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

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Introduction

In the summer of the year 30/651, a group of Arab Muslim[1] forces led by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir (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 (*ʿanwatan*). Ibn ʿĀmir 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 ʿĀmir's conquest, Sasanian Khurasan did not include the regions to the east of the Marw al-Rūd River.[4] After establishing Sasanian Khurasan, Ibn ʿĀmir 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 ʿĀmir and paid tributes in cash and kind. Eventually, Ibn ʿĀmir 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. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892) in his *Futūḥ al-buldān* ("Incorporation of Cities") written two

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[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-Abhath* 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-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 25 (2017): 113–140.

[2] For his biography, see Shadi Daʿi Rezaʾi Muqaddam, "ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir 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 ʿAbbāsid 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. Yaḥyā 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 ʿĀmir, was born and grew up in the Hijaz and later served his uncle ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, the third Commander of Believers (*amīr al-muʾminīn*), 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 ʿĀmir 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 ʿĀmir 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 Tügresh, 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

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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 Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh 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 ʿAbbāsid 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 ʿAbbāsid State-Incubation of a Revolt* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press-The Hebrew University, 1983), and *Revolt: The Social and Military Aspects of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1990); Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn ʿAbd 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 ʿAbbāsid, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts.* Leiden: Brill, 2003; Étienne de la Vaissière, "The ʿAbbāsid Revolution in Marw: New Data," *Der Islam* 95, 1 (2018): 110–146; 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-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 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] Saʿīd Nafīsī listed the name of fourteen kings and queens who ruled between 628–632, showing the zenith of political chaos at the Sasanian court (Saʿīd Nafīsī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimāʿi-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; Poursharati, *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-

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[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 Ijtimāʿi-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 baʿd 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 Ghodrat 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) *Faṣlnāma-yi ʿIlmi Pazhuhishi Tārīkh-i Irān baʿd 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-ʿAwtabī'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

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[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-Qāḍī, "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 ʿAbbāsid Revolution*; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Farīd al-ʿAfnān, "Al-qabāyil al-ʿArabiyya fī Khurāsān wa bilād Māwarāʾ al-Nahar fī al-ʿaṣr 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

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[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-Bāhilī (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 Additionelles 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 ʿAbbāsid 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: Aldershort, 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 ʿAbbāsid Revolution* 172–73.
[43] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid 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 ʿAbd 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 Ealy Arabic Historical Tradition: A Sourcse-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.

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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 ʿAbbāsid 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 *fatḥ*, meaning "opening", derived from *f-t-ḥ*. The term *fatḥ* 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 ʿAbd 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 Fatḥ as 'Conquest' and its Origin in Islamic Tradition," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 24 (2016): 1–14.

[53] For details, see Noth and Conrad, *The Ealy 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 Cambering 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 Mikhnaf Lūṭ b. Yaḥyā al-Azdī (living in 157/774),[64] al-Ḥaytham b. ʿUdday (living in 207/822),[65] Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. 209/824–5),[66] Khālid b. Khidāsh (living in 223/838), Yazīd b. Muḥammad al-Muhallabī, and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Madāʾinī (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-Madāʾinī 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]

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[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 ʿAlī Kāẓim Bigī (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1390/2011), 27–29.
[64] Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 136–37; H. A. R. Gibb, "Abū Mikhnaf," *Encyclopedia Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/abu-mikhnaf (accessed on 30 October 2022).
[65] For his biography, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1978), 145–46; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhadabī, *Sīyar ʿAlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuaʿyb al-Arnawūṭ and Muḥammad Naʿīm al-ʿArqasusī (Beirut: Muʾassisat al-Risāla, 1417/1996), 10: 103–104.
[66] Wilfred Madelung, "Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā as a Historian," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (1992): 47–56.
[67] For his biography, see Ursala Sezgin, "Al-Madāʾinī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-madaini (accessed on 30 October 2022); Ilkka Lindstedt, "al-Madāʾinī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/al-madaini (accessed on 7 May 2023).
[68] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, xvii–xx; Also, see Ilkka Lindstedt, "Al-Madāʾinī and the Narratives of the ʿAbbāsid Dawla," *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 5 (2017): 65–150.
[69] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, xvii; ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Qanavāt, "Futūḥ Khurāsān Madāʾinī Kitāb-i Kuhan dar Tārīkh-i Khurāsān," *Faṣlnāma-yi ʿIlmi-Pazhuhishi Tārīkh-i Farhang va Tamaddun-i Islāmi* 19 (1394/2015): 121–134.
[70] On the biography of Ibn al-Nadīm, see J. W. Fück, "Ibn al-Nadīm," *Encyclopedia 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-Madāʾinī's books on Khurasan.[71] Four of them, namely *Kitāb ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir b. Kurayz*, *Kitāb Nawādir Qutayba b. Muslim bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Wilāyat Asad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī*, and *Kitāb Wilāyat al-Naṣr b. Sayyār* were the primary sources of information for later historians like Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī (fl. third/ninth-century),[72] Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 240/854),[73] Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā 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 ʿĀmir, 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-Madāʾinī'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. Khayyāṭ'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

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[71] These are: *Kitāb Futūḥ Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Jurjān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Sajistān*, *Kitāb Futūḥ Kābul wa Zābulistān*, *Kitāb ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir b. Kurayz*, *Kitāb Nawādir Qutayba b. Muslim bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb al-Riwāya fī Khabar Qutayba bi Khurāsān*, *Kitāb Wilāyat Asad b. ʿAbd 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 ʿAtham 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 Khayyāṭ al-ʿUṣfurī," *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. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ*, ed. Akram Ziyāʾ al-ʿUmarī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1405/1985); Tobias Andersen, *Early Sunnī Historiography: A Study of the Tārīkh of Khalīfa B. Khayyāṭ* (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-Ḥārith (Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 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 Aʿtham 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 (*yuftiḥu 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. Jaʿfar (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-Dināwarī (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 Yaʿqūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (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 Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, ed. ʿAlī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwāʾ, 1411/1991), 150, 154.
[82] S. A. Bonebakker, "Ḳudāma," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kudama (accessed on 30 October 2022); Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Al-kharāj wa Ṣanāʿat al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1981), 400–402.
[83] T. Fahd, "al-Dīnawarī," *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-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Gergas (Leiden: Brill, 1888).
[85] In his *Kitāb al-buldān*, al-Yaʿqūbī followed a different approach by explaining the geography of Khurasan and then discussing its history (see Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *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 (*mufassir*) of the Qurʾan,[87] collected *ḥadīth* (the sayings and actions attributed to the Prophet) and complied his universal history *Taʾrīkh 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 chin 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 ʿĀmir's going to Sasanian Khurasan preserved all eight reports and their sources mentioned by al-Madāʾinī.[91] Other historians like al-Kūfī, Ibn Khayyāṭ and al-Balādhurī have only two reports about Ibn ʿĀmir 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-Madāʾinī, Abū Mikhnaf, Abū ʿUbayda, and Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/819).[92] Possibly, all 152 narratives about Khurasan mentioned by al-Ṭabarī come from al-Madāʾinī'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

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[86] Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Amīr al-Muhannā (Beirut: Shirkat al-ʿĀlamī li-l-Maṭbuʿāt, 1431/2010), 210; Only Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī mentioned this letter earlier (Ibn Aʿtham 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 Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾan* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʾrifa, 1412/1992).

[88] For his work and profession, see *Yādnāma-yi Ṭabarī* (Tehran: Wizarāt-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, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 5.

[90] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1: 6–7.

[91] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 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 Madāʾinī," 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 *Taʾrīkh* 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

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[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, ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, ed. Abū al-Fidā ʿAbd Allāh al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1407/1987); Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963); Ismāʿīl b. Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *Al-bidāya wa al-nihāya*, ed. ʿAlī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyāʾ wa al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1408/1988); Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt al-zamān fī tawārīkh al-aʿyān*, ed. Muḥammad Barakat, Kāmil al-Kharāt, and Ammār Rayḥāwī (Damascus: Dār al-Risāla al-ʿĀlamiyya, 1434/2013); Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, *Mūrūʿj al-dhahab wa mʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥasan Marʿī (Beirut: Al-Maktabat al-ʿAṣrīyya, 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-Madāʾinī 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-Madāʾinī 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Balʿamī produced a free translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* that is known as the *Tārīkhnāma* ("Book of History").[102] It refers to Persian narratives (*akhbār-i ʿajam*) 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

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[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 Yaʿqūb 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 (ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. Zaḥāk Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1363/1984); For detail see al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 58–59; Al-Yaʿqūbī 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-Balʿamī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Third Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3 (accessed on 8 May 2023).
[103] Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, ed. Muhammad Roshan (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1374/1995), 538.
[104] Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, summarized and translated by Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-Khalīfa al-Nishābūrī, ed. Muḥammad Riżā Shafiʿī Kadkanī (Tehran: Agāh Publications, 1374/1995); ʿAbd 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 *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh* ("Merits of Balkh") written by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī (b. ca. 565/1170) in Arabic and then translated into Persian by another Balkhi in 676/1277, contains important information about Islmicisation 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 *Faḍāʾil* 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.

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al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Abī al-Qāsim, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār, with an introduction by Mirzā Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Qazvīnī, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Froughi Publishers, 1361/1982); Ḥamza b. Yusūf b. Ibrāhīm al-Sahmī, *Taʾrīkh Jurjān*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Muʿid Khān (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1407/1987); Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, trans. Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Qubawī, ed. Mudarris Rażavī (Tehran: Maṭbaʿa-yi Dawlatī, 1362/1983); Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Al-qand fī dhikr ʿUlamaʾ Samarqand*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1378/1999).

[105] See the discussion on local histories and their aims in al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār 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: ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Juybārī's *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt*, Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's *Manāqib-i Balkh*, Muḥammad b. ʿAqīl's *Tārīkh-i Balkh*, ʿAlī b. Faḍl's *Ṭabaqāt*, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Samarqandī's *Tārīkh-i Balkh*, Abū Isḥāq al-Mustamlī's *Muʿjam al-kabīr*, Yunūs b. Ṭāhir al-Naṣīrī's *Kitāb al-bihja*, and Abū al-Qāsim Shahīd al-Balkhī's *Maḥāsin wa Maʾāthir Balkh.* For more detail, see ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī, *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh*, trans. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Ḥusaynī, ed. ʿAlī Miranṣarī (Tehran: The Centre fort 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]

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[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 extinctive linguist 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 Europæa, 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.

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[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 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 artciles, "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), Samingan (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 (*barāʾa*) 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

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[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 Zargaran 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.

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[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 Normand 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.