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

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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[479] Al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202.

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

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

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

3.1. Sasanian Khurasan on the eve of the conquests

3.1.1 Sasanian Khurasan's geography and politics

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

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

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

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

[482] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 7–8.

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

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

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

[486] It is mentioned in al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 69.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.1.2 Political competition in the frontier region of Khurasan

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

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

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[491] Pourshariati has discussed the political situation in late Sasanian Persia with a particular focus on the role of the local eastern Iranian families in the expansion and decline of the Sasanian empire. Therefore, I benefited from her argument to describe the political situation in Khurasan in this chapter (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 104–112, 130–136, 265–278).
[492] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 70.
[493] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 82; The Sasanians built the defensive walls of Gurgan and Tamishe to prevent the Hephthalites and the Turks' invasions. For most recent archaeological reports on these walls, see Eberhard Sauer, Jebrael Nokandeh and Hamid Omrani Rekavandi, ed., *Ancient Arms Race: Antiquity's Largest Fortresses and Sasanian Military Networks of Northern Iran: A joint fieldwork project by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organisation and the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham (2014–2016)* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2022).
[494] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 82.
[495] For more detail on the political situation, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 54–75.
[496] Apparently, the Hephthalite's domination of Marw ponded the space for Buddhists to move to Marw. The two Buddhist stupas of Marw were built in this period (Gerent, "Regional interaction," 212).

reconquered Marw later, from 615 onwards, Sasanian control over Khurasan remained weak. From their power base in Baghlan, the Hephthalites in fact controlled the Badghis region. Then the Turks conquered the region, and their overlordship was recognised as far as Herat in 643. Nonetheless, the Hephthalites survived and expanded their authority over Herat and Quhistan in 650.[497] The presence of the Hephthalites in the region brought the *marzbān*s into contact with them.

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

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

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[497] See chapter two, section 2.1.2, and chapter three, section 3.1.2.
[498] Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 148; The Arabic term *ṣāhara* with the same meaning is mentioned in Ibn Qutayba al-Dināwarī, *Faḍl al-ʿarab wa al-tanbīh ʿalā ʿulūmihā*, ed. Walīd Maḥmūd Khāliṣ (Abu Dabi: Manshūrāt al-Majmaʿ al-Thiqāfi, 1998), 97.
[499] Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39; Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, ed. C. Eduard Sachau (Leipzig, in Commission bei F. A. Brockhaus, 1878), 101–102.
[500] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 34–35.
[501] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5 : 2876.
[502] Ibn Khurdhādbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39, 40.
[503] C. J. Brunner, "ABRĀZ," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abraz-middle-persian-high-superior-height-old-iranian-uparyank-above-high (accessed on 27 May 2021); Haug, who has seen the relation between Māhūy and the Hephthalites as an example of complicated local politics in Khurasan, argued that Māhūy might not have had an elite background, and that may explain his ties with the Hephthalites (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 86–89). However, Haug does not explain how a non-elite could marry a Hephthalite lord.

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

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

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[504] Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 113–114.
[505] Nishapur had about 10,000 inhabitants at the time conquest (Richard Bulliet, "The Conversion Revisited," in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*, ed. Andrew C. S. Peacock (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 71).
[506] Rezakhani, "Nobles and Land," 251, 257.
[507] Pourshariati refers to works like collecting taxes, brokering peace, and waging war (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 113–114).
[508] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2885; Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 164–165.
[509] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 86–89.
[510] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 20–47. The Arabic narratives often call the *marzbān* of Tus *kanārā* or *kanārtak*, which is the corrupted form of *kanārang* (for instance, al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 405; Ibn Khurdhādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 39).
[511] The *kanārang* is mentioned in two Bactrian documents dated to the fifth century. According to these documents, the *kanārang* owned land and received their share of the products (Bactrian documents no. H, G in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 42–43). The true Bactrian form of this title is *καραλραγγο* known from the second-century Kushan inscriptions of Rabatak and Surkh Kotal (see Nicholas Simis-Williams and Joe Cribb, "A New Bactrian Inscription of Kanishka the Great," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 4 (1995/96): 80). Stefan Härel kindly informed me that the *kanārang* of the Sasanian period was the re-forming of the Bactrian *καραλραγγο*. It was "an attempt to follow the Bactrian semantics using the Middle Persian equivalent term, specially targeted to the office in Khurasan". The title *kanārang* was equal to that of *marzbān*, who controlled the eastern areas situated close to the former frontier of the Kushans (Härel's forthcoming dissertation on Kushan history will have more details about it. Online correspondence on 8 January 2024). Similarly, Haug suggested that *kanārang* was the Middle Persian translation of the Kushan *καραλραγγο*, and it was similar to the position of the *marzbān* (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 83). For detail discussion on the *kanārang*, see Eduard Shahneh Khurshudian, "The Parthian and Sasanian Administrative Institutions" (PhD diss, Leningrad State University, 1990).

In the early seventh century, the *kanārang* commanded his own local forces. A report by Sayf b.ʿUmar (lived in second/eight century), the compiler of narratives on early Islamic history preserved by al-Ṭabarī,[512] provides information about the composition of the Sasanian army in the Battle of Qadisiyya fought in 14/636–637 that may help. In this report, a *kanārang* commanded the light cavalry (*wa kanārā ʿalā al-mujarrada*) and fought alongside the Persian commander Rustam, who was of Khurasani nobility.[513] The Sasanian army had heavy cavalries, and the light cavalries were sent from the east to help the Sasanians.[514] All this supports the assumption that the *kanārang* had a Khurasani function with a military and administrative role. The *kanārang* had a claim over Nishapur in 650.[515]

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

3.1.3 The last Sasanian king and local politics in Khurasan

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

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[512] Sayf b. ʿUmar, *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com (accessed on 8 June 2021).
[513] De Goeje's edition misses the reports from the year 14–17. Therefore, this part is taken from the Cairo edition. See Abū Jaʿfar Muḥmmad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abul Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi Miṣr, 1387/1967), 3: 510.
[514] Shabazi, "Army,".
[515] Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 267–270.
[516] Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 111–115; Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 62–64, 274.
[517] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 318–219; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2873; Similarly, al-Dināwarī calls him Khurrazād, brother of the decayed Rustam (al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 133); Ḥamza al-Isfahānī mentions that Khurrazād, brother of Rustam accompanied the king from Isfahan to Marw. (Ḥamza b. al-Ḥasan al-

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

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

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

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

[518] Rezakhani, "Nobles and Land," 243.

[519] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldāṇ*, 275–289, 346–376.

[520] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 315; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2875.

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

[522] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2873.

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

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

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

[523] Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 255–262.
[524] Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 267–270.
[525] The Sasanians built the defensive walls of Gurgan and Tamishe to prevent the Hephthalites and the Turks' invasions.
[526] Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 148.
[527] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 323.
[528] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2877.
[529] Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 148–149; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2872–73; Al-Isfahānī, *Taʾrīkh sinni Mulūk al-arḍ*, 49; Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-futūḥ*, 2: 317–319.
[530] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 43.

Tārīkhnāma ("Book of History"), which is a free translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*. While al-Balʿamī repeats the issue of taxes that put pressure on Māhūy, he also mentions that Yazdgird III commissioned the construction of a grand fire temple (*ātash khāna*) with gardens in Marw for the sacred fire which he brought from Rayy.[531] This would have been perceived as an unmistakable message that the king wished to stay in Khurasan and unify it under his authority. Al-Balʿamī's report comes from Persian sources (*akhbār-i ʿajam*) that were not included by al-Ṭabarī. The Sasanian royal fire temples were located in the quarter of the South, and Yazdgird's attempt to build a new royal fire temple reflected his wish to make Khurasan his new home. That would limit the political autonomy of the local rulers of Khurasan. Hence, the death of Yazdgird III was the result of his attempt to change the power balance in the region, which was not acceptable to the local rulers, who saw the king as a severe threat to their political and economic autonomy.[532]

The murder of the Sasanian king in Marw in 651 had different consequences. The *marzbān* of Marw and the *kanārang* of Tus were released from the pressure imposed by the Sasanian king. However, the cooperation of Māhūy and the Hephthalite *nizak* must have disturbed the *kanārang* of Tus. Māhūy's alliance with the Hephthalites allowed them to come out from Badghis and expand their influence in the Marw region. The Arab Muslims facing the Hephthalites in Herat and Quhistan, mentioned earlier, show that the Hephthalites had influence in these regions too. The *kārin* family led by Barzān Jāh was in conflict with the *kanārang* of Tus in Nishapur, where they both controlled part of the city. An alliance between Māhūy, Barzān Jāh, and the Hephthalite *nizak* against the *kanārang* of Tus would certainly seal his fate. Hence, being caught in a dangerous situation, the *kanārang* of Tus searched for an outside force to support him. He required this not only to take Nishapur for himself, but also to protect Inner Khurasan from the Hephthalites. Not surprisingly, the *kanārang* of Tus saw no one better than the Arab Muslim forces to help him. His decision to pull the Arab Muslims into the local politics in Khurasan not only changed the region's political map, but also had significant social, political, and cultural impacts. The *kanārang* of Tus' strategy of involving

[531] Al-Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 536–537.
[532] Yazdgird's arrival in Marw, his communication with the court of Tang, and his clash with the local rulers are reflected in the *Tang Shu* ("Old Book of Tang"), which gives almost similar reports mentioned in the Arabic narratives. According to *Tang Shu*, Yazdgird sent an envoy with gifts, including a cyan snake, to the Tang emperor and asked for help. It adds that Yazdgird was weak and exiled by his chieftains, and he fled towards Tukharistan but was killed before reaching there. The *Tang Shu* adds that Peroz went to Tukhara and was allowed by the *yabghu* to stay there, but there are no reports about his marriage (*Tang Shu*, 110– 111). Also, see Yingjun, "Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of Iranian Princes," 52.

the Arab Muslims is the missing piece to understanding the process of Khurasan's conquests and the Arab Muslims' march towards Bactria.

The death of Yazdgird III in Khurasan reveals an important issue about the local politics in Khurasan. The king lost his life in his ill attempt to unify the region under his command. That was against the interests of the local rulers, who did not wish to lose their autonomy. The king did not perform as a traditional overlord or another local player, but wanted to unify the region under his direct and absolute control at the expense of the local kings. However, we will see that the Arab Muslims did not commit the same mistake. They entered Khurasan as an outside power, got involved in local politics as one political party among the many others, did not attempt to impose their rule immediately with force, and then gradually established their regional authority. The next part explains this.

3.2. Arab Muslims and local rulers in Sasanian Khurasan

While the engagement of the Arab Muslims in local politics in Khurasan is the key element to understanding the process of the conquests of Khurasan, it has received the least attention in the existing literature.[533] This part will show that from 31/651 to 51/671, the Arab Muslims played an active role in local politics, leading to their becoming a significant political power in Khurasan. Before discussing that, we first need to have an overview of the coming of the Arab Muslims to Khurasan.

The Arabic narratives related to the conquests (*futūḥ*) present a general image; their shortcomings have already been discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. However, to recapitulate the idea, we should know that the Arabic narratives lionize the third caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r. 23–35/644–655) and his generals in the story of the conquests of Khurasan. The Muslim historians who compiled their works in the early Abbasid period intended these for an early Muslim audience,[534] and wanted readers to believe that the conquests of Khurasan were pre-planned. Modern historians have followed more or less the same view, and that prevented them from looking at the local political context in which the conquests occurred. For instance, Muhammad Shaban argued that the conquest of Khurasan was "an organized campaign and planned to expand Arab rule."[535] He adds that the reason

[533] See the discussion in the introduction, section 1.
[534] See the discussion in the introduction.
[535] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 17.

behind sending forces to Khurasan was due to "tensions in Iraq as a result of the continued pressure of the influx of the Arab tribesmen into the two garrison towns of Kufa and Basra."[536] Thus, for Shaban, the conquest of Khurasan was a solution to reduce the pressure on Iraq. Shaban asserts that conquerors did not face any local resistance, but he fails to explain further. Though Shaban fairly refers to the threat of the Hephthalites that forced the *kanārang* of Tus to appeal to the Arab Muslims, he preferred to follow the Arabic narratives and the centrality of the caliph ʿUthmān in masterminding the conquests.[537]

The importance of local politics and their contribution to the Arab Muslim conquests of Khurasan is noticed by Pourshariati. In contrast to Shaban, who exaggerated the role of the caliph, Pourshariati argued that the conquests of Khurasan were the outcome of the hostility between the *kanārang* of Tus and the *kārin* family over the control of Nishapur. She added that the *kanārang* of Tus consciously "instigated and facilitated" the conquests of Khurasan to overcome his rival.[538] Pourshariati's interpretation is largely based on the local Persian histories that were lacking in Shaban's work. However, she does not include the Hephthalites and their relations with those noble families and the *marzbān*s. On the other hand, Haug has discussed the competition among the *marzbān*s within the context of frontier zone politics. He argued that "the direction of the conquest was directed by conflict and competition among the *marzbān*s and the noble Parthian houses", who took advantage of the arrival of the Arab Muslims to secure their positions.[539] However, he does not discuss the roots of these rivalries.

Shaban, Pourshariati, and Haug's works are constructive. They highlight two different views. The first view suggests that the Arab Muslims planned the conquests of Khurasan as part of a grand plan and campaign drawn up at the caliph's court. This interpretation presents a top-down approach to the conquests of Khurasan as fitting in an overall military strategy in which the Arab army leaders make all decisions and are the sole movers of historical events. The second view shows that local political rivalries in the frontier region of Khurasan directed the conquests. Therefore, the directionality of this latter approach comes from the bottom-up in which there are two acting parties: local rulers and the Arabs. It does not mean that the Arabs were only able to react without the ability to take strategic decisions. They just did so in reaction to the opportunity presented to them by the local situation, and they were successful

[536] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 17.
[537] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 6–9, 17–18.
[538] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 31–52.
[539] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 84.

in their responses to it. Involving this second approach makes more sense, as does reading Arabic narratives against the grain and combining the data with information that comes from non-Arabic sources. A critical analysis of these sources offers valuable information on the dynamic process of the conquests. It also helps to see the reasons behind the Arab Muslims' march towards Bactria and their engagement with Bactrian rulers. To understand the process of the conquests that was overlooked in earlier viewpoints, we should take a step back and see what happened after the death of Yazdgird III. The following section explains it.

3.2.1 The Arab Muslims' participation in local politics in Khurasan

The death of Yazdgird III in Marw happened after the arrival of ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir (d. 59/679) in Fars in the year 30/650. He was a young cousin of the caliph ʿUthmān, and his appointment as governor of Basra brought the Arab Muslim conquests of Sasanian Iran into a new phase. Before he arrived in Fars, the Arabian leaders of Bahrayn and Oman had already crossed the Persian Gulf and raided the region of Fars at their own decision and independent from the Medina regime. However, once Ibn ʿĀmir was appointed in Basra, ʿUthmān asked all Arabian leaders who were involved in the war in the Sasanian quarter of the South to follow Ibn ʿĀmir. In other words, Ibn ʿĀmir became the commander of the armies responsible for conquests in Sasanian Iran.[540] However, whether Ibn ʿĀmir could unite all Arabian leaders under his command is not fully known. In any case, shortly after his arrival, Ibn ʿĀmir engaged in war and tried to capture the main cities in Fars that the Arabian raiders could not take earlier. Thus, the Arabic narratives illustrated him as a commander and a diplomat after he was involved in a series of wars and peace treaties with local rulers in Fars.[541]

The Arabic narratives depict the conquests of Khurasan as a sequence of related events achieved fast and smoothly. They mention that Ibn ʿĀmir and his generals, like al-Aḥnaf b. Qays (d. 67/686) and ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim (d. 72/691), conquered the entire region of Khurasan within two years without much resistance. Al-Aḥnaf from the tribe of Tamīm is presented as the one who conquered Bactria and gathered tributes from the region.[542] More or

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[540] Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 161; For detail information, see Martin Hinds, "The First Arab Conquests of Fārs," *Iran* 22 (1984): 39–53.

[541] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh,* 2: 61; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 389–391; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 9: 356–367; Guy Le Strange and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, ed. *The Fārsnāma of Ibnu'l-Balkhi* (1921; repr., Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1385/2006), 113–116.

[542] For instance, see *al-Dināwarī, Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 149; Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh,* 2: 6–62; Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 163–165; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403–408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2884–88, 2898–2904; Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 2: 337–341.

less, the same image is reflected in modern studies on the conquests of Khurasan.[543] The main problem with this idealised image of the conquests is that it does not answer a major question: How was Ibn ʿĀmir able to conquer the frontier region of Khurasan in such a short time? How could Ibn ʿĀmir succeed in conquering the region where the Sasanian king Yazdgird III failed?

The answer to this question becomes crucially important if we compare Ibn ʿĀmir with Yazdgird. Both of them entered Khurasan and were involved in local politics. However, the Sasanians had a specific strategy towards the East. They first controlled the eastern regions through Kushano-Sasanians, a branch of the Sasanian royal family. After the Chionites' invasions, the Sasanians defended their eastern regions through continuous and systematic military operations conducted by an organised army. The Sasanians protected the conquered regions by funding massive construction projects like building defensive walls, forts, and garrisons.[544] In contrast, the Arab Muslims were not as organised as the Sasanians. Ibn ʿĀmir, with his small army and his limited economic resources, was not equal to any of the Sasanian campaigns in the east. So then, how did Ibn ʿĀmir rapidly conquer the region, which was highly diverse in its geography and people as well as deeply fragmented in its political order?

The Arabic and the Persian sources -if read together- show that the conquests of Khurasan were indeed not the sole achievement of the Arab Muslims. On the contrary, the conquests were joint military operations undertaken by both the Arab Muslims and the forces provided by the local rulers. This military strategy was followed in the east throughout the Umayyad period. The joint operations show that the Arab Muslims had gotten successfully involved in local politics and benefitted from these interactions. The cooperation of the *kanārang* of Tus with Ibn ʿĀmir is the first and the best example of this pattern. It is mentioned in the Arabic narratives related to the conquests of Khurasan and the Persian histories written in Khurasan. To clarify this Arab Muslim and local cooperation, we need to look at these narratives closely.[545]

The earliest Arabic report on the cooperation between the *kanārang* and Ibn ʿĀmir was mentioned by al-Balādhurī. When the caliph ʿUthmān appointed governors over Kufa and Basra in 30/650, he writes that the *kanārang* of Tus sent a letter to these governors and invited them to Khurasan on condition that if they achieved victory, they must return the governorship

[543] See the Introduction, section 1.
[544] Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 84.
[545] Pourshariati has discussed most of these narratives. However, I analyse these narratives to explain the dynamic process of the conquests and the reasons behind the Arab Muslim move towards Bactria.

of Khurasan to him. As a result, Ibn ʿĀmir marched towards Khurasan and performed what the *kanārang* had asked him to do. However, al-Balādhurī refers to some anonymous reports which said that the governor of Kufa did not receive such a letter, but he accepts the communication between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ʿĀmir.[546]

More information on this cooperation comes from the third/ninth-century historian al-Yaʿqūbī, a contemporary of al-Balādhurī. In his *Taʾrīkh*, al-Yaʿqūbī mentions that ʿUthmān wrote to Ibn ʿĀmir and Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ, the governors of Basra and Kufa, and ordered them to march towards Khurasan. Whoever would reach it first would become the governor of Khurasan (*ayyakumā sabagha ilā Khurāsān, fa huwa al-amīr ʿalayhā*). Al-Yaʿqūbī adds that a member of the *dihqān*, or landed gentry, from Khurasan visited Ibn ʿĀmir, negotiating with him for a reward if he would take the Arab Muslims to Khurasan. Ibn ʿĀmir promised not to take taxes (*kharāj*) from this *dihqān* and his family in exchange for his help. Al-Yaʿqūbī does not identify this *dihqān* and does not question that how Ibn ʿĀmir could ask for taxes at this early stage. After the agreement, the *dihqān* took Ibn ʿĀmir and his forces via a shortcut (*ṭarīq mukhtaṣar*) to Qumis and then they met in Nishapur where they jointly took the city by force (*ʿanwatan*).[547]

The identity of the *dihqān* and more details on his cooperation with Ibn ʿĀmir are given by al-Yaʿqūbī in his other book *Kitāb al-buldān* ("Book concerning the Regions"). According to him, Ibn ʿĀmir received a letter from the ruler of Tus (*qad ṣāra ilā ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir kitab malik Ṭūs*) in which he promised to take Ibn ʿĀmir to Khurasan if the latter would capture Nishapur for the ruler (*ʿalā an yumallikunī ʿalā Sabūr [Nishābūr]*). Here, the *dihqān* and the king are the same person, and they refer to the *kanārang* of Tus. Al-Yaʿqūbī ends the narrative by saying that both parties cooperated, and the document of that agreement remained among the offspring of the *kanārang* of Tus to his day.[548]

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[546] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 334.
[547] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 61–62.
[548] In Arabic: *fa kataba lahū kitāban wa hūwa ʿinda wuldihi ʿalā hādhihi al-ghāya* (al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 77); Pourshariati argued that this narrative shows that after two and a half centuries, a local family traced its lineage back to the *marzbān* of Tus and revealed the cooperation between him and Ibn ʿĀmir. That means an actual document of the agreement existed, and it was part of the family heritage legitimising their claim over the region of Nishapur now controlled by the Tahirids in the third/ninth century (Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 44–45); To al-Yaʿqūbī, this was not a unique case. He says that a local family in Marw possessed a letter of agreement signed between Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw and the Arab Muslims (al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 78). He gives a similar report in his *Taʾrīkh*, 83; Al-Balādhurī mentions that Māhūy received a document of agreement from the fourth caliph ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661) (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408); The previous chapter showed that some local noble families in Bactria or other parts of Khurasan preserved their social influence for a long time, which makes the continuation of the *marzbān*'s family, not a surprise.

Al-Ṭabarī preserved several reports that elucidate the local political situation in Nishapur and how this city was conquered. His sources on Khurasan vary from ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Madāʾinī (d. 228/842–843), the most famous historian on Khurasan, to the locals from Kirman.[549] Putting these reports together, it becomes clear that Ibn ʿĀmir crossed the great desert of Kirman (*rābar/rāwar*), which was 80 *farsakh* (about 480 km), with the aim to reach Nishapur, the city half of which only was under the control of the *kanārang* of Tus (*kāna al-niṣf al-ākhar fī yad kanārā*).[550] This is confirmed by Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ who added that when Ibn ʿĀmir conquered the city he in fact made peace with the *kanārang* who maintained control over his part of the city which remained as it was (*mā baqiya*); i.e., unconquered.[551] The other half of the city, it is to be remembered, was under the control of Barzān Jāh from the *kārin* family. This family was close to the Hephthalites, who were also allied to the *marzbān* of Marw.[552] Al-Ṭabarī adds that on their way to Nishapur, the Arab Muslim forces were confronted by the Hephthalites in Quhsitan.[553] The Hephthalites, themselves aiming to expand their control over the region, were surprised by the Arab advance, and immediately decided to prevent the Arab Muslims from reaching Nishapur, where they would threaten Bārzan Jāh, their ally's control over half of the city.[554] Nevertheless, the Arab Muslims passed Quhistan, arrived in Nishapur, and captured the city by force. While these Arabic narratives describe the coming of the Arab Muslims to Khurasan, they miss a crucial point: How did Ibn ʿĀmir cross the great desert? How did he know to take only half the city of Nishapur, which was not in the *kanārang*'s control? The local Persian histories fill the knowledge gap.

Tārīkh-i Nishābūr ("History of Nishapur"), written by al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī in Arabic in the fourth/tenth-century but only partly surviving in a fourteenth-century Persian translation, provides some details. According to al-Ḥākim, "the *kanārang* was the king of Khurasan in the past. He sent a letter and his representative to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir. Then, they came, and he

[549] The importance of al-Madāʾinī's report on the conquests of Khurasan is discussed in the introduction.
[550] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2885–86; Ibn Khurdhādbih gives valuable information on the roads between Iraq and Khurasan (Ibn Khurdhābih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 24–29); Al-Istakhrī, *Al-masālik wa al-mamālik*, 145, 154; One *farsakh* was between 5. 4 to 6.4 km. Detail information on the length of the *farsakh* in Arabic and Persian sources is given by Albert Houtum-Schindler, "On the Length of the Persian Farsakh," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 9 (1888): 584–588.
[551] Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ has a short narrative on this issue without highlighting the role of the *kanarāng*. However, he mentions that the *kanārang* made peace with Ibn ʿĀmir for the control of half of Nishapur (Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh,* 164–165).
[552] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 40.
[553] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2884–85.
[554] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 19.

[the *kanārang*] facilitated the conquest of Khurasan."[555] Al-Ḥākim adds that the cooperation between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ʿĀmir was a well-known issue among the trustworthy people (*thiqāt*) of Nishapur. According to them, the *kanārang*, the Zoroastrian governor of Khurasan (*kanārang ki vāli-i Khurāsān būd va ū majūsi būd*), informed Ibn ʿĀmir and Saʿīd b. ʿĀṣ about the death of Yazdgird III in Marw and invited them to Khurasan (*ba Khurāsān khvānd*) and promised them his assistance. Ibn ʿĀmir and Saʿīd b. ʿĀṣ informed ʿUthmān about the situation in Khurasan, and then, ʿUthmān permitted them to march toward Khurasan. Al-Ḥākim also says that people helped Ibn ʿĀmir's troops by providing them with wheat (*gandūm*), indicating that the locals gave logistical support to the Arab Muslims right from the beginning of their arrival in Khurasan.[556]

Al-Hākim's report can be completed by the narrative given by al-Balʿamī in his *Tārīkhnāma*. Al-Balʿamī mentions that it was in Kirman where Ibn ʿĀmir received the news of political conflicts in Khurasan that led to the death of Yazdgird III. Only after this news did Ibn ʿĀmir march towards Khurasan.[557] The significance of al-Balʿamī's report, which is not mentioned by al-Ṭabarī, is that the Arab Muslims were already aware of the local politics in the region, and they responded to events there effectively. What remains to be answered is: Who helped the Arab Muslims cross the great desert? To do this as well as passing through the mountains without a local guide and logistics was impossible, even if we think that the Arab Muslims came from the Arabian Peninsula.[558]

A clear answer to this question is provided by Abū Manṣūr Muʿammarī, the third/ninth-century compiler of the *Shahnāma* ("Book of Kings") produced in 346/957 for Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 350/961), the local commander (*sipāhsālār*) from Tus under the Samanid dynasty (819–999).[559] ʿAbd al-Razzāq claimed to have been the descendant of the Sasanian *spāhbed* and linked his lineage to the *kanārang*.[560] According to Muʿammarī, the

[555] Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202.
[556] Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 202–204.
[557] Al-Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 589.
[558] Ibn Ḥawqal crossed this desert twice and described its condition. He says that this desert has no inhabitants and one cannot cross it without local guide (Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 340). Alfons Gabriel crossed this great desert in 1933 and published his observation in *Duerch Persiens Wüesten* (Stuttgart, 1935). He gives similar description. I crossed this desert in 1999 and observed simlar situation that was described by Ibn Ḥawqal and Gabriel. Crossing this desert without local logistics and guidance is impossible today.
[559] Vladimir Minorsky, "The Older Preface to the Shāh-nāma," *Studi Orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida* II (1956): 59–79; Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, "Az Shahnāma tā Khudāynāma: justārī dar bāra-yi maʾākhidh mustaqīm va ghayr-i mustaqīm Shahnāma," www.noufe.com (accessed on 28 May 2021).
[560] Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, "Abū Manṣūr Maʿmarī," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-mansur-mamari (accessed on 28 May 2021); Also, see Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, "ABŪ MANṢŪR ʿABD-AL-

representatives of the *kanārang* of Tus brought the Arab Muslim forces via a short way across the desert of Kirman to Qumis and then to Abarshahr, where the son of the *kanārang* received them.[561]

If we put all these Arabic and Persian narratives together, we see that the delegation sent by the *kanārang* of Tus, who remains anonymous in our sources, met Ibn ʿĀmir in Kirman, gave him his letter, informed him about the political situation in Khurasan, and took the Arab Muslims the short way to Nishapur. Here the *kanārang*'s forces led by his son received Ibn ʿĀmir, and jointly they conquered Nishapur (half of which was controlled by the *kārin* family). This interpretation highlights the importance of the local political situation in the conquest of Khurasan. It changes the traditional view in which the conquests were a pre-planned programme designed by ʿUthmān and implemented by his generals in the field. It also shows that the Arab Muslims were pulled into the local politics by the ruler of Tus to maintain the power balance in Khurasan. However, once they became part of this system, the Arab Muslims began to carve out their niche in the local politics in the region. Only after the fall of Nishapur did the local rulers of Sasanian Khurasan recognise the Arab Muslim overlordship and pay tribute to them. The fall of Nishapur allowed Ibn ʿĀmir to secure his relations with the local lords, as will be explained next.

3.2.2 The fall of Nishapur and its impact on the region

The fall of Nishapur had a great political impact on Khurasan. Nishapur was an important political centre and its control symbolised the control of Khurasan.[562] Immediately, the local rulers of Khurasan came to pay their respects to Ibn ʿĀmir in person or sent representatives with gifts and tributes.[563] They tried not to fight the Arab Muslims but negotiated for peace. In other words, they recognised the Arab Muslims as a capable political and military force. At the same time, through these treaties, Ibn ʿĀmir recognised the political autonomy of the local

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RAZZĀQ," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abu-mansur-mohammad (accessed on 28 May 2021).

[561] Citied in Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 39.

[562] Al-Nishābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishābūr*, 204.

[563] The reports from *Tārīkh-i Marw* ("History of Marw") written by a certain Maʿdānī preserved in the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* ("History of Bayhaq") compiled by the sixth/twelfth-century Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Zayd, known as Ibn Fanduq. Maʿdāni mentions that IbnʿĀmir spent four months in Nishapur, and in this short period, the cities of Khurasan submitted (Abū 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), 26).

rulers.[564] Thus, the treaties would have created a mutual political understanding between the Arab Muslims and the local rulers and provided room for cooperation.[565]

The peace treaties with the local rulers had economic benefits. Based on the Arabic narratives, Donald Routledge Hill provided a list of the cities and the amounts of tribute. It shows that the Arab Muslims received lots of money and materials from Khurasan. Hill argued that all these were tributes delivered to the Arab Muslims, and there is no evidence that they asked for any land tax.[566] The tribute was in cash and kind and included silk fabrics, slaves, and animals.[567] The Arab Muslims did not interfere in how the tributes were raised in the respective kingdoms or any other local business. They received tributes from the local rulers.[568] Local accommodation was given to the Arab Muslims in Marw and Nishapur to protect them from the cold winter.[569] The importance of these treaties becomes clear because the Arab Muslims operated far from the Hijaz and Iraq. The regime in Medina or the garrison towns of Basra and Kufa did not provide logistical support or payment to the soldiers in Khurasan.[570] The tribute would cover the salaries and logistics of the forces.

After the defeat of Barzān Jāh, the Arab Muslims made a peace treaty with the *kanārang* of Tus who controlled one half of the city. Soon, however, the *kanārang* of Tus had control of the entire city – a bone of contention for the *kārin* family that would have consequences for the Arab Muslims, as we will see. Wresting control over the city of Nishapur from the hands of his rival, the *kārin* family, was surely a welcome result for the *kanārang* of Tus due to the arrival of his allies, the Arabs. It was, however, as the reports in Arabic and Persian sources discussed above show, surely not the only motive for the *kanārang* of Tus to call in outside help. Breaking the bond between those threatening the *kārin* family —the *marzbān* of Marw and the Hephthalite coalition— was another motive. As for the Arabs, joining forces with the *kanārang*

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[564] The memory of peace treaties made with the local rulers was also preserved in much later local sources. According to al-Balkhī, the entire region of Khurasan up to Marw al-Rūd made peace with Ibn ʿĀmir (al-Balkhī, *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh*, 27).

[565] The Arabic narratives depicted Ibn ʿĀmir as the actual overlord and downplayed the importance of the local rulers. For instance, Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926) reverted the story of the conquest of Nishapur to elevate Ibn ʿĀmir's position. He depicted Ibn ʿĀmir as the one with actual control of all affairs in Nishapur by saying that Ibn ʿĀmir gave the city of Nishapur to the *kanārang* of Tus because the latter helped Ibn ʿĀmir in capturing the city. However, he still confirms that it was the *kanārang* who sent a letter to Ibn ʿĀmir seeking his help (Ibn ʿAtham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ,* 1: 337–338).

[566] D. R. Hill, *Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests A.D. 634–656* (London: Luzac & Company, 1971), 158.

[567] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410–413.

[568] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 21.

[569] Ibn Fanduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, 26.

[570] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 25.

of Tus held great material advances in the form of tribute from allied rulers, but also support in conquering the remainder of Khurasan. Once established in Nishapur, Ibn ʿĀmir sent forces led by al-Aḥnaf b. Qays to raid western Bactria, the territory of the king of Guzgan, which will be discussed next.[571]

3.2.3 Entering Western Bactria: from Marw al-Rūd to Balkh

The Arab Muslims' approach to western Bactria was entirely different. The aim was not to help any local Bactrian ruler but to raid the region. Possibly, they wanted to show their presence to the Hephthalites beyond Marw al-Rūd and secure Inner Khurasan. This hypothesis can be supported by al-Yaʿqūbī's report that Arab Muslim administrators (*ʿummāl*) used to settle in Herat and not in other areas till the Umayyads came to power.[572] Staying in Herat that was associated with the Hephthalites would stop the Hephthalites from attacking Inner Khurasan.[573] In any case, the war in Marw al-Rūd was not easy for the Arabs. The mountainous nature of the region, the Marw al-Rūd river, the narrow passes, the existence of well defended fortresses and its warlike inhabitants were serious challenges. This region had formed the line of control between the contesting empires of the Sasanians, the Kidarites, and the Hephthalites in the past. The Marw al-Rūd region was controlled by a *marzbān* called Badhām (a corrupted form of the Persian name Badhān), who stayed in his fortress near the river. To avoid being trapped by the Hephthalites in the mountains of Herat and Badghis, al-Aḥnaf led his men not from Herat, but through Sarakhs on the way to Marw, then turned south and reached Marw al-Rūd. In other words, they went around the mountain to suddenly enter the enemy's region. This strategic move explains al-Aḥnaf's rapid move to Bactria. This was an excellent military strategy if we consider the difficulty of crossing the mountains of Badghis. His men fought the local soldiers, plundered villages and took people's cattle. Seeing a new force, Badhān decided to make peace and allowed al-Aḥnaf to cross his area on his way to Guzgan. Possibly, he hoped that the western Bactrians would destroy the new force. However, he initiated the negotiation for peace by sending his cousin Māhak to al-Aḥnaf with a letter explaining his conditions for peace.[574]

Badhān's conditions for peace were simple. He suggested paying only 60,000 dirhams as tribute and submitting on the condition that al-Aḥnaf recognises him as the *marzbān* of

[571] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2897.
[572] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 149.
[573] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 403.
[574] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 413–414; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2897–99. Taking flocks of sheep should have been for food supply.

Marw al-Rūd, the position he inherited from his grandfather. In response, al-Aḥnaf accepted all conditions but requested Badhān's help for raiding western Bactria. The tribute suggested by Badhān was the lowest amount of tribute the Arab Muslims received from any place in Khurasan. The low tribute agreed upon by al-Aḥnaf and his request for help show that the Arab general was not able to impose his demands by force. Rather, the outcome was based on negotiation, give and take from both sides. This would have especially been true in the frontier region like Marw al-Rūd. It also shows that al-Aḥnaf faced serious opposition, which he could not deal with on his own account: he needed Badhān's support and was prepared to cut his material tribute in exchange. This reconstruction is very much unlike the ideal image of the Arabic narratives. Haug argued that Badhān's decision for making peace with al-Aḥnaf was deliberate. Badhān was already caught between the Hephthalites and other hostile neighbours, and he did not want to fight with a new force. Hence, peace benefitted both sides.[575]

The presence of al-Aḥnaf accompanied by a group of the Sasanian cavalries whom Al-Balādhurī called "the submitted Persians" (*muslim al-ʿajam*) in the strategic region of Marw al-Rūd alarmed the western Bactrian rulers. The identity of this group is unknown, but al-Ṭabarī says that a group of cavalries (*asāwira*) came to Marw with Yazdgird III.[576] The number of this group matches with the group mentioned by al-Balādhurī. That implies that the remainder of the Sasanian king's cavalries, those who had arrived in Khurasan with him, now joined the Arab Muslims. Soon, the forces of Guzgan and Chaghaniyan arrived, not to join the Arabs, but to fight them. Al-Aḥnaf's men were scared to the extent that some of them asked to return to Marw or Nishapur. Others, however, encouraged al-Aḥnaf to stay put and fight. Eventually, with the advice given by an unknown cook or soldier (*ṣāḥib al-khazīra aw al-ʿajīn*), al-Aḥnaf could defeat the enemies.[577] All this time, Badhān remained neutral, holding on to his tribute and forces to see who would win the battle. Only after the victory of al-Aḥnaf,

[575] Haug also highlighted these two last points (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 72–73, 75).
[576] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2876.
[577] The report adds that al-Aḥnaf killed the king of Chaghaniyan and his drummers (*al-ṭabbūl*) in a heroic action. But that cannot be trusted because Arabic narratives often attribute such actions to the Arab Muslim generals. Both al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī mention that al-Aḥnaf defeated the western Bactrian forces only after he followed the advice of a person who was cooking in the camp. However, they do not identify this person. They do not even bother asking how a regular person could give such precise military advice. It is possible that this person was either a local soldier who had joined al-Aḥnaf or a Sasanian commander who knew the geography of the area and the Hephthalite war. Arabic narratives often glorify the Arab Muslims' achievements under any condition, even if everything was against them (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 413–414); Al-Ṭabarī has no words about the king of Chaghaniyan or the Persian cavalries (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2902).

Badhān sent the tribute to him.[578] However, it is unclear if he sent his forces to help the Arab Muslims.

The Arab Muslims and the Sasanian cavalries who joined them marched beyond Marw al-Rūd, captured a fortress later called *qaṣr Aḥnaf* or "Aḥnaf's fortress",[579] and entered the kingdom of Guzgan. They raided some cities of Guzgan, in which they lost many soldiers.[580] Still, al-Balādhurī says that the people of Talaqan and Faryab made peace treaties with al-Aḥnaf and even supplied him with logistical support that enabled al-Aḥnaf to move towards Balkh.[581] Why they helped al-Aḥnaf is unknown. It must have been to do with the local politics in western Bactria. The Arabic narratives do not reveal the identity of the king of Guzgan. However, as explained in the previous chapter, a Bactrian legal document produced seven years later in 659 refers to Kanag Guzgan as the ruler of this region.[582] Whether Kanag Guzgan sent his forces to stop al-Aḥnaf or made peace with him is not clear, but Guzgan was under the suzerainty of the western Turks at this time. However, the Turks did not react to the Arab Muslims and left the local rulers to deal with them.

With the logistical support from Talaqan and Faryab, the Arab Muslims reached Balkh. The elites of Balkh submitted without any resistance, made peace with al-Aḥnaf and accepted to pay tribute. Al-Aḥnaf appointed his cousin Usayd b. al-Mutashammis to collect this before leaving for Khwarazm. However, it was already autumn, and al-Aḥnaf had to return to Balkh before winter.[583] The collection of tribute in Balkh coincided with the *mihragān*,[584] or the autumn festival in which Usayd received some gold and silver objects, dinars and dirhams, and garments as gifts from the Balkhi elites. Being surprised by that, Usayd was told by the Balkhis that they often present gifts to their rulers on such occasions to make them kind to the people (*bi man wallīyanā nastʿṭifuhu bihi*).[585]

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[578] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2902.
[579] The term *qaṣr* does not mean palace in this narrative but is an Arabic equivalent for the Bactrian *λιζο*, meaning the fortress. This equivalence is also known from a few Arabic documents produced in Rob (see Khan, *The Arabic documents*, 122–139).
[580] In Arabic: *maṣāriʿ fityatan bi al-Juzjān* (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 407); Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2902.
[581] Al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-ahsrāf*, 12: 332.
[582] Bactrian document no. Nn in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 74–79.
[583] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān,* 408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2903.
[584] According to al-Birūnī, the *mihragān* was celebrated in Khurasan and the kings and people respected it very much (al-Birūnī, *Athār al-Bāqiya*, 222–24); A similar definition for the *mihragān* is given in Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, 509, 520.
[585] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2903; Al-Balādhurī mentions that al-Aḥnaf received some gifts during the *nawruz* festival but does not clarify where he received them (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 9: 358).

The reports about Balkh are vital to understand its political situation. Firstly, it confirms that Balkh did not have local troops to defend it, an issue already discussed in the previous chapter (2.1.3). Similarly, it shows that Balkh did not have a king to receive the gifts on the day of the *mihragān*, and the Balkhi elites recognised al-Aḥnaf's overlordship through his cousin. Presenting gifts to the rulers during the festivals and on other occasions was an old tradition mentioned in the previous chapter (2.3.2). Secondly, al-Aḥnaf did not go towards eastern Bactria but went towards Khwarazm, meaning Balkh was the most eastern point they wished to reach. In other words, Balkh was the end of the eastern conquests, which had begun in Nishapur. The Arab Muslims left the region after that (Figure 19).

3.2.4 Return to Iraq

Ibn ʿĀmir left Khurasan in 32–33/652–653 to go on hajj to thank God for his fruitful achievements.[586] The outcomes of his presence in Khurasan were many. He was successfully involved in local politics and appeared as a political leader among other regional rulers. He also managed to keep his forces fighting at a far distance from the Hijaz and Iraq without being dependent on those regions. His departure to Iraq also impacted Khurasan in two immediate ways. First, a certain Qārin from the *kārin* family gathered forces and, with Hephthalite support, tried to take back Nishapur, now controlled by the *kanārang* of Tus. [587] The few Arab Muslim troops Ibn ʿĀmir left behind had to deal with this. Secondly, the Arabian tribal leaders in the armies in Khurasan began fighting each other. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim -a leader from the tribe of Qays who had come to Khurasan with Ibn ʿĀmir -allegedly forged a letter (*iftaʿala ʿahdan*) in the name of Ibn ʿĀmir, and claimed the leadership of the Arab Muslims left in the region.[588] The *kārinids* put the Arab Muslims in a difficult situation and almost pushed them out.[589] However, Ibn Khāzim resisted and eventually defeated Qārin, but fighting with different rival groups continued for a longer period.[590]

The war with the *kārinids* and the tribal rivalry coincided with the first *fitna*, or social disturbance (36–40/656–661), in which caliph ʿUthmān was killed. ʿUthmān was accused of

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[586] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408: Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 9: 357; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2904.
[587] Al-Balʿamī mentions that this Qārin was the *marzbān* of a region between Qumis and Gurgan (al-Balʿamī, *Tārkīhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 590); Al-Ṭabarī does not call him the *marzbān*, but mentions that his forces came from Tabas, Quhistan, Herat and Badghis the regions defended by the Hephthliates in 651 (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2905).
[588] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 408; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2905.
[589] Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 15–16.
[590] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 5: 2905–96; Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 167.

nepotism, while his attempts to centralise political power and, incidentally, demand a larger slice of the locally raised (and largely spent) income from the provinces met with much opposition.[591] The first *fitna* divided the Arab Muslims around two characters: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661) who was selected as the commander of believers (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) after the death of ʿUthmān, and Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–680), the governor of Syria.[592] Eventually, ʿAlī was killed by a member of the Khārijites, a group that emerged in the course of the civil war, and Muʿāwiya became the *amīr al-muʾminīn*.[593] Muʿāwiya continued the centralisation of power begun by ʿUthmān and turned the office of *amīr al-muʾminīn* into dynastic rule that was rejected by some prominent Arabian leaders in the Hijaz and Iraq, and that became the reason for the second *fitna* (61–73/680–692).[594] The *fitna* and the far distance between Khurasan and the main centres of Arab Muslims' political power in the Hijaz and Iraq decreased the connection between the troops in Khurasan and the main garrisons in Iraq. That left the Arab Muslim troops in Khurasan on their own. Simultaneously, the kingdom of Guzgan and Balkh denied the payment of tributes that they had agreed to pay. Re-establishing Arab Muslim authority in Khurasan required political stability in the western regions, particularly in Iraq, from where the Arab Muslim forces came. The Umayyads secured this control, who were motivated to master Khurasan fully and absolutely.

3.3. Establishment of Umayyad authority in Khurasan

3.3.1. The Umayyad's claim to Khurasan

The establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (661–750) in Syria and its control over Iraq was followed by the Umayyads' expansion towards the East. Muʿāwiya appointed ʿAbd Allāḥ b. ʿĀmir over Basra and he sent Qays b. Ḥaytham to Khurasan, possibly with fresh troops from Iraq. In 42/662, the Umayyad forces attacked Guzgan and Balkh, in which parts of the Buddhist monastery of Naw Bahar were purposely damaged.[595] This was the earliest reported act of

[591] See Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78–140.
[592] Khaled Keshk suggested a new chronology for the reign of Muʿāwiya. He proposed the year 24/656 for the beginning of Muʿāwiya's reign (Khaled Keshk, "When Did Muʿāwiya Become Caliph?" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 31–42).
[593] Hannah-Lena Hageman, "History and Memory: Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography," (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014), 6, and "Was Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī a Khārijite? Rebellion in the Early Marwānid Period," 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): 445–68.
[594] Mehdy Shaddel Basir recently discussed the centralisation of political power by Muʿwāiya in an online meeting on 7 June 2021.
[595] Al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 409.

Umayyad iconoclasm in the east, which was not accidental, but an act of punishment. Al-Balādhurī mentions that only after this act the people of Balkh asked for peace and accepted the payment of tribute. This report indicates that the leader of Naw Bahar had in fact been rejecting the paying of tribute he had agreed to pay.[596]

The attack on Naw Bahar leads to an important point. It is likely that it was the leader of this Buddhist monastery who denied the payment. This leader could have been no one except the *barmak*, the keeper of Naw Bahar.[597] The stupa described by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang in 630 seems to have been damaged in this attack. Later, the authorities in Naw Bahar rebuilt the stupa, adding some new buildings for the servants, as mentioned in Arabic and Persian sources.[598] Once Balkh paid the tribute, the Umayyad troops returned to Inner Khurasan, indicating they did not plan to enter eastern Bactria.

The Arabic reports related to Khurasan between 43–51/663–672 do not offer a clear picture of Bactria in this period. They only speak about the Umayyad raids of some Bactrian cities as far as Chaghaniyan and eastern Bactria.[599] Raids on settlements in the Ghur mountains are also reported.[600] Possibly, the raids did not happen in Ghur but in Guzgan and the reporters misunderstood it later.[601] Ghur was a mountainous region to the southwest of Herat, and Muslims did not conquer it until the Ghaznavid period.[602] Al-Yaʿqūbī clarifies this issue further. He mentions that the Umayyad forces only entered the kingdom of Guzgan, but that they suffered from a shortage of food supplies and had to eat their horses.[603] This means the local rulers of Guzgan did not help the Arabs as they had done when al-Aḥnaf came through

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[596] Shaban rejected the authenticity of the reports related to the attack on Guzgan and Balkh. He argued that Qays b. Ḥaytham was sent to Khurasan on the condition that he remains neutral towards the local rulers in Khurasan. In Shaban's view, the source of this report is a person from the tribe of Qays, and it is evident that the reporter wanted to glorify the achievement of Qays in Khurasan (Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution,* 28–29). However, comparing the reports of Xuangzang and the Muslim geographers about the Naw Bahar shows that the damage happened. For details, see Étienne de la Vaissière et Philippe Marquis, "Nouvelles Recherches Sue Le Paysage Monumental De Bactres," *CRAI*, n. III (2013):1155–71.

[597] This was not the first time that the Arab Muslims made a peace treaty with a local religious leader, as they did it with the *herbad*, the high Zoroastrian priest of Darabgird in Fars earlier. But it was the first time they negotiated with a Buddhist leader in Bactria (Hind, "The First Arab Conquests in Fārs," 48). Later, the Umayyads and the Buddhist community experienced friendly relations in the east. See Derryl N. MacLean, *Religion and Society in the Arab Sind* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[598] La Vaissière and Marquis, " Nouvelles Recherches,"1165.

[599] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410.

[600] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 81

[601] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 84–85, 109–110.

[602] Gardīzī refers to the Samanid campaigns in Ghur in which only a few fortresses were taken. However, the actual conquest of Ghur happened later during the reign of Sultan Masʿud I (r. 421–432/1030–41) (Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 359); For more information, see Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Early Islamic History of Ghūr," *Central Asiatic Journal* 6, no. 2 (June 1961): 116–133.

[603] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tarikh*, 2: 131.

with his armies some thirty years earlier. It also shows that the Umayyad forces tried to secure Guzgan on their way to Balkh. These reports only refer to raids and do not report any attempts at a systematic conquest of Bactria. Even in this period, the Umayyad forces did not stay in Bactria but returned to Inner Khurasan after each raid. Then, the political situation changed, which forced the Arab Muslims to deploy many Arab Muslim soldiers from Iraq to Khurasan, which will be discussed next.

3.3.2 The great migration to Khurasan

In the year 51/671, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān (d. 53/673),[604] the Umayyad governor of Iraq, sent 50,000 soldiers from the garrisons of Basra and Kufa to Khurasan.[605] Though the Arabic narratives do not explain the reason behind this, sending such a large army to Khurasan must have been to defend the region from a great threat or was motivated by a desire to incorporate Khurasan into the Umayyad empire. In other words, the decision to undertake a costly and risky conquest of the province would not have been taken lightly and not without thorough deliberation weighing the factors involved, and exhaustive military and organisational preparation.

Modern scholarship has dealt with the Arab Muslim migration to Khurasan, but it fails to provide any satisfying explanation for it.[606] Shaban argued that this migration resulted from Ziyād's administrative policy in Iraq. According to Shaban, Ziyād reorganised the garrison of Basra and divided it into five parts (*akhmās*). The people of Tamīm, Bakr b. Wāʾil, Azd, ʿAbd al-Qays, and *ahl al-ʿāliya* (people from Mecca and Medina) settled in these parts. The army register for the stipends (*dīwān al-jund*) was updated, and many tribal warriors were not registered. Thus, they were sent to Khurasan.[607] However, the Arabic and Persian narratives do not confirm Shaban's argument. Moshe Sharon argued that sending migrants to Khurasan was part of a "premeditated policy of Muslims almost from the beginning of the conquest."[608] On the contrary, this chapter shows that there was no such policy. Daniel C. Dennet refers to the importance of this migration as it was larger than the number of migrants who moved to Egypt,

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[604] For his political career, see Khurshid Ahmad Fariq, *Ziyād b. Abīh* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966).
[605] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 69–70.
[606] Pourshariati has listed the arguments on this subject that were available until 1996 (Poursharati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 88–114). I did not repeat them here.
[607] Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 31–32.
[608] Cited in Poursharitati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 91.

but he does not discuss the reasons behind it.[609] Luce almost repeated Shaban's argument but added that sending forces to Khurasan was Muʿāwiya's decision to reduce the pressure on Iraq because of "overcrowding and population pressure experienced in Basra and Kufa".[610] However, Luce does not give any source for his presumption. To understand the true reasons behind the migration to Khurasan, we need to revisit the primary sources.

Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī provide some information on this migration led by a certain al-Ḥarithī (d. 53/674). The migrants crossed the provinces of Khuzistan, Fars, and Kirman to reach Khurasan. It was a journey of almost 2,500 km via the Zagros mountains and the great desert of Kirman.[611] The journey and their settlement in Khurasan took place over more than two years.[612] Pourshariati, who has discussed their settlement in detail, has argued that the migrants did not settle in Inner Khurasan but in Outer Khurasan, where its "topographical characteristics" made it "conducive to a tribal way of life."[613] Inner Khurasan was not comparable to the fertile inland delta of Marw, which had the capacity of feeding around 500,000 people.[614] Furthermore, the Marw oasis and its main city were heavily fortified, which made it an excellent place to stay for the new forces.[615] The settlement in the Marw region possibly had yet another reason for connecting these events to an earlier discussion in this chapter. Inner Khurasan was the territory of the *kanārang* of Tus, who had an old agreement with Ibn ʿĀmir reported by al-Yaʿqūbī and other historians mentioned earlier. Probably, they were not supposed to settle in his territory. In any case, the settlement sent a clear message to the locals: the migrants came there to stay permanently. The settlement of the newcomers was not peaceful. The Hephthalites objected to their presence.[616] The migrant forces fought them, particularly with the people of Amul and Zam, the two strategic crossing points on the Amu Darya.[617] Finally, they settled in Outer Khurasan.

A question that remains to be answered: Why did Ziyād send the migrants to Khurasan? Al-Dināwarī reports that Māhūy, the *marzbān* of Marw, fled to Abarshahr, but its residents did

[609] Dennet, *Conversion and the Poll Tax*, 106–107. Pourshariati has rejected Dennet's argument (Pourshariati "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 88).
[610] Luce, "Frontier Process," 123.
[611] The distance is 2,581 km based on the Google Map (accessed on 22 December 2020).
[612] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 410.
[613] Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tus," 116.
[614] La Vaissière, "The ʿAbbāsid Revolution in Marw," 113–119.
[615] Thanks to John Haldon, who highlighted this issue in an online conversation organised by the EMCO team on 23 November 2020 at Leiden University.
[616] Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 237.
[617] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410.

not let him in.[618] This happened before the Arab Muslim migrants arrived in the region. Being not welcomed, he decided to negotiate directly with the Arab Muslims. Al-Balādurī mentions that Māhūy then went to Kufa to meet ʿAlī, who interceded on his behalf, writing a letter to the local elites of Khurasan asking them to cooperate with Māhūy. Al-Dināwarī and al-Balādhurī do not explain why Māhūy left Marw, but their report shows that something important must have happened that forced him to leave Marw. Māhūy's move to Kufa might also have been related to the return of Yazdgird's son Peroz, who tried to re-establish the Sasanian empire, at least in the east. Since Māhūy was responsible for Yazdgird's death, he might have feared the revenge of the Sasanian King's son. That Peroz's attempts were partially successful – and Māhūy's fear of his power not unwarranted – is clear from the re-emergence of Sasanian structures in Khurasan around this time. In 657, some Sasanian administrators (*ʿāmil kasrā*) re-emerged in Nishapur and the Sasanian administration was re-established in parts of Khurasan.[619] As already mentioned, the *kārinids* rose up against the Arab Muslims around the same time, and Ibn Khāzim had a hard time putting them down. The Hephthalites, allies of the *kāranid*s, also supported Peroz.[620] Possibly, the Hephthalites decided not to support Māhūy, even though they had worked together with him in the past, because he had made a peace treaty with the Arab Muslims and provided them with local accommodation. This change in the political-military situation in Khurasan surely lies behind Māhūy flight from Marw.

The Chinese sources elucidate the political situation and show why Ziyād sent such an army to Khurasan. The *Tang Shu* ("History of the Tang") mentions:

> In the first year of the Longshuo's reign [i.e., 661], Peroz sent letters/words [to the Tang court] saying that he was constantly invaded by the Arabs (*Dāshī/Tāzī*), and thus he asked for help. The emperor ordered Wang Mingyuan, the chief of the Nanyan region in the Longzhau district as the envoy to the Western Regions (*xiyu*). Wang set up a new administrative arrangement in the region. He allocated the Ji Ling city [Zaranj in Sistan] as the Persian Protectorate (*dudufu*) to Peroz as the Protectorate General of that region. Since then, Peroz sent embassies several times with tributes to the emperor.[621]

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[618] Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 149.
[619] O. G. Bol'shakov, *Istoria xalifata* (Moskva: Vostočnaja Literatura, 1998), 3: 45. Also, see Domenico Agostini and Sören Stark, "Zāwulistān, Kāwulistan and the Land Bosi 波斯 – on the question of a Sasanian Court-in-Exile in the Southern Hindukush," *Studia Iranica* 45 (2016): 18; Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 78–79.
[620] Grenet, "Regionl Interaction," 210.
[621] *Tang Shu*, 111–112. Thanks to Shuqi Jia, who read and translated the Chinese text for me. For more information on the Sasanian princes in Chinese records, see Yingjun, "Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of Iranian Princes," 53, and Paolo Daffinà, "La Persia Sassanide Secondo le Fonti Cinesi," *Rivista Delgi*

The *Tang Shu* report clarifies that Peroz had been constantly active in the region after his father's death in 651 in Marw, but that he was unable to establish Sasanian authority in Khurasan. Peroz's chance of reviving the Sasanian empire decreased shortly before 661. The downfall of the Western Turks in 661 forced him to appeal to the Tang emperor for help. What kind of assistance he received from the Tang emperor is not clear. Given the far distance between China and Zaranj in Sistan, it is difficult to assume that the Tang forces accompanied Peroz to Zaranj, but it is possible that he was assisted financially. That would have allowed him to recruit local forces for his cause. In any case, it reflects the Tang's interest in keeping the power balance in the region by helping an anti-Umayyad force. Domenico Agostini and Sören Stark, who studied the relevant Chinese chronicles and the Persian apocalyptic texts, argued that Peroz's frequent contacts with the Tang emperor after 661 reflect "his increasingly difficult stand against the encroaching Muslim armies in Sistan."[622] Conversely, Ziyād's decision to increase the Arab Muslim military presence in Khurasan, probably responded to Peroz's continuing activities in the east.[623] However, Peroz returned to China in 673 (or 674) and died there in 678.[624] His return to China may have been related to the fact that he could not continue fighting the new forces which came from Iraq.[625]

Ziyād's policy restored Marw's central position in the region. Once again, Marw became the main military commanding zone to defend the empire –this time for the Umayyads– from invasions that came from the northeast. It turned Outer Khurasan into the largest Arab Muslim settlement east of the Euphrates. It facilitated military campaigns in Sogdiana via western Bactria for the next three decades. Ziyād's policy recalls the Sasanian strategy of settling forces to defend the eastern frontier.[626] However, Ziyād's policies to take full control of Khurasan for Umayyad strategic purposes, were incomplete by his death in 53/672. Nevertheless, he helped to establish Umayyad authority in Outer Khurasan.

Studi Orinetali 57 (1983): 121–170. For discussion on Wang Mingyuan's mission, see Chavannes, "Documents," 156.

[622] Agostini and Stark "Zāwulistān, Kāwulistan," 18.

[623] Haug also reached the same conclusion (Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94).

[624] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94.

[625] Peroz's activities were continued by his eldest son Narse. In 679, the Tang emperor sent him to the western regions with a Chinese army. However, helping Narse was not on the Chinese agenda. The Chinese wanted to destroy the Turkic confederation in Suyab. Being disappointed with the Chinese who withdrew their supports, Narse remained possibly in eastern Bactria till 708. Narse could not make a regional alliance against the Umayyads and had to return to China. Possibly, the Sasanians still had a court in exile in southern parts of the Hindukush until 747, before the Abbasid's takeover of the eastern regions. The Sasanian descendants tried their best to take back their lost empire to the last moment. See Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 94; Agostini and Stark, "Zāwulistān, Kāwulistān," 30–33; Yingjun, "Possible Connections between Historical Events and the Plots of," 54.

[626] See chapter three, section 3.2.1.

Following the endless back and forth between greater political entities attempting to establish direct control in the region and local rulers desiring political autonomy, local Arab rulers always looked for opportunities to increase their position at the expense of the Umayyad regime. The second *fitna* and the far distance from Iraq and Syria created room for some Arabian tribal leaders who had been settled in Khurasan to establish *de facto* rule in Khurasan.[627] Shortly after their settlement, they were absorbed into Khurasan, and created another independently ruled region among many other existing political groups. That is the subject of the following section.

3.3.3 ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim's de facto independence in Khurasan

Between 53–62/675–681, the Umayyad governors used the new migrant forces to raid the Bukhara region from their base in Marw.[628] However, they did not take the short route from Marw to Bukhara for unknown reasons. Instead, they went southward along Marw al-Rūd, traversed the kingdom of Guzgan, Balkh, and crossed the Amu Darya and the Iron Gate in Chaghaniyan. The western Bactrian rulers did not resist the newcomers who crossed into their territories.[629] Possibly, the Umayyads' focus on Sogdiana was the reason. Concentrating on Sogdiana was, in fact, shifting the geography of war and raid to the region outside Bactria. Similarly, the focus on plundering Sogdiana required more energy and time, which would divert the Umayyads' attention from establishing any garrison, planning for settlement in Bactria, or fighting with its local rulers. At the same time, the focus on Sogdiana would reduce tribal rivalries among the new migrants in Khurasan as it re-directed their energies and united them for war and raids. But that did not last long.

Serious tensions broke out among the tribal leaders in Khurasan with the second *fitna*. Parties aligned along old coalitions that had existed in the region, combined with rivalries that existed throughout the empire. The *fitna* divided people along the two conflictive poles: that of ʿAbd Allāh b. Zubayr (r. 65–73/684–692) centred in the Hijaz, and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 66–86 /685–705), who was stationed in Syria. In Khurasan, the tensions also had a tribal dimension. The tribal conflicts were between the tribe of Bakr b. Wāʾil, who had control of some areas in Herat; the tribe of Qays, that was stationed in Nishapur and had good relations with its local ruler; and the tribe of Tamīm, who had settled in the Marw region. The Azdis

[627] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 101.
[628] Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futuḥ*, 3: 314–316.
[629] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410–412.

lived in Marw, but they were a small group. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim represented the Qays but allied with the Tamīm against Bakr and Azd.[630] Salm b. Ziyād (d. 73/692) represented the Umayyads. Ibn Khāzim claimed Khurasan and competed with Salm over its control.[631] So, on the one side, there was Ibn Khāzim with his supporters from Qays and Tamīm. On the other, there were Bakr and Azd, who rivalled Ibn Khāzim. Nishapur, Herat, and Marw, which were areas of political tension earlier, now became areas of political rivalry between Arab tribesmen who settled in Khurasan.

The warriors of Bakr made the first move and objected to Ibn Khāzim, who was in Nishapur. Apparently, he enjoyed the tribute from Nishapur. They allegedly said: "how could he eat Khurasan without us?"[632] The people of Bakr fought Ibn Khāzim in Nishapur and then allied with the Hephthalites of Quhistan.[633] That recalls the alliance between the *kārin* family and the Hephthalites against the *kanārang* of Tus discussed earlier. However, Ibn Khāzim ruthlessly destroyed Bakr's military forces and appointed his son Muḥammad over Herat, which was the territory of the tribe of Bakr.[634] Resistance continued and after a series of conflicts, Ibn Khāzim established his authority over the Arabian tribal leaders in Khurasan.[635] He also voluntarily supported Ibn Zubayr against ʿAbd al-Malik.[636] That dragged Khurasan into a wider conflict.

Though the tribal war between Ibn Khāzim and his rivals mostly engulfed Inner and Outer Khurasan, it also impacted western Bactria. Ibn Khāzim took Balkh in 67–68/686–687 surely to quell opposing powers and confirm his own. However, he did not go beyond Balkh, indicating that the tribal conflicts did not involve the regions beyond Balkh.[637] The reaction of western Bactrian rulers to the tribal conflicts among the Arab Muslims is not fully known. A contemporary Bactrian document shows that an anonymous *ser* (*σηρο*) of the Turks ruled the Gaz region to the south of Balkh.[638] Other contemporary Bactrian documents from Rob and

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[630] For tribal rivalry in Khurasan, see Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and its Fall*, 411–413; Al-ʿAfnān, "Al-qabāyil al-ʿArabiyya fī Khurāsān," 124–126; Luce, "Frontier Process," 142–144.
[631] Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Salm b. Ziyād b. Abīhi," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com (accessed on 20 May 2021).
[632] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 414; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ahsrāf*, 12: 310–313.
[633] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 105.
[634] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 102–103; Al-Ṭabarī refers to a poem saying that Ibn Khāzim ruthlessly killed 8,000 soldiers from the tribe of Bakr (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 496); Luce mentions that many of the Bakr people fled to Sistan after this massacre (Luce, "Frontier Process," 143).
[635] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 7: 489–490.
[636] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 168.
[637] Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics* 1: 257; Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 103–104.
[638] Bactrian document no. S in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 94–96; For the term *σηρο* on coins, see Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 2: 521–22.

Kadagstan show that these regions were ruled by their local rulers without political disruptions.[639] However, the numismatic evidence from Guzgan shows that Arab-Sasanian coins countermarked with the name of Skag, the king of Guzgan, circulated in local exchange.[640] The countermark revalidated these coins and made them acceptable, indicating an economic connection between the king of Guzgan and the Arab Muslims in Khurasan.

The alliance between the Qays and Tamīm did not last long. Ibn Khāzim did not share power with them but kept all matters firmly in the hands of his own tribe of Qays.[641] At the same time, Ibn Zubayr and ʿAbd al-Malik each looked for loyal supporters in the eastern regions. Khurasan had a large Arab Muslim population that could be involved in the second *fitna*. Ibn Zubayr had supporters in the east and Ibn Khāzim had already expressed his support on his own accord.[642] Once Iraq was secured for ʿAbd al-Malik, he sent a letter to Ibn Khāzim offering him Khurasan's governorship for seven or ten years in exchange for his support. For Ibn Khāzim, accepting ʿAbd al-Malik's offer would have been equal to losing his independent position in Khurasan because he had never been appointed by ʿAbd al-Malik. In fact, Ibn Khāzim saw himself as no less important a ruler than ʿAbd al-Malik. Ibn Khāzim rejected it and forced the messenger to eat ʿAbd al-Malik's letter as a gesture of utter contempt for its sender.[643]

To expand his influence in Khurasan, ʿAbd al-Malik applied a policy of "divide and rule". Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ mentions that ʿAbd al-Malik next sent a letter to Bukayr b. Washāḥ (d. 77–78/696–697), saying: "if you kill or oust Ibn Khāzim from Khurasan, then you will be the governor."[644] Bukayr was the ideal candidate for that mission. He was from the Tamīm tribe and served as the chief of the guards (*ṣāḥib al-shurṭa*) of Muḥammad, Ibn Khāzim's son in Herat. ʿAbd al-Malik's suggestion was a great opportunity for Bukayr. He accepted ʿAbd al-Malik's overlordship, mobilised the Tamīmis, and killed Ibn Khāzim in 72/691.[645] With the

[639] Bactrian documents no. Jg and Ji in Sims-Williams, *BDII*, 134–35, 138–39, and documents no. R, S, Ss, T in Sims-Williams, *BDI*, 92–93, 94–96, 96–97, 98–103.
[640] This coin has the name of Zhulad as well. Malik, *Arab-Sasanian numismatics*, 2: 462–63; Vondrovec, *Coins of Iranian Huns*, 2: 534.
[641] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 593–98.
[642] Numismatics evidence from Fars suggests the local rulers of Fars and Kirman supported Ibn Zubayr. Coins with the Middle Persian language (*ʾmwl y wylwyšnykʾan*), an equivalent for the *amīr al-muʾminin*, were issued in his name in 63/682 (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 28).
[643] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 415; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 831; Al-Yaʿqūbī mentions that Ibn Khāzim burned the letter and mixed it with water, and then forced the messenger to eat it (al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 190).
[644] Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, 295; Al-Balʿamī also says that ʿAbd al-Malik asked Bukayr to kill Ibn Khāzim and represent the caliph in Khurasan (al-Balʿamī, *Tārkīhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 781).
[645] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 415–416; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 832–34.

death of Ibn Khāzim, his *de facto* independent rule in the region collapsed. Bukayr practically acted as an autonomous governor, though he nominally recognised ʿAbd al-Malik's overlordship.

The tribal rivalries did not end after Ibn Khāzim's death. To end the conflicts, some tribal leaders (*wujūh ahl Khurāsān*) informed ʿAbd al-Malik about the political situation and emphasised that Khurasan's as the eastern frontier (*thaghr al-mashriq*) was precarious, and asked for a Qurayshi leader who could end the tribal conflicts in Khurasan. They expected that a Qurayshi leader, who was not part of the tribal political conflicts in Khurasan, could bring political stability to the region. That means the tribal leaders would not accept the authority of anyone except a Qurayshi leader (*illā rajul min Quraysh*) who was not involved in tribal rivalries.[646]

In response to the Khurasani leaders, ʿAbd al-Malik appointed Umayya b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 87/706) over Khurasan. Umayya arrested and killed Bukayr in 77/696. Bukayr had been borrowing money from Sogdian merchants in Marw. Fearing that Bukayr was raising money to raid and establish independent rule in Sogdiana with the aid of Arab Muslim forces, this seems to have motivated Umayya's killing of Bukayr.[647] At the same time, the Sogdian merchants of Marw saw the presence of Arab Muslims as a unique opportunity to enhance and expand their trade interests in the region by funding the Arab Muslims and encouraging them to conquer Sogdiana.[648] Bukayr's death allowed Umayya to establish Marwānid authority in Outer Khurasan, but it did not remove Ibn Khāzim's family entirely.

3.3.4 The kingdom of Mūsā b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim in Tirmidh

Ibn Khāzim's son Mūsā went to Tirmidh in northern Bactria and founded his independent rule. The kingdom of Mūsā in Tirmidh was the outcome of the political situation in the region. The tribal leaders of Marw had submitted to the Marwānid authority. Marw was not safe for Mūsā after his father's death, so he moved to Sogdiana with the treasure he carried from Marw. Al-Ṭabarī, whose report is the main source of information on Mūsā, says that Mūsā's attempt to ally with the Sogdian rulers failed and that Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarkand, did not allow him

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[646] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 416; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 860; Asking for a Qurayshi representative to end the tribal conflicts in Khurasan is highly important for understanding the reason behind sending the Abbasid's missionaries to Khurasan by the Abbasid Imam Muḥammad b. ʿAlī.
[647] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān,* 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 860–62.
[648] Étienne de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders : A History*, trans. James Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 273–76; Also, see Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 107.

to stay in his territory. It is said that thieves (*al-ṣʿālik*) had joined Mūsā, which provided enough reason for Ṭarkhūn to reject him. The report of *al-ṣʿālik* joining Mūsā can be simply a mechanism to dehumanise the rebellions in the later Arabic narratives.[649] Al-Ṭabarī also says that a companion of Mūsā killed the Sogdian champion of Samarkand, and that kindled Ṭarkhūn's anger. In any case, Mūsā's attempt to take the city of Kish also failed, but Ṭarkhūn allowed him to go to Tirmidh.[650]

Tirmidh was ruled by the *Tirmidh-shāh*, who had enemies among the local elites in Tirmidh. An unidentified member of the elites from Tirmidh received Mūsā warmly. He wanted to remove the *Tirmidh-shāh* by the hands of Mūsā doubtlessly to further his own interests. With the advice of that elite person, Mūsā visited the *Tirmidh-shāh*, presented him with gifts and acted like a servant, and in return, the *Tirmidh-shāh* invited Mūsā and his men to a banquet arranged in his palace. At the end of the feast, Mūsā refused to leave the palace, defeated the palace guards and forced *Tirmidh-shāh* to leave the city. He then took control of the city. Whether Mūsā and his elite informer continued to work together is not told. The humiliated *Tirmidh-shāh* turned to the Turks who refused to help him. He then turned to Umayya b. ʿAbd Allāh the Umayyad governor of Khurasan, who granted his support. However, Mūsā defeated the forces of the governor of Khurasan sent to help the *Tirmidh-shāh*. Seeing Mūsā's victory, the Turks decided to try and take back Tirmidh from Mūsā, but he defeated them too.[651] Mūsā's victories over the Umayyads and the Turks enabled him to turn Tirmidh into his area of political control and continue as the king of Tirmidh for twelve years. The kingdom of Tirmidh is a good example of local power politics in which the Arab Muslims were just another political player. The news of Mūsā's kingdom in Tirmidh and the governor's inability to suppress it echoed in Iraq and Syria and urged ʿAbd al-Malik to embark on a new policy that added to the political complexity in Khurasan. That was to send the Muhallabids to Khurasan.[652]

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[649] Hanna-Lena-Hageman discussed the importance of this issue to understand how the Muslim writers looked back at the rebellion that occurred two or three centuries before they compiled their works (personal Communication, 20 December 2020); Peter Webb discussed *al-ṣʿālik* and its meaning in Arabic poetries (Peter Webb, *The Arab Thieves -al-Maqrīzī's "luṣūṣ al-ʿArab" Al-Maqrīzī's al-Ḫabar ʿanal-bašar v, Sections1–2: The Arab Thieves* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[650] Al-Balādhurī does not elaborate on it but gives a short narrative on Mūsā (al-Balādurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417–419); Al-Ṭabarī gives detailed information on Mūsā (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1145–1164).

[651] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417–419; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1145–1149.

[652] I use the Muhallabids for al-Muhallab b. Abī Sufra, his sons and relatives. It is an Anglicised form of the Arabic *al-muhālaba* mentioned by al-Sullāmī (al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār Wulāt Khurāsān*, 100).

3.3.5 The Muhallabids between Mūsā and the Umayyads

The political situation in Khurasan motivated ʿAbd al-Malik to appoint al-Muhallab b. Abī Sufra (d. 82/701), a senior leader from the tribe of Azd with solid military and political experience, over Khurasan.[653] Al-Muhallab had a long and impressive career. His father is said to have been a Persian weaver from the island of Khark in the Persian Gulf who had migrated to Basra, where he was accepted as an Azdi member.[654] Al-Muhallab had already served under the governors of Khurasan before the second *fitna* in which he supported Ibn Zubayr.[655] Later, however, he shifted his loyalty and supported ʿAbd al-Malik. The tribe of Azd remained loyal to the Umayyads and helped them in their difficult times.[656] He was known for his generosity, loyalty, capability in managing difficult situations, and good relations with ʿAbd al-Malik.[657] He also was on good terms with al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 95/714) the most famous Marwānid governor of Iraq.[658] In al-Ḥajjāj's words, narrated by al-Ṭabarī, the Muhallabids were the "guardians of the borders" (*ḥumāt al-thughūr*).[659] ʿAbd al-Malik's decision to send al-Muhallab, one of his most loyal and capable generals to Khurasan, shows that the political situation was fragile and needed special attention.

Upon his arrival in Khurasan in 79–80/698–699, al-Muhallab went to Balkh, from where he crossed the Amu Darya and besieged the city of Kish, which belonged to Ṭarkhūn the king of Samarkand. The reason behind this campaign is not clear. However, after two years of fruitless fighting in Kish, the threat of the Sogdians, and his hostility with the Muḍr tribe, al-Muhallab was forced to make peace with the ruler of Kish, take tribute (*fidya*) and return to Marw. He died on the way at Zaghul in Marw al-Rūd in 82/701 and was buried there.[660] On his deathbed, he appointed his son Yazīd (d. 102/720), whose position was confirmed by al-Ḥajjāj.[661]

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[653] Al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 289.
[654] Patricia Crone, "al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, https://referenceworks.brillonline.com (accessed on 20 May 2021).
[655] Martin Hinds, *An Early Islamic Family from Oman: Al-ʿAwtabī's Account of the Mullabids* (University of Manchester, 1991), 49; Also, see Syed Muḥammad Yūsuf, "The life of Al-Muhallab b. Abi Ṣufra" (PhD diss., Aligarh University, 2002).
[656] Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 400.
[657] Hinds, *An Early Islamic Family from Oman*, 92–93.
[658] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1033; For their friendly relation reflected in most recent work, see Petra Sijpesteijn, "Closing Ranks: Discipline and Loyalty in the Umayyad Army," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 30 (2022):469–499, and Hnna-Lena-Haggeman, "Was Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī a Khārijite? Rebellion in the Early Marwānid Period," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 30 (2022): 445–468.
[659] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1033.
[660] Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 417; Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1040–1041.
[661] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1085.

Al-Muhallab's campaign in Kish and Yazīd's presence in Khuttal did not effect Mūsā's kingdom negatively. In fact, his power increased over the course of time. Many soldiers of the beaten "Peacock Army" (*jaysh al-ṭawāwīs*), the elite warriors of Iraq led by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ashʿath al-Kindī (d. 85/704) in Sistan, joined Mūsā in Tirmidh. These soldiers took refuge in Tirmidh because they refused al-Hajjāj's command to fight the king of Kabul (*al-Rutbīl*). They crossed Herat and Guzgan without being stopped by Yazīd or the local western Bactrian rulers. Some warriors from the Tamīm, Qays, Rabīʿa, and Yaman also joined Mūsā. Among them were some people who had fought Mūsā's father but now joined Mūsā to fight against Yazīd.[662] Two Sogdian brothers named Ḥurayth and Thābit, the sons of Qutba, joined Mūsā with their personal troops, and their Arab allies from Marw. Ḥurayth supported al-Muhallab and helped him in his campaign in Kish, but he was punished by al-Muhallab later in Marw for his secret contact with the Sogdians. Feeling unsafe in Marw, the Sogdian brothers joined Mūsā.[663] The coming of all these different people to Tirmidh provided Mūsā with a great military force.

Despite all these developments, the Muhallabids did not bother Mūsā while he was an independent ruler and his kingdom turned into a safe place for anti-Umayyads in the east. Al-Ṭabarī shows that the Muhallabids' reluctance to obstruct Mūsā was not out of fear or respect, but rather had practical reasons. According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Muhallab told his sons that as long as Mūsā was alive, he was considered a threat to the Marwanids, and for that reason, the Muhallabids could continue as the guardians of the frontier region of Khurasan. However, once Mūsā was removed, then the Muhallabids would be dismissed from Khurasan because the anti-Umayyad threat would also disappear.[664] Whether this event took place or not, al-Ṭabarī assigns al-Muhallab sound political insight, namely that the presence of Mūsā as independent ruler in the region ensured his family's position. They were needed to keep the independent ruler in check to secure the border as long as Mūsā remained an unreliable ally. In other words, Mūsā was a threat to the Marwānid Caliphate, but his existence was an opportunity for the Muhallabids to continue as the governors of Khurasan. Though they were loyal to the caliph, the Muhallabids' political interest was not necessarily the same as that of the caliph's.

The kingdom of Mūsā in Tirmidh ended when Yazīd turned against the Sogdian brothers who had joined Mūsā. For unknown reasons, Yazīd killed relatives of the Sogdian

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[662] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1045–1046, 1055–1105–1125, 1152.
[663] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1081–1082, 1108–1111.
[664] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1151–52.

brothers Hurayth and Thābit and seized their properties. Thābit -who had been very respected by the locals, using his name in the taking of oaths- took refuge with Ṭarkhūn the king of Samarkand, who sheltered him. In response to Yazīd's action, Ṭarkhūn called for a regional alliance against Yazīd. As a result, local kings from Bukhara, Chaghaniyan, a certain al-Subul (Tr. *Sülü*), and the Hephthalite *nizak* from Badghis in western Bactria joined Ṭarkhūn. However, Ṭarkhūn did not initiate attacks on Yazīd, but sent the Sogdian brothers and the forces to Tirmidh. At the same time, Mūsā was supported by members from the tribes of the Tamīm, Rabīʿa, Qays, and Yaman.[665] This was the first, but certainly not the last, regional alliance in which the Sogdians, the Hephthalites, northern Bactrians, and some Arabs cooperated to remove the Umayyad governor from Khurasan.

The Sogdian brothers revealed their interest in replacing Yazīd with Mūsā. That the local regional forces joined out of resentment against Umayyad rule would in fact agree that Mūsā become their overlord seems, however, unlikely. The sources place this in the mouth of Mūsā's advisors, who allegedly warned him that even if they defeated Yazīd, then the caliph won't remain silent and would send another administrator to Khurasan. In other words, they should maintain their relations with Yazīd. They also insisted that the Sogdians would not allow Mūsā to rule there anymore if he removed Yazīd. Mūsā followed his advisors and argued that it is better for him to remain in Tirmidh. Mūsā's reluctance to fight Yazīd and his rejection of the Sogdians' plan to replace him with Yazīd reflects his mistrust of the Sogdians. It also shows that Mūsā was aware that Yazīd was not interested to fight him. Remaining neutral was to their benefit. Mūsā's local supporters might have resented his stance, and Ṭarkhūn and other local rulers returned to their areas. Shortly after, internal rivalry broke out between Mūsā and the Sogdian brothers, and the alliance failed. Seeing it as an opportunity, the Hephthalites and the Turks tried to take Tirmidh from Mūsā and in a series of wars, Ḥurayth was killed. Later, Thābit was murdered in a plot arranged by Mūsā's men against the latter's will.[666] This created anger among the Sogdian allies of Mūsā.

The Sogdians eventually managed to remove Mūsā with help from Marw. A change in the governorship of Khurasan accelerated it. Shortly after the death of the Sogdian brothers, Yazīd was dismissed by al-Ḥajjāj and his brother al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Muhallab was appointed as governor of Khurasan.[667] Al-Ḥajjāj was unhappy with Yazīd as the latter often ignored al-

[665] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1152.
[666] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1153–1161.
[667] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1161.

Ḥajjāj because he followed the caliph's orders and not al-Ḥajjāj. Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī mentions that Yazīd was a great governor and often rejected al-Ḥajjāj's orders to conquer Sogdiana. He adds that al-Ḥajjāj brought all Arab Muslims of Iraq under his control but failed to impose his will upon Yazīd.[668] Unlike Yazīd, al-Mufaḍḍal was not able to show strong opposition to al-Ḥajjāj. In contrast, he wanted to show he was the right man for the job and was loyal to al-Ḥajjāj. Hence, al-Mufaḍḍal decided to remove Mūsā.[669] He dispatched the forces of Khurasan led by ʿUthmān b. Masʿūd, the cousin of the Sogdian brothers. ʿUthmān was a Sogdian and wanted to take revenge on behalf of his cousins who were killed by Mūsā. Volunteers who joined them from the Marw region were registered in the *dīwān al-jund* (army register of stipends) and received salaries.[670] Al-Mufaḍḍal also ordered his brother Mudrik who was in Balkh, to join ʿUthmān. Possibly, this was the first time that the forces of Khurasan were led not by an Arab Muslim general, but by a local Sogdian who served the Umayyad governor of Khurasan.

In Balkh, ʿUthmān called for the formation of a regional alliance against Mūsā. Ṭarkhūn and al-Subul joined ʿUthmān, indicating they preferred to join a Sogdian and not assist Mūsā, who was their former ally but refused to act against Yazīd. For unknown reasons, the Hephthalites did not join them. Mūsā's bravery in the war did not help either, and he and many of his Arab supporters were killed by ʿUthmān's men as atonement for the deaths of Thābit and Hurayth. The city of Tirmidh was given to Mudrik, who handed it over to ʿUthmān.

Al-Mufaḍḍal's act against Mūsā was contrary to al-Muhallab's advice, who understood the delicate balance of power in the frontier region of Khurasan. As said earlier, al-Muhallab warned his sons that they must not disturb Mūsā because the presence of Mūsā would justify the continuation of the Muhallabids' governorship over Khurasan. Al-Ṭabarī explains that al-Mufaḍḍal had acted in order to show off his loyalty to al-Ḥajjāj (*arāda al-yaḥẓi ʿinda al-Ḥajjāj*) and his capability as governor to eradicate a rebel.[671] In other words, Mūsā's death was a political gift given by the governor of Khurasan to al-Ḥajjāj. However, we will see that it caused the removal of the Muhallabids from Khurasan. The death of Mūsā was an offer to the Sogdians who wanted to take revenge. Mūsā's removal ended the first Arab Muslim kingdom established in Bactria. It also brought Tirmidh under the control of the Sogdian ally of al-

[668] Ibn al-Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Futūḥ*, 7: 131.
[669] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1161.
[670] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 12: 313.
[671] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1161–64.

Mufaḍḍal. The story of Mūsā raises an important question. If the Muhallabids were aware of the region's delicate local political situation, how did they interact with western Bactrian rulers? The following section will look at this issue.

3.3.6 The Muhallabids and Bactrian local rulers

The Muhallabids followed a general policy towards Bactrian rulers. They wanted local rulers to recognise their overlordship and pay them tribute. Therefore, they did not hesitate to exploit any opportunity provided by local political rivalries that would benefit them. The example of Khuttal shows their policy. As already pointed out, al-Muhallab led a campaign in Kish to the north of the Amu Darya. His presence was seen as an opportunity by some elites in Khuttal, the region located in the northeast of Bactria. According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Subul, the king of Khuttal, had a cousin who wanted to remove the king but needed outside help. So, he visited al-Muhallab and invited him to conquer Khuttal. In response, al-Muhallab sent his son Yazīd with troops to take Khuttal on behalf of the king's cousin.

The king of Khuttal's reaction was a surprise. He knew the Arab Muslims well, their language, war tactics, and was aware of the alliance between Yazīd and his cousin. Therefore, he played a 'game' that must have astonished Yazīd. The king's forces attacked the enemy, consisting of his cousin and Yazīd's men, while shouting the Arabic *takbīr*. The king's cousin assumed that Yazīd had betrayed him and had turned against him. He decided to fight the attackers, whom he assumed were the Muslims of Yazīd's army. He was, however, captured and killed at the king's order. Seeing this situation, Yazīd visited the king in his fortress in Khuttal, where they concluded a peace treaty. The king paid tribute (*fidya*) to Yazīd, who left Khuttal after that.[672] Perhaps, in Yazīd's view, it did not matter who ruled Khuttal. All he wanted was a local ally who would pay him tribute. The king provided both. At the same time, the king did not want another force in his region, so by killing his cousin and making peace with Yazīd, he prevented Yazīd's interference.

After Khuttal, Yazīd, and his brother al-Mufaḍḍal succeeding him, attacked Badghis with the aim of subduing the *nizak* of Badghis. Their military operations were done when the *nizak* was away from Badghis. In his absence, the Umayyad forces attacked the *nizak*'s fortress,

[672] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1040–41.

which forced the *nizak* to make a peace treaty with the Muhallabids.[673] As a result, the *nizak* paid tributes, and the Arab Muslim forces left his region. This means the Umayyads did not want to engage in war in the mountains of Badghis.

The numismatic evidence confirms the Muhallabids' overlordship in western Bactria. A few silver dirhams produced in Guzgan reflect the overlordship of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab. They are extremely rare and have no parallel in Umayyad coinage.[674] They have different legends in Arabic, Bactrian, and Middle Persian, and countermarks on their margin. Possibly, they were part of the hoard that showed up in Kabul in the early nineteenth century which then ended up in different museums and private collections in the United Kingdom and France.[675] On the obverse of the coin, the name of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, and the legend *bism Allāh al-ʿaẓīm*," In the name of God, the great", are written in Arabic. The image of the Sasanian king and the Middle Persian legend are also there. On the reverse, the coins have a unique and rather enigmatic Arabic legend: "struck for *jizya* in Juzjan" (*ḍuriba jizyatan bi-l-Juzjān*). Besides the Arabic writing, the name of Zhulad Guzgan, the local king of Guzgan (r. 80–91/699–711), occurs in Bactrian. The date and the place of mint are written in Middle Persian. The coins are countermarked by a *tamgha* or stamp representing the name of the local kings. While the coins make an unambiguous reference to *jizya*, this term could refer to tribute in a more general sense, and could have been paid as a bulk sum, rather than as a poll tax more specifically, which was imposed as a personal obligation. Whether this coin was minted on the order of Yazīd or of Zhulad king of Guzgan for the payment of tribute or taxes is not fully understood.[676] In any case, with their combination of names and languages the coins minted in Guzgan witness on the one hand the diverse but integrated character of the region, while the name of Yazīd and specific sentences in Arabic as well as the administrative fiscal term indicate the participation of Yazīd as overlord in this fragmented political landscape.[677]

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[673] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8: 1129–31, 1144; Al-Balʿamī mentions that Yazīd sent some spies to Badghis to see when the *nizak* leave his fortress (al-Balʿamī, *Tārkīhnāma-yi Ṭabarī*, 1: 812).

[674] Two of them were in auction on 22 October 2020, in Sotheby's, in the Upper Grosvenor Gallery, The Aeolian Hall, Bloomfield Place New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA.

[675] Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."

[676] Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."; Malik has published this coin, but he does not offer any solution to that (Mehdi Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1, 71–72); For the coins of Zhulad Guzgan, see Vondrovec, *Coinage of the Iranian Huns*, 531–32, Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians*, 180.

[677] Despite this outstanding reference to *jizya* payments, the Muslim authorities would hardly have tried to enforce a regular and strict tax collection in the mountainous area of western Bactria, where independent rulers remained largely in place. Therefore, these coins cannot be taken as evidence of Umayyad *jizya* imposed on regular people in Guzgan. For Yazīd, this was not only earning income but a prestigious act as he could bring down the powerful local western Bactria princes to their knees. The standing warrior with a spear in full armour on the coin's reverse might represent Yazīd or ʿAbd al-Malik. These coins are very unusual and have no parallel throughout Umayyad numismatic history. Apart from the Guzgan coins, al-Muhallab or his son Yazīd minted an Arab-Sasanian coin in

The Muhallabids commissioned ʿAbd al-Malik's post-reform coins in Khurasan. Unlike the Arab-Sasanian coins with Sasanian iconography and Middle Persian legend, the post-reform coins had no image and only Arabic text. Joe Cribb, who has studied a coin hoard produced in Guzgan in this period, argued that post-reform dirhams were minted in Guzgan in 79/694–695, precisely one year after these coins were introduced in Syria.[678] The dirham from Guzgan minted in 79/694–695 has the name of Amber (*αμβηρο*). Possibly, they were minted in Amber, when al-Muhallab was in Khurasan. One year later, the post-reform dirhams were minted in an unknown mint called 'Tukharistan' that may not have been a specific location, but perhaps just an indication to imply that the whole region recognised ʿAbd al-Malik's overlordship. In the year 82/701, post-reform dirhams were minted in Balkh, and this was before the death of al-Muhallab in Marw al-Rūd. Therefore, the post-reform coins must have been minted at the order of al-Muhallab to show his loyalty to the Marwānid caliph only and were not intended to circulate for commercial use. In Cribb's view, these coins were produced based on copies sent from Syria and were prepared as an "act of prestige", reflecting the reach of ʿAbd al-Malik's suzerainty as far as Guzgan and Balkh.[679] But it is unknown if the actual mint was sent at the request of al-Muhallab, or if the local mint masters produced coins with the names of cities in Bactria.

After all, the Muhallabids' policy was general. They were not interested in war but invested in infrastructure in Khurasan. They built gardens and palaces and were famous for being generous to the people.[680] They interacted with local rulers in Guzgan, Badghis, Khuttal, and Balkh, who recognised their overlordship and paid tribute. They did not interfere in local rulers' internal affairs and often left their areas after taking tributes. The Muhallabids were the true guardians of the eastern borders. During their governorship, Bactria remained in the hands of the local rulers who ruled independently according to the model by now familiar to the region. However, the Umayyads' policy towards Bactria changed from peaceful cooperation to violent conquest in the second fifty years, which turned Bactrian rulers against the Umayyads. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

78/693 in Marw with a unique legend. Amin Amini, who studied this coin, argued that the Arabic legend "God's grace" (*barakatun min Allāh*) on the margin replaced *bism Allāh* that used to be added to the margin earlier. The Middle Persian legend "chief of believers" (*rad ī wurrōyišnīgān*) replaced *rad* with *amīr.* Amini adds that this was the last Arab-Sasanian coin minted in Marw (Amin Amini, "Muʿarrifi sikka-yi wizha bā tarāz sikkahā-yi ʿArab-Sāsānī," *Shahr-i Kuhan* (2015): 1–2).

[678] Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."; Al-Dināwarī mentions that ʿAbd al-Malik issued his coins in 74/689–690 (al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, 322).

[679] Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."; Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 338–339.

[680] Fāmī Hiravī, *Tārīkh-i Herāt*, 7–9.

Conclusion

The first fifty years of the Arab Muslim presence in Khurasan discussed in this chapter can be viewed as a *transitional period* for the conquests of Khurasan. It can be divided into four stages. In the first stage, the Arab Muslims acted as an outside force and were involved in local politics by the *kanārang* of Tus.[681] They restored the *kanārang*'s authority over Nishapur and other areas in Inner Khurasan and received tributes for their achievements. In the second stage, supported by a group of the Sasanian cavalry, the Arab Muslims moved beyond Marw al-Rūd and entered western Bactria. They engaged in war with the Hephthalite forces, but with the help of the locals, they crossed Guzgan and reached Balkh. However, they did not enter eastern Bactria.

The Arab Muslims' involvement in local politics brought them into close contact with local rulers who recognised the Arab Muslims as a potential political and military ally. The peace treaties represented mutual political agreements and provided room for cooperation between them. However, the Arab Muslims did not build any garrisons in the region, and there was no plan for permanent settlement. Unlike in other places in the empire, the Umayyad soldiers did not bring families with them.[682] Instead, the local rulers in Nishapur and Marw hosted them. Though they changed the local power balance to benefit the *kanārang* of Tus in Inner Khurasan, they did not interfere in Bactrian local politics.[683] Hence, there was no reason for the Bactrian rulers to fight them. During these two stages, Khurasan cannot be considered to have been part of the Umayyad empire despite the Arab Muslim presence in the region. Al-Yaʿqūbī's list of the provinces that paid taxes during the reign of Muʿāwiya does not include Khurasan, indicating that this was general knowledge.[684]

Numismatic evidence supports this idea. The Arab-Sasanian coins with short legends stating *jayyīd* (excellent, pure, good quality) on the margin were minted in the eastern regions after the death of Yazdgird III. These coins were often said to have been minted in 30/651 in Marw and were taken as a symbol of the conquests of the region.[685] But, the legend *jayyid* refers to the quality of the coin and not the authority who minted them. Michael Bates suggested

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[681] This supports Pourshariati's argument that the regions controlled by the Parthian nobles did not fight the Arab Muslims. In other words, the Parthians were reluctant to fight the Arab Muslim forces and left the *parsig* rulers of the quarter of the South alone (Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 4); Also, see Huag, *The Eastern Frontier*, 83.
[682] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 78.
[683] Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 416–417.
[684] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 143.
[685] Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 78.

that the Muslims had no official coins until 35/655, and the first official coins were minted by ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir from 42/687 when he was appointed as governor of Basra by Muʿāwiya.[686] Similarly, Hodge Mehdi Malik argued that the Arab-Sasanian coins with the name of Ibn ʿĀmir were minted in Marw (*MLW*) in 41/681, which was the second round of his governorship over Basra.[687] That means Ibn ʿĀmir minted no coins in his name in Khurasan when he was there to help the *kanārang* of Tus. He left Khurasan after that and brought a great amount of tribute from Khurasan. In other words, the Arab Muslims ruled in Marw after they settled there in 51/671 and produced coins. However, they operated as one party amongst many in Bactria and Sogdiana and did not operate as a singular overlord or a sole ruler by minting coins there.

These two stages cannot be called "conquest". The reason is that the Arab Muslims did not have any pre-planned agenda to conquer Khurasan. They also did not fight with local rulers except in Nishapur, Marw al-Rūd and Guzgan. No garrison was built, no permanent settlement was planned, and no regular taxation was imposed on the locals. The nature of their presence in Khurasan was the result of a "reciprocal agreement" made between them and the *kanārang* of Tus. Instead, they "raided" western Bactria and then "returned" to Inner Khurasan.[688] These raids cannot be labelled as "conquests".

The cooperation between the *kanārang* of Tus and Ibn ʿĀmir leads to another significant point: the Arab Muslims' presence in Khurasan was the result of their playing off local politics well. The Arab Muslim goal was and remained the conquest of the Sasanian quarter of the south, the largest and the richest part of the Sasanian empire. The quarter of the south extended from Iraq to Sistan. The most important battles against the Sasanians happened here, and the Arabians of Bahrayn and Oman also focussed on the Fars region. Sistan was a rich province with access to the southern trade route to India; Khurasan in contrast was far

[686] Michael Bates, "Coins of ML, 20–32," published on his Academia.edu page (15 February 2015): 1–6, https://www.academia.edu/6558309/Coins_of_Marw_651_680 (accessed on 7 November 2021).
[687] Malek, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 253.
[688] In his PhD dissertation, Luce introduced the term "raid and return" to discuss this period. Luce suggested different stages for the conquest. According to Luce, the "Muslim Umayyad authority in Khurāsān can be divided into three distinctive stages of development. The first stage was one of raids (21–64/641–684) …its second phase (54–63/673–682) was one of settlement…and third and final stage of development (92–128/715–745) witnessed…a period of misgovernance...". Luce's proposed stages help understand the political situation in Umayyad Khurasan. However, he does not consider local politics and its importance in the shaping of the conquest (Luce, "Frontier Process," 112–113). His terminology "raid and return" was adopted by Haug in his discussion on the conquests of Khurasan. Haug argued that the Arab Muslims did not have an organised and standard army, but various tribal leaders led their men in the battles. Therefore, the nature of the army did not allow any systematic conquests (Haug, *The Eastern Frontiers*, 81); Similarly, Malik argued that the early period was all "raiding expedition designed to secure the payment of tribute." (Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 17).

away and controlled by the Hephthalites and the Turks; fighting them was not easy.[689] Moreover, the earliest Arab-Sasanian coins were minted not in Khurasan but in Kirman and Sistan in 31/652, and these became the standard for the later Arab-Sasanian coinage in Iran and Iraq supporting the importance of Sistan.[690] Khurasan became a priority only when Peroz, the son of the Sasanian king Yazdgird III, came to the region to claim his father's lost empire. In response, Ziyād, the governor of Iraq, sent soldiers from Iraq to Khurasan which set in motion the events that led to Khurasan's full submission to Umayyad rule. Once Khurasan became important, Sistan lost its power and became peripheral, allowing the region to become *a centre* for the Khārijites later.[691]

In the third stage, the migrants from Iraq were settled in Outer Khurasan. The influx of new people with different languages and cultural identities not only added to the already diverse society of Khurasan, but also allowed the Arab Muslims to become an important political player in the region. At this stage, we can safely speak about the conquest of Outer Khurasan because the Arab Muslims settled not only in the Marw region, but turned it into their centre of power and organised raids from there into Bactria and Sogdiana. However, Inner Khurasan was not marked by the Arab Muslim settlements, though it witnessed tribal wars among the new migrants. Similarly, Bactria was not conquered at this stage but was used only as a safe passage to reach Sogdiana.

In the fourth stage, political tensions increased between the Arabian tribal leaders who had come to Khurasan in the first stage of Arab-Muslim engagement with the region, the tribal leaders who settled there later, and the representatives of the Umayyad empire. Political factionalism and tribal war between the Arab Muslims in Khurasan were the result. The leaders of the tribe of Bakr b. Wāʾil allied with the Hephthalites against Ibn Khāzim from the tribe of Qays. Far from the Hijaz, Syria, and Iraq, the second *fitna* and the local politics provided space for Ibn Khāzim and his son Mūsā to establish their rule independent from the Umayyads. Mūsā's kingdom in Tirmidh became a safe place for anti-Umayyad rebels from Sistan and the Sogdians who opposed the Muhallabids. Also, at this stage, Umayyad authority was established by the Muhallabids in Khurasan. However, the Muhallabids' actual control did not extend beyond Marw al-Rūd, meaning even the Umayyads could not really move the Sasanian border

[689] Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 20–23; Wellhausen also had a similar view and argued that Sistan was the main target of the conquest (Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom*, 413); Also, see Luce, "Frontier as Process," 114.
[690] Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics*, 1: 21–22.
[691] This issue came out in a personal discussion with Minoru Inaba in October 2019 at Leiden University.

further east. All this shows that the conquests of a frontier region were far more complicated than the way the Arabic narratives (*futūḥ*) framed it.

If, in the first fifty years, Bactria was not conquered, then when was it? The next chapter will discuss the actual conquests of Bactria as they happened during the second fifty years of the Arab Muslim occupation of Khurasan.