Thaqafī (d. 126/744), the governor of Iraq, ordered Naṣr b. Sayyār to convert the official registers into Arabic. A certain Khurasani bilingual named Ishāq b. Ṭulayq completed the task. Whether there was a relation between Naṣr’s reforms and Yūsuf’s order is not understood. However, despite this change, most secretaries were Iranians and continued their job.¹⁰¹⁷ That implies these administrators were bilingual and could remain in their jobs using Arabic they already knew.

The policy of Arabicisation of the *dīwān* in Marw in 124/741 expanded to Bactria by the end of the Umayyad period. This suggestion can be supported by a land sale contract produced in Rob in 525 of the Bactrian calendar, equal to 747 CE. It is six years after the Arabicisation of the *dīwān* in Marw. According to this document, the Arab Muslims imposed land tax and poll tax on the local households and a family had to sell their land to pay their taxes. The document mentions that the land properly belongs to the buyers and no one can claim its ownership by showing any other contracts. It then has a specific formula saying that no one, not the people of Rob, Bamiyan, or those among the Turks and Arabs can claim it (*ναγο ρωβιγο οδο ναγο βαμοιανιγο ναγο τορκο ναγο ταζιγο*). This formula does not refer to any individuals identified as a person from Rob, Bamiyan, Turk or Arab. Instead, it shows that there were local, Turkic, and Arab administrations around that could issue legal documents. Moreover, referring to Arabs here means that the Umayyad administration was expanded to

¹⁰¹⁶ Athamina, “Taxation reforms,” 279–281.

¹⁰¹⁷ Al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā’*, 67.

Rob in 747. They could levy taxes on locals and also issue documents.¹⁰¹⁸ Certainly, they would issue documents in Arabic. This idea becomes more real because two decades later, all land tax receipts issued for the Mir family who lived in Rob are in Arabic. Hence, four decades after the Arabicisation of the *dīwān* in Iraq, this policy was enforced in Marw and then by the end of the Umayyad period, it expanded to Bactria. How long Arabic continued as an administrative language in Bactria is unknown. Whatever it may have been, Arabic was used as an administrative language in the region and contributed to the rise of New Persian in Khurasan, which gradually replaced Bactrian. This will be explained next.

6.2.5 The rise and spread of New Persian

One of the most significant impacts of the Arab Muslim conquests was linguistic, in that New Persian came to being. The New Persian generally considered to refer to the language as it is written in Arabic script and contains a large portion of Arabic vocabulary. New Persian became the *lingua franca* in the eastern Iranian regions and gradually replaced local languages like Bactrian and Sogdian. Scholars have intensively discussed the origin of the New Persian language.¹⁰¹⁹ There is an agreement that literary New Persian written in Arabic script developed in post-conquest Khurasan under the patronage of local Iranian dynasties such as the Samanids. Involvement in this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis. What is relevant

¹⁰¹⁸ Bactrian document no. W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 126–135.

¹⁰¹⁹ There is a rich bibliography on this subject. An insightful discussion in Persian language can be found in Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, *Sabk Shināsī yā Tārīkh-i Taṭawwur-i Nathr-i Fārsī*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Kitābhā-yi Parastū, 1349/1970), 1: 101–208; Gilbert Lazard has intensively studied this topic since 1960s and published several works. See three of his main works, “The Rise of the New Persian Language,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran IV. The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. Richard N. Fry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 595–632, *La Formation de la Langue Persane* (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle Paris III, Institut d’études, 1995), and “Du pehlevi au persan: diachronie ou diatopie?” in *Persian Origins: Early Judaeo-Persian and the Emergence of New Persian: collected papers of the Symposium, Göttingen 1999*, ed. Ludwig Paul (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), 95–102. Discussion on the origin and expansion of New Persian continued by other scholars based on new documentary and inscriptional evidence. See, for instance, Ludwig Paul, “Early Judaeo-Persian in a Historical Perspective: The Case of the Prepositions *be*, *u*, *pa(d)* and the Suffix *rā*,” in *Persian Origins – Early Judaeo-Persian and the Emergence of New Persian. Collected Papers of the Symposium, Göttingen 1999*, ed. Ludwig Paul (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), 177–194. For a quick review, see Ludwig Paul, “Persian Language i. Early New Persian,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/persian-language-1-early-new-persian> (accessed on 29 August 2022); Carlo G. Cereti, “From Middle to New Persian: Written Materials from Northern Iran and Khorasan,” *Vicino Oriente XXIII* (2019): 95–107; Mauro Maggi and Paola Orsatti, ed., *Persian Language in History* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2011); John Perry, “The Origin and Development of Literary Persian,” in *A History of Persian Literature, Vol. I: General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J. T. P. de Bruijn (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 43–70; Mauro Maggi and Paola Orsatti, “From Old to New Persian,” in *Oxford Handbook of Persian Linguistics*, ed. Anousha Sedighi and Pouneh Shabani-Jadidi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7–51; Khodadad Rezakhani, “Navigating Persian: The Travels and Tribulations of Middle Iranian Languages,” in *Navigating Languages in the Early Islamic World*, ed. Antione Borrut, Manuela Caballos and Alison Vacca (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023, forthcoming).

to our discussion is that our sources show that the New Persian language was spoken in western Bactria in the Umayyad period. Equally important is that the earliest evidence of New Persian written in Hebrew script (known as Judeo-Persian) was also found in early Abbasid Khurasan. Before discussing them, some remarks about the New Persian language can help us understand this development better.

In the late Sasanian period, different languages were spoken in the empire. Though the Sasanians used Middle Persian for their coins and inscriptions, they did not impose one single language all over the empire. The Sasanian empire was a multilingual empire. From the narratives of early Abbasid scholars like Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 757), we realise that two varieties of the Middle Persian language were common in late Sasanian Iran. The first was called *pārsī*, which referred to Persian proper spoken in southern Iran and "formed the basis of the written religious and literary language".¹⁰²⁰ The second one was *darī*, a more innovative and prestigious variety spoken in the capital of the Sasanian empire and the northeastern regions.¹⁰²¹ Inscriptions from Sasanian Iran support this idea. Carlo Cereti has argued that the Middle Persian inscriptions show different dialectal variants. The Middle Persian dialect of the southern regions reflected in the inscriptions was *pārsī*. The one used in the northern and northeastern regions like Khurasan was *darī*. Later, people from the north and eastern regions -where *darī* was the common dialect- gathered at the Sasanian court and spoke their dialect. The *darī* variant soon became dominant in the East and developed into classic Persian. In sum, *pārsī* and *darī* were variants of the same language, Persian, a southwestern Iranian language that later evolved into classic Persian.¹⁰²²

The Arab Muslim conquests accelerated the expansion of the *darī* variant of Persian. As John Perry has argued, the Arab Muslim conquests led to "full Persianisation" of the eastern Iranian regions. Many Persian-speaking people who lived in Iraq and around the Sasanian capital and northern parts of Sasanian Iran joined the conquerors and moved to Khurasan with them. Many of them were *darī* speakers and served the new empire by joining the military and administration, and settled in conquered regions like Bactria and Sogdiana. Many people from the southern regions, like Khuzistan and Arab Muslims who settled in Khurasan, learned Persian.¹⁰²³ The mixture of people and intermarriage between Persians and Arabs created a

¹⁰²⁰ Mauro and Orsatti, "From Old to New Persian," 26.

¹⁰²¹ Mauro and Orsatti, "From Old to New Persian," 26.

¹⁰²² Cereti, "From Middle to New Persian," 96, 103.

¹⁰²³ Perry, "The Origin and Development of Literary Persian," 52–53; Also, see Mauro and Orsatti, "From Old to New Persian," 31.

space for New Persian to rise and adopt different elements from Arabic, eventually emerging as a language written predominantly in the Arabic script. It gradually dominated the region by replacing other local languages like Bactrian. While the *darī* dialect of Middle Persian was expanding, its *pārsī* dialect continued for Zoroastrian religious texts in the southern regions, as well as administration, coinage, and some monumental buildings in areas such as Tabaristan.¹⁰²⁴

The Arabic narratives related to the conquests show that Persian was spoken in western Bactrian, particularly Balkh, where the Arab Muslims settled among local people. At least two relevant reports from al-Madā'inī are preserved in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh*. Both are from the Umayyad period. The first report is related to the rebellion of al-Ḥārith in 116/734. According to that account, after al-Ḥārith's defeat in Marw, most of his local supporters deserted him. Still, an Arab Muslim supporter of al-Ḥārith wished to fight the Umayyad forces and when he asked for a combatant, a man from Talaqan (in western Bactria) responded. Being very surprised by seeing not an Arab but a Talaqani man, he cursed him in Persian, proclaiming: "O donkey phallus" (spelt in Arabic as *ay kir-i khar*).¹⁰²⁵ This report does not identify these men. Whether the Talaqani man was a native of Talaqan or was settled there after the Arab conquests is unknown. In any case, the report shows that the Arab supporters of al-Ḥārith knew Persian and people who spoke this language were present in western Bactria.

The second report is related to the year 119/737. On the authority of al-Madā'inī, al-Ṭabarī mentions that the Türgesh forces defeated Asad in 119/737 in Khuttal. The Turks killed and captured many Arab Muslim soldiers and looted Asad's logistics train. Asad returned to Balkh and stayed outside for a while and then entered the city (*wa maḍā Asad Balkh fa'askara fī murjihā...wa dakhala al-madīna*) where people mocked him in Persian (*qīla lahū bi-l-fārsīyya*): "[he] returned from Khatlan [Khuttal], may damage come on him, he returned a fugitive, he returned barren and lamenting" (*az Khatlān āmadiya, bar ū tabāh āmadiya, ābāra bāz āmadiya, khushk u nizār āmadiya*).¹⁰²⁶ This report shows that Persian-speaking people lived in Balkh during this period and composed poems in Persian

Al-Ṭabarī preserved another report about the same event that can expand our view about Persian spoken in the region. He refers to Abū 'Ubayda, who believed that Asad's

¹⁰²⁴ Cereti, "From Middle to New Persian," 97. Examples are Middle Persian documents from Tabaristan, Arab-Sasanian coins minted in the early Abbasid period, and the tomb tower at Lajim.

¹⁰²⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1572.

¹⁰²⁶ This poem is mentioned three times in al-Ṭabarī (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1602–03).

campaign in Khuttal happened in 108/726. According to Abū ‘Ubayda, Asad fought the Turks but the Turks defeated him (*hazamu Asad*). He returned vanquished from Khuttal, and the people of Khurasan (*ahl Khurāsān*) mocked him in Persian. He gives a shortened version of the same poem mentioned by al-Ṭabarī. In another place, Abū ‘Ubayda adds that children mocked Asad. However, al-Ṭabarī indirectly rejects Abū ‘Ubayda’s report by saying that al-Madā’inī clarifies that the *qaghān* met Asad but did not fight him in 108/726.¹⁰²⁷ From al-Madā’inī’s detail of Asad’s campaign in Khuttal and the fact that Asad returned to Balkh to prepare to fight the Turks and al-Ḥārith, we can infer that Abū ‘Ubayda mixed the events. Nevertheless, his report shows that Persian was spoken in Khurasan. A report by al-Dināwārī reflects that some Arab Muslim leaders like Juday‘ b. ‘Alī al-Kirmānī communicated in Persian with local people in Marw.¹⁰²⁸ All these narratives echo the fact that Persian was already spoken in Marw, Talaqan, and Balkh, which were part of Umayyad Khurasan. However, they do not tell us if New Persian was a written language at this time.

When and where New Persian began to be written in Arabic script is unknown. The earliest evidence for the emergence of New Persian dates to the eighth century.¹⁰²⁹ Early New Persian was written in various scripts, including Hebrew. There are shreds of evidence showing that the Hebrew script was used for writing New Persian in early Islamic Khurasan. This is attested from the Judeo-Persian inscriptions of Tang-i Azao in modern-day western Afghanistan dated 753 CE,¹⁰³⁰ and some letters from Dandan-Uiliq near Khotan exchanged between Jewish families. The letters were produced in the late eighth century.¹⁰³¹ Using Hebrew for writing New Persian continued up to the Mongol period, as testified by the Judeo-Persian documents from Bamiyan.¹⁰³² However, all Judeo-Persian inscriptions and documents from Khurasan and Khotan are related to Jewish families. That means using Hebrew script for New Persian was likely limited to the Jewish community (at least in these cases). Instead, the

¹⁰²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9: 1492–94. It is worth noting that al-Ṭabarī’s detail on this topic is nine pages in print, while Abū ‘Ubayda’s report is very short and less than a page.

¹⁰²⁸ Al-Dināwārī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 335.

¹⁰²⁹ Cereti, “From Middle to New Persian,” 97.

¹⁰³⁰ W. Henning, “The Inscriptions of Tang-I Azao,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 20, no. 1 (1957): 335–342; They are short graffiti and resembles the graffiti in the Hijaz, see Abdullah Alhatlani, “Descendants and Ancestors: A Study of Arabic Inscriptions from the Arabian Peninsula (1st–4th c. AH/7th–10th c. CE)” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2021).

¹⁰³¹ Different scholars translated and discussed these Judeo-Persian documents. See, for instance, D. S. Margoliuth, “An Early Judeo-Persian Document from Khotan in the Stien Collection with other early Persian Documents,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1903): 735–761; Bo Utas, “Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandān-Uiliq,” *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1968): 123–136; Zhan Zhang, “Judeo-Persian Document from Khotan,” *Journal of Dunhuang and Turfan Studies* XI (2008): 71–99.

¹⁰³² See Haim, “What is the ‘Afghan Genizah’?”; Also, see Ofir Haim, “Landlords and Tenants Under the Ghaznavids: The Hinterland of Eleventh-Century Bamiyan,” *Atiqot* 112 (2024): 201–224.

Arabic alphabet became the main script for writing New Persian, which has since continued to the present. With time, New Persian written in the Arabic script and containing many Arabic words, became the second most important language in the Islamic world.

While Arabic and New Persian were utilised in the region, the Bactrian language continued as the primary administrative language in the areas controlled by Bactrian local rulers. Bactrian documents from Guzgan, Rob, and Kadagstan produced during the Umayyad period confirm its continuation. The last preserved Bactrian document was written in Kadagstan in 772, showing that local rulers of this area had their administration in place during the early Abbasid period.¹⁰³³ It is unknown how long Bactrian continued, but, likely, the rise of New Persian and its popularity did not leave room for Bactrian to continue. So far, no bilingual document in Arabic and Bactrian has ever been found. That suggests two separate linguistic worlds existed: the Arab Muslims used Arabic in their controlled areas, and the local Bactrian rulers used Bactrian in their spheres of influences. Travelling across these monolingual chanceries, however, would have been bilingual individuals, for as was mentioned above, the two languages also influenced each other wherever they interacted.¹⁰³⁴ The conquests and settlements allowed not only the infiltration of the Arabic script, but also other aspects of the expansion of the Arabic language, culture, and administration to spread to Bactria. The settlement also provided space for the spread of Islamic ideology. The following part will discuss that.

6.3. Spread of Islamic institutions and infrastructures in Bactria

It is reasonable to argue that the Arab Muslims introduced their Islamic institutions and infrastructures to Bactria during the Umayyad period. The Arab Muslims were not empty bowls to be filled by the local traditions, but they had their form of governance, cultural traditions and belief system. After founding the garrisons filled by Arab Muslim soldiers, they established different offices and enforced a series of regulations to manage them. Once they moved from the garrisons into the cities, they did not abandon their system of governance but expanded it to the cities. They commissioned the construction of physical infrastructures. They built an office of the governor (*dār al-imāra*), its relevant offices, and a mosque (*masjid*). Equally, they expanded their institutions like the judiciary system (*al-qaḍā*) into the cities. Though what the

¹⁰³³ Bactrian document no. Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 142–43.

¹⁰³⁴ Examples are the Bactrian letter Y, the Arabic document (P. Kratchkovski), and the Sogdian document (I. I) discussed in this part.

governor and his administrators have done may not necessarily have been based on Islamic regulations, their presence reflected the Islamic rule in the region. Likewise, their community now living within the cities, their mosques and institutions were physical signs of the existence of Islam.

The Arab Muslim presence was significant in expanding Islamic ideology in Bactria. Our sources show that the Arab Muslims constructed mosques and government offices in the areas they controlled. However, they do not provide many details about the exact locations of the offices and how they relate to local people. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to infer that local people saw the mosques, witnessed Arab Muslim traditions, visited their offices, and interacted with them. This part will focus on building mosques, individuals' conversion, expansion of Islamic regulations, and extension of the Arab Muslim fiscal system that are reflected in our sources.

6.3.1 Building mosques in Bactria

The construction of mosques left many traces in our written sources and archaeological records. The mosque is the beating heart of the Islamic community. It is the most visible sign of Muslim presence in a region. Special attention was paid to its location, construction plan and materials that made them last longer than regular buildings.¹⁰³⁵ The construction of a mosque had an evident and public Islamicising impact on the diverse religious landscape of Bactria, where Buddhist stupas and viharas, image shrines of the Iranian deities and other religious buildings existed. A mosque was a space for multiple functions. It was not only the space where religious rituals were performed but also an obvious political arena. Arab Muslim authorities addressed their dependents with public speeches on special occasions such as the arrival of a new governor, at the outset of a military campaign or during religious festivals and other festivities.¹⁰³⁶ The Arab Muslims and local converts could meet in a mosque for congregational prayers. Participating in congregational rituals would create social and religious cohesion among co-religious followers. Hence, the mosque was both a political platform and a landmark representing the existence of a Muslim community. However, when and where were the earliest mosques built in Bactria?

¹⁰³⁵ For a detailed discussion on the designs and functions of mosques in the Islamic world, see Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

¹⁰³⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1458; See Sijpesteijn, "Closing Ranks," 469–499.

Information about building mosques in Bactria is reflected in Arabic reports related to the conquests, local histories, and Muslim geographical reports. They show that the earliest mosques were built within the garrisons where the Arab Muslims stayed. They needed a mosque to perform their religious rituals, particularly congregational prayers. Then, with the move of Arab Muslims to the cities, mosques arose there as well. For instance, al-Balkhī mentions that Qutayba b. Muslim built a mosque in Baruqan in 89/710 for the Arab Muslims. Later, in 108/726, Asad al-Qasrī moved the Arab Muslim population from Baruqan to the city of Balkh and commissioned a mosque for them within it.¹⁰³⁷ Al-Balkhī's source is unknown, but his narrative suggests that the earliest mosque was built in the garrison and then in the city. Al-Balkhī's narrative about the mosque in Baruqan is not mentioned in other Arabic chronicles. However, it does not mean the Arab Muslims did not build a mosque in the garrison for their daily prayers.

Al-Balkhī's report about Asad's building a mosque in the city can be attested by al-Ṭabarī's narratives relating to 116–118/734–736. According to al-Ṭabarī, Asad prepared to fight the Türgesh and al-Ḥārith b. Surayj. To create a strong force, he called on the people of Balkh, and many people, including villagers who may not have been Muslims responded to his call. Arab Muslims and local people gathered in a mosque where Asad prayed and stepped on the *minbar* to deliver his speech. The *minbar* is often near the mosque's prayer niche (*mihṛāb*). Subsequently, he asked people to prostrate and sacrifice animals. Then, he mounted to fight the enemies. This report indicates that the mosque in Balkh had a big space like a courtyard for people and a *minbar* for speech.¹⁰³⁸ However, its exact location is not mentioned.¹⁰³⁹

Asad was not the only one who commissioned the construction of a mosque. The anti-Umayyad Arab Muslim rebel al-Ḥārith, who was famous for his emphasis on establishing the government based on the Qur'an (*al-kitāb*) and the Prophet's tradition (*al-sunna*), built (*banāhu*) a mosque in the Tabushkan fortress in Tukharistan. The fortress was given to al-Ḥārith by the *yabghu* of Tukharistan. When he gifted that to al-Ḥārith is unknown. In any case, al-Ḥārith settled some of his Arab and non-Arab supporters in that fortress.¹⁰⁴⁰ In 171/788, as

¹⁰³⁷ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 30–31.

¹⁰³⁸ Al-Ṭabarī does not use the word *masjid* but *al-minbar*. However, *al-minbar* was located within a mosque and often made of wood, breaks or stones. In any case, Asad's resettlement of Arab Muslims within the city should have brought the idea *masjid* and its *al-minbar* from the garrison of Baruqan to the city of Balkh (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1603).

¹⁰³⁹ Based on literary sources, Azad and Kennedy concluded that the mosque was located within Bala Hisar in Balkh. However, only archaeological excavations can show where the mosque was located (Azad and Kennedy, "The Coming of Islam to Balkh," 293).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1591.

al-Balkhī mentions, Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath (d. 173/791), the Abbasid governor of Khurasan, constructed a mosque in Kunduz.¹⁰⁴¹ If Kunduz in this report refers to modern Kunduz, then it means there was a Muslim population in eastern Bactria in the late eighth century. However, Kunduz also means “old fortress” in Persian (*kuhan diz*), and if al-Balkhī used Kunduz for the old fortress, then the mosque should have been constructed in the old city of Balkh.

With the increase of the Muslim population, they required a grand mosque. Again, it is al-Balkhī, who knew his city well, mentions that the grand mosque (*masjid-i jāmi‘*) of Balkh was built in 125/743. That is seven years after Asad built his mosque. No specific person is identified as commissioner but it is said that Mutawakkil b. Ḥamrān, Muqātil b. Hayyān, and Muqātil b. Sulaymān suggested the building. All these characters lived in the second/eighth century and were famous for their religious scholarship.¹⁰⁴² Al-Balkhī is the only source that recorded the narrative about this mosque. Whether these scholars were behind building the mosque or not, al-Balkhī’s connecting the grand mosque of Balkh with some of the earliest and the most famous Muslim scholars in Khurasan could have been aimed at attaining more prestige for his city. Al-Balkhī does not speak about the exact location of the grand mosque.

Arabic and Persian reports from the fourth/tenth-century describe more mosques being built in Bactria in the third/ninth century and later. Building new mosques suggests an increase in Muslim populations in the region. According to al-Balkhī, Dāwūd b. al-‘Abbās (in office from 233–257/848–871), the governor of Balkh, contributed to the congregational mosque (*masjid-i ādīna*) in 255/869. Then, his wife (*khātūn*) spent more money on expanding the mosque further.¹⁰⁴³ However, the exact location of the mosque is not mentioned.¹⁰⁴⁴ Al-Istakhri and Ibn Ḥawqal describe the grand mosque of Balkh they saw when they visited the city. They

¹⁰⁴¹ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 31.

¹⁰⁴² Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁴³ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 35–36.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Dāwūd is also known for spending twenty years constructing the Naw Shad. It was located outside of the city of Balkh. Whether it was a palace or a religious monument is not known. In any case, the Naw Shad was an important building with rich decorations that attracted the attention of the Saffarid ruler. Ibn al-Athīr and Gardīzī’s reports show that Ya‘qūb b. Layth (r. 247–265/861–879), the founder of the Saffarid dynasty in Sistan, demolished it in 257/871 (Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, 6: 232; Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 306–307). Even after its demolition, the decoration of the Naw Shad was still visible because they were mentioned in many fourth/tenth-century Persian poems (Muḥammad Qazvīnī, “Gughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkhī: Naw Shad kujā būda ast?” *Yādgar* 9/10 (1327/1948): 8–30). Ya‘qūb is the first post-conquest Persian ruler who is known for his iconoclastic acts in Buddhist shrines in Kabul and for sending Buddhist statues to the caliph in Baghdad (Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-ta’rīkh*, 6: 232); For discussion on early Islamic iconoclasm in Kabul and Bamiyan, see Finbarr Barry Flood, “Between cult and culture: Bamiyan, Islamic iconoclasm, and the museum,” *The Art Bulletin*, 84, no.4 (2012): 641–659; Said Reza Huseini, “Destruction of Bamiyan Buddha: Taliban Iconoclasm and Hazara Response,” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2012): 15–50).

both mention that the grand mosque was located within the city, and the markets were around it.¹⁰⁴⁵ Furthermore, Ibn Ḥawqal mentions that the mosque was in an ideal situation and filled by local people.¹⁰⁴⁶ It is not sure whether this mosque was the same as the one commissioned by Dāwūd and expanded by his wife.

Tirmidh was the second Bactrian city with a grand mosque, but it is not reported when precisely it was constructed. Al-Istakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal mention the presence of a mosque in Tirmidh. They say that the mosque was located in the city (*al-madīna*), and the praying place (*al-muṣallā*) was within the defensive wall (*al-sūr*).¹⁰⁴⁷ Archaeological excavations in Tirmidh unearthed the remains of a small mosque known as Chor Sutun that may have been constructed in the early Islamic period. This mosque had round columns and was covered by domes.¹⁰⁴⁸ A small mosque with a similar layout was found within the citadel of Hulbuk in Khuttal that is said to have been built in the ninth-tenth century.¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥawqal mentions that the city of Faryab had a grand mosque. He noticed the mosque had no minaret, while the mosque in the neighbouring “Jewish” city (*al-yahūdīyya*) in Guzgan had two.¹⁰⁵⁰ This means there were no fixed roles about the presence of the minaret in the mosque. Over time, the Muslim community increased and when al-Balkhī wrote his book in the seventh/thirteen-century, he mentioned that there were 1,848 mosques in the entire region of Bactria. Though this number is not verified, it shows that mosques were abundant in the region.¹⁰⁵¹

The above-mentioned reports show that the idea of building mosques spread to the city from the garrison. It was built for the Arab Muslim soldiers who stayed in the garrison and then in the cities after the garrisons’ populations moved to the cities. However, the exact location of these mosques is unknown. So far, no systematic archaeological excavation has been conducted within the old city of Balkh or other places in southern parts of the Amu Darya to search for early Islamic remains. Thus, the planning and structure of the mosques mentioned

¹⁰⁴⁵ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 155.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 373.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 167; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 394.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Thérèse Bittar, “La mosquée de Tchorsoutoun à Termez. Sa place dans l’architecture islamique,” in *La Bactriane au carrefour des routes et des civilisations d’Asie centrale*, ed. Pierrre Leriche, Chakir Pidaev, Mathilde Gelin, and Kazim Abdoullaev (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001), 385–397.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Pierre Siméon, “Hulbuk: Architecture and Material Culture of the Capital of the Banijurids in Central Asia (Ninth–Eleventh Centuries),” *Muqarnas* 29 (2012): 385–421; For excavations at Hulbuk, see Pierre Siméon, *Étude du matériel de Hulbuk (Mā wārā’ al-nahr-Khuttal) de la conquête islamique jusqu’au milieu du XIe siècle (90/712–441/1050). Contribution à l’étude de la céramique islamique d’Asie centrale* (Oxford: British Archaeological Report, 2009).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 370.

¹⁰⁵¹ Al-Balkhī, *Faḍā’il-i Balkh*, 37.

in those narratives are unknown. Only one mosque survived in its original shape in Balkh, which requires particular attention.

This mosque is known as Masjid-i Haji Piyāda (trekking pilgrim) among locals of Balkh. It is located 3.5 km away from the city of Balkh. It is also known as Nuh Gunbad (nine domes) because it originally had nine domes that all collapsed over time. It is likely that the mosque was first built in the early second/eighth century and then restored in the late eighth century. Its chronology, suggested commissioner, and location make it especially important for discussing the spread of Islamic infrastructure in post-conquest Bactria. However, before discussing these issues, we need a description of the mosque in its present condition.

A detailed observation shows that the mosque is about 20 x 20 m in dimension and consists of an older and a newer part. The old part is a square structure built with ramped soil (*pakhsa*) reinforced by mud bricks. It had a small round niche (*mihrāb*). Probably, the whole building was covered by a wooden roof. Wooden pillars carried the roof. There are no remains of any decorations in the old part. The new part is built within the old part. It consists of massive brick pillars and arches covered with a thick layer of decorated stuccos. The pillars were built to hold nine domes that replaced the wooden pillars and the roof.¹⁰⁵² A new decorated *mihrāb* was also added. The investigation conducted by Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) confirms this observation. They found out that the mosque was constructed in three different phases. First, a simple building was made with compacted soil, and then the decorated pillars, arches, domes and a decorated *mihrāb* were added. Subsequently, an external *mihrāb* was made on the main façade of the building.¹⁰⁵³ The external *mihrāb* could have been used in the summertime as it is common nowadays in Balkh.¹⁰⁵⁴ The pair of pillars standing against the old wall recall the Sasanian palace architecture at Ctesiphon. The pillars, arches, and walls have rich plaster decorations. Each arch is decorated by two large lotus flowers made of stucco. The remains of blue and red pigments are visible in the decoration. The interior of the mosque had been richly decorated

¹⁰⁵² The late Chahryar Adle shared this idea with me in 2007 when he showed me his excavations in the mosque. There are three mosques with similar planning in the region: Chor Sutun in Tirmidh, Digaron in Bukhara, and Hulbuk in Khuttal. All these mosques had nine domes and rich stucco decorations. Adle informed me that this type of planning developed in the region.

¹⁰⁵³ See the complete report in Philippe Marquis, Julio Bendezu Sarmiento, Thomas Lorain and Nader Rassuli, "Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad: Works Carried out by the French Archaeological Delegation," in *The Nine Domes of the Universe: The Ancinet Noh Gonbad Mosque, the Study and Conservation of an Early Islamic Monument at Balkh* (Kabul/New York/Lurano/Bergamo: Aga Khan Trust for Culture/Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA)/World Monuments Fund/Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo/Bolis Edizioni, 2016), 49–59.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Many of the mosques in Balkh have two *mihrāb* and the second one is used in the summertime.

and painted. Interestingly, the mosque had no Qur'anic verses in its decorations (Figures 23–26).

Different chronologies are suggested for this mosque.¹⁰⁵⁵ Lisa Golombek argued that this mosque was an early Abbasid structure and, thus, the extension of the Samara style.¹⁰⁵⁶ Pierre Siméon suggested that the mosque may have been constructed in the ninth/tenth century. His argument is based on a stylistic comparison between the mosque at Hulbuk in Khuttal with that of Nuh Gunbad in Balkh and Chor Sutun in Tirmidh. All these mosques had similar plans and were richly decorated.¹⁰⁵⁷ Chahryar Adle, who excavated the mosque's front part and made the C14 examination, proposed 178–179/794–795 to be the date of construction of the decorated brick pillars and the nine domes. He attributed the construction of the mosque to Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, the great-grandson of the *barmak* and the minister of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809).¹⁰⁵⁸ DAFA's investigation supports Adle's chronology. The investigation shows that the older part may have been made contemporary to the Arab Muslim settlement in Balkh, and the second part could have been constructed in the late eighth century.¹⁰⁵⁹ Likewise, Golombek now agrees with Adle's chronology saying that this monument is an Islamic monument constructed by Faḍl to show his access to the “most esteemed resources of the capital to build his reputation.”¹⁰⁶⁰

Adle's proposal for the mosque is highly significant. It shows there had been a mosque even earlier, albeit a simple one. Then, Faḍl, the great-grandson of the famous *barmak* of Balkh, who now was a Muslim minister serving a Muslim caliph, commissioned the second part to be built. Equally important, La Vaissière and Philippe Marqui showed that the mosque is located in the left corner within the enclosure of Naw Bahar. The stupas and the monasteries

¹⁰⁵⁵ Galina A. Pougatchenkova, “Les monuments peu connus de l'architecture medievale de l'Afghanistan,” *Afghanistan* XXI, no.1 (1968) 1–71; Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani, “La plus ancienne mosuqe de Balkh,” *Arts Asiatiques* XX (1969): 3–20; Siméon, “Hulbuk,” 402; Philippe Marquis, Julio Bendezu Sarmiento, Thomas Lorain and Nader Rassuli, “Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad,” 54–57.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Lisa Golombek, “Abbasid Mosque at Balkh,” *Oriental Art* 15, no. 3 (1969): 173–189.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Siméon, “Hulbuk,” 402.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Chahryar Adle, “La mosquée Haji-piyadah/noh-gunbadan à Balkh (Afghanistan), un chef d'oeuvre de Fazl le Barmacide construit en 178–179/794–795 ?” *CRAI* (2011): 566–625.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Philippe Marquis, Julio Bendezu Sarmiento, Thomas Lorain and Nader Rassuli, “Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad,” 57–58.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Lisa Golombek, “Abbasid Mosque at Balkh,” *Oriental Art* 15, no. 3 (1969): 173–189. Lisa Golombek, “Between Balkh (Noh Gonbad) and Isfahan,” in *The Nine Domes of the Universe: The Ancient Noh Gonbad Mosque, the Study and Conservation of an Early Islamic Monument at Balkh* (Kabul/New York/Lurano/Bergamo: Aga Khan Trust for Culture/Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA)/World Monuments Fund/Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo/Bolis Edizioni, 2016), 44.

were located within an enclosure with the dimensions of 1,255 x 2,220 m.¹⁰⁶¹ The chronology and the location of the mosque highlight two crucial points. The first issue is that Faḍl wanted to make a statement that though his great-grandfather the *barmak* was the custodian of Naw Bahar and protected the Buddhist community, his great-grandson promoted the Muslim community by commissioning the mosque within the enclosure of the Buddhist complex. Al-Balkhī's narrative that in 178/794, Faḍl gathered the scholars of Balkh and said to them that his great-grandfather was famous for being the keeper of Naw Bahar and that bothered him because it was associated with non-Muslim faith (*qibla-yi mughān*) support this idea. According to al-Balkhī, he wished to achieve something that could distinguish him from his great-grandfather.¹⁰⁶² By constructing the new part of the mosque with such splendid decoration, Faḍl projected a change in the *barāmika*'s tradition: moving from Buddhism to Islam.¹⁰⁶³

The second point is that the mosque has been located within the Naw Bahar's enclosure, but no evidence shows that it replaced any earlier religious monument.¹⁰⁶⁴ Instead, it is built adjacent to the main religious landmark of the region: the Naw-Bahar. This supports the idea that the Arab Muslims did not destroy local religious monuments in Bactria, but it also indicates that Muslims worshipped next to Buddhists. If the old part of the mosque was indeed built in the early eighth century, it represents the coexistence of Muslims and Buddhists in Balkh. An issue was reported by the Korean Buddhist monk Hye Ch'o, who visited the region in 725–726. He mentions that while the Arabs controlled the region, the local people and their chiefs were Buddhist.¹⁰⁶⁵ It is not clear how long the Buddhist community of Balkh continued. The

¹⁰⁶¹ For discussion on the Naw Bahar's enclosure, see La Vaissière and Marquis, "Nouvelles recherches sur le paysage monumental de Bactres," 1155–1171; Also, see Philippe Marquis, Julio Bendezu Sarmiento, Thomas Lorain and Nader Rassuli, "Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad," 57.

¹⁰⁶² Al-Balkhī does not refer to the construction of the mosque but mentions that Faḍl commissioned a canal to be made to bring water to the city. Probably, making the canal was more important for him to mention and not a small mosque that was already in ruin in his time (al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 35–36); Ibn Baṭṭūṭa says that when he visited Balkh, the mosque was already ruined (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Rahla Ibn Baṭṭūṭa Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār wa 'ajā'ib al-asfār*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Uryān and Mustafā al-Qaṣṣāṣ (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm, 1407/1987), 387.

¹⁰⁶³ According to al-Narshakhī, Faḍl built mosques in Sogdiana as well. He was the first person who funded the making of large lustres for the mosques to be sued during the month of Ramadan (al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 69).

¹⁰⁶⁴ Philippe Marquis, et al., "Haji Piada/Noh Gonbad: Works Carried out by the French Archaeological Delegation," in *The Nine Domes of the Universe*, 49–59; Julio Bendezu-Sarmiento, "Haji Piyada in Afghanistan: a new Stage of Research," in *Traces of Empires: Culture of Central Asia from Alexander the Great to the Timurids*, ed. Ruslan Muradov (Kabul, Bishkek: DAFA, 2018), 201–209.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52.

faith of the Naw Bahar complex is also not known. In any case, this great Buddhist complex was in ruin in the seventh/thirteenth century when al-Balkhī was writing his book.¹⁰⁶⁶

The Masjid-i Haji Piyāda built by Faḍl, the great-grandson of the *barmak*, shows that a profound social change happened in post-conquest Bactria. The progenies of the custodian of Naw Bahar promoted an Islamic infrastructure in Balkh. What would cause such a significant change? This brings us to the issue of individuals' conversion to Islam, a crucial element of Islamicisation that allowed the *barmak*'s descendants to reach such a high position in the Abbasid administration.

6.3.2 Individuals' conversion to Islam

Information on the conversion of local people to Islam in Umayyad Bactria is very scarce. The Arabic narratives on Umayyad Khurasan record the conversion of a few Bactrian elites. They do not speak about regular people's conversion. However, some Bactrian and Arabic documents produced in Rob during the early Abbasid period show the conversion of a regular Bactrian individual and the problem his conversion created for his family. This part will discuss these narratives and documents. Before that, we should keep some issues in mind about conversion in the East to prevent making any generalisations and overestimations.

The first issue is that the Umayyads did not have a policy of forced conversion.¹⁰⁶⁷ They did not force the local population to convert or commit violence against local religious places in Bactria.¹⁰⁶⁸ The Arab Muslims had enough power to demolish Naw Bahar or other religious places in Bactria after they suppressed the *nizak*'s uprising and stationed military

¹⁰⁶⁶ Al-Balkhī mentions that in 124/742, before Faḍl's governorship in Khurasan, some people added three iron gates (*darvāza-yi āhanīn*) to Naw Bahar. The gates were positioned one after another. One of these gates was removed, possibly by Ḥamza b. Mālīk al-Khuzā'ī the Abbasid governor in 177/793, who used it for his house. However, Naw Bahar was still impressive even after it was abandoned. The *Hudūd al-ʿālam* shows that the wall paintings and decorations of Naw Bahar were still remarkable in 372/982 (*Hudūd al-ʿālam*, 61). Eventually, the last iron gate of Naw Bahar was removed in the seventh/thirteenth century, and probably with that, the whole Buddhist complex was left to fall into ruin (al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 31–32).

¹⁰⁶⁷ Barthold also noticed that the conquerors were not interested in the spread of their religion in the East (Barthold, *Turkestan*, 183).

¹⁰⁶⁸ Al-Balādhurī's report about the Arab Muslim attack on the Buddhist monastery of Naw Bahar in 42/662 seems to have been a political act. His report shows that the elites of Balkh refused to pay tribute, which motivated the Arab Muslims to punish them by attacking Naw Bahar (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 409). Except for this event, no other report mentions Arab Muslims targeting local religious places in Bactria. The Naw Bahar was restored, and an octagonal structure was added to the complex. A similar octagonal structure with a *stūpa* within it was constructed in Siahgird, an area located to the northeast of the city (Étienne de la Vaissière et Philippe Marquis, "Nouvelles Recherches sur le Paysage Monumental de Bactres," *CRAI* 3 (2013): 1155–1171).

forces in Balkh. However, they did not do that.¹⁰⁶⁹ The non-Muslim populations kept their religious traditions but paid taxes. Their conversion would reduce the government's income.¹⁰⁷⁰ Having no governmental policy for conversion makes us think about why people still converted.¹⁰⁷¹ What would motivate elites and regular people to convert? Did conversion create stronger relations with the Muslims, or did they do so because they found Muslim rulers more inclined towards supporting converts? Or did conversion create a high symbolic value for a person and allow him to be promoted in the Umayyad political system? The second concern is how people converted. Did their previous religion allow conversion? Were there any specific rituals for conversion?

Another issue to remember is that Islam and Islamic identity were in their formative period when the Arab Muslims arrived in the eastern regions. In this period, the details of executing Islamic duties and rituals were largely still being fixed.¹⁰⁷² In addition, certain practices that were later inseparably connected to Islam were not imposed on converts at this time. The religious practices were still loose and people shared and used across religious boundaries. Therefore, it is no surprise to hear that in early eighth-century Sogdiana, converts had no idea about circumcision or how to pray in Arabic and read the Qur'an. They were paid to gather in the mosque and prayed in the Sogdian language even after they went there.¹⁰⁷³ Moreover, the switch from local religions to Islam was not absolute. In Umayyad Sogdiana, a convert could easily reconvert to his earlier religion if the Arab Muslims left his region. He would switch again to Islam if the Arab Muslims re-controlled his region. In both cases, the

¹⁰⁶⁹ As Andrew Magnusson argued when discussing post-conquest Iran, the Arab Muslims were aware of the negative consequences of desecrating religious places. He adds that the reports related to the desecration of religious places, especially the fire temples mentioned in local histories, are not "reliable indicators of Islamisation", but they "represent a sort of collective memory of the triumph of Islam over Zoroastrianism. They preserve the story of Islamisation as Iranian Muslims *chose* [my emphasis] to remember it." (Andrew Magnusson, "Zoroastrian Fire Temples and the Islamisation of Sacred Space in Early Islamic Iran," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. Andrew C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 112); It should be mentioned that Qutayba b. Muslim violent act against Sogdian religious places is a different issue beyond this dissertation's scope.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1507–58.

¹⁰⁷¹ Azad suggested that it might have been precisely the absence of force that facilitated conversion, as the Arab Muslims allowed religious freedom and the coexistence of religions in their domains (Azad, "The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan," 41). Khalil Athamina mentions that the Umayyads did not have any "well-defined policy" regarding the spread of Islam in Khurasan, and thus, the non-Muslim motivations for conversion were shaped by their own socio-political interests (Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 272). However, these scholars did not conduct any systematic study of conversion in Khurasan.

¹⁰⁷² See Webb, "Identity and Social Formation in the Early Caliphate," 129–158.

¹⁰⁷³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1507–10; Al-Narshakhī, *Tārikh-i Bukhārā*, 56–59; Whether the converts performed circumcision for their newborn sons is also not clear; For more detail on how Islam was understood in this early period in Sogdiana, see Petra Sijpesteijn and Étienne de la Vaissière, "Shifting Frontiers: Current issues in the history of early Islamic Central Asia held on December 17–18, 2010 at Leiden University," *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 7 ([2016] 2017): 207–288.

Arab Muslim authorities did not bother them.¹⁰⁷⁴ That means the longevity of Arab Muslim rule was an important factor for individuals to convert. Hence, before discussing people's conversion in Umayyad Bactria, we should remember that Islam was not a fixed tradition in this period, and the Umayyads did not have a forced conversion policy. On this notice, let us turn to our sources to see what they say about conversion in Bactria.

The Arabic reports relating to Bactria show the conversion of a few high-profile Bactrian individuals. These are the *barmak* of Naw Bahar and his grandson Khālīd, the *Sāmān-khudā*, and the chief of Namrun in the territory of the king of Gharchistan. The first two persons received a lot more attention in the sources belonging to the same family. Undoubtedly, their significant presence in the sources is due to their symbolic status as heads of the leading Buddhist institution in the region, whose conversion was at the same time politically hugely significant and symbolically very conspicuous, and because of the vital role this family would play later on in Abbasid politics. Similarly, the *Sāmān-khudā*'s grandsons served the Abbasids and their progeny established the Samanid empire.¹⁰⁷⁵ The circumstances for the conversion of each of these figures were different. Some words about each case show how and why they converted.

Conversion of the *barmak* is reported by Ibn al-Faḳīh, who preserved the reports of Azraq al-Kirmānī on the *barāmika*.¹⁰⁷⁶ According to these reports, the *barmak* was a man of dignity, and his religion was worshipping idols (*ibādat al-awthān*). However, when the Arab Muslims arrived in Balkh, he went and visited the caliph 'Uthmān, willingly converted to Islam (*aslama*), and then returned to Balkh. The news of his conversion reached the *nizak*, who disliked it. The *nizak* urged the *barmak* to return to his ancestors' religion. The *barmak*'s denial led to his death and that of most of his sons by the *nizak*. His wife could save only one son whom she took to Kashmir, her land of origin. This is the only case of a member of the Bactrian elite who paid with his life for his conversion. Why did the *barmak* convert?

Ibn al-Faḳīh claims that the *barmak* willingly converted because he found Islam superior to his religion. In other words, Islam was greater than Buddhism. He does not clarify

¹⁰⁷⁴ Al-Narshakhī mentions that the people of Bukhara used to become Muslim when the Arab Muslim forces were around, and with their departure, people returned to their old religion (al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 56). Reconversion of Sogdian converts to their pre-Islamic faith was not objected by Naṣr b. Sayyār, the last Umayyad governor of Khurasan, and even the caliph Hishām allowed it (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1718).

¹⁰⁷⁵ For the rise of the Samanids, see W. L. Treadwell, "The Political History of the Sāmānid State" PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1991).

¹⁰⁷⁶ For the importance of Azraq's narrative about the Barmakids, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Abū Ḥaṣṣ 'Umar al-Kirmānī and the rise of the Barmakids," *BSOAS* LVII (1994): 268–82.

how the *barmak* understood the superiority of Islam over Buddhism nor how he came to this conclusion. It sounds like an apologetic argument produced later because he may not know why the *barmak* converted. Considering the apparent personal risk that the *barmak* took by converting, we may consider his personal conviction as the main motive for his conversion.¹⁰⁷⁷ According to Ibn al-Faqīh, the *barmak* was a respected person and had a friendship with the rulers of Kabul and India. Apparently, he was not under political pressure to convert. If it was driven by pressure, then his son also called the *barmak* should have converted to gain the Arab support. However, his son did not follow his father in conversion. He returned from Kashmir – the Buddhist epicentre of the time – to Balkh to become chief of Naw Bahar.¹⁰⁷⁸ While keeping his faith, he supported the Umayyad and even named his son Khālīd. Once it appeared that the Umayyads could not keep stability in Khurasan anymore, Khālīd turned away and supported the Abbasids, and he and his family became a notable imperial elite family at the heart of the Abbasid court. The case of the *barmak*, his son and his grandson show that conversion varies from person to person, even within a family. The *barmak* willingly converted but lost his life, then his son groomed to be a hard-core Buddhist in Kashmir and then in Balkh, while *his* sons Khālīd (and his brothers, who all had Arabic names) grew up within increasingly encroaching Arab Muslim rule in which they saw opportunities and at the same time a diminishing influence for locals.

The conditions of the conversion of the *Sāmān-khudā*, another member of the Bactrian elite, are different from that of the *barmak*. Al-Narshakhī narrates that the *Sāmān-khudā* was a fugitive from Balkh seeking asylum with Asad al-Qasrī, the governor of Khurasan. The *Sāmān-khudā* converted (*īmān āvard*) and named his son after Asad al-Qasrī. The sons and grandsons of the *Sāmān-khudā* entered Abbasid service and played a vital role in keeping Sogdiana for the Abbasids but then turned away and formed the Samanid empire. So, just like the first *barmak*'s grandson's conversion opened up the road for his sons to play a role in Abbasid high politics, the *Samān-khudā*'s move established a line of highly influential administrators who could even found their own successful dynasty several generations later. Unlike the first *barmak*, however, who opted perhaps his own choice for conversion, *Samān-khudā* was likely

¹⁰⁷⁷ Personal motive for conversion is not strange because some people really looked at personal salvation and would move to any religion if they would have been convinced. For discussion on this issue, see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Introduction," in *Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam and Beyond, Papers from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, University of Oxford, 2009–2010*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou, Neil McLynn and Daniel L. Schwartz (Ashgate, 2015), 207–288.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibn Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-buldān*, 322–324.

unable to resist conversion as he was entirely under the influence or even at the mercy of the Arab Muslim rulers under whose protection he lived.

The case of Namrun in Gharchistan differed from that of the *barmak* and the *Sāmān-khudā*. There is only one report about it from al-Madā'inī preserved by al-Ṭabarī. According to al-Ṭabarī, in early 107/726, Asad al-Qasrī raided the mountains of Namrun in the territory of the king of Gharchistan. The people of Namrun submitted to and converted at the hands of Asad (*aslama 'alā yadihi*).¹⁰⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī ends this report by saying that those who converted now live in Yemen. This report is very short (two lines), and it is not possible to understand whether the ruler of Namrun converted or the regular people. It is also unknown how they converted and ended up in Yemen. In any case, al-Muqaddasī mentions that there was a Muslim community in fourth/tenth-century Gharchistan that followed two different *madhhab* and during Eid, the king prayed twice according to each *madhhab*.¹⁰⁸⁰ Putting these reports together, we can see the chief of Namrun acknowledging military defeat, followed by people's conversion as a sign of complete submission to the Arab Muslim commander. Over time, Islam became the religion of the king and many people of Gharchistan.

Apart from these cases, no other case of conversion is reported which means conversion was not popular among ordinary people in Bactria.¹⁰⁸¹ Equally, the Umayyads were reluctant towards it because there is no evidence showing they supported it in Bactria.¹⁰⁸² That includes

¹⁰⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta' rīkh*, 9: 1489.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 323.

¹⁰⁸¹ In contrast, the *Faḍā'il-i Balkh* depict a different image. The *Faḍā'il* wants us to believe that Balkh was empty and filled by the Muslims. It says that some Companions of the Prophet (*al-ṣaḥāba*) and their Companions (*al-tābi'īn*) speared the Islamic teachings in Balkh (al-Balkhī, *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*, 30–31); However, Muḥammad b. Ḥebbān al-Bustī (d. 354/964), who recorded names of Companions who visited Khurasan before the *Faḍā'il* does not mention any Companions who visited or lived in Balkh (Muḥammad b. Ḥebbān al-Bustī, *Kitāb Mashāhīr al-'ulamā' al-amṣār*, ed. Manfred Fleischhammer (1959; repr., Cairo: Maṭba'a Lajna, 1379/1959), 59–62). It is important to know that local histories like the *Faḍā'il* are mostly translated and edited in Persian. That decreases their reliability to be taken at face value for Islamicisation in Khurasan. These local histories attempted to make prestige for their cities by connecting them to the Prophet, his Companions or other important Biblical characters (this is Jürgen Paul's argument given in an online presentation on 02/02/202). Hence, the picture of an Islamic Balkh reflected in the *Faḍā'il* cannot be taken as evidence for conversion in Umayyad Bactria. For Islam in Balkh, see Azad, "The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan," 41–55.

¹⁰⁸² In contrast, the Umayyads encouraged conversion in Sogdiana. The reason behind it was to prevent locals from joining the Türgesh. The Türgesh Turks put enormous pressure on the Arabs. The Umayyads announced that anyone who converts will be exempted from the *jizya*. As a result, many people converted to Islam. Although this policy had a negative impact on their incomes, the Umayyad authorities hoped that conversion would lead to political support. At the same time, many people hoped that they would be released from the *jizya*. However, the local Sogdian rulers went against this strategy and tried to stop it, as increasing converts could reduce their autonomy. Therefore, they forced the Umayyads to reimpose the *jizya* on the converts, which not only led to their protests but pushed them towards the Türgesh to save them from the Umayyads (Huseini, "The Rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj," 522–23, 528–30).

most local Bactrian rulers who did not embrace Islam even in the early Abbasid period.¹⁰⁸³ Thus, even amongst high-profile political rulers and elite members who were more likely to be exposed to Arab Muslim influence and whose acts of conversion had political-military consequences, conversion rates were limited. This was more so for regular Bactrian individuals. Bactrian documents show that worshipping deities like Wakhsh, Ram-set, and Zhun continued among locals.¹⁰⁸⁴ Besides, Buddhism remained popular in the region, as reported by Hye Ch'o.¹⁰⁸⁵ Archaeological excavations show that the great Buddhist complex at Ajina Tepe in northern Bactria that flourished in the seventh century remained an important centre in the eighth century.¹⁰⁸⁶

A case of conversion for a local Bactrian well-to-do family is known from a group of Bactrian and Arabic documents produced after 750 in southern and eastern Bactria. This is the only example of its kind known from the documentary sources and requires some elaboration. It provides insights about conversion that was used to solve an old familial dispute but then dismantled a Bactrian family and divided them between the Muslim and non-Muslim authorities. The case under discussion is related to the family of Mir b. Bek.¹⁰⁸⁷ They were residents of Rob region that came under Arab Muslim control around 747 CE.¹⁰⁸⁸ As I have discussed elsewhere,¹⁰⁸⁹ there were four brothers in the family named Kamird-far, Mir, Wahran, and Bab. The brothers lived together and jointly owned the family properties. Bactrian tradition required brothers to live together (*βραδο αλο βραδο αβδδινιδο*) and manage the household properties. Mir, Wahran, and Kamird-far possessed a free woman named Zeran together. However, the brothers disputed joint ownership and complained against each other.

¹⁰⁸³ Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 17.

¹⁰⁸⁴ The name of Wakhsh (*oaxho*), the god of the Amu Darya River, is mentioned in the opening of legal documents, e.g., Bactrian documents no. O, R, S, Ss, Tt, Uu, V, U in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83, 92–93, 94–95, 96–97, 104–105, 112–15, 116–125, and see Bactrian document no. ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 138–39. Wakhsh is called the “king of gods” (*βαγανο βανο*) in Bactrian documents no. O and Tt in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 80–83, 104–105. Apart from them, Ram-set is mentioned in documents produced in 660 CE and in 671 CE, at Marogan market in Samingan (Bactrian documents no. P and Q in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91). To worship the images of these deities, Bactrians built temples called *baglan* and *nishalm* to worship them (Bactrian documents no. P, Q, Tt, V, W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 84–87, 88–91, 112–15, 116–125, 126–135).

¹⁰⁸⁵ *The Hye Ch'o Diary*, 52.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Litvinsky and Zejmal, *The Buddhist Monastery of Ajina Tepa*, 181–84.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Several scholars have discussed this family. See François de Blois, “Du nouveau sur la chronologie bactrienne post-hellénistique: l'ère de 223–224 ap. J. –C.,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 150e année, n. 2 (2006): 991–997; Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 20–22; Nicholas Schindel, “The era of the Bactrian Documents: A reassessment,” *Gandhāran Studies* 5 (2011): 1–10; Nicholas Sims-Williams and François de Blois, *Studies in the Chronology of the Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, 33–39; Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 400–405; Azad, “Living happily ever after,” 33–56.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Bactrian document no. W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 126–135.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Huseini, “Between the Arabs and the Turks,” forthcoming.

Nevertheless, they realised that their quarrel would eventually destroy their household, and thus, they visited the court of the Turkic ruler of Kadagstan and made a contract that obliged them to live together and manage the family property together. They agreed that if any one of them broke the contract, then that person would be guilty and should “go from the house without a share of the property” (*ασο χανο αβηιοβαγο βοαδο*) and pay fines to the government and other brothers.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Nonetheless, their agreement did not last.

Although they signed a resolution, the brothers continued their dispute. Apparently, Kamird-far disagreed with his brothers over their joint ownership of Zeran. Kamird-far, who fathered four children with Zeran, apparently wanted to end joint ownership with his brothers over the women.¹⁰⁹¹ However, Bactrian law did not allow this and he could not one-sidedly and single-handedly act against the Bactrian law. Conversion to Islam and his association with a Muslim *mawlā* offered a solution. He converted, took the Arabic name of Sa‘īd, which means “fortunate” and echoed a similar meaning to his Bactrian name Kamird-far “whose fortune is (from the god) Kamird.”¹⁰⁹² He also associated himself as a client (*mawlā*) to an Arab Muslim lord named Ghālib b. Nāfi‘ in 138/755. The socio-political position of Ghālib is unknown, but he was able to issue a legal letter of emancipation (*‘itq*) for Zeran. Conversion to Islam and association with Ghālib helped legal support to deal with the Bactrian law. Ghālib’s letter of emancipation for Zeran and her children provided the solution, and we can imagine that Sa‘īd had asked him for it. The conversion brought them to the fold of the Muslim community, where Islamic law did not allow Bactrian customs of brothers possessing a woman.

Kamird-far’s conversion was not limited to removing Zeran and her children from the household properties. It had a far more destructive impact on the household. It led to the division of family properties between the brothers. That was against the Bactrian law of joint ownership. Seeing this situation, Bab, another brother, left the household and later received his share of properties. This put Mir in a difficult situation. He is now faced with some people who dispute his right to his properties. Some other people who had disputes with Bab now put pressure on Mir. Being helpless, he decided to appeal to Kera-tonga, the Turkic ruler of Kadagstan. He travelled from Rob to Kadagstan, visited the king’s court, presented his petition, and received a protection letter for himself, his family, and his properties.¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁹⁰ Bactrian document no. X in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 136–141.

¹⁰⁹¹ All four children had Arabic names (Arabic document no. 29 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 152–153).

¹⁰⁹² Sims-Williams and de Blois, *Studies in the Chronology*, 37–39.

¹⁰⁹³ Bactrian document no. Y in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 142–143; Also, see Huseini, “Acts of Protection Represented in Bactrian Documents,” 107–24.

Kamird-far's conversion threatened the foundation of Bactrian social-economic life, namely the household. Bactrian law and tradition sanctioned cohabitation and joint ownership of household properties. Conversion to Islam made it impossible to uphold these customs, forcing the division of properties among male siblings and destroying the foundations of the household. As with the cases of high-profile individuals from Bactrian political life deciding to convert to Islam for possible ulterior motives beyond personal conviction presented above, Kamird-far's motives to convert to Islam seem to have been inspired by self-interest that extended beyond personal religious conviction. Conversion to Islam served a short-term interest in his personal situation, namely taking possession of Zeran and her children, manumitting and marrying her as a free woman.

The case of the Mir family also shows that the pattern of Arab Muslims entering local conflicts at the request of one of the parties occurred at the highest political level (local rulers) to the most modest level of the household. The dispute within this family over household properties created quarrels among these four brothers, dividing them with resulting invasive economic, social, and political consequences. Kamird-far found support with the Muslims motivating his conversion to Islam. Mir on the other hand, turned towards the Turkic authorities for help.

The Arab Muslims operated not only at the highest political level as yet another player in local power games but also at the lowest level of the family unit. As with the military-political support offered by Arab Muslim commanders to local rulers, the Arab-Muslim support on the level of this family in exchange for conversion had far-reaching effects. The conversion of Kamird-far solved his problem but dismantled a Bactrian household. It associated Kamird-far with Muslim authority and the Muslim community. In this sense, it is another example of how an individual's interests for political, economic or personal gain led to long-term and profound social changes in the region under the Arab Muslim rule.

The cases discussed so far show that circumstances and motivations for conversion varied from one person to another. While the *barmak* was personally interested in Islam, the *Sāmān-khudā* needed protection and help. The chief and people of Namrun converted as a sign of total submission to Arab military power, and Kamird-far found conversion as an effective solution to deal with the Bactrian law of cohabitation and joint ownership. Ghālib's letter of emancipation issued in Arabic reflects that the Islamic legal regulations were expanded to the areas controlled by the Umayyads. The following section will briefly discuss this issue.

6.3.3 Influence of Islamic legal regulations

The Arab Muslims settlements and coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslim populations under Muslim rule led to the spread of Islamic legal regulations in the areas they controlled. The Arabic documents from the early Abbasid Rob show that Muslims issued legal documents for the local people of Rob. Altogether, eight legal documents have been preserved, they are issued in Arabic, witnessed by Muslim and non-Muslim men who left their fingernail impressions on small clay sealings attached to the documents. Two of them are emancipation letter (*ʿitq*),¹⁰⁹⁴ two others are manumission documents (*mukātaba*),¹⁰⁹⁵ three documents are related to the dowry of a certain woman named Ḥamrā,¹⁰⁹⁶ and the last one is related to a quarrel.¹⁰⁹⁷ The documents show that Arab Muslims freely applied their own established legal instruments. The emancipation and the manumission documents stand for particular importance. Just like the Bactrian laws, the Islamic laws allowed slavery, but they had more to offer the slaves. This section explains this issue.

Let us begin with the manumission documents. They are related to the manumission of a certain Qiyā, a weaver (*al-ḥāʾik*), who worked for Būya b. Muḥammad. Būya is an Iranian name, but it is not seen in any Bactrian document. Likewise, Qiyā is not a Bactrian name, but it could be a Turkish name.¹⁰⁹⁸ The background of these two persons and how they ended up in Rob is unknown. The first document was produced in 146/763. It records the agreement between Qiyā and Būya. The former should pay the latter thirty dirhams in advance and one hundred dirhams in a year's time. If he fails to pay his price, he will be made to remain in slavery (*fahuwa abqā fī al-rraq*), and whatever he paid should be accepted as his dues to his owner. The document was witnessed by thirteen men whose names are mentioned. Four other men, including Qiyā, sealed it. The clay sealing has the fingernail impression of the witnesses, which is adopted from the Bactrian tradition.¹⁰⁹⁹ The second document is written in 148/765–

¹⁰⁹⁴ Arabic documents no. 29 and 30 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 152–54, 155–57.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Arabic documents no. 31 and 32 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 158–165.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Arabic documents no. 26, 27, 28 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 145–151.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Arabic documents no. 25 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 141–43.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 150; The famous Būyid dynasty taken its name from a fisherman called Būya.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Arabic documents no. 31 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 158–161; Validation of a legal document by thumbnail impression on clay sealing was known in Bactria. It is attested in a legal Bactrian document dating to 712 from Rob and in a document dating to 726 from Khash, an area between Bamiyan and Kabul (Bactrian document no. Vv in Nicholas Sims-Williams and Étienne de la Vaissière, “A Bactrian Document from Southern Afghanistan?” *Bulletin of Asia Institute* 25 (2011): 39–53; Bactrian document no. U in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 106–111). This tradition found its way to Arabic legal documents. Khan observed that the use of the star image travelled from Bactria to the western parts of the Islamic empire, such as Egypt (Geoffrey Khan, “Newly Document Discovered from Early Abbasid Khurasan,” in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra Sijpesteijn et al., (Leiden; Brill, 2007), 206–7. Also, Petra Sijpesteijn has argued that the personal participation of witnesses, them leaving a personal touch on the document can be traced to this practice of the

66. It explains that Qiyā had paid 116 dirhams to Būya, and thus, he is released from the obligation of his contract (*bari`a Qiyā al-ḥā`ik `an mukātibatihi*).¹¹⁰⁰ Twenty-one witnesses witnessed the second document. The exact number of fingernail impressions can be seen on the sealings attached to the document. Hence, these two documents show that Qiyā decided to purchase his freedom. However, he did not have money to pay the total price. Therefore, he made the first contract. Later, he paid what he had promised earlier and completed his obligation. Finally, his owner issued this document and declared Qiyā's freedom.

The case of Qiyā shows some similarities and differences to the Bactrian practice of slavery.¹¹⁰¹ Bactrian laws allowed a slave to purchase his freedom only if he paid the full price to his owner. He was obliged by the law to pay his full price and receive his manumission document from the court. In contrast, as the case of Qiyā shows, Islamic law obliged Qiyā by God's bound (*`ahd Allāh wa-dhimmatuhū*) to keep his word and fulfil his obligation. He also could pay his price in several instalments over time. Equally important, the slave and the owner sealed the same document, a tradition unknown in Bactrian documents.

The two emancipation letters also reflect important changes in Bactria. Both letters are issued by Muslims for two women and their children. They are freed for the sake of God (*li wajh-i-allāh*) that was unknown in Bactrian laws. In Bactrian tradition, slaves were treated as personal property and their owners could set them free only if they paid their full prices or performed good service. The emancipation documents indicate that while Islam allowed slavery, it introduced some regulations opposite the Bactrian laws.

The above-mentioned documents (including three documents related to Ḥamrā) show a different administrative practice. In Bactrian tradition, the local ruler's court was considered the court of law. People visited local authorities, presented petitions, and accepted fair judgment.¹¹⁰² Administrative authorities issued legal documents in the court of law. Most of the legal documents were made in the form of double contracts, and their records were kept in

fingernails (Petra Sijpesteijn, "Seals and Papyri from Early Islamic Egypt," in *Seals and Sealing Practice in the Near East. Developments in Administration and Magic from Prehistory to the Islamic Period*, ed. Ilona Regulski, Kim Duistermaat, and Peter Verkinderen (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 171–182.

¹¹⁰⁰ Arabic document no. 32 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 162–65.

¹¹⁰¹ For slavery in Bactrian society, see Said Reza Huseini, "Slavery Represented in Bactrian Documents," in *Textual Sources and Geographies of Slavery in the Early-Islamic Empire, ca. 600-1000 CE*, ed. Jelle Bruning and Said Reza Huseini, Special Issue, *Journal of Slavery & Abolition* 44, no. 4 (2023): 682–696; The Arab Muslims practised slavery in Khurasan as well. For instance, the city of Balkh had a slave market in 116–118/734–736, and Asad al-Qasrī sold Muslim and non-Muslim women and children of al-Ḥārith's supporters there (Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 283).

¹¹⁰² Huseini, "Acts of Protection Represented in Bactrian Documents," 107–24.

the government archive. The documents have details about the identity of the attending parties, the subject of dispute, agreements, guarantee statements, and fines that one should pay in case of breaking the contract.¹¹⁰³ In contrast, the Arabic documents are short and without any details. From their contents, we can infer that they may not have been made in the court of law before a judge but were written by individuals who knew Arabic, Islamic legal regulations, and the legal phraseology for writing the document. In this situation, some local people turned to Muslims to regulate their interactions and someone like Mir b. Bek preferred to visit the court of the Turkic king to solve his problem.¹¹⁰⁴ The presence of Bactrian and Islamic systems side by side shows that the Arab Muslims and their institutions, their language, and their documents operated as one of many parties in the region to solve issues. They also reflect a significant interaction and cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants of Bactria. Such interaction and shared practice lead to increasing Islamicisation as practices introduced by the Arab Muslims spread further through exposure and example. Actual conversion of individual Bactrians remained as we saw, however, limited. This leads us to Muslim taxation.

6.3.4 Expansion of Umayyad fiscal system in Bactria

Taxation is evident in the expression of Islamic rule in Bactria. Detailed information on the expansion of Umayyad fiscal administration in Bactria is not reflected in Arabic or Persian narratives. Modern scholarship on taxation in Umayyad Khurasan offers some generalised views and often refers to the fiscal reforms undertaken by the governors of Khurasan Ashras al-Sulamī and Naṣr b. Sayyār.¹¹⁰⁵ The first fiscal reform was initiated by Ashras in 110/728 in Sogdiana when the Umayyads faced the attacks of the Türgesh Turks. They hoped to increase local support among Sogdians by reorganising the taxation policies. However, the reforms failed, and the Sogdian converts who were forced to pay the *jizya* revolted. Naṣr enforced the second fiscal reform in 121/738 in the Marw region.¹¹⁰⁶ The modern scholarship relating to these reforms does not discuss taxation in Bactria separately. Instead, they give an incomplete

¹¹⁰³ See Sheikh, *Studies of Bactrian Legal Documents*, 7–10.

¹¹⁰⁴ Khan has suggested that Bactrian local rulers retained their jurisdictional authority (Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 19). His proposal can be supported by the Bactrian protection document issued by the Turkic ruler for Mir b. Bek.

¹¹⁰⁵ Gibb, *The Arab Conquests*, 69–70; Barthold, *Turkestan*, 190; Wellhausen, *The Arab-Kingdom*, 456–458, 476–482; Dennett, *Conversion and Poll Tax*, 106–113; Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 109–111, 129–130; 'Abdal 'Aziz Duri, "Notes on Taxation in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 2 (1974): 136–144; Athamina examined all earlier studies on taxation in Khurasan (Athamina, "Taxation reforms in early Islamic Khurasan," 272–281); Sayed Maḥmūd Samānī, "Dastgāh-i māli Umaviyān bā takya bar qalamrau-i sharqi Khilāfat," *Tārīkh dar Ā'īna-yi Pazhūhish* 6 (1384/2005): 113–134; Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 131.

¹¹⁰⁶ Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 281.

picture of Khurasan and use it as an umbrella term for the entire region, including Bactria and Sogdiana up to Khwarazm. However, these regions were not under one single political rule, nor did they have one single taxation system. Nevertheless, these studies serve as a foundation for further investigations on taxation in the eastern regions of the Umayyad empire.¹¹⁰⁷ This section builds on these studies and takes a step further to discuss taxation in Bactria. It includes Bactrian and Arabic documents in the discussion.

To begin with the Umayyad taxation in Bactria, we must remember that the fiscal reform conducted by Ashras and Naṣr led to a new taxation policy in Umayyad Khurasan.¹¹⁰⁸ Before the reforms, the Arab Muslims imposed tributes on local rulers, who then raised this money through their own administrative system according to the models that had been in place in the region. The Arab Muslims did not interfere in the collection process. The confusion began after local people converted and Arab Muslims settled in the villages. In Sogdiana, the converts were forced to pay the *jizya*, which was against the Islamic laws. Even some Arab Muslims argued that the governor of Khurasan left them to the local rulers.¹¹⁰⁹ All these people

¹¹⁰⁷ These studies often highlight the Sasanian taxation system in Iraq. See, for instance, Michele Campopiano, "Land Tenure, Land Tax and Social Conflictuality in Iraq from the Late Sasanian to the Early Islamic Period (Fifth to Ninth Centuries CE)," in *Authority and Control in the Countryside From Antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th–10th Century)*, ed. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre, and Petra Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 464–499; Dennett maintains that the *kharāj* and the *jizya* were collected from these regions. The Arab Muslims followed the same tradition in Iraq and collected taxes from locals but let the Khurasani local chiefs collect taxes and pay tributes to the Arab Muslims. He also assumed that Khurasan and Sogdiana had identical taxation systems. He does not reveal his sources for such a proposal. Nevertheless, he highlights two kinds of taxes paid by people: the *kharāj* and the *jizya* (Dennett, "Conversion and Poll Tax," 106); Shaban rejected Dennett's suggestion on a similarity of taxation in Khurasan and Sogdiana. He argued that the *jizya* was collected within the Sasanian territory, and Sogdiana was not part of it. Instead, the land tax and merchandise tax were collected in Sogdiana (Shaban, *The 'Abbāsid Revolution*, 111–112). The same issue is discussed by Athamina as well (Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 274). 'Abdal 'Aziz Duri agrees with Dennett on the two kinds of taxes collected in Sasanian Khurasan. However, he argues that the tributes paid to the Arab Muslims did not include the land tax. The *jizya* was individual payment, and the *kharāj* was the total sum of tribute taken from the region (Duri, "Notes on Taxation in Early Islam," 142–143). Van Vloten suggested that only one kind of tax was paid in cash in Khurasan (mentioned in Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 274). Like Shaban, Athamina disagrees with Dennett's suggestion on the similarity of taxation in Khurasan and Sogdiana. Still, he maintains that the bases of taxation in Khurasan were land and human. He agrees with Wellhausen's idea on the difference between the *kharāj* and the *jizya*. Athamina adds that the tribute collected from Sogdiana was called the *jizya*. The land tax was not imposed in Sogdiana, and the governors of Khurasan had the authority to negotiate the amount of the *jizya* (Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 275–277).

¹¹⁰⁸ The *kharāj* and the *jizya* were not separate taxes in the eyes of the Arab Muslim governors in Khurasan. Duri attributes the distinction between these taxes to the caliph 'Umar II. He mentions that the governors of Khurasan did not follow the caliph's view (Duri, "Notes on Taxation in Early Islam," 144). Athamina rejected this proposal. He argues that the distinction between the *kharāj* as land tax and the *jizya* as poll tax appeared only around 121/738 after Naṣr b. Sayyār's fiscal reform. In this reform, Muslim landowners were asked to pay the *ushr*, one-tenth of their yield, and those who converted to Islam were exempted from paying the *jizya* but paid their land tax. Non-Muslim chiefs were asked to pay the annual tributes based on the peace treaties they had. The tribute came from the land tax and the poll tax. Naṣr abolished all additional payments to the amount of money promised by the local chiefs to pay (Athamina, "Taxation reforms," 279–281).

¹¹⁰⁹ See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9: 1420–21.

had to pay taxes but there was no precise mechanism to distinguish between them. Hence, the new system differentiated between the land tax (*kharāj*) and the poll tax (*jizya*). Muslim and non-Muslim landowners paid different amounts of the *kharāj*, and non-Muslims also paid the *jizya*. Those who converted to Islam were exempted from paying the *jizya* but paid their land-tax. The additional payments taken from the local rulers earlier were also abolished. They paid tributes according to the agreements allegedly made between them and the Arab Muslim authorities in the past. The local chiefs either had the original documents or their records.¹¹¹⁰ Was Bactria part of this reform? Did people pay the *kharāj* and the *jizya*? The answer is positive.

The new policy was enforced in Bactria as well. The evidence comes from a Bactrian land sale contract produced in 525 of the Bactrian calendar corresponding to 747 CE, in Gandar, Rob region. That is to say, nine years after Naṣr's fiscal reforms. It is related to two kinds of taxes the Arab Muslims imposed on local households. According to the documents, a family had to sell their land because they had to pay their poll tax (*γαζιτο*) and land tax (*βαριτο*) imposed by the Arabs (*ταξιναγγο*).¹¹¹¹ They sold the land for 60 Umayyad silver dirhams to be able to pay their taxes. This document has several layers of information that should be unveiled to understand the whole process.

The first issue is that the taxes are imposed not on individuals but on households. This was following the Bactrian taxation policy that taxes levied on household (*καδγο*). This means the Umayyads continued the Bactrian tradition, at least in the Rob region, because we do not have information about other areas. The second issue is that this family had to sell their land to be able to pay their taxes and other debts they had. They received Umayyad silver dirham and most likely paid their taxes from that money. That means the Umayyad coins were minted and widely circulated in Bactria. However, selling land to pay taxes was not new. People also sold their ancestral land to pay taxes during the Hephthalite and Turkic domination.¹¹¹²

Another issue to consider is the terminology used in this document. This land sale document does not use the old Bactrian terms for taxes, namely *tog* (*τογο*) or poll tax and *harg* (*vapγο*) or land tax.¹¹¹³ Instead, it uses the terms *gazit* and *barit* in the same formulary fashion to refer to *tog* and *harg* collected for the Turks. For instance, a land sale document produced

¹¹¹⁰ This supports al-Ya'qūbī's report about the descendants of the *kanārang* of Tus and Māhūy of Marw, who had old agreements signed with Arabs Muslims. See chapter three, 3.2.1, 3.2.2.

¹¹¹¹ Bactrian document no. W in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 126–127.

¹¹¹² Bactrian documents no. I, J, Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 44–47, 48–55, 74–79.

¹¹¹³ For etymology of the *harg*, see Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 272.

in 436 of the Bactrian calendar equal to 569 CE, from Guzgan, refers to *qaghān*'s tax and the lord's dues (*χαλαναγγο τωγο οδο χοηοαγγο ναργο*).¹¹¹⁴ The land sale document from Rob uses the same formula but just replaces *tog* and *harg* with *gazit* and *barit* (*ταζιναγγο γαζιτο οδο βαριτο*). In both cases, the sellers declared they had nothing else to give for taxes and thus had to sell their lands. It is uncertain, but the *gazit* could have been based on the Arabic *jizya* or poll tax.¹¹¹⁵ The *barit* seems to have been the Bactrian equivalent for the Arabic *barā'a* "acquittance".¹¹¹⁶ Possibly, these two terms entered the Bactrian land sale document after people heard that the Arabs imposed poll tax and land tax and issued the receipt called *barā'a*. Moreover, all Arabic receipts related to the land tax from Rob use the term *barā'a* for the land tax. Hence, our land sale document indicates that despite the expansion of the taxation reforms to Rob, the Umayyad authorities enforced it within the Bactrian tradition of charging taxes on households. It is likely that they issued Arabic receipts for families who paid their taxes.

The Bactrian document relating to Arab Muslim taxation reveals a meaningful political change. It mentions that the land sellers were servants of the *khar* of Rob. That means the political authority of the *khar* must have been significantly decreased; otherwise, the Arab Muslims could not have directly imposed taxes on families who served the king of Rob (or lived under his political jurisdiction). It also confirms that non-Muslim landowners paid both land tax and poll tax to Arab Muslim authorities. Whether other parts of Bactria paid the land tax and poll tax to Arab Muslims is not known. Nevertheless, if Rob paid these taxes, western and northern Bactria, which came under Umayyad authority earlier, should probably have paid them too.

The Arabic documents produced between 147–158/764–774 in the Rob region provide detailed information on taxation. Although they confirm that the collection of the *kharāj* from the landowner continued into the Abbasid period, they do not hint at the collection of the *jizya*. Probably, the receipts for the *jizya* were issued separately. So far, no Arabic receipt for the *jizya* has ever been found from Bactria. The Arabic documents relating to the *kharāj* show the discontinuation of taxing households in Bactria.¹¹¹⁷ Unlike the land sale contract from Rob that shows that the Arab Muslims imposed taxes on a household, the Arabic documents are issued

¹¹¹⁴ Bactrian documents no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *DBI*, 74–79.

¹¹¹⁵ Thomas Benfey has informed me that the Middle Persian *gazīdag* is mentioned in document no. Berk.67 (667–8CE) from Qum. He argued that the Middle Persian *gazīdag* as poll tax was developed in the early Islamic period (Thomas Benfey, "Land Taxes in Middle Persian Documents from Early Islamic Iraq," Paper presented at Conference "A Hard Row to Hoe," Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 13 December 2022).

¹¹¹⁶ Cited in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 185.

¹¹¹⁷ Azad also reached the same conclusion (Azad, "Living happily ever after," 46–47).

in the name of individuals who had farming land. Many of these Arabic receipts are issued for different members of the same family. The taxation system reflected in the Arabic documents has already been studied in detail by Geoffrey Khan.¹¹¹⁸ Here, I will only provide a summary of the issues related to taxation as highlighted by the documents as an element of social change in post-conquest Bactria.

Altogether, twenty-four tax quittances (sing., *barā'a*) issued by Muslim authorities between 147–158/764–774 in Rob are extant. They are issued for Mīr b. Bek al-Bāmiyānī (Mīr of the Bactrian documents) his brother Bāb and Mīr's son Qārwāl. A certain Miham is also mentioned, but his relation to Mīr's family is unknown. These individuals regularly paid their land tax to the Muslim authorities in Rob. The first significant issue represented in these Arabic documents is the Arab Muslim fiscal administration. The region was divided into several fiscal administrative units called the *kūra* "consisting of a collection of towns and villages."¹¹¹⁹ The *amīr* resided in the main town, and his administrators (sing., *'āmil*) served in different areas within the *kūra*. The administrators received taxes and issued receipts for taxpayers. The financial administration was not a complex system, and the administrators often changed with the governor's change.¹¹²⁰

Probably, payment of taxes was based on the measurement of land (*misāḥa*). A document dating to 154/771 mentions that three people measured land in Gandar in Rob. Cultivated land (*arḍ*) and uncultivated orchards (*al-kurūm al-ghāmira*) were measured.¹¹²¹ Once the harvest was collected, the landowner was obliged to pay his taxes. Anyone who had more considerable land had to pay more taxes. Taxes were received in cash, which creates the impression that the landowners had to sell their yields in the market to provide cash. However, payment of taxes was not regular, and sometimes, people paid their taxes in several instalments.¹¹²² Two kinds of taxes are mentioned: the land tax (*kharāj*) and the supplementary tax (*qism*). The *kharāj* is often followed by the word *sana* "year", and the *qism* is followed by *shahr* "month".¹¹²³ This creates an impression that the *qism* was assessed monthly. The amount mentioned for the *kharāj* is always more than the *qism*. Two documents dating to 148/765 and 158/774 explain that the *qism* was spent for the governor's and his administration's expenses.

¹¹¹⁸ Khan, "Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan," 6–53.

¹¹¹⁹ Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 22.

¹¹²⁰ Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 25.

¹¹²¹ Arabic document no. 24 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 138–39.

¹¹²² Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 33.

¹¹²³ Arabic documents no. 3, 6, 8, 13, 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 96–97, 102–103, 106–107, 116–117, 120–121, 124–125, 126–127, 132–133, 134–35, 136–137.

The *qism* was also spent “for pack animals used for corvée duty, to the portion for the expense of the substance of al-Mahdi”,¹¹²⁴ and for the “expenses of the *amīr*, captives and slaves who join al-Mahdi.”¹¹²⁵

The Arabic tax receipts bear dates that may create confusion. The dates mentioned at the end of the receipts differ from the years related to the taxes. For instance, the receipt issued for Mīr in Dhul Qa‘da of the year 147 mentions that he paid ten dirhams *khāraj* for the year 146.¹¹²⁶ Similarly, the document issued for Mīr in Dhul Ḥijja of the year 148 mentions that he paid ten dirhams *khāraj* for the year 147.¹¹²⁷ One may think the Muslim authorities were oppressive and taxed Mīr several times in one year. However, the reality is different. The tax receipts are based on the Islamic calendar (*hijri*), which is a lunar-based calendar. Bactrian taxpayers had solar-based calendars that were appropriate for agricultural activities.¹¹²⁸ Khan has argued that the officials who assessed the land tax based their assessment on the solar calendar but recorded the payment in the *hijri* calendar.¹¹²⁹ This shows that the Arab Muslims who brought their lunar calendar to Bactria did not simply leave it for the Bactrian calendar even after they mixed with the local population.¹¹³⁰ Change in the taxation system from household to individual, issuing Arabic documents with *hijri* dates for the local Bactrian taxpayers depicts the conquests’ gradual social impact.

The taxation system discussed so far informs us that the Arab Muslim rule expanded to southern Bactria. While they left the local structure in place, they imposed new rules like taxing individuals instead of households, issuing Arabic documents and introducing a new calendar. All this indicates the continuity and change that happened from the beginning of the conquest to the end of the Umayyad period.

6.3.5 Bactria and Arabicisation and Islamicisation discourse

The social and political changes discussed so far recall ‘Arabicisation’ and ‘Islamicisation’ that are widely used in modern scholarship to explain the spread of the Arabic language and Islamic

¹¹²⁴ Arabic documents no. 3 and 6 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 96–97, 102–103.

¹¹²⁵ Arabic document no. 21 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 132–33.

¹¹²⁶ Arabic document no. 2 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 94–95.

¹¹²⁷ Arabic document no. 4 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 98–99.

¹¹²⁸ Sims-Williams and François de Blois, *Studies in the Chronology*, 21–29, 109–114.

¹¹²⁹ Khan, “Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan,” 15.

¹¹³⁰ Lionel Casson has shown that the same phenomenon of a discrepancy of two years between the year of the taxes and the year in which the taxes are paid happened in Egypt (Lionel Casson, “Tax-Collection Problem in Early Arab Egypt,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 69 (1938): 274–91).

ideology by the conquerors in the conquered regions.¹¹³¹ These terminologies are derived from the terms ‘Arab’ and ‘Islam’. It is said that the conquests were carried out by the Arabs who believed in Islam, and thus, they spread the Arabic language and Islamic ideology among the conquered people. However, this simplifies a highly complex issue, just like the conquest itself, which has been simplified and idealised for a long time.¹¹³² Like Arab and Islam, there is no single definition for Arabicisation and Islamicisation.¹¹³³

Generally, Arabicisation is said to have been related to the spread of the Arabic language, and Islamicisation is taken for the spread of Islam, and in many cases, they are viewed as an interrelated process occurring simultaneously.¹¹³⁴ In other words, adopting the

¹¹³¹ There is a rich scholarship about social and political changes as a result of the conquests in different regions. For instance, changes in administration and social and economic mobility have been discussed by various scholars. See, for example, Cecilia Palombo, “The View from the Monasteries: Taxes, Muslims and Converts in the ‘Pseudepigrapha’ from Middle Egypt,” *Medieval Encounters* 25/4 (2019): 297–344; Luke Yarbrough, *Friends of the Emir: Non-Muslim State Officials in Premodern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Marie Legendre, “Islamic conquest, territorial reorganization and empire formation: A study of 7th Century movements of population in the light of Egyptian papyri,” in *The Long Seventh Century: Continuity and Discontinuity in an Age of Transition*, ed. A. Gnasso, E. Intagliata, T. MacMaster, & B. Morris (Peter Lang, 2015), 235–250. Marie Legendre, “Aspects of Umayyad Administration,” in *The Umayyad World*, ed. Andrew Marsham (Routledge, 2020), 133–157; Eugenio Garosi, *Projecting a New Empire: Forms, Social Meaning, and Mediality of Imperial Arabic in the Umayyad and Early Abbasid Periods* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Federico Morelli, *Documenti del primo periodo arabo dall’archivio di Senouthios “anystes” e testi connessi*. Corpus Papyrorum Raineri 36 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022). Further detail on changes after the conquests in Egypt can be found in Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*. As we can see, most of the existing literature is about Egypt, which had more documentary and literary sources. Other regions are less studied compared to Egypt. See, for instance, Jack Tannous, “Arabic as a Christian Language and Arabic as the Language of Christians,” in *Medieval Encounters: Arabic-Speaking Christians and Islam*, ed. A. S. Ibrahim (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022), 1–93; Corisande Fenwick, *Early Islamic North-Africa: A New Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam*. The scholarship about the social and political changes in Khurasan is even less compared to Iraq and North Africa. For instance, see Étienne de la Vaissière, ed., *Islamisation de L’Asie Centrale* (Paris: Association Pour L’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2008); Deborah Tor, “Islamization of Central Asia in the Sāmānid era and the reshaping of the Muslim world,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 72, no. 2 (2009): 279–299; Azad, “The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan,” 41–55; Luce, “Frontier Process,” 112–253, Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 99–169.

¹¹³² The very terms ‘Arab’ and ‘Islam’ are intensively debated, and there are different interpretations of these terms and whether the people who carried out the conquests should be called Arab or Muslim. Similarly, should we call the conquests an ‘Arab conquest’ or ‘Islamic conquest’? The discussion on the identity of the conquerors gets further complicated if we consider that the people who achieved the conquests were not all Arabic-speaking people, did not identify themselves as ‘Arab’, and many of them were not followers of Islam. The Arab identity and Islamic ideology were not fixed but developed during and after the conquests in different temporal and spatial circumstances. This summary is based on the work of some scholars of Islamic studies, namely, Wellhausen, Kennedy, Donner, Hoyland, Crone, Cook, Webb, and van Bladel. We have learned from the previous chapters that the Arab Muslims who entered Bactria in 32/652 included a group of former Sasanian cavalry. Qutayba formed his conquest army out of many different groups, including troops from Iraq, Syria, Inner Khurasan, Bactria and Khwarazm. Al-Hārith army had fighters from Bactria, Sogdiana and different Arab tribes. Asad al-Qasrī had Iraqi, Syrian, and Bactrian forces under his command. Not all these people spoke Arabic, and not all of them were Muslim.

¹¹³³ A quick search about these terms shows that there is even no consensus on whether to call it Arabicisation or Arabisation, Islamicisation or Islamisation.

¹¹³⁴ G. H. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, 661–750*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 9; Van Bladel suggests that Islamicisation followed Arabicisation for the war captives who became Muslim because of its benefits (Van Bladel, “Arabising,” 16).

Arabic language automatically led to conversion and conversion facilitated Arabicisation. However, this is not accurate. Learning Arabic does not necessarily require a person to convert or lose his mother language and cultural tradition. Conversion to Islam (though it requires some Arabic for daily prayers and reading the Qur'an) does not make a person an Arab. Thus, Arabicisation and Islamicisation should not be viewed as one single phenomenon but as separate things occurring differently in various regions.¹¹³⁵ A brief explanation of these phenomena helps to see if the socio-political changes in Bactria explained in this chapter respond to the discussion on Arabicisation and Islamicisation.

Arabicisation is a process in which non-Arabic-speaking people adopt Arabic for communication. As van Bladel argued, the process begins by the “adoption of Arabic language as the medium of communication in public space and increasingly even in the homes of population not originally Arabic-speaking, and the concomitant abandonment of languages hitherto used in these domains.”¹¹³⁶ Though this definition considers linguistic elements only, it must be mentioned that choosing Arabic names, terminologies and practices associated with the Arabs was part of this process as well.¹¹³⁷ To van Bladel, the process of Arabicisation was directly linked to the Arab Muslim settlement pattern in the conquered regions and “regional variation in settlement pattern is probably the primary and original factor in the different rate of Arabicisation.”¹¹³⁸ In other words, Arabicisation happened faster anywhere the Arab Muslim people settled throughout the country alongside locals. Because of intensive contact, local people adopted Arabic quickly. In contrast, Arabicisation happened slower when Arab Muslims lived separately from the locals.

Van Bladel's explanation is helpful, but it has some limits. The adoption of the Arabic language for communication in public domains like offices cannot be called Arabicisation. The reason is that using Arabic for certain domains of writing or speaking did not immediately or

¹¹³⁵ See for example, Petra Sijpesteijn and Lennart Sundelin, ed., *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹¹³⁶ Van Bladel, “Arabising,” 4; Van Bladel's definition has another problem. He does not explain how this ‘adoption’ happens. Did people willingly adopt Arabic, or did the government enforce it? How frequent should the use of Arabic be, and how deep should the application and knowledge of the language spread into society? Moreover, can Arabic be used alongside other languages for it to be called ‘Arabicisation’?

¹¹³⁷ Andrew C. S. Peacock, ed., “Introduction: Comparative Perspectives on Islamisation,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 3–4; Daniel Beben maintains similar points. He distinguishes between conversion as an individual decision to accept religion and Islamicisation as “a broader and more gradual process of social change.” (Daniel Beben, “Islamization on the Iranian Periphery,” in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 319).

¹¹³⁸ Van Bladel, “Arabising,” 12.

even entirely end the use of local vernaculars.¹¹³⁹ A local person could use Arabic while working in the office but switch to his mother language at home. This local person could also use his mother language when speaking to his colleague in the office if that colleague came from the same linguistic background. Learning Arabic as a second language does not make one lose his mother language.¹¹⁴⁰ However, the second part of van Bladel's definition is plausible. If Arabic becomes one's mother language or the only language one can speak, then we can talk about Arabicisation.

The case of Bactria shows that Arabicisation, in the sense that Arabic becomes *the* first language and replaces local languages, did not happen. This form of Arabicisation discussed by van Bladel did not happen anywhere in the eastern Iranian regions despite the Arab Muslim settlements among local people that created intensive social contacts. Instead, the Arabic language and culture enriched local linguistic and cultural traditions. The case of Bactrian bilinguals who learned Arabic to communicate with Arabs or work for the Umayyad administration and Arabic documents from Rob show that Arabicisation, in the sense that one adopts Arabic for communication in public space happened in Bactria. However, this form of Arabicisation was limited to the administration. The state initiated a series of administrative work to benefit the state without having any deliberate policy to change people's language or religion. However, the state's decision to improve administration led to some social changes in the long term. Though Arabic was used as an administrative language, it did not become the leading language in Bactria.

Van Bladel's suggestion about settlement patterns as the principal forerunner of Arabicisation applies to regions like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and North Africa. Arab Muslims established garrisons and settled among local people creating intensive contact between them. Eventually, Arabic became the dominant language in these regions.¹¹⁴¹ However, this

¹¹³⁹ Greek and Coptic languages continued after the conquests in Egypt. See Maria Mavroudi, "Greek Language and Education Under Early Islam," in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, ed. Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed, Robert Hoyland, Adam Silverstein (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2014), 295–342; Petra Sijpesteijn, "Arabic-Greek Archives," in *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the 'Abbasids*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 105–126. Like Greek, the Coptic language was used in Umayyad Egypt too (see Eline Scheerlinck, "Protective Interventions by Local Elites in the Countryside of Early Islamic Egypt" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2023); Berber language continued in North Africa (see Fenwick, *Early Islamic North-Africa*); Armenian language was still in use in post-conquest Armenia (see Vacca, *Non-Muslim Provinces under Early Islam*); Iranian leagues like Middle Persian, Sogdian and Bactrian continued as we have actual documents in these languages.

¹¹⁴⁰ For example, if a person from India learns the English language at school, that does not make her 'English'.

¹¹⁴¹ Van Bladel also suggests the same model for the spread of Islam in the conquered regions. He argues that there were two models for Islamicisation. The first model was individuals' association with Arab Muslims. It happened during the conquest when local people willingly attached themselves to the Arabian tribes among the

framework does not apply to the East. The Arab Muslims established a web of military garrisons from Marw to Samarkand. They settled Arab Muslims in the garrisons in Bactria and then moved them into the main cities like Balkh to live among local people. Despite intensive social contacts, these areas did not lose their local languages in favour of Arabic. Nevertheless, Arabic had an impact on the region. It contributed to the rise and expansion of New Persian written in the Arabic alphabet. Instead of Arabic, New Persian became the *lingua franca* in the post-conquest eastern Iranian regions. Arabic contained the position of being the language of religion, sciences, inscriptions of Islamic monuments and legends on coins.

Islamicisation is about the spread of Islam by the Arab Muslim conquerors in the conquered regions. However, the existence of different interpretations makes the process more complicated.¹¹⁴² One interpretation limits Islamicisation to conversion,¹¹⁴³ while another takes Islamicisation as an outcome of learning Arabic.¹¹⁴⁴ Apart from these, Islamicisation is also said to be an overall process with broad social impacts beyond individuals' conversion and adoption of Arabic. The advocate of this broad view, Andrew Peacock argues that Islamicisation should be taken as an umbrella term covering several elements, including political changes to the Muslim's benefit, the spread of the Arabic language, conversion, the

conquerors. These people who came to be known as the *mawālī* may not have known Arabic or about Islam but gradually adopted them. The second model was a settlement in which non-Muslims and Muslims lived together. The children who lived in the Arabic-speaking Muslim areas quickly learned Arabic but did not convert. Later, in their adult age, they converted to Islam and their children were born as Muslims, who had Arabic names and spoke Arabic. This means the third generation of a non-Muslim family became Muslim Arabic-speaking (Van Bladel, "Arabising," 16).

¹¹⁴² Both Hawting and Van Bladel recognised this difficulty. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, 9; Van Bladel argued that Islamicisation was a "complex and multi-dimensional process" that took many centuries to happen (Van Bladel, "Arabising," 13).

¹¹⁴³ See Nehemia Levtzion's works, "Towards a Comparative Study of Islamization," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1970), 1–23, "Conversion to Islam: Some Notes towards a Comparative Study," in *Actes de 29e congrès international des orientalistes: Études arabes et islamiques*, ed. C. Cahn (Paris: L'Asiathèque, 1979): 125–129, and, "Aspects of Islamization: Weber's Observations on Islam Reconsidered," in *Max Weber and Islam*, ed. T. B. Huff and W. Schluchter (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 1999), 153–61; Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam*, 1–9; Nimrod Horvitz, Christian C. Sahner, Uriel Simonsohn and Luke Yarbrough, ed., *Conversion to Islam in the Premodern Age: A sourcebook* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020); Van Bladel, "Arabising," 14; In a series of articles, Richard Bulliet has argued that adopting Arabic names represents conversion in post-conquest Iran. These are: Richard W. Bulliet, "A Quantitative Approach to Medieval Muslim Biographical Dictionaries," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13, no. 2 (1970): 195–211, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), *Islam the View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), "Conversion-based Patronage and Onomastic Evidence in Early Islam," in *Patronage and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. Monique Bernards and John Nawas (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 246–262, and "The Conversion Curve Revisited," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. Andrew C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 74.

¹¹⁴⁴ Though Van Bladel observed that conversion to Islamic does not necessarily leads to Arabicisation, he mentions that knowing Arabic leads to Islamicisation (Van Bladel, "Arabising," 16); See also Uriel Simonsohn, "Conversion to Islam: A Case Study for the Use of Legal Texts," *History Compass* 11, no. 8 (2013): 647–662; Peacock, "Introduction," 1–20.

increase of the Muslim population, the spread of Islamic ideology and institutions such as the sharia laws, and Islamic culture attested by the construction of mosques, adaptation of Arabic religious texts like the Qur'an and the *ḥadīth*.¹¹⁴⁵ He adds that this process includes non-Islamic cultural elements that take Islamic veneer, such as the Persian idea of kingship. In Peacock's definition, Islamicisation had a different course in different regions depending on the context. Therefore, it should be understood in the different regions' political, social, and cultural contexts.¹¹⁴⁶

The process of Islamicisation in its broader definition occurred in Bactria. It was slow but effective. The Arab Muslims changed the political situation to their benefit through conquests and negotiations, settled first in military garrisons and then moved to the cities, established their rule in the region, minted monolingual coins in Arabic with the Qur'anic verses, imposed tributes and taxes over local rulers and regular people, and some people found Arab Muslims as legitimised authority for judgment. Though the Arab Muslims did not encourage conversion in Bactria as they did in Sogdiana,¹¹⁴⁷ Bactrian individuals converted to Islam. Although the conversion rate remained low in the Umayyad period, maintenance of Islamic rule in long term in the form of the Abbasid caliphate and other Muslim dynasties ensured the continuation and increase in conversion in Bactria. Eventually, Bactria became a major Muslim region, and many of its inhabitants identified themselves as part of the Muslim community.

Islamicisation could not alienate people from their pre-Islamic past in the East, and people preserved their pre-Islamic culture even after they became Muslim.¹¹⁴⁸ It is likely that this strong cultural link prevented the domination of the Arabic language and culture in the

¹¹⁴⁵ Peacock, "Comparative Perspectives on Islamisation," 3–4; Beben maintains similar points (Beben, "Islamization on the Iranian Periphery," 319).

¹¹⁴⁶ Peacock, "Introduction," 1–2.

¹¹⁴⁷ For instance, Qutayba encouraged people of Bukhara to become Muslim and even paid them to perform daily prayers. But the Bukharis prayed in Sogdian language and many of them pretended to be Muslim but secretly worshipped their idols (al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 65–71). Similarly, the Umayyads encouraged Sogdians to convert to Islam to increase local support to counter the threat of the Türgesh Turks (Huseini, "The Rebellion of al-Hārith b. Surayj," 526–30).

¹¹⁴⁸ See Clifford E. Bosworth's articles, "The Appearance and Establishment of *Islam in Afghanistan*," in *Islamisation de L'Asie Centrale*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: Association Pour L'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2008), 241, and "The Persistent Older Heritage in the Medieval Iranian Lands," in *The Rise of Islam: The Idea of Iran volume IV*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 30–43. For the slow process of Islamicisation in Iran, see I. P Petrushevsky *Islam in Iran*, trans. Hubert Evans (London: Athlone, 1985).

eastern Iranian regions.¹¹⁴⁹ Al-Balkhī -who wrote his book in Arabic about the merits of Balkh five centuries after the conquests of Bactria and attempted to create an Islamic identity for Balkh by connecting it to cities like Mecca and Medina- was still unable to break away from the pre-Islamic cultural ties that were alive in the region. Hence, post-conquest Bactria became part of the Islamic community while preserving its cultural identity expressed in the Persian language.

Conclusion

The early eight-century Arab Muslim conquests of Bactria impacted the region. The Arab Muslims expanded their military and political control over most parts of Bactria and added them to the Umayyad province of Khurasan. They first settled in the garrison and then moved into the cities. Their settlement among local people provided intensive social interaction between them and the local inhabitants. They expanded their form of administration in Bactria and received taxes and tributes. They introduced Arabic language, culture, and Islamic ideology in Bactria. Living together under the Arab Muslim rule allowed the rise of bilinguals, who spoke Arabic and local languages and worked for the administration. Some local Bactrians turned to Arab Muslim authorities to solve their problems, received legal documents from them, and some converted at their hands. The Arab Muslims constructed mosques first in the garrisons for the Arab Muslims, and then within the main cities. Building mosques represented the presence of Islam in the diverse religious landscape of Bactria. Later, Bactrian Muslim elites made the mosque an indispensable part of the Bactrian landmark. By the end of the Umayyad period, the Umayyad administration expanded to almost all parts of Bactria. Arabic was used as an administrative language in the areas directly controlled by the Arab Muslims. Although Arabic did not become the primary language in the region, it played a significant role in rise and expansion of New Persian that eventually replaced local languages like the Bactrian and Sogdian. In short, Bactria was Islamicised but not Arabicised. All these marked social and political changes affected by the Arab Muslims' conquests.

¹¹⁴⁹ The situation differed in the western parts of the Islamic empire. In Egypt, Christianity had cut the ties with the pharaonic past and allowed Islam to create a new identity for the region. See Michael Cook, "Pharaonic History in Medieval Egypt," *Studia Islamica* 57 (1983): 67–103.

Conclusion: A New Framing for the Conquests

The present dissertation has shown that the Arab Muslims' conquests of Bactria and their domination over the region did not come about a linear process. Conversely to common opinion, the victories were not a series of sequential events directed by the caliphs and implemented by generals. This idealised and simplified framework of the conquests reflected in the *Futūḥ* literature does not match the socio-political complexity on the ground in Bactria. Bactria was part of the Makran-Pamir shatter zone with diverse geographical and climatic conditions and populations. Similarly, Bactria was part of a greater frontier region between contesting political powers, and before the Arab Muslim conquests, many different political powers like the Sasanians, the Chionites, the Hephthalites, and Western Turks fought over control of this domain. Bactria's political organisations was characterised by diversity, leading to the development of five different areas of political control: western Bactria, Bactria proper, southern Bactria, eastern Bactria, and northern Bactria. Different political groups controlled these areas autonomously while they often recognised the overlordship of a greater political power. The Arab Muslims entered into this complicated situation, although it is not reflected in the *Futūḥ* literature. The conquests of Bactria were slow and difficult, affected by political circumstances within Bactria. Hence, this study offers a new lens with which to view conquests of Bactria.

This study's new framework identifies four phases of conquests. In the first phase, beginning in 31/651, a group of Arab Muslims led by Ibn 'Āmir went to Sasanian Khurasan to help the *kanārang* of Tus capture the city of Nishapur from his rival Bazān Jāh of the *kārin* family. The *kanārang* and the *kārin* families were aligned to the Sasanian empire, but after the political decline of the Sasanian power, they competed over the control of Nishapur, which was an important city in Sasanian Khurasan. At the same time, the remains of the Hephthalites, who survived the Sasanian-Western Turk joint invasion in 560, reorganised their forces and began to expand towards Marw and Herat. The *marzbān* of Marw allied with the Hephthalites, and the *kārin* family was inclined towards the Hephthalites. The rivalry with the *kārin* over Nishapur and the threat of the Hephthalites compelled the *kanārang* to look for an external ally, and he found the Arab Muslims who were raiding the southern quarter of the Sasanian empire. He invited and helped them to go to Sasanian Khurasan. Once they secured Khurasan for the *kanārang*, the Arab Muslim forces supported by a group of former Sasanian cavalries entered western Bactria to reduce the possibility of the Hephthalites incursions into Sasanian Khurasan. They did not face any strong local resistance and reached Balkh. After receiving the tributes

from Balkh, the Arab Muslims returned to Khurasan and Iraq. Their activities did not change the local political situation in Bactria. Hence, there were no conquests in Bactria in this phase.

The second phase began in 51/671. Many Arab Muslim soldiers and their families migrated to Khurasan from Iraq. Their migration was the Umayyads' response to the progenies of the last Sasanian king, who was supported by the Chinese seeking to carve out their sphere of political power in Khurasan. These migrants settled in the Marw region and established the Umayyad authority there. In this period, the Arab Muslims continuously raided Sogdiana. To reach Sogdiana, they often went to Guzgan via the Marw al-Rūd, crossed Balkh and Chaghaniyan, and attacked Sogdiana. They used western and northern Bactria as a safe passage. The Arab Muslims established good relations with Bactrian local rulers and did not encounter any local resistance. By allowing the Arab Muslims to cross their areas peacefully, Bactrian rulers saved their realm from the Arab Muslim raids. The focus on Sogdiana, the second *fitna* which engulfed the Arab Muslim communities, along with the Arabian tribal war in Khurasan, and the formation of *de facto* rule by some anti-Umayyad Arab Muslim leaders in Khurasan, did not let the Umayyads consider conquering Bactria. Thus, Bactrian local rulers continued their rule. This phase ended in 85/705, and the Arab Muslims did not change the situation in Bactria.

The third phase began in 86/705–6 after the second *fitna* ended with the victory of the Marwanid branch of the Umayyads over their rivals in the Hijaz and Iraq. Bactria was conquered in this phase. The reason for this was the profound changes in the Umayyads' policy towards the eastern regions. The Umayyads applied an aggressive policy of expanding the empire in the east, and incorporating Bactria and Sogdiana into the empire. This was directed by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the governor of Iraq and the East and implemented by his loyal general Qutayba b. Muslim. In this period, Qutayba created a new political order among Arabian tribes in Khurasan by removing members of the Tamīm and Azad from key positions in Khurasan and replacing them with the people from the tribe of Muḍr. He also reorganised the military forces and enlarged them with local rulers' forces. He made peace treaties with the rulers of western and northern Bactria, particularly the *nizak* of Badghis, and began the conquests of Sogdiana with their help. However, his violent conquest, interference in local political situations, and confiscations of locals' houses to settle Arab Muslim soldiers alarmed Bactrian rulers who saw Qutayba as a great threat to their local autonomy. The *nizak* organised a great uprising to remove Qutayba from Bactria and united many western Bactrian rulers. However, Qutayba suppressed the uprising with the help of local rulers of Inner Khurasan and the ruler

Rob in southern Bactria, who had a rivalry with the Hephthalites. Removing the *nizak* allowed Qutayba to conquer western Bactria, eliminating any local rulers who resisted him, establishing military garrisons from the Marw al-Rūd to Tirmidh and appointing Arab Muslims in the conquered areas. In this period, the Umayyads broke down the old political order of local autonomy and overlordship in western Bactria after they imposed direct control over it. Nevertheless, the Umayyads allowed the local rulers of northern, southern, and eastern Bactria to retain their position because they supported the Umayyads against the *nizak*. These rulers recognised Umayyad overlordship and paid tribute. Hence, the Umayyads changed the political situation in Bactria. This phase ended in 96/715–16 with the death of Qutayba in Farghana after he rebelled against the Umayyad caliph.

The fourth phase began in 116/734 after al-Ḥārith b. Surayj, a notable from the Tamīm tribe and the commander of the Arab Muslim garrison of Andkhud in western Bactria, rebelled against the Umayyad caliphate. His rebellion took back Bactria from the Umayyads and forced them to re-conquer and re-establish their regional control. The reason for his rebellion was the pressure of the Türgesh, a confederation of different groups of Turks who united under the leadership of Sülū *qaghān* and competed with the Umayyads over the control of Sogdiana. The Türgesh defeated the Umayyad forces several times, putting enormous pressure on them. The caliphal response was to force Arab Muslims of Khurasan to fight the Türgesh, and that angered many of them who were already settled in the region and had social and economic interests in the region. Many Arab Muslim soldiers, like those in Balkh, even rebelled against their commander. This resentment provided the ground for al-Ḥārith, who soon united them and captured Balkh. He aimed to create an autonomous government in Khurasan under his leadership. His agenda to free Khurasan from the caliphal control attracted some local rulers of western Bactria -who survived Qutayba's campaigns- to join him. Likewise, Sogdian converts forced by the Umayyads to pay the *jizya* gathered around al-Ḥārith. With his Arab Muslim soldiers, Bactrian and Sogdian allies, al-Ḥārith attacked Marw. However, the large number of non-Muslim allies of al-Ḥārith frightened the Arab Muslims of Khurasan and untied them, leading to al-Ḥārith's defeat. His Bactrian allies deserted him after they found him a weak leader.

Al-Ḥārith's rebellion forced the Umayyad caliph Hishām to combine Iraq and Khurasan under one single command and mobilise all available forces to suppress the rebellion. Asad al-Qasrī, a leader from the Azad tribe, was dispatched with Syrian forces to secure Khurasan. With the help of Bactrian local rulers who now joined Asad, the Umayyads defeated al-Ḥārith

and re-conquered Bactria. Al-Ḥārith allied with the Türgesh Turks and encouraged him to invade Bactria. The Türgesh invasion created division among Bactrian rulers. The rulers of western and northern Bactria supported the Umayyads, and the rulers of eastern Bactria helped the Türgesh Turks. The Türgesh *qaghān* and his allies were defeated in Guzgan, and Asad re-established the Umayyad authority in Bactria. After the Umayyads' victory, Bactrian rulers eventually submitted and became part of the Umayyad empire, and helped Naṣr b. Sayyār, the last governor of Khurasan, in his campaigns in Sogdiana. The re-conquest of Bactria ended the Turkic overlordship over Bactria except for the area of Kadagstan in eastern Bactria. This phase ended in 128/746 after the Abbasids began their takeover of Khurasan.

The conquests and establishment of Arab Muslim control in Bactria had social and political impacts in Bactria. Politically, Bactria was incorporated into Umayyad Khurasan, which was an important province of the empire. This act allowed the Umayyads to expand their administration to Bactria and impose their form of governance and taxation system on the region. The Arab Muslim settlement in the cities among local people provided intensive social interaction between them and local people. The Arab Muslims introduced the Arabic language and culture and Islamic ideology to Bactria. Living together under Arab Muslim rule led to religious conversions. Local people learned Arabic and worked for the Umayyad administration. However, Arabic did not become the leading language in the region, but it contributed to the rise and expansion of New Persian written in the Arabic alphabet. Bactria's strong ties to its pre-Islamic culture protected it from adopting an Arabic cultural identity, as had taken place in Egypt, North Africa, Syria, and Iraq did. Nevertheless, over time, Bactria was Islamicised, and a few centuries later, Balkh became one of the leading centres of Islamic scholarship in the East.

By re-framing the conquests and situating them in their local and regional socio-political contexts, we can provide some answers to the central question of this study, which asked how the conquests of Bactria happened. This new approach explains the processes of the conquests in the frontier region of Khurasan, where the Arab Muslims faced many local rulers and regional rivals. Recognising the local and regional contexts helps us understand the conquests' diverse and dynamic processes. They were initially rapid because the local rulers facilitated them, but then stalled when the local rulers resisted the Arab Muslims. Likewise, the establishment of Arab Muslim control in the region was affected by the local and regional political situations. The Arab Muslim authorities could impose their rule through military campaigns; however, they could not maintain it without local rulers' cooperation. The case of

Bactria not only contributes to the current scholarship on the Arab Muslim conquests in general, but it also shows that the conquests were different in a frontier region. If Bactria is compared to other frontier regions with similar circumstances, like Transoxiana and Transcaucasia, then we have a nuanced understanding of the processes of the conquests, Arabicisation, and Islamicisation in the frontier regions of the early Islamic empire. May future research continue to fine-tune our knowledge of this subject.

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Figure 1: The direction of Ibn 'Āmir's march towards Khurasan. Courtesy of Khodadad Rezakhani, modified by Huseini.



Figure 2: Makran-Pamir shatter zone. From Google Earth, modified by Huseini.



Figure 3: General view of Bactria. From the Google Earth.



Figure 4: A view of Western Bactria. From Google Earth.



Figure 5: A view of Bactria Proper. From Google Earth.



Figure 6: A view of the Balkh River creating the oasis. From Google Earth.



Figure 7: A view of Khulm Pass and Valley. From Google Earth.



Figure 8: A view of Khulm Valley towards Samangan. Photo by Huseini 2007.



Figure 9: A view of Southern Bactria. From Google Earth.



Figure 10: A view of the villages in Southern Bactria. From Google Earth.

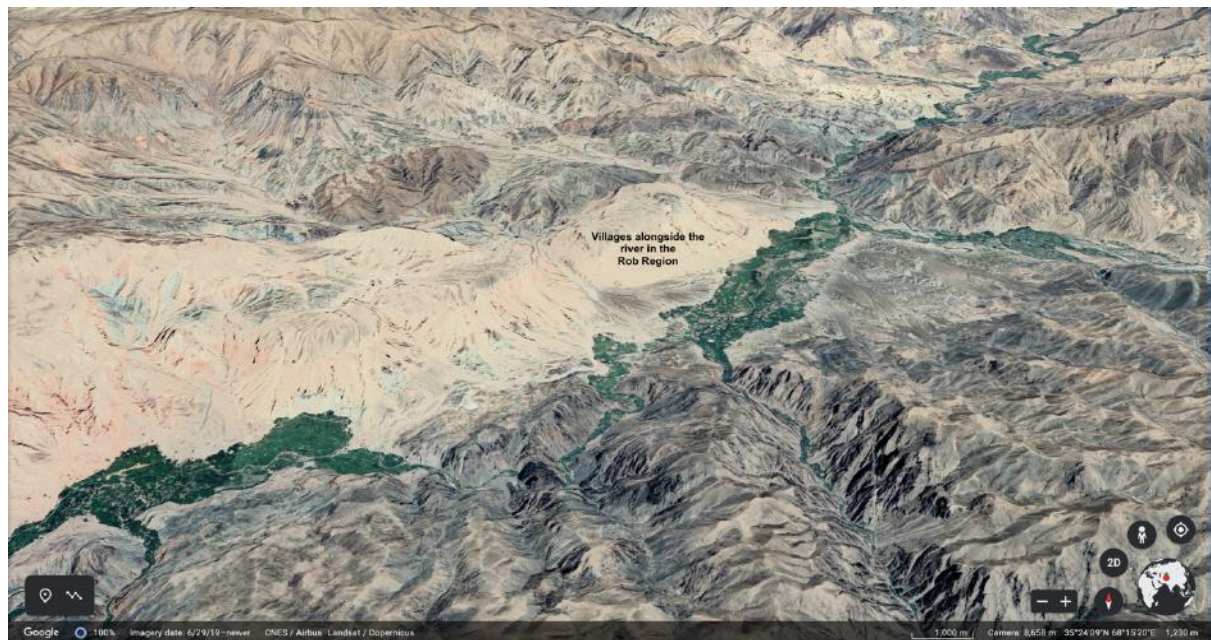


Figure 11: A view of Eastern Bactria. From Google Earth.



Figure 12: A view of Northern Bactria. From Google Earth



Figure 13–15: A view of defensive walls in Balkh. Photos by Huseini 2007.

Remains of the great wall (72 km) around the oasis.



The southern wall of Balkh. Photo by Huseini, 2007.



The Southern wall of Balkh, Timurid/Shaybanid addition to the Kushan wall. Photo by Huseini, 2007.



Figure 16. Remains of the Naw Bahar. Photo by Jonathan Lee 1996.



Figure 17: Bactrian principalities. From Ryoichi MIYAMOTO, “Étude préliminaire sur la géographie administrative du Tukhārīstān,” *Studia Iranica* 48, 2 (2019), 21 modified by Huseini.

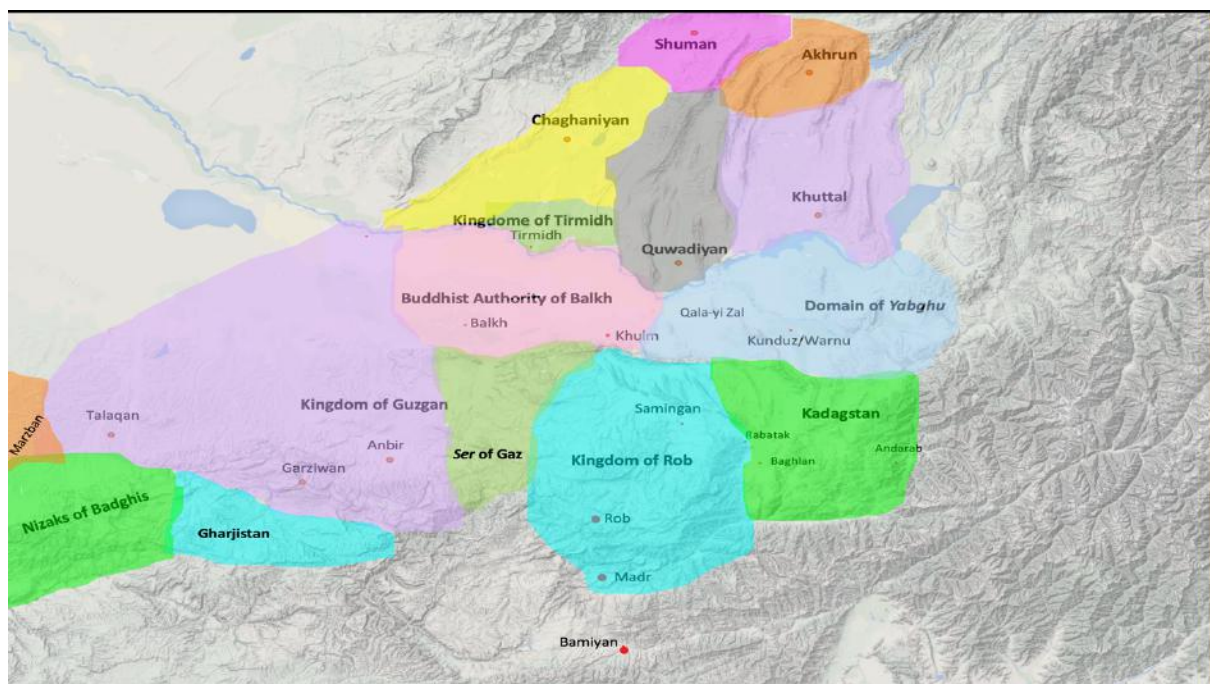


Figure 18: Diagram of Bactrian local rulers and their overlord. Designed by Huseini.

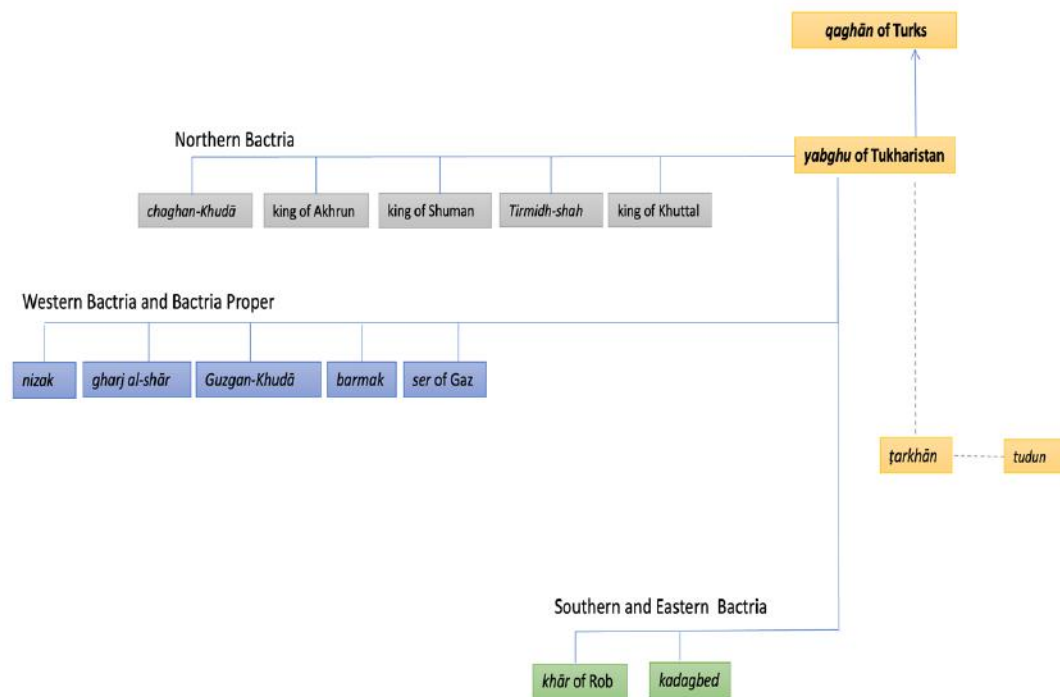


Figure 19: The direction of al- Aḥnaf's campaign in western Bactria. From <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/nara-national-museum>, modified by Huseini.

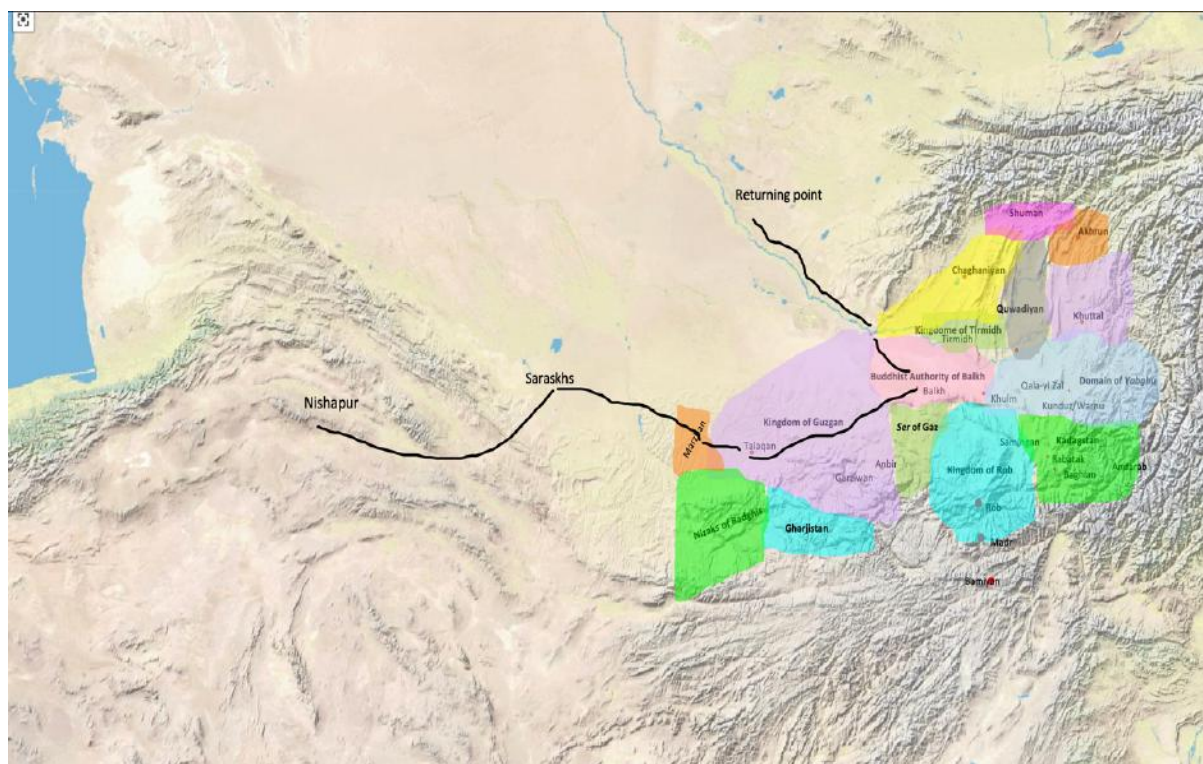


Figure 20: Qutayba's military campiness in Bactria. From <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/nara-national-museum>, modified by Huseini.

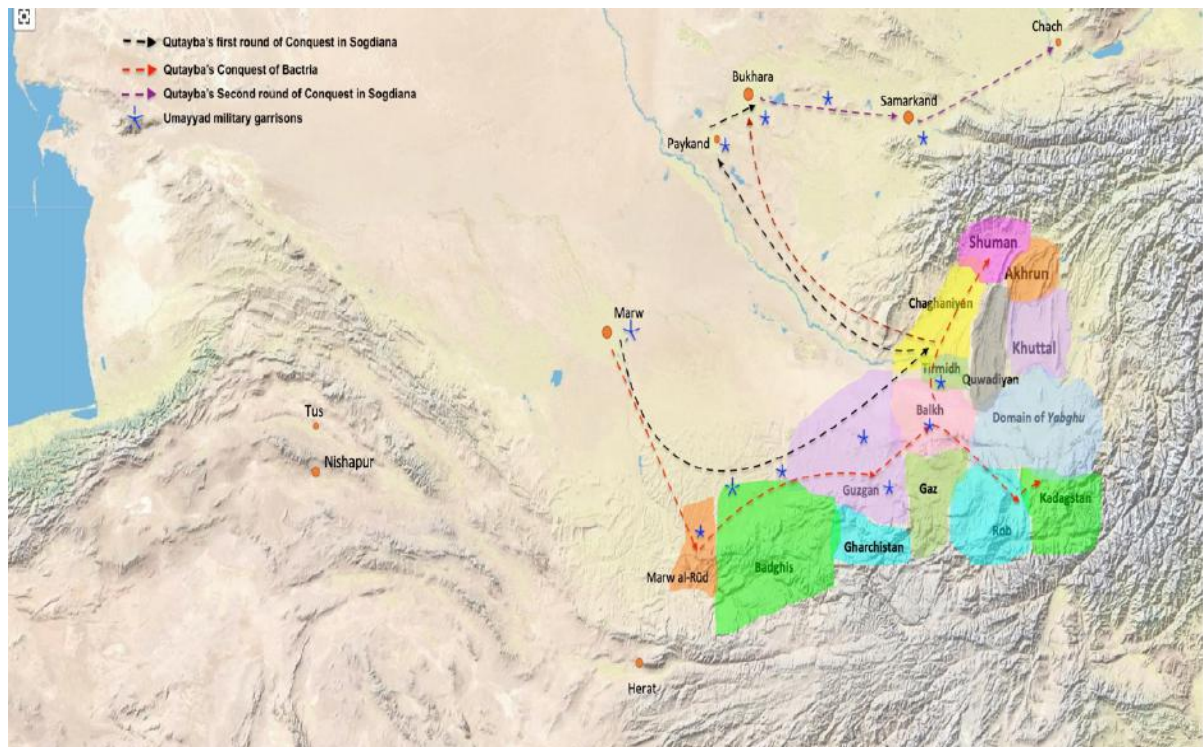


Figure 21: Bactrian local rulers between the Umayyads and the Turks. Designed by Huseini.

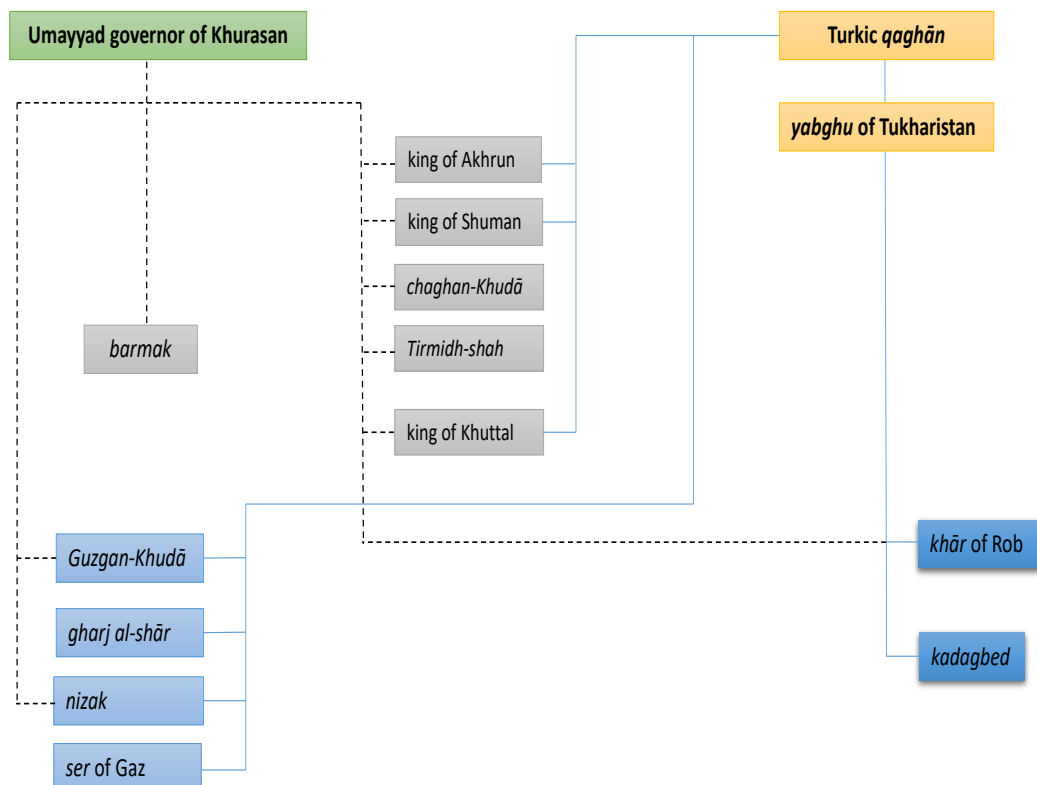


Figure 22: Areas under Umayyad's control. From <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/content/nara-national-museum>, modified by Huseini.

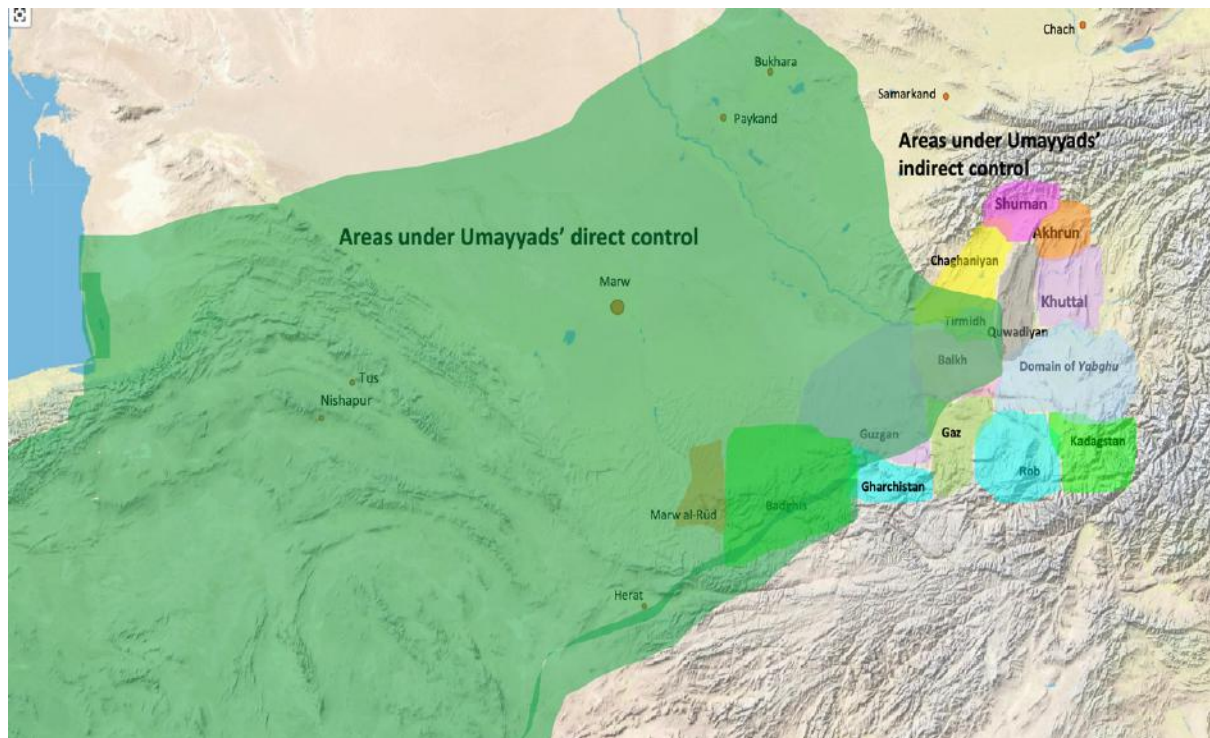


Figure 23–26: Masjid-i Haji Piyāda, Balkh. Photos by Huseini 2006–2009.







Summary

This dissertation addresses the dynamic process of the Arab Muslim conquests in Bactria and their socio-political impacts in the region. It covers almost a century from 31–128/651–746. It discusses the conquests within the context of the geographical and political complexity of the region. It highlights the local political situation before the Arab Muslims' arrival and the active role of Bactrian rulers whose cooperation and resistance shaped and reshaped the conquests. In doing so, it combines a broad spectrum of sources. It brings Bactrian, Arabic (and relevant Middle Persian and Sogdian) documents with the literary sources, specifically Arabic narratives related to the conquests and Persian and Chinese reports. It also consults numismatic data, seals and sealings, inscriptions, and archaeological reports. Based on a systematic analysis of these sources, this dissertation shows that the Arab Muslim conquests of Bactria were not simply the results of a series of 'pre-planned' military operations initiated and led by the Arab Muslims, as it is often assumed to have been the case. In contrast, the conquests were highly complicated as they were deeply affected by the local and regional political situation that were not considered. The local and regional political competitions in late Sasanian Khurasan pulled the Arab Muslims into the region, where they helped the local rulers to implement their political agendas. However, being in Sasanian Khurasan allowed the Arab Muslims to learn about local political competition, become part of it, create their niche of power, and eventually establish their political domination over the region. The conquests of Sasanian Khurasan, Bactria, Sogdiana and Khwarazm (that formed Umayyad Khurasan) became possible only with the help of some local rulers who viewed the Arab Muslims as powerful allies to overcome their internal or neighbouring rivals. The local rivalries benefited the Arab Muslims the most as they provided space for the expansion and consolidation of Arab Muslim authority in the region in the long term. At the same time, the Arab Muslim settlements in the region marked the beginning of a centuries-long process of Islamicisation in Bactria, out of which the Islamic Balkh has emerged.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift behandelt het dynamische proces van de Arabische moslimveroveringen in Bactrië en de sociaal-politieke gevolgen in de regio tussen 31–128/651–746 n.Chr. Het onderzoek bespreekt de veroveringen in de context van de geografische en politieke complexiteit van de regio. Het belicht de lokale politieke situatie vóór de komst van de Arabische moslims en de actieve rol van de Bactrische heersers, wier medewerking en verzet de veroveringen vorm en inhoud gaven. Daarbij wordt een breed spectrum aan bronnen gebruikt. Het onderzoek is gestoeld op Bactrische, Arabische (en relevante Midden-Perzische en Sogdische) documenten en literaire bronnen, met name Arabische verhalen over de veroveringen, maar ook Perzische en Chinese verslagen. Ook wordt gebruikgemaakt van numismatische data, zegels, inscripties en archeologische rapporten. Op basis van een systematische analyse van deze bronnen laat dit proefschrift zien dat de Arabische moslimveroveringen van Bactrië niet simpelweg het resultaat waren van een reeks ‘vooraf geplande’ militaire operaties die werden geïnitieerd en geleid door de Arabische moslims, zoals vaak wordt aangenomen. De veroveringen waren daarentegen zeer complex omdat ze sterk beïnvloed werden door de lokale en regionale politieke situatie. De lokale en regionale politieke competitie in het late Sasanidische Khurasan trok de Arabische moslims naar de regio, waar ze de lokale heersers hielpen om hun politieke agenda’s uit te voeren. Het verblijf in het Sasanidische Khurasan stelde de Arabische moslims in staat om de lokale politieke concurrentie te leren kennen, er deel van uit te maken, hun eigen machtspositie te creëren en uiteindelijk hun politieke dominantie over de regio te vestigen. De veroveringen van het Sasanidische Khurasan, Bactrië, Sogdië en Khwarazm (dat het Umayyadische Khurasan vormde) waren alleen mogelijk met de hulp van sommige lokale heersers die de Arabische moslims als machtige bondgenoten zagen om hun interne of naburige rivalen te overwinnen. De lokale rivaliteiten kwamen de Arabische moslims het meest ten goede omdat ze ruimte boden voor de uitbreiding en consolidatie van het Arabische moslimgezag in de regio op de lange termijn. Tegelijkertijd markeerden de Arabische moslimnederzettingen in de regio het begin van een eeuwenlang proces van islamisering in Bactrië, waaruit het islamitische Balkh is voortgekomen.

Curriculum Vitae

Said Reza Huseini was born on January 6, 1981. He grew up in Balkh, a multicultural region in modern Afghanistan, where he obtained a traditional education at home in Persian and Arabic, learned the art of calligraphy and the skill to read manuscripts and inscriptions written in *kufi*, *naskh*, *thulth*, and *nasta'liq* hands. His education was cut short by war, which forced him to become a refugee in Iran. After returning to Afghanistan, he worked as a calligrapher in Mazar-e-Sharif before joining the Ministry of Culture as a librarian and a museum curator. He assisted a French archaeological team and led the effort to preserve the shrine of Khwaja Parsa from destruction caused by a road project. In 2009, he received admission to Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he completed his BA, MA and first year of MPhil in Persian and history of medieval and early modern India. In 2015, he received an Encompass Scholarship at Leiden University, completed a BA and MA, and wrote a thesis on the famous but understudied *Millennial History* (Tarikh-i Alfi) commissioned by the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605). From 2017 to 2023, he pursued his PhD on Arab Muslim conquests of Bactria within the ERC project “Embedding Conquest: Naturalising Muslim Rule in the Early Islamic Empire (600–1000)” under the supervision of Prof. Petra Sijpesteijn and Dr. Edmund Hayes. His research on Bactria is based on an analysis of documentary and literary sources in Persian, Middle Persian, Bactrian, Sogdian, Arabic, and Chinese. In 2021, he joined the Silk Roads Programme at King’s College, University of Cambridge. He works on a monograph entitled *The Mongols in Persian Discourse: Continuity and Changes 1252–1582*. It explores various Persian sources to explain how the Persian historians created a new identity for the Mongols.

