

# The Rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj (116–28/734–46): The Local Perspective\*

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## Abstract

*This article addresses the rebellion of al-Ḥārith b. Surayj, which occurred between 116 and 128 AH (734–46 CE) in Umayyad Khurasan. Combining Bactrian documents, Chinese, Arabic, and Persian narratives, and numismatic evidence, it highlights the local aspect of this rebellion. It shows that in the frontier region of Khurasan, the Umayyads were only one political group among many other local and regional powers, all with different political priorities. Al-Ḥārith b. Surayj successfully united Arab soldiers, Sogdian converts, and local western Bactrian rulers by appealing to their political priorities and by mobilizing local cultural symbols against the Umayyads. The role of Bactrian local rulers in the initial success but also in the downfall of al-Ḥārith's rebellion turns out to have been crucial.*

## Introduction

In the year 116/734, an unprecedented anti-Umayyad rebellion started in the garrison of Andkhud,<sup>1</sup> an area west of Balkh in the frontier region of Khurasan. The rebellion was led by al-Ḥārith b. Surayj (d. 128/746), an Arab Muslim notable of Tamīm, an important tribe in Khurasan, who was the commander of the Umayyad troops in the garrison. He declared that he was fighting for the Qurʾān (*al-kitāb*), the Prophet's tradition (*al-sunna*), and allegiance

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1. That is modern Andkhui, located in northwestern Afghanistan on the Turkmenistan border.

to the leadership of the “Elected One” (*al-bay‘a li-l-riḍā*).<sup>2</sup> His rebellion weakened Umayyad rule in the region and facilitated the Abbasid takeover that started there a few years after al-Ḥārith’s death. Unexpectedly, al-Ḥārith was able to unite Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs in his uprising.<sup>3</sup> Further, this was the only time that Arab Muslim forces turned against the Umayyad government while allying with a strong non-Muslim enemy—namely, the Türgesh Turks, who themselves were challenging Umayyad rule in the east. Although the rebellion of al-Ḥārith is a well-known event in the history of late Umayyad Khurasan, its local context, and particularly the role played by Bactrian rulers, has been understudied.<sup>4</sup>

Accounts of the rebellion of al-Ḥārith appear in later Arabic sources. Using Bactrian documents alongside Arabic, Persian, and Chinese narratives and numismatic data, this article places al-Ḥārith’s rebellion in the very complex context of the frontier region of Khurasan. Such a local perspective offers a nuanced understanding of the forces and motives that gave rise to this revolt. Making use of regional accounts and material sources, other scholars have already provided insight on the history of early Islamic Khurasan, where local interests and motives played at least as important a role in the unfolding of events as did imperial politics initiated in capitals thousands of kilometers away.<sup>5</sup> This study builds on their methodology by applying it to the rebellion of al-Ḥārith.<sup>6</sup>

To be able to study this rebellion from a local perspective, we need to understand the situation “on the ground” in Bactria at the time of the rebellion. Non-Arabic sources do not contain any direct references to al-Ḥārith’s rebellion, but they do provide essential background information about social and economic conditions as well as political relations in the region before and after the uprising; the former, as we will see, played a crucial

2. Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1879–81), 9:1566–67.

3. These terms are not straightforward and are used here in their general meaning. For discussion of this terminology, see P. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

4. For a short overview on al-Ḥārith, see M. J. Kister, “Al-Ḥārith b. Suraydj,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online).

5. See, for instance, K. Athamina, “Taxation Reforms in Early Islamic Khurasan,” *Der Islam* 65 (1988): 272–78; A. F. al-‘Afnān, “al-Qabā’il al-‘arabiyya fī Khurāsān wa-bilād Mā warā’ al-nahr” (PhD diss., Umm al-Qura University of Mecca, 1413/1993); P. Pourshariati, “Iranian Tradition in Ṭus and the Arab Presence in Khurasān” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1995); M. D. Luce, “Frontier as Process: Umayyad Khurāsān” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009); P. Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); A. Azad, *Sacred Landscape in Medieval Afghanistan: Revisiting the “Faḍā’il-i Balkh”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); É. de La Vaissière, “The ‘Abbāsīd Revolution in Marw: New Data,” *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (2018): 110–46; R. Haug, *The Eastern Frontier: Limits of Empire in Late Antique and Early Medieval Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2019). This is not, of course, a full bibliography on this subject.

6. In its effort to understand early Islamic Khurasan, especially its function as a frontier zone of geographically and culturally diverse people and rulers, this article fits into the larger project of my forthcoming doctoral thesis, which examines the Arab conquest of Bactria with special attention to the role of local actors: S. R. Huseini, “Framing the Conquest: Bactrian Local Rulers and the Early Muslim Domination of Bactria (31–128 AH/651–746 CE)” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2022).

role in the revolt. First, there are documents written in Bactrian, the only Middle Iranian language that uses the Greek alphabet.<sup>7</sup> They date to between the early fourth and the late eighth century CE and offer important insights into the concerns and activities of the Bactrian inhabitants of the region. The political fragmentation of the region—the continuing dominance of the Turkic Qaghān even as the Umayyads sought to establish their authority—comes out clearly in the Bactrian documents. It is also clear that local Bactrian rulers in this period remained powerful, controlled local resources, and even had their own military forces. In addition, the documents show that worshippers of old Iranian deities and Buddhists coexisted in the region. Finally, the documents reflect the limits of conversion on the ground, as well as the gradual changes in the political structure of Bactria during the Umayyad period.<sup>8</sup>

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7. The Bactrian documents contain administrative, economic, and legal documents as well as official and private letters reflecting the sociopolitical circumstances in Bactria. However, they do not cover the entire Bactrian region and were mostly produced in Rob in the south, Guzgan (modern Juzjan) and Gaz (possibly Darray-i Gaz, south of Balkh) in the west, and Samingan (modern Samangan), Kadagstan (possibly in modern Baghlan), and Warnu (probably Qala-i Zal or Qunduz) in the east of Bactria. No Bactrian document has thus far been found from the Balkh oasis. The information these documents yield is limited to the areas where the documents were produced and circulated. Nevertheless, they display a continuity in their form and formulas that implies administrative and cultural continuity despite regime changes over the long time span that they cover. The documents have been translated and published by Nicholas Sims-Williams in several publications: N. Sims-Williams, “New Documents in Ancient Bactrian Reveal Afghanistan’s Past,” *IAS Newsletter* 27 (2002): 12–13; “Nouveaux documents bactriens du Guzgan (New Bactrian Documents from Guzgan),” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 146, no. 3 (2002): 1047–58; “Bactrian Letters from the Sasanian and Hephthalite Periods,” in *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europæa, Ravenna, 6–22 October 2003*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies*, ed. A. Panaino and A. Piras, 701–13 (Milan: Mimesis, 2006); *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 2, *Letters and Buddhist Texts* (London: Nour Foundation and Azimuth Editions, 2007); *Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, vol. 1, *Legal and Economic Documents*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Nour Foundation, Azimuth Editions, and Oxford University Press, 2012); N. Sims-Williams and F. de Blois, *Studies in the Chronology of the Bactrian Documents from Northern Afghanistan*, with contributions by H. Falk and D. Weber (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2018). There is a long list of publications on the Bactrian documents, but this article is not the place to mention all of them.

8. These documents have been available for more than two decades but have still not made the impact on historiography that their importance deserves. Interest in this material has, however, taken flight in recent years. For earlier studies, see G. Khan, “The Pre-Islamic Background of Muslim Legal Formularies,” *ARAM* 6 (1994): 193–224; K. Rezakhani, “The Bactrian Collection: An Important Source for Sasanian Economic History,” *Sasanika* 13 (2008): 1–14; idem, “Balkh and the Sasanians: Economy and Society of Northern Afghanistan as Reflected in the Bactrian Economic Documents,” in *Ancient and Middle Iranian Studies*, ed. M. Macuch, D. Weber, and D. Durkin-Meisterernst, 1–21 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); K. Van Bladel, “The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids,” in *Islam and Tibet: Interactions along the Musk Routes*, ed. A. Akasoy, C. Burnett, and R. Yoeli-Tlalim, 43–88 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011); R. Payne, “The Making of Turan: The Fall and Transformation of the Iranian East in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9, no. 1 (2016): 4–41; A. Azad, “Living Happily Ever After: Fraternal Polyandry, Taxes and ‘the House’ in Early Islamic Bactria,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, no. 1 (2016): 33–56. For more recent work, see K. Rezakhani, *ReOrienting the Sasanians: East Iran in Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); A. Azad, “The Beginning of Islam in Afghanistan: Conquest, Acculturation and Islamization,” in *Afghanistan’s Islam from Conversion to the Taliban*, ed. Nile Green, 41–55 (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); H. Sheikh, “Studies on the Bactrian Legal Documents” (PhD diss., Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2017); S. R. Huseini, “Acts of Protection

Apart from the Bactrian documents, the personal accounts and travelogues of Chinese and Korean Buddhist pilgrims who visited Bactria before and after the Arab Muslim conquests provide valuable information. From their descriptions of encounters, observations, and reflections on what they came across on their travels, much can be deduced about the region and its population.<sup>9</sup> A number of multilingual coins minted in Anbir (modern Sari-i Pul) in Guzgan in the Umayyad period are also included in this study. They were part of a hoard identified in Kabul in the early nineteenth century, which was then bought by various museums and private collections in the United Kingdom and France.<sup>10</sup> In addition, there are the monolingual silver dirhams issued by al-Ḥārith—the only local source discussed here that directly references his revolt—which are crucially important to understanding his uprising as they reflect his political agenda and his use of religious vocabulary.<sup>11</sup> Finally, a Persian narrative contains some unique information that seems to have a local provenance; this makes it a useful source despite its late composition.<sup>12</sup>

Together, these sources give us an impression of the conditions in the region, especially the competing political groups operating in it that form the background against which al-Ḥārith's revolt took place. The sources show that the Umayyads were not the sole political power in the region, but one among many. Reading the Arabic narratives that offer the most complete reports on the events with this local perspective in mind sheds light on the complex political and social dynamics that help explain both the initial success and the ultimate failure of al-Ḥārith's rebellion.

Among the Arabic sources that discuss the revolt, al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Genealogies of elites) and al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (History of prophets and kings) offer the most extensive accounts of the rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Other Arabic sources written before al-Ṭabarī either do not include this rebellion or provide only a meager amount of information.<sup>14</sup> The Arabic narratives written after him mostly summarize the story and do

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Represented in Bactrian Documents," *Annales islamologiques* 54 (2021): 107–24; idem, "The Idea and Practice of Justice Represented in Bactrian Documents," *Association for Iranian Studies Newsletter* 41, no. 2 (2020): 28–31; idem, "Between Turks and Arabs: Household, Conversion and Power Dynamics in Early Abbasid Bactria (700–772)," in *The Ties that Bind: Mechanisms of Social Dependency in the Early Islamic Empire*, ed. E. Hayes and P. M. Sijpesteijn (forthcoming).

9. See *SI-YU-KI: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, trans. S. Beal (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906); Hye Ch'o, *The Hye Ch'o Diary: Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India*, trans. Y. Han-Sung et al. (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1984), 52.

10. J. Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan during the Period of Islamic Conquest, c. AH 70–150 [AD 690–767]," paper presented at the workshop "Contesting Empires: Sogdiana, Bactria and Gandhara between the Sasanian Empire, the Tang Dynasty and the Muslim Caliphate (ca. 600–1000 CE)," Leiden, September 17, 2020. I am grateful to the author, who provided me with a draft of the paper.

11. S. D. Sears, "The Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj and the Countermarking of Umayyad Dirhams in Early Eighth Century CE Khurāsān," in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*, ed. P. Cobb, 377–405 (Leiden: Brill, 2012). Thanks to Mehdy Shaddel, who provided me with this article.

12. 'Abd al-Ḥayy b. Zahāk Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, ed. 'A. Ḥ. Habībī (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1363/1984).

13. Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1417/1996).

14. Other authors, including Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854), Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dināwarī (d. 290/902), Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī (d. 292/905?), and Ibn

not offer any new details.<sup>15</sup> These narratives are, of course, well known and have been used in previous studies of the revolt. But this article offers a rereading of the Arabic narratives that focuses on the local conditions and gives special attention to the role of Bactrians and Khurasanis in the rebellion. For this purpose, al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh* is a central source of information. Al-Ṭabarī's narratives of the revolt come mostly from 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā'inī (d. 228/843), who is said to have composed several books on Khurasan.<sup>16</sup> Al-Ṭabarī includes information on certain local Bactrian rulers, their locations, and their positions in the rebellion that is not mentioned in any other Arabic source. It is only al-Ṭabarī who informs us which Bactrian rulers supported al-Ḥārith and which ones did not. Further, his reports include local voices, which adds to the importance of his work as far as this article is concerned. His *Ta'rikh* corroborates the picture of political fragmentation under Turkic overlordship painted by the Bactrian documents and pilgrims' reports.

Combining all these sources to fully comprehend the rebellion in its local and regional context, I argue that this rebellion successfully united both Muslim and non-Muslim and both Arab and local followers who all had different motives but one common purpose: repelling Umayyad authority from the east. Indeed, the Arab Muslims were only one political group among many that joined the revolt. I show that local Bactrian rulers played a crucial role, their actions dictated by their own interests and shifting political circumstances. In this sense, the rebellion fit into regional power dynamics in the east that had been in place already prior to al-Ḥārith's revolt and that continued into the Abbasid period.

To provide an overview on the rebellion, I start with an evaluation of previous studies. I then explain al-Ḥārith's early career in Khurasan and discuss what might have motivated him to take up arms against Umayyad forces. This part also considers why al-Ḥārith's message appealed to the Arab Muslim troops and their leaders against the background of Umayyad-Türgesh fighting in the region. Turning to the local conditions of the revolt, I examine the controversy over the poll tax (*jizya*) and its relation to the rebellion, including al-Ḥārith's support among Sogdian converts. I then discuss al-Ḥārith's local allies, particularly Bactrian rulers and the reasons for their support of him. Finally, I examine Umayyad responses to the rebellion and the role of Bactrian rulers therein.

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A'tham al-Kūfī (d. 314/926), wrote before al-Ṭabarī. However, Khalīfa b. Khayyāt's and Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī's reports on al-Ḥārith's rebellion are very short and do not provide any details about his local supporters. Al-Dināwarī's narratives on late Umayyad Khurasan do not even mention the rebellion. See Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, *Ta'rikh Khalīfa b. Khayyāt*, ed. A. Z. al-'Umarī (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1405/1985), 346–48; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, ed. 'A. Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā', 1411/1991), 8:282–83; Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dināwarī, *Kitāb al-Akḥbār al-ṭiwāl*, ed. V. Gergas (Leiden: Brill, 1888), 318–30. Al-Ya'qūbī provides some information on the reign of Caliph Hishām (r. 105–25/723–42), but he does not discuss the rebellion of al-Ḥārith; see Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh al-Ya'qūbī*, ed. 'A. A. Muḥannā (Beirut: Shirkat al-'Ālamī li-l-Maṭbu'āt, 1431/2010); idem, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. T. G. J. Juynboll (Leiden: Brill, 1860).

15. See, for instance, 'Izz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi al-ta'rikh*, ed. A. F. 'A. A. al-Qāḍī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1407/1987); Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fi funūn al-adab*, ed. S. 'A. F. 'Āshūr (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963); Ismā'īl b. Kathīr al-Dimashqī, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, ed. 'A. Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' wa-l-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1408/1988); Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān fi tawārīkh al-a'yān*, ed. M. Barakat, K. al-Kharāt, and A. Rayḥawī (Damascus: Dār al-Risāla al-'Ālamiyya, 1434/2013).

16. U. Sezgin, "Al-Madā'inī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

## Previous Studies

Various reasons have been proposed in previous studies to explain the response to al-Ḥārith's call for revolt. These include his religious piety, the Umayyads' decision to impose *jizya* on recent converts in Sogdiana and the protests this decision raised, and Umayyad changes in the military and political organization of Khurasan, which various local power holders saw as threatening. I will discuss these explanations one by one and offer my evaluation of the arguments put forward.

According to Gerlof van Vloten, al-Ḥārith was a "pious Muslim, ascetic and reformer."<sup>17</sup> He thus suggests a specific religious appeal behind the revolt. Others, too, have sought the reason for al-Ḥārith's success in his religious character. Al-Ḥārith is thereby often referred to as *murjiʿī*.<sup>18</sup> The Murjiʿa was a religious movement that stressed faith over actions and was active in Khurasan.<sup>19</sup> Saleh Said Agha has argued that the *murjiʿī* character of al-Ḥārith's rebellion and his "uncompromising puritan posturing" are the reasons behind Muslim and non-Muslim support for the uprising.<sup>20</sup> Al-Ḥārith's relationship with Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) seems to have been the main factor that prompted these scholars to identify him as a *murjiʿī*.<sup>21</sup> Jahm's identity as a *murjiʿī* leader in Khurasan is, however, not undisputed.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, although opponents of the Umayyads regularly couched their dissatisfaction in religious terms, this tendency does not mean they shared a sectarian program. Al-Ḥārith's interest in debate with his Umayyad rivals on the issue of the application of the Qurʾān and the *sunna*, as well as his military operations against the Umayyads, may create a temptation to connect his cause with that of the Kharijites, the military groups that challenged Umayyad authority in Iraq and in the central and eastern parts of Iran. However, the evidence is too weak to identify him as a Kharijite.<sup>23</sup> Using religious slogans and taking up arms against

17. Cited in H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 78.

18. Wellhausen mentions that al-Ḥārith appeared as a *murjiʿī*; J. Wellhausen, *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall*, trans. M. Graham Weir (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927), 464.

19. For details on the *Murjiʿa* in Khurasan, see W. Madelung, "The Early Murjiʿa in Khurasan and Transoxiana and the Spread of Ḥanafism," *Der Islam* 59, no. 1 (1982): 1–39; K. Athamina, "The Early Murjiʿa: Some Notes," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35, no. 1 (1990): 109–30; H. ʿAṭwān, *al-Murjiʿa wa-l-Jahmiyya bi-Khurāsān fī al-ʿaṣr al-umawī* (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1413/1993). For more information, see P. Crone and F. Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 219–50, and V. L. Novak, "The Delineation between Believer, Rebel and Heretic" (MA thesis, University of Maryland, 2012).

20. S. S. Agha, *The Revolution which Toppled the Umayyads* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 154.

21. The association between these two characters is mentioned in most of the studies. For instance, see Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 464–65; Madelung, "Early Murjiʿa," 33–35; Athamina, "Early Murjiʿa," 124–25; M. Parvīsh and M. Tabārakī, "Auṣāʿ-i siyāsī Khurāsān az vurūd-i islām tā payān-i Khilāfat-i Umaviyān," *Khīradnāma* 22 (1390sh/2011): 33–34; M. Bihishtī Sirisht and M. M. Pūr, "Rīshahā-yi qiyām-i Ḥārith b. Surayj va natāyij-i ān," *Taʾrīkh dar āyina-yi pazhūhish* 9, no. 2 (1390–91sh/2012–13): 31; E. Urban, "The Early Islamic *Mawālī*: A Window onto Processes of Identity Construction and Social Change" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 128.

22. For detail on Jahm's thought, see J. van Ess, "Jahm b. Ṣafwān," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., ed. E. Yarshater, updated April 10, 2012, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/jahm-b-safwan>; Kh. al-ʿUlā, "Jahm b. Ṣafwān wa-makānatuhu fī al-fikr al-islāmī" (MA thesis, Baghdad University, 1965).

23. Al-Ḥārith is called a *khārījī* in Ḥabībī's edition of Gardīzī's *Zayn al-akhbār*, 257, but this description could have been added later by a copyist. Moshe Sharon rejected al-Ḥārith's identification as a *khārījī* in *Revolt: The*

the Umayyads were commonplace in this period.<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, viewing al-Ḥārith's actions in an exclusively ideological and theological vein fails to appreciate fully the social and political context in which his rebellion occurred.

This context has, however, been taken up by some other scholars. Julius Wellhausen, for example, regards the revolt as having been directed against the imposition of *jizya* tax on Sogdian converts, and he portrays al-Ḥārith as an advocate for the rights of indigenous converts.<sup>25</sup> Vasily Barthold discusses al-Ḥārith's revolt in the same context and argues that it did not have an "anti-dynastic character" at the beginning.<sup>26</sup> However, Khalid Blankinship notes that the Sogdian converts on whom the Umayyads imposed the *jizya* had already voiced their resentment before al-Ḥārith's revolt. Al-Ḥārith's revolt then incorporated and built on these protests. Blankinship argues that "the ties of many of al-Harith's followers to the earlier reform movement prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the later movement was a continuation of the previous one."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, he points out that this "movement must have been the product of extreme tensions of local provenance."<sup>28</sup> Awad Mohammad Khleifat effectively rejects any connection between the *jizya* and al-Ḥārith's rebellion because of the absence of any evidence that the revolt was aimed at the defense of converts' rights.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, Khleifat does not offer an alternative explanation. The arguments that seek to connect al-Ḥārith's revolt with the converts' protests might have been valid if the rebellion had taken place in Sogdiana, where the movement against the *jizya* had arisen some years before. As I will argue, however, al-Ḥārith's mission began instead in Andkhud in Bactria, where the *jizya* was not imposed on the local population as it was in Sogdiana.

Similarly, al-Ḥārith is presented as the champion of the rights of *mawālī*, or clients.<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Urban has questioned that relation. In a discussion of the rebellion in the context of factionalism in Umayyad Khurasan, she assigns al-Ḥārith a religious program, emphasizing his religious slogans and ascribing a *murji* sectarian identity to him.<sup>31</sup>

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*Social and Military Aspects of the 'Abbāsīd Revolution* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1990), 30–31.

24. See H.-L. Hagemann, "Was Muṭarrif b. al-Mughira al-Thaqafi a Khārijite? Rebellion in the Early Marwānīd Period" in the present issue. For al-Ḥārith's emphasis on the Qur'ān, the *sunna*, and *shūrā*, see P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 59–65; see also P. Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 277–78. On the significance of al-Ḥārith's call for *shūrā* and the leadership of the Elected One, see P. Crone, "On the Meaning of the 'Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā," in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al., 95–111 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

25. Wellhausen, *Arab Kingdom*, 465.

26. W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 190–91.

27. K. Y. Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 177.

28. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 177.

29. A. M. Khleifat, "The Caliphate of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik (105–125/724–743) with Special Reference to Internal Problems" (PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1973).

30. E. Urban discusses these studies in "Early Islamic Mawālī," 128–35.

31. *Ibid.*

The final group of arguments takes a regional focus, pointing to the impact of the settlement of Umayyad forces on the local balance of power, which led to a struggle for power and control between the Arab newcomers and local power holders. H. A. R. Gibb argues that al-Ḥārith's revolt was primarily a fight for control over Khurasan between the Umayyads and Türgesh forces. He notes that the Umayyad governor's administrative and military mismanagement in Khurasan provoked resentment, including al-Ḥārith's, and that "it may even be questioned whether he [al-Ḥārith] and his small personal following were not rather the tools than the leaders of the elements making for the overthrow of the Umayyad administration in Khurāsān."<sup>32</sup> M. A. Shaban has viewed al-Ḥārith's rebellion as a reaction to the reorganization of Arab settlements in Khurasan by Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105–25/723–42). The movement of troops in Khurasan was aimed at keeping potentially disloyal forces far from Marw and occupied in fighting the empire's enemies, especially the Türgesh, while retaining the fighters who were loyal to the caliph in Marw. This reorganization was not acceptable to the Arab tribesmen sent on these missions, who saw it as "an unfair reward for their obedience to the government to be sent from Marw, which they considered their home, to new locations which virtually amounted to exile."<sup>33</sup> ʿAbd Allāh Maḥdī al-Khaṭīb discusses the rebellion in the context of competition between local eastern Iranian leaders and newly emerging Arab elites in Khurasan.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, Kurūsh Ṣālihī and Javād Bahrāmīniyā maintain that al-Ḥārith's goal was to implement economic and social reforms to benefit local people living under Umayyad authority.<sup>35</sup>

Robert Haug places the rebellion in the context of a frontier region in which various political groups coexisted and reacted differently to the Umayyad incorporation of eastern Iranian territories.<sup>36</sup> Haug questions the presumed centrality of religion to the rebellion and instead focuses on al-Ḥārith's opposition to the Marwānids, which attracted Arabs and non-Arabs alike.<sup>37</sup> Recently, Stuart Sears has drawn attention to another local aspect of the revolt on the basis of numismatic evidence. He analyzes a group of silver coins issued by al-Ḥārith in Balkh and the silver dirhams countermarked by the Hephthalites of Bactria in support of al-Ḥārith. The participation of the Hephthalites in this rebellion was already discussed by Shaban,<sup>38</sup> but Sears is the first to use numismatic evidence for this purpose.<sup>39</sup> One more scholar should be mentioned here, although his study deals with the Abbasid revolution that took place after al-Ḥārith's revolt had already been subdued. Étienne de La Vaissière highlights the sociopolitical situation in the region of Marw where

32. Gibb, *Arab Conquests*, 78.

33. M. A. Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsīd Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 118.

34. ʿA. M. al-Khaṭīb, *Ḥukūmat-i Banī Umayya dar Khurāsān*, trans. B. Musavī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Tūkā, 1357/1978). Agha has similar ideas about the role of Iranians in the Abbasid revolution; see Agha, *Revolution*.

35. K. Ṣālihī and J. Bahrāmīniyā, "Muṭālīʿa-yi taṭbīqī qiyāmahā-yi ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ashʿas va Ḥārith b. Surayj," *Pazhūhishnāma-yi taʾrīkh-i islām* 10 (1392sh/2013): 79–105.

36. These territories were Bactria, Sogdiana, and Khwarazm.

37. Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 141–43.

38. Shaban, *ʿAbbāsīd Revolution*, 6–14.

39. Sears, "Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj," 377–405.

Abū Muslim (d. 137/755) rose to power. As La Vaissière shows, Abū Muslim successfully managed local politics for his own ends, which culminated in his domination of the region. He convincingly argues that Abū Muslim formulated his mission using local vocabulary and symbols, particularly the black garments that were such an important symbol to the indigenous population and that had already been used by al-Ḥārith before him.<sup>40</sup> As I argue below, it is exactly this awareness of local sentiments and concerns, including the use of black garments, that explains the support received by al-Ḥārith's movement.

My reconstruction of the rise and fall of al-Ḥārith's movement, therefore, builds on the work of scholars who have already considered the local context from one or more points of view. It is, for instance, indebted to Haug's emphasis on fragmentation within Khurasani society due to the region's position as a frontier. In fact, it was precisely al-Ḥārith's ability to appeal to different groups for different reasons that explains his initial success. In that sense, my study also follows the approach applied by La Vaissière in explaining the very successful, albeit later, efforts of Abū Muslim to drum up local support for his revolutionary movement. For al-Ḥārith, it was such local support, I contend, that played a crucial role in the course of the revolt, and it was the withdrawal of this local support that marked the beginning of the end of his uprising. By contrast, I will show that some of the explanations proposed for his revolt, including al-Ḥārith's religious identity and the idea that his movement was motivated by fiscal discrimination against converts, are unfounded.

### Al-Ḥārith b. Surayj

Al-Ḥārith belonged to the tribe of Tamīm. Surayj, his father, lived in the garrison of Basra in the quarter of the Banū Mujāshi<sup>6</sup> and is known to have received a stipend (*ʿaṭā*) of 700 dirhams, which means that he was a member of the fighting forces (*muqātila*).<sup>41</sup> Whether al-Ḥārith was born in Khurasan or was sent there is not clear. Al-Khaṭīb remarks that al-Ḥārith was from Dabussiya, which was an Arab Muslim garrison in Sogdiana.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Ḥārith's first appearance in history is as a soldier in the Arab Muslim army of Khurasan at the battle of Paykand, near Bukhara on the right bank of the Amu Darya, in 108/727–28. When Türgesh forces blocked the irrigation canal and deprived the Muslim army of drinking water, al-Ḥārith appears on the stage as a hero. He encourages the soldiers of Tamīm and Qays to fight the Turks and eventually succeeds in pushing the enemy back from the canal.<sup>43</sup> Not much is known about al-Ḥārith after this incident until the beginning of his revolt in the garrison of Andkhud.

Al-Ḥārith started his rebellion by inviting people to the application of the Qurʾān and the *sunna* and allegiance to the leadership of the Elected One. Such leadership could have been legitimized only via a *shūrā*, or an assembly of pious Muslim leaders. The first two elements of al-Ḥārith's program (adherence to the Qurʾān and the *sunna*) were fundamental religious tenets for all Muslims, but the insistence on a *shūrā* was highly political, as it

40. La Vaissière, "Abbāsīd Revolution," 110–46.

41. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 12:110.

42. Al-Khaṭīb, *Hukūmat-i Banī Umayya*, 105. Wellhausen mentions the same thing in *Arab Kingdom*, 464.

43. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1513–14.

called into question the very basis of Umayyad political legitimacy. Establishing a *shūrā* was thus a rebellious act, removing decision-making power from the caliph and placing it in the hands of an assembly of Arab Muslim elites in Khurasan, to which al-Ḥārith belonged. La Vaissière argues that al-Ḥārith's call for *al-riḍā* was in fact a way to invoke his own leadership.<sup>44</sup> According to this view, al-Ḥārith appealed for *al-riḍā* because it necessitated a *shūrā*, in which he would play a major role, and which would thus give him power over all appointments in Khurasan. Al-Ḥārith's intention to rebel was known to some Arab notables already before his calling for the *shūrā*. When he invited people to join his cause in Balkh, Qaṭan b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, an Arab Muslim figure from the garrison in Balkh, responded that he would not trust al-Ḥārith's words even if “[the archangel] Gabriel stands on his right and Michael on his left.”<sup>45</sup> Clearly, Qaṭan did not believe al-Ḥārith's claim that his movement was purely or merely a call to adherence to the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. Rather, he suspected a far more personal motive.

The Umayyad authorities soon became aware of al-Ḥārith's political ambitions, and he was punished. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that al-Ḥārith was whipped publicly in Balkh by a certain al-Tujībī during the governorship of Junayd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (in office 111–16/730–34).<sup>46</sup> Al-Balādhurī writes that he was whipped for his refusal to be a *janība*, or subordinate, to a certain Murra, who stood above al-Ḥārith in administrative rank.<sup>47</sup> Others, however, ascribe the punishment to al-Ḥārith's political ambitions. Khālid al-Qasrī (d. 126/743), the governor of Iraq, assumed that al-Ḥārith wanted to be caliph but dismissed this prospect, saying, “How remote are the means of the caliphate from a saddle?”<sup>48</sup> The personal ambitions ascribed to al-Ḥārith by these historical figures in Umayyad service could very well explain some of al-Ḥārith's strategic choices, such as joining forces with the Türgesh Turks and attaching himself to local Bactrian rulers (see below). But how did his political agenda appeal to the Arab Muslim soldiers of the garrison in Andkhud?

### Al-Ḥārith's Revolt and Arab Support

The rebellion of al-Ḥārith should be considered in the context of a series of political and military interactions in Khurasan initiated by Umayyad attacks. These affected various local actors differently, laying the ground for al-Ḥārith's clever appeal to these different local groups with specific arguments and programmatic points. In the early eighth century CE, Umayyad armies led by Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bāhilī (d. 96/715) incorporated Bactria and Sogdiana into the political structure of Umayyad Khurasan through campaigns of conquest. When the Umayyad armies reached Chach, a city located on the right bank of the Syr Darya river, they entered the world of the steppe, a region from where nomadic bands of warriors had appeared to attack sedentary societies and create nomadic empires.<sup>49</sup> Shortly after the

44. La Vaissière, “Abbāsīd Revolution,” 136.

45. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1657. Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī calls his followers “people of corruption” in *Futūḥ*, 7:283.

46. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1567.

47. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 12:111.

48. *Ibid.*

49. For these nomadic empires, see C. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from*

Umayyad conquests, the Türgesh Turks united under the leadership of the Qaghān Sülü (r. 716–36 CE). They fought the Umayyads for control of Sogdiana, which led to two decades of war. The Türgesh defeated the Umayyad troops in the battle of the “Day of Thirst” (*yawm al-‘aṭsh*) in 106/724 and in the battle of the “Day of the Mountain Pass” (*yawm al-shi‘b*) in 112/731.<sup>50</sup> The nomadic nature of the Türgesh Turks and their highly mobile cavalry, which could operate around the year and under diverse geographic conditions, put them at an advantage vis-à-vis the Umayyads. The Umayyads, in turn, relied on both lightly and heavily armored cavalry (*al-mujarrada* and *al-mujawwafa*). The Türgesh policy of plundering ensured that even when the Turks lost a battle, there was not much left for the Umayyad forces to gain. Similarly, the Turks’ nomadic tradition meant that the Umayyads were unable to impose regular taxes on them even if they did conquer their territories.<sup>51</sup>

The continuing Türgesh-Umayyad warfare put enormous pressure on the Umayyad soldiers in Khurasan, which laid the foundation for al-Ḥārith’s support among the Arab troops. Al-Ḥārith’s plan to establish an independent government was attractive to Arab Muslim soldiers for several reasons. Independence would end the war in the east. The Arab troops were exhausted from the war with the Türgesh Turks. Moreover, the Iraqi soldiers, who had by now become integrated in social and economic life in Khurasan, were particularly disappointed by the Umayyad losses.<sup>52</sup> Unlike the Syrian troops, who were loyal to the caliph, the Iraqis were more interested in retaining their socioeconomic position in the region. Before al-Ḥārith’s rebellion, the Iraqis of Khurasan had sent a delegation to the governor of Iraq to complain: “We are on a frontier, facing the enemy in an endless war. Each one of us wears the steel armor to the point that it is connected to his skin ..., but you are in a province where you live in prosperity wearing colorful and exquisite dress.”<sup>53</sup> Al-Ḥārith’s promise to establish just government on the basis of *shūrā* with the aim of limiting the caliph’s burdensome military policies would have been an incentive for these troops to join his revolt.

### The Local Context and the Role of Bactrian Leaders

Arab Muslim control of the frontier region of Khurasan was far from secure or comprehensive. This was due in part to the geography of Umayyad Khurasan, which belonged to the Pamir-Makran “shatter zone.”<sup>54</sup> An important characteristic of this shatter

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*the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). The most recent study on this subject is W. Ball, *The Eurasian Steppe: People, Movement, Ideas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021). On the Umayyads’ reaching Chach (modern Tashkent) and its consequences, see Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 111–37.

50. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 126–28, 155–61. For a discussion on the battle the “Day of the Mountain Pass,” see S. S. Agha, “The ‘Battle of the Pass’: Two Consequential Readings,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63, no. 3 (2000): 340–55.

51. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 126.

52. *Ibid.*, 126–28.

53. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9:1460–61.

54. The Pamir-Makran shatter zone was created by a tectonic collision that formed a “massive system of mountain chains.” See S. R. Bowlby and K. H. White, “The Geographical Background,” in *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from Earliest Times to the Timurid Period*, ed. R. Allchin and N. Hammond, rev. ed., ed. W. Ball

zone is its extreme geographical diversity. The plains contain large areas of desert, marshes, rivers, and high hills, all situated together in one region. This terrain posed significant logistical difficulties for the Arab Muslim invaders, who had no experience with this kind of geography. Umayyad Khurasan also had a diverse population with a variety of religious groups.<sup>55</sup> These factors meant that Umayyad control in the region was limited, often confined to garrison towns established outside existing urban spaces.

Arabic narratives describe the trials that the Umayyads endured in their efforts to control Khurasan. The main challenges lay, on the one hand, in settling Arabs in Khurasan,<sup>56</sup> keeping the Arab tribal leaders loyal to the Umayyad caliphs, and uniting them in defense of the northeastern frontier,<sup>57</sup> and, on the other hand, in imposing Umayyad authority over local independent, warlike Iranian and Turkic rulers who moved between their winter capitals on the plains and their summer capitals in the mountains.<sup>58</sup> Other challenges included maximizing provincial revenue and organizing the province's administration.<sup>59</sup> The difficulty the Umayyads experienced in dealing with these diverse issues is indicated by the frequent changes of governors between 86 and 130/705–47<sup>60</sup> as well as by the eruption of intertribal wars among the Arabs of Khurasan<sup>61</sup> and various rebellions led by local rulers and Arab Muslim elite members. The rebellion of al-Ḥārith occurred within this complicated regional political situation. The Umayyads were at war with the nomadic Türgesh confederation, which was as ambitious and expansionist as the Umayyads were. This had an impact on local Arab troops. Local Arab Muslim elites also resented the Umayyads' centralizing policies, and they shared these resentments with Arab elites in other provinces. At the same time, the Umayyads had to deal with numerous Sogdian and Bactrian rulers who made alliances with outside powers to secure their own political priorities.

In the early eighth century CE, Bactria and Sogdiana were controlled by a number of local independent rulers. However, most of them recognized the overlordship of the Qaghān of the Western Turks.<sup>62</sup> To protect their positions, these local rulers shifted their

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(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 16–17.

55. Luce, "Frontier as Process," 12–52; Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 9–14.

56. Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition"; E. L. Daniel, "Arab iii. Arab Settlements in Iran," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, updated August 10, 2011, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/arab-iii>.

57. An example is the rebellion of 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzīm and his son Mūsā and their attempt to create de facto rule in Khurasan (Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 99–109).

58. The best example is the attempt by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and later Qutayba b. Muslim to subdue Ṭarkhān Nizak, the Hephthalite prince of Badghis (Haug, *The Eastern Frontier*, 119–121).

59. The tax reforms of Ashras al-Sullāmī described by al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1507–10, offer an example.

60. For instance, Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz was governor of Khurasan for only one year. He was replaced by Sa'īd al-Ḥarashī, who also remained in office for a year. Later, Jarrāh b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥakamī kept his position for just seventeen months.

61. For the Arab tribal war in Balkh, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1472–77.

62. La Vaissière called this situation in Sogdiana "fragmentation territoriale"; É. de La Vaissière, *Samarcande et Samarra: Élités d'Asie centrale dans l'empire abbasside* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 2007), 23–36, 68–75. There are some Bactrian documents attesting to this situation in Bactria (documents T, Tt, U, Uu, V, X, and Y in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:98–103, 104–5, 106–11, 113–15,

loyalties frequently and applied intricate political strategies. Thus, it is not a surprise that the Chaghān Khudā the king of Chaghaniyan in northern Bactria, invited the Umayyads into his territory to protect him from hostile neighboring rulers.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Ghūrak, the local ruler of Samarkand, signed a peace treaty with Qutayba b. Muslim<sup>64</sup> but later assisted the Türgesh against the Umayyads.<sup>65</sup> Ghūrak also appealed to the Tang emperor in China for help against the Umayyads<sup>66</sup> but then did not hesitate to save the retreating Arab troops in their war with the Türgesh.<sup>67</sup>

Control over revenue collection, such as tribute and taxation, not only was a bone of contention between local Arab elites and central Umayyad authorities but also mobilized local non-Arab rulers. The provincial revenues from Khurasan came from a variety of sources. The main sources of income besides booty and gifts were tribute paid in cash (*dirham ʿājila*) by local rulers after negotiations and the conclusion of peace treaties (*ṣulḥ*) with the Arab Muslim conquerors, annual tribute (*dirham fī kull ʿām*), the poll tax, and later the land tax (*kharāj*).<sup>68</sup> The taxation process involved Arab Muslim financial officials, local rulers, and taxpayers. Taxes were collected by the local rulers and delivered to the Umayyad financial agents. Their monopoly over tax collection benefited the local rulers while simultaneously preventing direct contact between the Arab Muslim agents and the local population, a policy that left the local rulers' financial and political authority intact.<sup>69</sup>

The *jizya*, mentioned frequently in the Arabic sources, was collected from non-Muslims and could become a political issue at any time. When it was imposed on converts who had accepted Islam in the hope that they would be released from this imposition, resistance and even revolt sometimes ensued.<sup>70</sup> In a frontier zone, such an imposition was fraught

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116–25, 136–41, 142–43).

63. Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1866), 419–20.

64. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 7:160–62.

65. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1533–45.

66. É. Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* (Saint Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie impériale des sciences, 1903), 204–5.

67. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1542–43.

68. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 447–90; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifā, 1399/1979). The plunder of Paykand by Qutayba brought enormous wealth to the Arabs according to Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Narshakhī, *Taʾrīkh-i Bukhārā*, trans. A. N. A. b. M. b. N. al-Qubāvī, summarized by M. b. Zafar, ed. M. T. Mudarris Rażavī (Tehran: Maṭbaʿa-yi Dawlatī, 1362/1983), 61–63.

69. Athamina, “Taxation Reforms,” 272–78. D. R. Hill provides information on the income raised by the conquests in *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests A.D. 634–656* (London: Luzac, 1971), 144–52. A similar arrangement can be observed in Egypt. Arietta Papaconstantinou has argued that leaders of the Egyptian Christian community exploited their position of authority vis-à-vis the local population as long as they functioned as middlemen for the Arab Muslim rulers; A. Papaconstantinou, “‘Great Men,’ Churchmen, and the Others: Forms of Authority in the Villages of the Umayyad Period,” in *Village Institutions in Egypt in the Roman to Early Arab Periods*, ed. D. Rathbone and M. Langellotti, 178–89 (London: British Academy, 2020).

70. In Egypt, too, Arab officials continued levying the *jizya* on converts, which led to protests. People showed up to protest the situation at the governmental palace in Fustat; P. M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193–95. See also D. C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (1950; repr., New Delhi: Idarah-i Adabyat-i Delli, 2000),

with danger, since the discontented could join forces with the Türgesh Turks. Indeed, the Umayyad *jizya* policy angered local Sogdian converts who appealed to the Türgesh for help against the Arab Muslim authorities in Khurasan. But did the *jizya* policy in Sogdiana really trigger al-Ḥārith's rebellion? As noted above, some scholars have argued that this was the case. However, it does not appear that the *jizya* issue was particularly important for al-Ḥārith at the beginning of his uprising, although he subsequently exploited the discontent around this tax when he needed local support. Before discussing that, however, we need to ask why these Muslim converts chose to revolt rather than negotiate with the Umayyad authorities.

The Umayyad *jizya* policy helped al-Ḥārith gain local support for his revolt once it had started. But it was not the direct cause of his rebellion. The *jizya* was a recurring political issue that had plagued previous governors of Khurasan when al-Ḥārith served the government. It caused problems during the reign of Caliph ʿUmar II (r. 99–101/717–20), whose piety and justice are praised in the chronicles particularly because he abolished the practice of demanding the *jizya* from converts.<sup>71</sup> However, lifting the *jizya* from converts in Khurasan may have been an act not of sheer piety but rather of Realpolitik. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that in the year 100/719, the governor of Khurasan, al-Jarrāḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥakamī (d. 111/730), sent a delegation (*wafd*) to the caliph. Usually, such delegations represented Arab Muslim elites of the province and defended their interests.<sup>72</sup> In this case, however, a local *mawlā* (client) of the Banū Ḍubba named Ṣāliḥ b. Ṭarīf, known as Abū al-Ṣaydā, was part of the delegation. He was not a Sogdian, but he was a recent convert who was well aware of the situation in the region. He complained to the caliph:

There are 20,000 *mawālī* fighting alongside Muslim soldiers without receiving a salary or rations (*bi-lā ʿaṭā wa-lā rizq*), and another 20,000 of the protected people (*ahl al-dhimma*) who converted to Islam but still have to pay the *jizya*. And the amir [al-Jarrāḥ] who came to Khurasan is a harsh man who discriminates between people and loves his own tribe. He is a sword of al-Ḥajjāj (*sayf min suyūf al-Ḥajjāj*) who rules by oppression and hostility.<sup>73</sup>

In light of the presence of the Türgesh in Khurasan and their relation to the local population, the caliph must have been aware of the danger developing in the east. It is highly likely (though not certain) that he declared his decision to exempt all converts from payment of the *jizya* with the eastern situation in mind.<sup>74</sup> In a similar decision, in 106/725 the governor of Khurasan Asad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī (d. 120/737) ordered that *jizya*

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104–13.

71. See A. Borrut, “Entre tradition et histoire: Genèse et diffusion de l’image de ʿUmar II,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 58 (2005): 329–69; J. Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

72. For details on the *wafd*, see M. Tillier, “Représenter la province auprès du pouvoir impérial: Les délégations (*wafūd*) égyptiennes aux trois premiers siècles de l’Islam,” *Arabica* 67, no. 2–3 (2020): 125–99.

73. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1353–54.

74. *Ibid.*, 9:1354.

not be taken from converts to prevent them from joining the Türgesh. However, his policy was discontinued when he was dismissed in 109/728.<sup>75</sup> In 110/729, the governor Ashras al-Sullāmī (d. 111/730) attempted to reinstate Asad's policy while also tasking Abū al-Ṣaydā with converting people to Islam. However, Ghūrak objected, pointing to the financial loss the policy would cause.<sup>76</sup> The sources regularly quote Umayyad governors offering the same argument, making it something of a topos.<sup>77</sup> For local non-Muslim rulers, however, any active conversion policy had a direct negative effect on *their* income base. Moreover, conversion created new social ties for the converts, decreasing the rulers' local support base in general terms, as well.<sup>78</sup> Sogdian rulers thus attempted to stop this undermining of their lucrative role as local tax collectors. Under pressure from Sogdian rulers, the Muslim authorities instituted new criteria for exemptions from the *jizya*: converts seeking such exemptions had to prove that they were good Muslims, circumcised, praying regularly, and able to recite the Qurʾān. In response to this ruling, Sogdian converts in Samarkand protested, but their complaints were suppressed and their leaders, including Abū al-Ṣaydā and Bishr b. Jarmūz, were arrested. Further, Umayyad fiscal administrators humiliated some local notables by ripping their clothes, putting their belts around their necks, and taking the *jizya* by force. As a result, Sogdian converts sought the aid of the Türgesh Turks against the Muslim government.<sup>79</sup>

During the anti-*jizya* protests in Sogdiana, al-Ḥārith was based in Ashras al-Sullāmī's camp. He witnessed all these events but showed no interest in supporting the protests against the imposition of the *jizya* on converts. His revolt commenced a full six years after these events took place, which makes it unlikely that this was the rebellion's main trigger. Moreover, he issued his call for revolt not in Sogdiana but in the garrison of Andkhud on the Bactrian side of the Amu Darya. These facts indicate that the Umayyad *jizya* policy in Sogdiana was not the cause of al-Ḥārith's revolt in Bactria. However, as we will see later, he did exploit the *jizya* issue to attract Sogdian converts once his revolt was underway.

### The Beginning of al-Ḥārith's Revolt

Al-Ḥārith launched his rebellion in 116/734 in the Andkhud garrison and counted on the support of its Arab Muslim soldiers. Unexpectedly, he did not move to Marw, the political center of Khurasan, but instead marched toward Balkh, where the garrison of Baruqān was located. Was this accidental or a calculated military move? What could al-Ḥārith hope to find in Balkh?

According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Ḥārith marched on Balkh with four thousand troops belonging to Tamīm and Azd who had joined him from the Andkhud garrison. He first encountered Arab Muslim forces under Naṣr b. Sayyār (d. 131/749), head of the garrison of Baruqān, which is said to have housed ten thousand troops from various Arab tribes. Al-Ḥārith invited

75. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 125, 127.

76. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1508.

77. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 193–95.

78. I discuss the problems created by conversion in a Bactrian household in "Between Turks and Arabs."

79. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1507–10; Athamina, "Taxation Reforms," 278.

Naṣr and other Arab Muslim elites to heed his call for the application of the Qurʾān and the *sunna* and for allegiance to the leadership of the Elected One, but his message was rejected. After a quick skirmish, Naṣr fled,<sup>80</sup> though the reason for his flight is not given. Possibly he did not want to witness another conflict like the one he had seen earlier in Balkh when Arab Muslim soldiers had refused to fight the Türgesh. In that instance, the soldiers had mutinied, and the situation rapidly turned into a tribal war between troops from Rabiʿa and those from Yaman. Naṣr had been able to suppress the rebels only with the help of troops sent to him by the Chaghān Khudā.<sup>81</sup>

After capturing Baruqān, al-Ḥārith appointed Sulaymān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim governor of Balkh. The Ibn Khāzim family had shown opposition to Umayyad rule on several occasions. Sulaymān’s brother was the famous Mūsā (d. 85/704–5) who had established de facto rule in Tirmidh after tribal leaders, provoked by ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705), had killed his father ʿAbd Allāh b. Khāzim in 72/691. Ibn Khāzim’s family had also supported ʿAbd Allāh b. Zubayr (d. 73/692) during the second *fitna* (61–73/680–92).<sup>82</sup> Al-Ḥārith’s appointment of Sulaymān was not only a declaration of his anti-Umayyad intentions but also an attempt to gain the support of the remaining members of Ibn Khāzim’s family, who were known for their long struggle against the Umayyads. The repeated participation in different revolts by members of the Umayyad elite is also addressed in the contributions of Petra Sijpesteijn and Hannah-Lena Hagemann to this issue. It raises interesting questions about the Umayyad polity’s apparent ability and desire to retribute and reintegrate members of its elite who had shown temporary dissatisfaction and disagreement with its policies. And it challenges the definition of a rebellion as constituting an absolute and definite break between rebels and representatives of the central authority, as raised in the introduction.

Ibn Khāzim’s complaints about Umayyad central power were similar to those of other local Arab Muslim elites. As the main consumers of provincial revenues, they rejected the caliph’s attempts to limit their autonomy or their access to provincial resources.<sup>83</sup> Any encroachment on what they perceived as their right was opposed, often by force. The resentment of local Arab elites about expanding Umayyad administrative power and the resulting competition over local resources seem to have been recurring motifs in revolts throughout the Umayyad empire in this period, including revolts in Egypt, Iraq, and Khurasan as discussed by Hagemann, Sijpesteijn, and Alon Dar in this issue.<sup>84</sup>

Al-Ḥārith celebrated his victory over Naṣr b. Sayyār by striking coins in Balkh. Both the legend “God commanded justice for the Triumphant One” (*amara Allāh bi-l-ʿadl li-l-Manṣūr*) on his coins and the legend “O Victorious” (*yā Manṣūr*) that was reportedly used as a slogan

80. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1566–67.

81. *Ibid.*, 9:1473–77.

82. *Ibid.*, 9:1568.

83. For example, al-Ḥakamī al-Ghifārī rejected Muʿāwiya’s request for tribute (*ibid.*, 7:110). Qutayba directly warned Caliph Sulaymān, saying that “he will dismiss the caliph like he removes his shoe” (*ibid.*, 8:1283–85).

84. See also Yaacov Lev on the Coptic-Arab revolts in early eighth-century CE Egypt: Y. Lev, “Coptic Rebellions and the Islamization of Medieval Egypt (8th–10th Century): Medieval and Modern Perceptions,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2002): 303–44.

by his followers announced the arrival of a new government whose priority was justice. The title *Manṣūr* refers to al-Ḥārith and shows his political ambition to establish an independent government in Khurasan.<sup>85</sup> The act of minting coins, assigning his own appointee over Balkh, and insisting on a *shūrā* to decide on all further appointments in Khurasan were acts of rebellion against the Umayyad authorities.

In Balkh, al-Ḥārith was in a position to reach out to three different groups. The first two groups were the Arab troops and members of the local elite, in particular families such as the Banū Khāzim. Al-Ḥārith knew about the resentment of the Arab Muslim soldiers in Baruqān who had refused to fight the Türgesh and whose resistance had been suppressed by Naṣr b. Sayyār. More importantly, Balkh was a strategic location, and by capturing it al-Ḥārith could expand the geography of his rebellion and bring local rulers over to his side. Balkh was on the main route to Sogdiana, where large numbers of Muslim converts lived, and these converts were potential recruits. For an anti-Umayyad alliance to emerge and the rebellion to succeed, al-Ḥārith also needed to persuade local elites to join him. The arguments he could use to win Arab Muslim supporters were discussed earlier, but what could he offer the locals? What did they see in his revolt that was worth their support?

The answer is found in the *Zayn al-akhbār* (Ornament of histories), a Persian chronicle dealing with Ghaznavid history written by ‘Abd al-Ḥayy b. Zaḥāk Gardīzī, who lived in the eleventh century CE. According to Gardīzī, once al-Ḥārith prevailed in Balkh, he invited people to the Qur’ān and the *sunna* but also promised to maintain existing agreements with the “protected peoples” (*ahl al-dhimma*), that is, mainly non-Muslim Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews; to refrain from levying the *kharāj* tax on Muslims; and to not oppress anyone. As a result, many people are said to have answered his call.<sup>86</sup> In Gardīzī’s narrative, al-Ḥārith’s call contains various layers that need to be examined in turn. As before, the appeal to the Qur’ān and the *sunna* targeted Arab Muslims, but the newly introduced promises were clearly directed at local non-Muslims and local converts to Islam. Usually, the agreements that al-Ḥārith promised to respect were made not with ordinary non-Muslims but with elites who had the authority to negotiate and sign agreements. The pledge not to extract the *kharāj* from “Muslims” refers to the *jizya* that was systematically being collected from converts.

Al-Ṭabarī mentions that al-Ḥārith met Bishr b. Jarmūz, an ally of Abū al-Ṣaydā, and some other elite Arabs in Guzgan on his way to Marw. Many of Abū al-Ṣaydā’s supporters who were from Sogdiana joined al-Ḥārith at this point, which suggests that al-Ḥārith addressed Sogdian converts not at the beginning of the revolt but only later, after he had taken Balkh, and that he promised them that they would be required to pay only the taxes that

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85. Sears, who published these coins, emphasizes the ideological nature of al-Ḥārith’s message; Sears, “Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj,” 395.

86. Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, 257–58. Gardīzī’s narrative may come from the *Akhbār wulāt Khurāsān* (Reports about the governors of Khurasan), a now-lost Arabic text compiled by Abū al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī b. Aḥmad and his brother in eleventh-century CE Khurasan. Recently, Muḥammad ‘Alī Kāzim Begi has tried to reconstruct the original text by collecting relevant information from other sources. See Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Sullāmī, *Akhbār wulāt Khurāsān*, reconstructed by M. ‘A. Kāzim Bigi (Tehran: Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1390/2011), 62.

were due on all Muslims.<sup>87</sup> Gardīzī's narrative, supported by the encounter reported by al-Ṭabarī, indicates that it was only after al-Ḥārith's victory at Balkh that the abolition of the *jizya* for converts became part of his reform program. This addition seems to have been motivated by a conscious effort to mobilize support among the local population. Since Sogdian converts had been suffering from the Arab Muslim government's discrimination, al-Ḥārith's adoption of Abū al-Ṣaydā's goal to lift the *jizya* and establish just government was an inclusive and powerful message aimed at uniting the cause of Sogdian converts with that of the discontented Arab Muslim soldiers.

The third group of local Khurasanis who were attracted to al-Ḥārith's movement played a crucial role in the course of the revolt. Following the victory in Balkh, local Bactrian rulers warmly welcomed al-Ḥārith's conquests. According to al-Ṭabarī, a number of rulers in western Bactria declared their support for his revolt. They included the rulers of Guzgan, Tarsul the *dihqān* (local chief) of Faryab, the *shahrāb* (ruler) of Talaqan, and Qaryāqis the *dihqān* of Marw.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike the Sogdian converts, who were upset by the continuing *jizya* requirement, the Bactrians do not seem to have had a problem with this imposition. The Bactrian documents do not help with this line of inquiry, since the earliest evidence of taxes is later, from the Abbasid period.<sup>89</sup> The textual sources contain no references to oppressive Umayyad taxation, to a policy of demanding the *jizya* from converts, or even to large-scale conversion in Bactria. The only concrete evidence of the *jizya* is a few coins minted in Anbir in Guzgan. Interestingly, these coins are silver dirhams based on the Sasanian model with the name of the governor of Khurasan, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab (d. 102/720), and the date 84/703, three decades before al-Ḥārith's rebellion. The coins have different legends in Arabic, Bactrian, and Middle Persian and countermarks on their margins.<sup>90</sup> On the obverse of the coins the name Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and the legend *bi-sm Allāh al-ʿazīm*, "In the name of God, the Great," is written in Arabic. The image of the Sasanian king and some Middle Persian words are depicted as well. On the reverse, the coins have a unique and rather enigmatic Arabic legend, "Struck for *jizya* in Juzjan" (*ḍuriba jizyatan bi-l-Juzjān*), as well as the name of Zhulad, king of Guzgan (r. 80–91/699–711), in Bactrian; the date and the place of minting are in Middle Persian. The coins are countermarked by a *tamgha*, or stamp, representing the name of the local king.<sup>91</sup>

Although these coins make an unambiguous reference to the *jizya*, this term could also refer to tribute in a more general sense, rather than specifically to the Islamic poll tax, which was a personal tax on individuals. All in all, the combination of names and languages as well as the obscure and unique Arabic reference to the *jizya* make it difficult to understand the

87. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1568.

88. *Ibid.*, 9:1569.

89. G. Khan, *Arabic Documents from Early Islamic Khurasan* (London: Nour Foundation and Azimuth Editions, 2007), 92–136.

90. H. M. Malik, *Arab-Sasanian Numismatics and History during the Early Islamic Period in Iran and Iraq: The Johnson Collection of Arab-Sasanian Coins* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 2019), 1:71–72.

91. Cribb, "Coinage in Afghanistan."

function of the coins and the circumstances under which they were struck. Whether they were minted on the orders of Yazīd or of Zhulad king of Guzgan for the payment of tribute cannot be determined with certainty. In any case, despite the coins' reference to *jizya* payments, the Muslim authorities would have found it difficult to enforce regular and strict tax collection in the mountainous area of western Bactria, where independent rulers largely continued to hold sway.

Evidence of the levying of taxes associated with Muslim rule in Bactria comes only from later periods. A Bactrian legal document from the Rob region in southern Bactria, dating to 525 of the Bactrian calendar, which corresponds to 747 CE, refers to taxes called *γαζιτο* and *βαριτο* levied on a Bactrian household (*χανο*).<sup>92</sup> The word *γαζιτο* could have been the Bactrianized form of the Arabic *jizya*; alternatively, it might represent the equivalent of a former Bactrian tax.<sup>93</sup> The *kharāj* was collected from individuals in Bactria in the early Abbasid period, according to several Arabic documents dating from 138–60/755–77.<sup>94</sup> However, all of these documents postdate al-Ḥārith's death and cannot be regarded as evidence of Umayyad taxation before or during his rebellion.

Other evidence confirms that conversion to Islam progressed at a slower pace in Bactria than it did in Sogdiana. Zoroastrianism and Buddhism remained the major religions in Bactria.<sup>95</sup> Bactrian documents show that the worship of old Iranian deities such as Wakhsh, Ram-set, and Zhun continued in the region: their names are referenced in legal documents produced between 659 and 747 CE and<sup>96</sup> appear as popular personal names,<sup>97</sup> and they were worshipped in purpose-built temples.<sup>98</sup> Bactria also continued to

92. Bactrian document W in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:126–35.

93. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 2:205. My thanks to Jonathan Lee, who suggested that this could have been the equivalent of a former tax called *royo*.

94. Arabic documents 1–23 in Khan, *Arabic Documents*, 92–136.

95. There was a significant Christian presence in the region under the Sasanids, when Christianity was an important religion in the empire; see N. Sims-Williams, “Baršabbā,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, updated December 15, 1988, <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/barsabba-legendary-bishop-of-marv-and-founder-of-the-christian-church-in-eastern-iran>; Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 57. Many Hephthalites had converted to Christianity, and there were bishoprics in Badghis, Bushanj, and Quhistan; see C. E. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs: From the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Ṣaffārids (30–250/651–864)* (Rome: IsMEO, 1968), 8–9. A number of Turkic tribes had also converted en masse to Nestorian Christianity; see D. Wilmshurst, *The Martyred Church: A History of the Church of the East* (London: East and West, 2011) and C. Baumer, *The Church of the East: An Illustrated History of the Assyrian Church* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

96. See the attestation of Wakhsh (*οαχβο*), the god of the Amu Darya, in the beginning of, e.g., the Bactrian legal documents O, R, S, Ss, Tt, Uu, V, and U in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:80–83, 92–93, 94–95, 96–97, 104–5, 112–15, 116–25, and in document ji in 2:138–39. He also appears as “king of gods” (*βαγανο βαβο*) in documents O and Tt in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:80–83, 104–5. Ram-set is referenced in legal documents produced in 660 CE and 671 CE at Marogan market in Samingan, an area to the east of Balkh (Bactrian documents P and Q in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:84–87, 88–91).

97. The deity Zhun is preserved in the personal names Zhun-lad (“given by Zhun”), Zhulad, and Zhun-bandag; N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Personal Names*, pt. 7 of *Iranisches Personennamenbuch*, vol. 2, *Mitteliranische Personennamen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 65–66. Zhulad, the king of Guzgan, was also named after this deity.

98. Bactrians built temples called *baglān* and *nishālm* in which to house the images of these deities and

be an important center of Buddhism in the region. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang encountered substantial Buddhist communities in Bactria in 630 CE in Tirmidh, Chaghaniyan, Kulab, Qubadiyan, Balkh, Guzgan, Gaz, and Samingan.<sup>99</sup> Balkh alone had a hundred monasteries with three thousand monks of the Hināyānā school. Xuanzang's reports have been confirmed by archaeological surveys and excavations in the region.<sup>100</sup> Buddhism was still popular in Bactria when the Korean Buddhist pilgrim Hye Ch'o visited around 725–26 CE. He noted that the region was dominated by Arabs but that the local population and its kings were mostly Buddhist.<sup>101</sup> It is unlikely that western Bactrian rulers, whose population was still mostly Zoroastrian and Buddhist, would have been interested in al-Ḥārith's call to apply the Qur'ān and the *sunna*. Likewise, there were no mistreated converts to speak of in Bactria and thus no audience for al-Ḥārith's promise of just government. The source of the local leaders' political legitimacy was entirely different. So what attracted non-Muslim Bactrian rulers to al-Ḥārith's rebellion?

Al-Ṭabarī's list of Bactrian rulers who joined al-Ḥārith highlights an important point. Except for the *dihqān* of Marw, all of the local rulers or their family members had joined the earlier revolt of Nizak Ṭarkhān, the Hephthalite prince of Badghis, against Qutayba b. Muslim in 90/710.<sup>102</sup> During the first fifty years of Arab Muslim presence, from 652 to 705 CE, Bactria remained largely independent. Bactrian documents of this period show that local rulers controlled their areas independently while recognizing the overlordship of the Turkic Qaghān.<sup>103</sup> Arab Muslim forces mainly used Bactria as a safe passage on their way to raid Sogdiana, and local rulers mostly cooperated with the Umayyads. However, between 90 and 94/710–13, the campaigns of Qutayba b. Muslim brought western Bactria under Umayyad authority, incorporating local rulers into the political structure of Umayyad Khurasan.<sup>104</sup> Local leaders subsequently rose in protest under Nizak Ṭarkhān. Qutayba, however, killed Nizak Ṭarkhān<sup>105</sup> along with Badhān, the *marzbān*, or margrave, of Marw

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worship them (Bactrian documents P, Q, Tt, V, and W in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:84–87, 88–91, 112–15, 116–25, 126–35).

99. *SI-YU-KI*, 38–49.

100. P. Bernard, R. Besenval, and P. Marquis, "Du 'mirage bactrien' aux réalités archéologiques: Nouvelles fouilles de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (DAFA) à Bactres (2004–2006)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 150, no. 2 (2006): 1217–29. The ruins of stupas are still visible in various places in northern Afghanistan, including Balkh, Dawlatabad, Charkint, and Marmul; personal observation, 2004–9.

101. Hye Ch'o, *Diary*, 52. A similar situation is reflected in the Tang-i Safidak inscription; see J. Lee and N. Sims-Williams, "The Antiquities and Inscription of Tangi Safidak," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 9 (2003): 169–84.

102. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8:1204–6.

103. See Bactrian documents N, Nn, P, Q, S, and T in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:68–69, 74–75, 84–87, 88–91, 94–96, 98–103.

104. Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī mentions that no one had ever suppressed the rulers in the east the way Qutayba did (*Futūḥ*, 7:153).

105. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 8:1221; Ibn A'tham, *Futūḥ*, 7:149. Al-Ṭabarī refers to a poem in which Nizak Ṭarkhān and his relatives are mentioned (*Ta'rikh*, 8:1226–27). See also Haug, *Eastern Frontier*, 114–21.

al-Rūd.<sup>106</sup> There were even rumors that Qutayba had poisoned the king of Guzgan,<sup>107</sup> though the royal family of Guzgan survived.

To control western Bactria, Qutayba established a network of garrisons filled with soldiers from Syria, Iraq, and the Marw region.<sup>108</sup> Qutayba then appointed his brothers and relatives as commanders of these garrisons.<sup>109</sup> These measures reduced the autonomy of western Bactrian rulers, who joined the rebellion of al-Ḥārith likely in order to try and recover their independence. Other Hephthalites joined al-Ḥārith's rebellion for similar reasons. Some Umayyad dirhams produced in Iraq, Fars, and Marw bear the Hephthalite *tamgha*, a specific mark of association with a certain family. Sears has argued that these dirhams are countermarked to support al-Ḥārith's movement.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, local leaders' expressions of independence by revalidating Umayyad dirhams with their own stamps was accompanied, according to Sears, with financial support for al-Ḥārith's movement. The countermarks thus reflect the Hephthalite rulers' attempt to reduce Umayyad power by supporting an anti-Umayyad rebel. The Bactrian documents show that western Bactrian leaders still had access to military forces at this time, and these also likely bolstered al-Ḥārith's forces.<sup>111</sup>

Not all Bactrian rulers supported al-Ḥārith. Local notables such as the Barmak, the head of the Buddhist monastery of the Naw Bahar in Balkh, and his relative the Chaghān Khudā, the king of Chaghaniyan, did not join al-Ḥārith.<sup>112</sup> The Barmak's father (also called Barmak) had been killed by a Nizak after he had supported Arab Muslims in the past.<sup>113</sup> The Chaghān Khudā had invited Arab Muslims to help him vanquish rival kings in northern Bactria.<sup>114</sup> In all likelihood, these two holdouts were not able to stand up against the other powerful Bactrian rulers who had joined al-Ḥārith. However, they remained loyal to the Umayyads and helped them against al-Ḥārith later when the situation allowed (as discussed below).

Al-Ḥārith's rebellious army is said to have consisted of sixty thousand Arab, Sogdian, and Bactrian troops, with many others also joining in for the purpose of plunder.<sup>115</sup> Al-Ḥārith habitually wore black garments and carried a black banner, which was not an Arab tradition.<sup>116</sup> Al-Ḥārith's use of black quickly became a symbol of resistance against

106. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 7:152.

107. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8:1184–85.

108. *Ibid.*, 8:1206–7.

109. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:208.

110. Sears, "Revolt of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj," 380.

111. For instance, Bactrian local military forces and their commanders are mentioned in Bactrian document T in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:98–103 and in document jg in 2:134–35.

112. For detailed information on the Barmak, see É. de La Vaissière, "De Bactres á Balkh, par le Now Bahar," *Journal asiatique* 298, no. 2 (2010): 517–33.

113. *Ibid.*, 525.

114. Al-Baladhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 419–20; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 8:1180.

115. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1570; Khleifat, "Caliphate of Hisham b. ʿAbd al-Malik," 222.

116. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā, who led the Azdite soldiers in al-Ḥārith's camp, had his own flag. Most probably the Azdites' banner was not black, otherwise al-Ṭabarī would have said so. Naṣr b. Sayyār, who confronted al-Ḥārith near Balkh, was astonished by al-Ḥārith's black dress and banner (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1575–76).

the Umayyads. In a poem sent to the Arab elite in Marw, the famous Umayyad-era poet Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī (d. 126/741) referred to the connection between black banners and the followers of al-Ḥārith. For Kumayt, the black banner was a sign of support for the Hāshimites. He asked the local elite of Marw to support al-Ḥārith by raising black banners and called the Umayyads “people of ignorance and oppression” (*ahl al-ḍalāla wa-l-ta‘addī*).<sup>117</sup> However, the Arabic narratives, such as those of al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī, that were produced in and reflect the concerns of the caliphal center give no indication that al-Ḥārith’s Arab Muslim soldiers dressed in black or displayed black banners. This suggests that al-Ḥārith used black dress and banners specifically to communicate with the local population, for which these symbols would have been meaningful.

The symbolism of the black dress that al-Ḥārith used to communicate with his local constituency had a long history in the pre-Islamic East. Scholars have argued that al-Ḥārith exploited current messianic expectations among Muslims with his use of black symbolism.<sup>118</sup> It is true that messianic appeals related to the removal of the Umayyads had probably spread to Khurasan from Syria and Iraq. However, the symbolism of the color black was not initially imported to Khurasan from the western lands; rather, it was an ancient symbol in the east that first migrated westward from Khurasan before returning in the Abbasid period, accompanied by strong messianic symbolism. The apocalyptic idea that Umayyad rule would come to an end a century after the *hijra* (emigration) of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina was known among the Arab Muslims in Khurasan. It was mentioned in a letter sent in 719 CE by Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, to the Tang emperor, in which the Sogdian ruler asked for help against the Arabs.<sup>119</sup> It is possible that the Arab Muslims in Sogdiana informed Ghūrak about this expectation. However, there is no evidence to connect awareness of such apocalyptic ideas to the use of black garments in 719 CE. It seems that al-Ḥārith’s rebellion combined the color black with the apocalyptic vision of the end of the Umayyad caliphate and that this symbol was subsequently taken up further west by the Abbasids. This theory is supported by the fact that the majority of the reports attributed to the Prophet relating to the appearance of holders of black banners (*ṣāhib al-rāyāt al-aswad*) who will bring an end to Umayyad rule are collected in *Kitāb al-Fitan* (“Book of Social Disturbances”) compiled by Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād al-Marwazī (d. 227/844), a native of Marw who lived in the ninth century CE.<sup>120</sup>

Instead of seeing al-Ḥārith’s use of black dress and banners as reflecting later Islamic apocalyptic associations, his use of color symbolism should be understood in a local eastern context, in which it was associated with political change, political power, Buddhism

117. *Ibid.*, 9:1575–76.

118. See Sharon, *Revolt*, 30–31; *idem*, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the ‘Abbāsīd State; Incubation of a Revolt* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983); K. Athamina, “The Black Banners and the Socio-political Significance of Flags and Slogans in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica* 36, no. 3 (1989): 307–26.

119. For an English translation of the letter, see V. A. Livshits, *Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech’e*, trans. T. Stableford, ed. N. Sims-Williams (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 2015), 49.

120. Nu‘aym b. Ḥammād al-Marwazī, *Kitāb al-Fitan*, ed. S. Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1991). Similarly, La Vaissière has argued that “most texts saying that it was the colour of the flag of the prophet, or his turban, are ‘Abbāsīd reconstructions trying to justify the choice of black”; La Vaissière, “‘Abbāsīd Revolution,” 140.

and mourning. During the Southern and Northern dynasties of China (386–589 CE), and specifically during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou (r. 560–578), a prophecy spread that the wearer of a black garment would take the throne. Emperor Wu took the prophecy very seriously. To prevent its realization, he listened to the preaching of two influential Daoists, Wei Yuansong and Zhang Bin, who agitated against Buddhists, accusing them of being the black garment wearers. The emperor prohibited the use of black and ordered the execution of many Buddhists. During the Tang dynasty (618–907), the Tang emperor, who was also known as Wu but whose real name was Li Yan (r. 840–846) seems to have reacted to rumors that a “Tiānzǐ,” or Son of Heaven, dressed in black would appear to depose him.<sup>121</sup>

We know that many Sogdians, Bactrians, and other people from Central Asia traded or settled in China and spread Buddhism in the region.<sup>122</sup> On the basis of Xuanzang’s account, Renato Sala calculated that at least 496 monasteries with 22,500 monks existed in the southern parts of Central Asia in 630 CE.<sup>123</sup> Many of these Buddhist monasteries were in Bactria. Balkh was the center of Buddhism in the eastern Iranian regions. According to Xuanzang, followers of the Sarvāstivādā Buddhist sect were present in Gaz, an area to the south of Balkh.<sup>124</sup> Hye Ch’o, during his visit in 725–26 CE, also noted the presence of the Sarvāstivādā sect.<sup>125</sup> It is said that the Buddhist monks in the Sarvāstivādā tradition wore black garments.<sup>126</sup> It is not known, however, whether the Buddhists of Balkh related the color black to any apocalyptic narrative.

La Vaissière made an important observation regarding the significance of black garments in Sogdiana: he showed that black was the color of mourning in seventh- and eighth-century Central Asia. Some ossuaries show mourners in black dress, and a text from the *Tongdian*, the Chinese institutional history, refers to mourners in Samarkand who wore black.<sup>127</sup> Given that Bactria, Samarkand, and Bukhara shared strong ethnic, cultural, and commercial ties, it is likely that Bactrians, too, used black as a mourning color.<sup>128</sup> It is also important to

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121. I would like to thank Shuqi Jia for providing me with detailed information on the symbolism of black in China. The main Chinese sources on this issue are: Sima Qian, “Annals of Qin Shi Huang” [秦始皇本紀], in *Records of the Grand Historian* [史記] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1973), *juan* 6; Dao Xuan, *Guang Hong ming ji* (40 *juan*) [廣弘明集: 40卷] (Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju, 1936), *juan* 8. Brief information in English on black garments is also given in K. S. Ch’en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 186–87.

122. É. de La Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders: A History*, trans. J. Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2005); V. Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

123. R. Sala, “The Spread of Buddhism from Gandhara to South, West and East Central Asia (I BC–XIV AD),” in *Religions of Kazakhstan and Central Asia on the Great Silk Road: Materials of the International Scientific and Practical Conference, 12–13 June 2017*, 248–72 (Almaty: Service Press, 2017), 260.

124. *SI-YU-KI*, 44–49.

125. Hye Ch’o, *Diary*, 52.

126. M. Deegalle, “Theravāda Pre-understanding in Understanding Mahāyāna,” in *Three Mountains and Seven Rivers: Prof. Musashi Tachikawa’s Felicitation Volume*, ed. S. Hino and T. Wada, 43–64 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 55.

127. La Vaissière, “Abbāsīd Revolution,” 140–42.

128. Similarities in the ways in which the *Nawrūz* festival is celebrated in these areas are a good example of

note that various groups of Chionites and Turks migrated westward and settled in Sogdiana and Bactria. These nomadic groups continued to have relations with China and with eastern Iranian regions. Thus, it is not implausible that the symbolism of black passed from one region to another.<sup>129</sup>

The fact that al-Ḥārith's rebellion began in Bactria and attracted many Bactrian and Sogdian supporters may explain al-Ḥārith's use of black clothing and banners. By wearing black, al-Ḥārith may have tapped into a "regional color code" that was understood by his local supporters,<sup>130</sup> who were familiar with black as the color of power, political change, and mourning.<sup>131</sup> Al-Ḥārith represented these cultural elements in his clothing, though the specific meanings that he may have attached to black beyond its regional significance are unknown. In his mission, al-Ḥārith successfully combined the political priorities of local Bactrian rulers with ideological terminologies and symbols that appealed to other groups. His message was inclusive and powerful and generated a large group of supporters from various backgrounds to whom he appealed with different arguments. He used the prioritization of the Qur'ān, the *sunna*, and just government based on *shūrā* for his Arab Muslim supporters; the abolition of the *jizya* for Sogdian converts; and messianic

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the cultural ties between these regions. The symbolism of black is also reflected in the *Shāhnāma* (Book of kings) composed by Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī in tenth-century CE Khurasan. A large part of the *Shāhnāma* is related to the eastern Iranian world, as attested by the geographical names and characters that appear in it. In the *Shāhnāma*, black is the color of political power and mourning. The tents of the mythical Iranian kings (*shāh-i Ērān*) were black, and Afrāsiyāb, the king of Turān, wore black and carried a black banner when he fought the Iranians. In the *Shāhnāma*, Turān is the region beyond the Amu Darya, which included Sogdiana and northern parts of Bactria. When Eraj son of Afrīdūn was killed, the Iranians dressed in black, and the wearing of black garments to mourn the deaths of Iranian kings, princes, and heroes is mentioned several times in the *Shāhnāma*. All these examples indicate that the *Shāhnāma* reflects a very similar view of the color black as that which we have seen in the Sogdian and Chinese examples. It is highly unlikely that Firdawsī's portrayal of black as the color of mourning and a symbol of power was his own innovation or an adaptation of Abbasid narratives. Had it been a later adaptation, we should have seen it in his work. See Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāhnāma*, available online at <https://ganjoor.net/>. Black color as symbol of mourning continued in Bactria to the sixteenth century. It is reported in Mirzā Muḥammad Ḥaidar Dughlāt, *Ta'rikh-i Rashīdī*, ed. Abbāsquī Ghaffārīfard (Tehran: Mirāth-i Maktūb, 1383/2004), 275.

129. The relations between the Turks and the Chinese have been studied by various scholars. See, for instance, H. Ecsedy, "The Trade and War Relations between the Turks and China in the Second Half of the 6th Century," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 21, no. 2 (1968): 131–80; N. Di Cosmo, "China-Steppe Relations in Historical Perspective," in *Complexity and Interaction along the Eurasian Steppe Zone in the First Millennium CE*, ed. J. Bemann and M. Schmauder, 49–72 (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 2015); N. Di Cosmo, "The Relations between China and the Steppe from the Xiongnu to the Turk Empire," in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. N. Di Cosmo and M. Maas, 35–53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

130. Thanks to Étienne de La Vaissière, who informed me that this was a local cultural code (personal communication, October 11, 2021).

131. La Vaissière has argued that Abū Muslim's choice of black as symbol of his revolution was a strategic move (La Vaissière, "Abbasid Revolution," 140). The use of symbols as an effective tool of communication in rebellions has been studied in detail in the medieval European context. These studies show similarities with the meanings of symbols discussed in this article. See, for example, J. Firnhaber-Baker and D. Schoenaers, eds., *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

propaganda combined with messages of authority and political change through his use of black dress and banners for local elites. Despite his huge and diverse army, al-Ḥārith's mission ultimately failed. Even so, however, it had been powerful enough to break down the political structures of Umayyad Khurasan—structures that would crumble for good a couple of years later under another black banner, that of the Abbasid revolution of Abū Muslim.

### The Umayyad Response to the Rebellion

After conquering Andkhud and Balkh, al-Ḥārith marched on Marw, which alarmed the Umayyad authorities. Unable to unite the Arab Muslims of Marw against al-Ḥārith, 'Āṣim al-Hilālī, the governor of Khurasan at the time (in office in 116/734), withdrew to Abarshahr to recruit more forces and prepared to breach the dam on the Marw River to flood al-Ḥārith's camp.<sup>132</sup> However, these strategies failed to stop the advance of the rebels. In the end, what prevented a complete collapse of Umayyad authority in Khurasan was the internal conflict that broke out in al-Ḥārith's camp. His Arab Muslim soldiers as well as the Arab tribal leaders in the region who had not joined al-Ḥārith were alarmed by the large number of local supporters in al-Ḥārith's army. The unwelcome prospect of non-Arab dominance formed a common threat that united the Arabs—both those in the Umayyad camp and those in al-Ḥārith's. The Azdite soldiers of al-Ḥārith abandoned him and joined al-Hilālī before the battle for Marw commenced.<sup>133</sup> The dissent in al-Ḥārith's camp combined with al-Hilālī's breaching of the dam caused al-Ḥārith's first military defeat. This, in turn, prompted his Bactrian allies to desert him. Al-Ḥārith was left with a small group of loyal soldiers, mostly from Tamīm. The sources do not specify the reason the local rulers abandoned al-Ḥārith.<sup>134</sup>

The battle at Marw, however, was not the end of the rebellion. The rebels' attack on the political center of Khurasan was taken seriously by Caliph Hishām. On the advice of al-Hilālī, he combined the forces of Iraq and Khurasan and placed them under the command of Khālid al-Qasrī (d. 126/743),<sup>135</sup> who sent his brother Asad al-Qasrī (d. 120/738) to Khurasan with twenty thousand Syrian troops. Al-Hilālī, too, had advised the caliph not to rely on the Iraqis of Khurasan but to send Syrian forces, who had fought for the caliph faithfully.<sup>136</sup>

When Asad al-Qasrī arrived in Khurasan, the entire region was in turmoil. Asad divided his forces, sending one division to Marw and another to Marw al-Rūd. Marw and Marw al-Rūd were soon reconquered, and al-Ḥārith retreated to Balkh. Those Arab troops who had abandoned al-Ḥārith earlier now joined al-Hilālī and Asad's service.<sup>137</sup> Al-Ḥārith then crossed the Amu Darya and surrounded Tirmidh but could not capture it despite having the support of the Turks and the *spāhbed*, or military commander, of Nasaf. Though al-Ḥārith was defeated at Tirmidh, he managed to send a number of his followers—soldiers and their families—to safety in the Tabushkān fortress, located somewhere in eastern Bactria. The

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132. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1569–71.

133. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 177.

134. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1569–71.

135. *Ibid.*, 9:1574–82.

136. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 179.

137. *Ibid.*, 180.

fortress was given to him by the *yabghu* of Tukharistan.<sup>138</sup>

Once al-Ḥārith had left, Asad entered Balkh. From Balkh, he sent Juday<sup>c</sup> b. ʿAlī al-Kirmānī (d.129/746), a senior leader from the Azd, to take the Tabushkān fortress with Syrian forces as well as two and a half thousand soldiers from Balkh (*jund Balkh*). Al-Kirmānī took the fortress by force, killed the men sheltering there, and sold both Arab and non-Arab women and children on the market in Balkh as slaves. A number of the Arab Muslim notables who had supported al-Ḥārith were sent to Balkh, where Asad publicly executed them.<sup>139</sup> It is likely that the purpose of al-Kirmānī's and Asad's brutal acts was to show that they would not tolerate any rebels, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

### Bactrian Rulers Turn against al-Ḥārith

The defection of the local Bactrian rulers who had initially supported al-Ḥārith accelerated his defeat. Having no other option, al-Ḥārith fled and took refuge with the Qaghān of the Türgesh Turks, who was preparing to invade Bactria.<sup>140</sup> However, the arrival of Asad al-Qasrī in Balkh divided the Bactrian rulers into two camps, one pro-Umayyad and another pro-Türgesh—that is, backing al-Ḥārith. In order to attract more local support and drive a wedge between al-Ḥārith and the Bactrian rulers, Asad shifted his capital from Marw to Balkh and appointed the Barmak to restore the city by using the *faʿla*, or corvée labor, which the local inhabitants contributed as part of the tribute they were supposed to deliver to the Arab Muslim officials.<sup>141</sup> The city of Balkh was heavily fortified, but its fortifications had been damaged during the wars of the early seventh century CE. Most of its population had also left.<sup>142</sup> For this reason, the Arabs did not settle in the city but founded the Baruqān garrison outside the city walls.<sup>143</sup> Asad reasoned that the restoration of the city would attract people to return. He ordered the Arab Muslim soldiers to leave Baruqān and settle in the city among the local people. Asad also moved the official registers (sing. *dīwān*) from Marw to Balkh and restored the city's irrigation system. The locals appreciated these efforts, and some of them consequently shifted their allegiance to Asad and the Umayyads.<sup>144</sup>

The first great conflict between Asad and the Qaghān occurred in 119/737 in Khuttal in eastern Bactria. The king of Khuttal, angered by Asad's raids and plunder, complained to the Qaghān, accepted his overlordship, and invited him to Khuttal. The king hoped to destroy the Arab Muslims by the hand of the Türgesh Turks. He nonetheless surely intended to maintain his autonomy and did not expect the Qaghān to stay after vanquishing the Arabs.

138. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1582–85, 1590–92; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, 12:111.

139. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 7:283.

140. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1594; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 7:283.

141. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1591.

142. *SI-YU-KI*, 44.

143. Abū Bakr ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Wāʿiẓ al-Balkhī, *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh*, trans. ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Balkhī, ed. ʿA. Ḥ. Ḥabībī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1350/1971), 34, 43.

144. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1490–91.

The Türgesh army arrived and took Asad by surprise.<sup>145</sup> The clash triggered a run on both sides to secure the assistance of supporters with the aid of threats and promises, carrots and sticks. Al-Ṭabarī reports that Asad sent a letter to a certain commander, Ibrāhīm b. ʿĀsim, informing him that he would kill him and sell all his family members as slaves in the Balkh market if he were to join the enemy. The Qaghān, for his part, ordered his forces to attack Chaghaniyan and other non-Arab supporters of the Umayyads to demonstrate the consequences of siding with the Arabs. The Türgesh Qaghān also sent a message to Asad via one of al-Ḥārith's supporters, saying that the region beyond the Amu Darya belonged to him and that he had the right to defend it against Arab attacks. However, in practice, the Qaghān claimed the entire region and invaded Bactria as far west as Marw al-Rūd. Even so, some local commanders remained loyal to Asad, including the Chaghān Khudā, who was killed defending Asad.<sup>146</sup>

The defeat at Khuttal taught Asad a bitter lesson—namely, that his Syrian forces were as weak as the Iraqis in the war against the Türgesh.<sup>147</sup> Asad was therefore in desperate need of local support. In Balkh, he ordered fires to be lit on the city walls to invite people from the surrounding villages (*min al-rasātiq*) to join him. Then he called a large gathering at which he accused al-Ḥārith of being “God’s enemy” and of having invited the Türgesh to bring down destruction on the people.<sup>148</sup> Shortly before Asad’s arrival, Türgesh forces had already attacked Guzgan and destroyed the rulers’ palaces. It is possible that some Bactrian rulers had been unsettled by the sight of the Türgesh and their allies plundering Bactria. Indeed, the local rulers and rural inhabitants of this region may have seen al-Ḥārith as more of a threat than an ally.<sup>149</sup> They thus preferred to make an alliance with the Arabs to defend Bactria against plundering by Türgesh forces.

One of the local rulers who remained loyal to the Qaghān was the *yabghu* of Tukharistan, who hosted the Qaghān after the battle of Khuttal.<sup>150</sup> Such autonomous eastern Bactrian rulers had traditionally recognized the overlordship of the Qaghān.<sup>151</sup> The outcome of

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145. *Ibid.*, 9:1592–94.

146. *Ibid.*, 9:1594–1601.

147. Blankinship, *End of the Jihād State*, 181.

148. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1603.

149. *Ibid.*, 9:1603–5.

150. *Ibid.*, 9:1604.

151. Several Bactrian documents from Rob dated to between 629 and 671 CE reflect the Qaghān’s overlordship and refer to the king of Rob with the Turkic title *tapaghliḡ iltābir* of the Qaghān (documents N, P, and Q in Sims-Williams, *Bactrian Documents*, 1:68–73, 84–87, 88–90). The rulers of Rob retained their territorial control, court, and administration until 747 CE (documents U and V in *ibid.*, 1:106–11, 116–25). The region of Gaz was ruled by the *ser* (possibly means ruler) of the Turks in 691 CE (document S in *ibid.*, 1:94–96), and this situation may have continued. In Kadagstan in 700 CE, Bag-Azyas, the queen of the *qutlugh tapaghliḡ* Bilgä Säviḡ, gifted farm land and a female slave to a priest named Kamird-far. The army of Kadagstan was led by a commander called Baralbag, and the administration functioned under the Turks (document T in *ibid.*, 1:88–91). The Turkic control of Kadagstan continued much longer, as indicated by a legal document dated to 772 CE (document Y in *ibid.*, 1:142–43). It is most likely that these local rulers were on the Qaghān’s side because they traditionally recognized Turkic overlordship. Al-Ṭabarī’s report that the Türgesh Qaghān requested the rulers of Tukharistan to join him with their forces supports this idea (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 9:1604).

the revolt was finally decided at the battle of Kharistan in Guzgan in 119/737. The battle is described in detail by al-Ṭabarī, but none of the existing studies have explained it, and they have thus missed the role played by local western Bactrian rulers in the defeat of the Qaghān and al-Ḥārith. The Türgesh Qaghān was accompanied by al-Ḥārith and the king of Khuttal, as well as the local rulers of Sogdiana and the *yabghu* of Tukharistan. The main part of the Türgesh army, however, had been scattered with orders to plunder the region. Consequently, the Qaghān had only a small contingent of troops, which was furthermore weighed down with a large amount of booty and cattle.<sup>152</sup> Asad, by contrast, commanded a coalition force of Syrian and Iraqi troops and several western Bactrian allies, most importantly the king of Guzgan.

Before the battle, the Qaghān ordered that all Guzganis who had joined the Arabs were to be killed if Asad was defeated. Despite this threat, the ruler of Guzgan eventually decided to stay with Asad. The Guzganis, who knew the region well, and some Arabs mounted a surprise attack on the Qaghān. Al-Ḥārith fought valiantly, particularly against the Syrians, but was eventually defeated. While fleeing, he even saved the Qaghān's life. The Qaghān and al-Ḥārith retreated to the upper Amu Daraya region, where they planned to regroup and attack Samarkand.<sup>153</sup> However, the unexpected murder of the Qaghān by Bugha Kul Cür, chief of the "Yellow Bone clan," ended this ambitious plan.<sup>154</sup>

### Aftermath

The Qaghān's death caused the Turks to divide into competing and hostile factions. They never again challenged Umayyad power in Khurasan. Al-Ḥārith lost his most powerful supporter, but he continued to live among the Turks.<sup>155</sup> The death of the Qaghān had a significant impact on the region. It encouraged the local rulers of western Bactria to remain loyal to the Umayyads, which helped preserve Bactria as part of Umayyad Khurasan until the Abbasid revolution. It also provided an opportunity for Asad to consolidate Umayyad authority over Bactria. The implosion of the Türgesh allowed Asad to punish the king of Khuttal, removing another potentially powerful opponent in the process.<sup>156</sup> Asad's successor, Naṣr b. Sayyār, campaigned in Sogdiana with the aid of Bactrian rulers, in particular the ruler of Guzgan.<sup>157</sup>

The battle of Kharistan showed that in the end Bactrian elites preferred to be ruled by the Umayyads rather than by al-Ḥārith or his ally, the Türgesh Qaghān, whose troops had resorted to plunder and violence. Like al-Ḥārith's Arab Muslim supporters, who wearied of al-Ḥārith's alliance with powerful local commanders and defected to the Umayyads, his

152. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1604–14.

153. Ibid.

154. C. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 90.

155. Ibn A'ṭham, *Futūḥ*, 7:283; Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1613, 1689.

156. Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 9:1630–33.

157. Ibid., 9:1695–96.

local allies, too, turned against al-Ḥārith because of his alliance with the Qaghān. After the battle, al-Ḥārith was never able to attract local support and eventually met his death in Marw in 128/746 after failing to organize another anti-Umayyad rebellion.<sup>158</sup>

## Conclusion

The rebellion of al-Ḥārith revolved around the power dynamics that existed in the frontier region of Umayyad Khurasan, involving not only the Arab Muslims but also many local rulers who ruled their territories independently. Depending on the political situation, these rulers either cooperated with the Umayyads or made alliances with Tang China or the Türgesh. This flux made central control over the northeastern frontiers of the Umayyad empire far from easy. Although the Umayyad governors represented imperial authority, they faced a difficult task in keeping both Arab Muslim elites and local rulers on their side. Cooperation with these Muslim and non-Muslim elites was essential for creating and maintaining political stability in Khurasan. At the same time, the governors had to maintain good relations with the caliph and the governor of Iraq. They had to ensure regular fiscal income from the province without upsetting the Arab tribal leaders and local rulers, who represented provincial authority. Mismanagement, favoritism, or discrimination by the governors could lead to rebellion. Al-Ḥārith's rebellion should be understood in the context of competition between central imperial power and provincial authority, which was not limited to local Arab elites.

Al-Ḥārith effectively exploited anti-Umayyad sentiments among the various groups that joined his rebellion, basing his appeals to them on the specific needs and political concerns of each faction. The allegiance of Arab and non-Arab, Muslim and non-Muslim, local, Umayyad, and Türgesh supporters to his cause undermined Umayyad control in Khurasan, even though he eventually lost the war. His supporter base crumbled, first through the defection of a large proportion of his Arab supporters and subsequently through the departure of a number of Bactrian notables. Ironically, the Umayyads were subsequently able to create a coalition of Arab Muslims and mostly non-Muslim Bactrians against al-Ḥārith and his Turkish, Sogdian, Arab, and Bactrian allies.

When raising support for his rebellion, al-Ḥārith made clever use of various local dissatisfactions. He exploited Arab soldiers' disappointment with Umayyad authority, drew on the resentment of Sogdian converts forced to pay the *jizya*, and appealed to western Bactrian rulers who wanted to free themselves of increasingly intrusive and burdensome Umayyad control. He also tapped into indigenous color symbolism through his use of black clothing and banners. Al-Ḥārith utilized an inclusive and powerful message to unite Muslims and non-Muslims and created a coalition of Arabs, Sogdians, and Bactrians. Though this diversity was the basis of his power, his inability to keep his coalition together led to his downfall. His later alliance with the Türgesh Qaghān who invaded Bactria also turned local rulers in western Bactria against him.

Although al-Ḥārith's rebellion failed to overthrow Umayyad rule in Khurasan, it was successful at uniting Muslims and non-Muslims in the region for a single cause. The

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158. Ibid., 9:1917–33.

complexity of the local context, including the distinct interests, dissatisfactions, and ambitions of different groups, makes it clear that it is not enough to grasp just one group's interest in or opposition to al-Ḥārith's movement when trying to explain its success and ultimate failure. Al-Ḥārith's rise in Andkhud, the expansion of his revolt to Balkh, and his downfall in Kharistan highlight the role of local Bactrian rulers in his rebellion. Sogdian converts and local Arab Muslim elites as well as common soldiers and the Türgesh Qaghān each had their own reasons for joining the uprising and, in the case of some, for eventually defecting to the Umayyad side. One lesson to be learned from al-Ḥārith's rebellion is that victory in Khurasan was liable to go to the commander or ruler who was able to navigate and unite in a common cause the complex web of competing and opposing local interests.

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