

The Gate of Iron:
The Making of the Eastern Frontier

by

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To Mom and Dad for all your support.

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Abstract

The study of the eastern dynasties that ruled Khurāsān and Transoxania during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries - most notably the Ṭāhirids (r. 205-259/821-873), Ṣaffārids (r. 247-393/861-1003), and Sāmānids (r. 204-395-819-1005) - has traditionally focused on the relationship between these dynasties and a weakened ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (r. 132-656/750-1258). This approach understands this period as a time when provincial governors sought to break away from a declining Caliphate in order to form their own independent dynasties. This project offers a different approach to the study of Khurāsān and Transoxania during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, one which focuses on the role of these provinces as a frontier.

Through the end of the fourth/tenth century, Khurāsān and Transoxania made up the eastern frontier of the Islamic world, facing the Turks of the Inner Asian steppe. This frontier created a unique set of circumstances in these provinces which affected the political, social, and economic networks of the region. This project applies a frontier studies approach to the eastern frontier during the reign of the eastern dynasties in order to present an alternative view of the history of these provincial dynasties.

To achieve these goals, this project is divided into two major sections. The first (Chapters Two, Three, and Four) examines the “environment” of the frontier, exploring

issues of how the eastern frontier was conceived by contemporary writers, the built environment of the frontier through a study of networks of fortifications, and the political and economic networks of the region, examined through minting practices. The second section (Chapters Five and Six) moves the focus onto the “frontier processes” of settlement, integration, and acculturation that shaped the eastern frontier from the time of the Arab conquests of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries, through the reign of the eastern dynasties, and to the end of the fourth/tenth. This project seeks to place the eastern dynasties within local and imperial networks that developed along the eastern frontier in the early centuries of Muslim rule.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Waning of ‘Abbāsīd Authority and the Rise of the “Independent” Provincial Dynasties

The history of Khurāsān and Transoxania in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries is dominated by the rise of the “independent” eastern dynasties, most importantly the Ṭāhirids (r. 205-259/821-873),¹ Ṣaffārids (r. 247-393/861-1003)² and Sāmānids (r. 204-395/819-1005).³ The period during which these eastern dynasties ruled the eastern provinces of the Islamic world is most often portrayed as a response to or as a result of the central narrative of ‘Abbāsīd history. At its peak, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate (r. 132-656/750-1258) controlled territory stretching from modern Algeria to Afghanistan from its capital in Iraq. Less than a century after the ‘Abbāsīds rose to power through a violent revolution which overthrew their predecessors, the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs’ relationship with the furthest provinces of their empire began to change. As early as

¹ These dates are only for Ṭāhirid rule in Khurāsān, which was ended by the Ṣaffārid Ya‘qūbī b. al-Layth’s conquest of the Ṭāhirid capital of Nīshāpūr. Another branch of the Ṭāhirid family held onto power in Baghdad until 278/891.

² The real peak of Ṣaffārid power lasted only until 287/900, when the second Ṣaffārid *amīr* ‘Amr b. al-Layth was defeated and captured by the Sāmānid Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad. The latter half of the Ṣaffārid period saw the dynasty confined to their native Sīstān.

³ The Sāmānids were little more than vassal lords in Transoxania until Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad’s victory over the Ṣaffārids in 287/900, which allowed the Sāmānids to expand their territory into Khurāsān.

184/800, the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170-193/786-809) had granted Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab (r. 184-197/800-812) the governorship of the western province of Ifrīqiya and, in return for an annual payment of tribute, the right to bequeath this position within his family. With this transition from governors who were appointed, typically from among the caliph's inner circle in Iraq, and who were recalled by the caliphs, remitted taxes to them, and received orders from them, to governors who operated largely of their own account and were able to develop multi-generational relationships in the provinces they governed, we see the rise of the "independent" provincial dynasty. The first of these, the Aghlabids ruled Ifrīqiya from 184/800 to 296/909 and even expanded their territory into Sicily.

The Aghlabids were the first, but, certainly, not the last dynasty to flourish in the provinces of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate during the third/ninth century. In 205/821, the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 198-218/813-833) invested his former military commander and the governor of the western provinces Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn Dhū al-Yaminayn (d. 207/822) with the governorship of Ṭāhir's native Khurāsān and, along with it, Transoxania and Sīstān. This position became hereditary, with Ṭāhir followed as governor of Khurāsān by two of his sons, one grandson, and one great-grandson. From this point at the beginning of the third/ninth century, the eastern domains of the Islamic world saw themselves under a succession of provincial dynasties with the Ṣaffārīds and Sāmānīds being the most notable of the numerous smaller dynasties that followed the Ṭāhirīds.

The history of these dynasties is, as I have said, most often tied to the fortunes of the 'Abbāsīds themselves. The third/ninth century is, correctly, seen as a period of waning power for the 'Abbāsīds. Following the civil war between the sons of Hārūn al-

Rashīd, al-Amīn (r. 193-198/809-813) and al-Ma'mūn, the authority of the caliphs increasingly fell into the hands of military commanders and administrators, such as the third/ninth century Turkish military commanders of Sāmarrā' and, later, the Būyids (r. 334-447/945-1055),⁴ and the territory which was directly under 'Abbāsīd authority gradually shrank. During this period, the authority of the 'Abbāsīds is thought of as a "caliphal fiction," with the 'Abbāsīds becoming little more than figureheads and often prisoners in their own palaces while effective power was spread through other groups in the imperial administration and military. It is in this context of waning 'Abbāsīd authority that many have seen the eastern provincial dynasties as being pushed towards independence from the caliphate by centrifugal forces. With central authority weakening, the governors of those provinces furthest from the centers of power saw an opportunity to break free of the center and to create their own kingdoms on the fringes of the Islamic world.

Because of this focus on the relationship between provincial governors and central authorities, the specter of 'Abbāsīd decline has always lurked behind the history of both the eastern provincial dynasties and the eastern frontier itself. The way these histories have been understood has often been dependent on and tangential to the history of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. Much of this is the result of historiographical contingencies, most importantly a historical record which was primarily written at the political center with the primary interest of telling a universal history of the Islamic world. In this context, the dynasties which came to rule Khurāsān and Transoxania in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries are portrayed as peripheral to events taking place in Iraq and their rise is understood as a symptom of a failing caliphate. This focus overlooks

⁴ The dates given are only for the years of Būyid authority in Baghdad.

indigenous historical trajectories in the eastern provinces themselves and replaces them with a master narrative of the Islamic world.

While the current project is not directly a study of the eastern dynasties, it introduces an alternative approach to the study of Khurāsān and Transoxania during the period during which they ruled the eastern-most provinces of the Islamic world. Instead of looking at this period as largely the result of weakness at the center of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, this project focuses on the role of Khurāsān and Transoxania as frontiers, and connects the rise of the eastern provincial dynasties to developments related directly to the eastern frontier, rather than developments taking place in Iraq. This alternative reconstruction of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries in Khurāsān and Transoxania highlights the roles of local populations and communities and their interactions with the forces around them; including the ‘Abbāsīds, the Turks of the Inner Asian steppe, and the larger Islamic world.

1.2 A Frontier Studies Approach

The study of the frontiers of the Islamic world has become increasingly important in recent years. While a full discussion of frontier approaches to Islamic history, as well as frontier studies in general, will appear in Chapter Two, a few comments about the role of frontiers in the study of Islamic history are important here. The Islamic world was shaped by the series of conquests of the Byzantine and Sāsānian Empires by the Arabs, expanding out from the Arabian Peninsula, in the first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries. Through these conquests, the Islamic world which formed in the first centuries after the establishment of the Muslim community consisted largely of areas which had

only recently been incorporated into the Islamic political and cultural sphere and were therefore engaged in a process of integration into the larger Islamic world over the following centuries. This process of integration may be described as a frontier process.

Frontiers are liminal zones where dynamic territorial change is possible; this definition will be more fully articulated in Chapter Two. As frontiers expand or contract and territory and populations are brought under the authority of new political and cultural spheres, frontier zones and their populations go through a process of integration and acculturation until the new political authorities and dominant culture achieve a degree of dominance and acceptance within the area. For the early history of the Islamic world, this process is an important underlying factor in almost every part of the Caliphate. For this reason, the study of developments along various frontiers at particular moments in history has become increasingly important to the broader study of Islamic history.

Associated with the history of the early caliphate, from the post-conquest period through the 'Abbāsīd period, two frontiers have become the subjects of major studies which have addressed these frontier processes. The Arab-Byzantine frontier or *thughūr*, running through south-eastern Anatolia, has been the focus of studies which have often focused on the relationship between the state and the conduct of *jihād* against the Byzantines.⁵ The eastern frontier of Central Asia has also received recent interest with studies focusing on questions of settlement following the Arab conquests⁶ and others

⁵ See Michael Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier: Awāsim, Thughur, and the Arab Geographers," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57 (1994), 17-24 and *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*, (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996); and A. Asa Eger, "The Spaces between the Teeth: Environment, Settlement, and Interaction on the Islamic-Byzantine Frontier," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, (2008).

⁶ Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Tūs and the Arab Presence in Khurāsān," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, (1995) and "Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement," *Studi Iranica* 27 (1998), 41-81; and Mark D. Luce, "Frontier as Process: Umayyad Khurāsān," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, (2009).

addressing the role of the eastern frontier and the conduct of warfare across the frontier in political legitimation.⁷ The dynamics and patterns of frontier societies are unique, both in comparison to those of political centers and from one frontier to the next, and, by addressing historical frontiers directly, studies such as these bring those unique dynamics of the frontier into our understanding of the history of the Islamic world. As frontiers and frontier actors become objects of study, the patterns found on the fringes of Islamic society enhance our understanding of particular historical patterns in the broader Islamic world as well.

In this project, a focus on the eastern frontier, on the dynamics of frontier societies, and on the populations who lived together along the frontier will allow us to look at Khurāsān and Transoxania in a way which removes (though not entirely) the master narrative of ‘Abbāsīd decline that has influenced previous studies of the eastern dynasties. By looking at the “environment” of the frontier, the way it was structured physically and socially, we can set the stage in which the history of the eastern provincial dynasties played out. Then we will be able to look for those local patterns which contributed to the rise of groups such as the Ṭāhīrīds and Sāmānīds in Khurāsān and Transoxania. This approach transfers the focus of the history of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries away from the ‘Abbāsīd courts of Iraq and centers it on the political, economic, and social networks of contemporary Khurāsān and Transoxania, providing alternative explanations for the development of these dynasties.

⁷ For a study focusing on the Ṣaffārīds and their role as frontier fighters, see D.G. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ‘Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*, *Istanbuler Texte und Studien*, 11 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007). For a later study see Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

1.3 Previous Scholarship on the Eastern Dynasties

While this project does not focus directly on the histories of the eastern dynasties, they have dominated the study of third/ninth and fourth/tenth century Khurāsān and Transoxania. For this reason, it is important to look at the major themes in modern studies of the eastern dynasties at the outset of this project, in order to understand how my approach differs or complements the current views. Typically, the various eastern dynasties have been studied as individual entities,⁸ and particular issues or ways of understanding have been attached to each individual dynasty. The study of the Ṭāhirids, for example, has largely focused on their relationship to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate as the most “Arabized” of the eastern dynasties and the dynasty whose origins are most closely tied to a personal relationship with the caliphate. These studies have addressed the question of the Ṭāhirid’s “independent” streak, whether or not they ever intended to throw off the overlordship of the ‘Abbāsīds,⁹ the cultural orientation of these “Arabized” Persians,¹⁰ and the relationship between their governorships in Khurāsān and high offices in the imperial center of Baghdad.¹¹

⁸ The one notable exception is the combination of the Ṭāhirid and Ṣaffārid periods into a single narrative in more general historical works. Here, it is the conquest of Ṭāhirid Nīshāpūr by the Ṣaffārids in 259/873 which connects the two narratives. For example, see C.E. Bosworth, “The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasions to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 90-135.

⁹ Earlier studies often viewed the Ṭāhirids as rebellious and intent on breaking free from ‘Abbāsīd authority. See V.V. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. C. E. Bosworth, (1968; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub., 1992), 207-218. This reading of Ṭāhirid loyalties is best expressed by C.E. Bosworth, “Soon after his arrival in the east, Ṭāhir began leaving al-Ma’mūn’s name out of the *khutba*, and certain coins minted by him in 206/821-2 also omit the caliph’s name; both these actions were virtually declarations of independence from Baghdad. However, at this point he died in Marv (207/822). It is obviously difficult to gauge Ṭāhir’s motives, since we do not know how events might have turned out.” Bosworth, “The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids,” 95. This quote appears paraphrased in C.E. Bosworth, “Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muṣ’ab b. Ruzayk,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition.

¹⁰ C.E. Bosworth, “The Tahirids and Arabic Culture,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969), 45-79 and “The Tahirids and Persian Literature,” *Iran* 7 (1969), 103-106.

¹¹ Mongi Kaabi, “Les Origines ṭāhirides dans la *da’wa* ‘abbāsīde,” *Arabica* 19 (1972), 145-164 and *Les Ṭāhirides: Etude historic-littéraire de la dynastie des Banū Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn au Ḥurāsān et en Iraq au IIIème s. de l’Hégire/LXème s. J.C.*, (Paris: Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1983).

In studies of the Ṣaffārīds, on the other hand, this question of their relationship with the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate is almost completely one-sided. As C.E. Bosworth wrote, “The dominant motive behind Ya‘qūb’s¹² actions, in addition to this hatred of the ‘Abbasids, seems to be a sheer love of military conquest.”¹³ The Ṣaffārīds rose from plebian roots, the name of the dynasty comes from Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth’s profession as a coppersmith (*ṣaffār*) before he established himself as the leader of a band of ‘ayyār and, eventually, the founder of a political dynasty. They are portrayed as military adventurers taking advantage of a weakened caliphate to carve out their own personal domain. The earliest studies of the dynasty focused primarily on constructing a historical narrative of the Ṣaffārīd dynasty, including a lineage of the Ṣaffārīd *amīrs*.¹⁴ The problems of a Ṣaffārīd dynastic history became much fewer with the discovery of a unique manuscript of the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* in Mashhad in 1925;¹⁵ and, following this discovery, C.E. Bosworth has been at the forefront of creating an authoritative narrative for the dynasty.¹⁶ Recently Deborah Tor has taken up the topic of the Ṣaffārīds, focusing on their early history as *ghāzīs* and ‘ayyārs and the religious ideologies which drove them, in contrast to their earlier image as pure military adventurers.¹⁷ Another thread which

¹² Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth (r. 247-265/861-879), the founder of the Ṣaffārīd Dynasty.

¹³ C.E. Bosworth, “The Armies of the Saffarids,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 31 (1968), 536.

¹⁴ Th. Noldeke, “Yakub the Coppersmith and his Dynasty,” in *Sketches of Eastern History*, trans. John Sutherland Black (London, 1892), 176-202; V.V. Barthold, “Zur Geschichte der Saffariden,” in *Orientalische Studien zu Theodor Noldeke gewidmet*, ed. C. Bezold (Giessen, 1906), 1:171-191 and *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasions*, 215-218; and Richard Vasmer, “Über die Münzen der Saffariden und ihrer Gegner in Fars und Hurasan,” *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 63 (1930), 131-162.

¹⁵ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Malik al-Shu‘ara Bahar (Tehran, 1314/1935).

¹⁶ First with his article Bosworth, “The Armies of the Saffarids,” and later with his book C.E. Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (247/861 to 2949/1542-3)*, (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1994).

¹⁷ D.G. Tor, “Historical Representations of Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 12 (2002) 247-275; “A Numismatic History of the First Saffarid Dynasty,” *Numismatic Chronicle* 162 (2002), 293-314; and *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ‘Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*.

emerged within the study of the Šaffārids focused on their role as Persian nationalists. Coming from lowly roots, the Šaffārids, in contrast to the highly cultured Ṭāhirids, are portrayed as unlearned in Arabic and many have seen them as the first expressions of a growing Persian nationalist sentiment.¹⁸

The history of the Sāmānids has similarly focused on the role of Persian nationalism during their reign. Much of this concern has come from the emergence of New Persian as a literary and courtly language under the Sāmānids.¹⁹ Often, this scholarship has focused on particular literary traditions associated with the Sāmānid court and has not delved far into the history of the Sāmānid dynasty itself. The political history of the Sāmānids themselves has not received much attention.²⁰ What has been written tends to focus on the Sāmānid military²¹ and their relationship to the rise of the Ghaznavids²² and the Qarakhānids.²³ Much attention has been paid to the numismatic history of the Sāmānids, especially the unique oversized *dirhams* containing four to six

¹⁸ Y. Armajani, "The Saffarids: A Study in Iranian Nationalism," *Trud. XXV. Mezhdunarodnogo Kong. Vostokovedov, Moscow, 1960*, (1963), 168-173; S.M. Stern, "Ya'qub the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," in *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 535-553.

¹⁹ Richard Frye, "The Sāmānids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasions to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 136-161 and *The Golden Age of Persia*, (London, 1975), 200-207; Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Towards a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study of Perso-Islamicate Historiography*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980); Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 15-46; and James E. Montgomery, "Ibn Rusta's Lack of 'Eloquence,' the Rus, and Samanid Cosmography," *Edebiyat* 12 (2001), 73-93.

²⁰ A single large scale study has looked at the political history of the Sāmānids, W. Luke Treadwell, "The Political History of the Sāmānid State," PhD Diss. Oxford University (1991).

²¹ Jürgen Paul, *The State and the Military: the Samanid Case*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1994).

²² E.E. Oliver, "The Decline of the Samanis and the Rise of the Ghaznavis in Mawaraun-Nahr and Part of Khurasan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* 55 (1886), 89-135 along with more general works on the Ghaznavids, especially C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 944-1040*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963).

²³ Sergej Klâštornyj, "Les Samanides et les Karakhanides: une étape initiale de la géopolitique impériale," *Cahiers d'Asie centrale* 9 (2001), 35-40.

times the silver found in other contemporary coins,²⁴ and the large numbers of Sāmānid *dirhams* found in Northern and Eastern Europe, evidence of long distance trade between the Sāmānids and the Volga Bulgars and Vikings.²⁵

If we consider the corpus of literature on these three dynasties as a whole, we see that the major themes which arise also relate to the role of Khurāsān and Transoxania as a frontier region. There are center-periphery questions, focused on the relationship between these eastern provinces, the dynasties which ruled them, and the political center in Iraq, often phrased in terms of “independent” dynasties acting against the caliphate. The theme of Persian nationalism similarly involves integration and acculturation with the Islamic world, related directly to the notion of a frontier process. Early Ṣaffārid military interests stem from a particular relationship between the dynasty and the frontier itself, as does the role of Turkish soldiers and commanders within the Sāmānid military. Finally, there is the issue of long distance trade between medieval Central Asia and Northern and Eastern Europe, made possible by the particularities of the eastern frontier.

This project will pose questions that are not the same as those asked by scholars working directly on the histories of these provincial dynasties, but they will address similar topics as well as a shared geographical and temporal scope. By preferring to focus on the frontier itself rather than the political bodies which ruled it, this alternative

²⁴ Gilles Hennequin’s “Grandes monnaies Sāmānides et Ghaznavides de l’Hindū Kush, 331-421 A.H. – Étude numismatique et historique,” *Annales Islamologiques* 9 (1970), 127-179; Michael Mitchner, *The Multiple Dirhams of Medieval Afghanistan*, (London: Hawkins Publications, 1973); Stephen Album, “Sāmānid Oversize Dirhams of the Fourth Century A.H. (Tenth Century A.D.),” *The Numismatic Chronicle* 16 (1976), 248-254; and N.M. Lowick, “On the Dating of Samanid Oversize Dirhams,” *The Numismatic Circular*, 85 (1977), 204-206.

²⁵ Tadeusz Lewicki, “Le Commerce des Samanides avec l’Europe orientale et centrale à la lumière des trésors de monnaies coufiques,” in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. Dickan K. Kouymjian, (Beirut, 1974), 219-233; Michael Mitchner, “Evidence for Viking-Islamic Trade Provided by Samanid Silver Coinage,” *East and West* 37 (1987), 39-150; and Thomas S. Noonan, “Volga Bugharia’s Tenth-Century Trade with Samanid Central Asia,” *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 11 (2000-2001), 140-218.

approach should highlight new ways of thinking about some of the questions common between the study of the eastern frontier and the study of the eastern dynasties. One important difference will be that the histories of each individual dynasty will not be treated separately. While it is understood that the Ṭāhirids, Ṣaffārids, and Sāmānids, as well as the numerous smaller dynasties found along the eastern frontier, were each unique in their approaches to ruling Khurāsān and Transoxania, by approaching them collectively, larger dynamics and patterns which developed over the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries can be better observed.

1.4 Scope and Outline

The overall focus of this study is the eastern frontier of the Islamic world in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. For the purposes of this project, the region of the eastern frontier is being defined as Khurāsān and Transoxania, the easternmost provinces of the Islamic world which faced the Inner Asian steppe. Sīstān, which is often connected politically to Khurāsān, is excluded for a number of reasons, primarily due to its geographical orientation towards the Indian subcontinent.²⁶ The focus here will be on the northern half of the eastern frontier, the part of the frontier facing the Inner Asian steppe. Refining this geographic scope further, the primary focus will be placed on what Parvaneh Pourshariati has called “Outer” Khurāsān, those regions of Khurāsān east of the Bālkhān, Kūrendagh, Kopet Dāgh, and Bīnālūd mountain ranges.²⁷ Important urban centers in “Inner” Khurāsān, most notably the Ṭāhirid capital of Nīshāpūr, will also be

²⁶ The omission of Sīstān from the scope of this project also means that the Ṣaffārids, whose homeland was in Sīstān, will play a lesser overall part.

²⁷ For a description of “Inner” and “Outer” Khurāsān, see Parvaneh Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquests of Iran*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 417-420.

discussed, but the primary focus will be on the northern and eastern reaches of the province. In the second half of this project, the temporal scope will expand to include earlier developments in the region that had important effects on the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, especially those related to the Arab conquests of the region.

This project is organized into two major parts. The first part examines the “environment” of the eastern frontier in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, focusing primarily on the descriptions of Khurāsān and Transoxania in contemporary geographical texts written in Arabic and Persian.²⁸ Chapter Two looks at the ways the eastern frontier, specifically as a frontier, is represented in the geographic literature. This is prefaced by a more theoretical discussion of the nature of frontiers which will provide a framework for examining the language of our medieval sources. In Chapter Three, the physical make-up of the frontier is examined through a study of the networks of fortifications which covered the eastern frontier and connected the urban nodes of Khurāsān and Transoxania. This chapter connects the building and maintenance of fortifications with the defining of the frontier itself. Chapter Four acts as a transition between the first and second parts of the study. Focusing on coinage minted in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century, this chapter uses numismatics to examine the development of economic and political networks across the eastern frontier.

The second part will take a broader historical approach and focus on the progress of certain frontier processes from the Arab conquests to the period of the Sāmānids. Chapter Five focuses on the role of the *dihqāns*, the native Persian landed gentry, as landholders and political figures from the Arab conquests until the Sāmānid period. The

²⁸ A full discussion of the relevant geographical sources appears in Chapter Two.

study of this particular social group will compare their positions along the eastern frontier with those of the Arab settlers who came to Khurāsān and Transoxania during the conquests of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries and other social groups who lived in the region. The sixth chapter looks at the frontier process following the Arab conquests which converted not just the populations of Khurāsān and Transoxania to Islam, but also redefined the eastern frontier as a specifically Muslim frontier.

Throughout this study, the histories of the eastern dynasties will be in the background of the discussion, coming to the forefront at times. This is the story of the political, cultural, and economic networks which existed in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the reign of the eastern dynasties. The concluding chapter will explore the impact of the frontier “environment” and the frontier processes which were the focus of the earlier chapter on the rise of the eastern dynasties.

1.5 The Geography of the Eastern Frontier

Before proceeding, a few brief words on the geography of the eastern frontier, Khurāsān, and Transoxania are necessary. The eastern frontier of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries did not become a frontier with the arrival of Islam; it had been a frontier region for as long as historical records are available. The limits of Alexander’s conquests laid roughly along the same frontier. Later it was the frontier between Iran and Tūrān immortalized by the *Shāhnāma*. The geography of the region is essential to understanding its role as a frontier and how it retained its frontier status for such a long time. Two distinct environmental zones meet along the eastern frontier. To the south, there are the

river valleys of Khurāsān and Transoxania. Dominated by the Oxus River/Amu Darya²⁹ and the Jaxartes River/Syr Darya,³⁰ “Outer” Khurāsān and Transoxania are watered by numerous rivers whose origins are found in the mountain ranges of the Pamir Knot.³¹ Along these rivers, in river valleys, and around oases, agricultural communities and large cities developed as early as the seventeenth century BC.³² The rivers and oases provide the necessary irrigation for settlement and agricultural production even in the midst of the Karakum and Kyzilkum Deserts where large and important cities such as Marw were able to grow. The people who lived along the rivers of the eastern frontier before the arrival of Islam were primarily of Persian or other Iranian background, such as the Soghdians.

The river valleys and oases of the south are juxtaposed by the grassy Inner Asian steppe to the north, stretching from the Crimea to Manchuria. Unlike the settled communities of the south, the steppe was historically dominated by pastoralist nomads. The pastoralists of the Inner Asian steppe living closest to the eastern frontier primarily belonged to numerous Turkic groups and were referred to collectively by our medieval sources as the Turks. Historically people had interacted across this frontier. Merchants from the south traded with the Turks and the Turks would venture south and, on occasion, had conquered large parts of Transoxania. For example, in the sixth and seventh centuries the confederation of the Türk Qağanate ruled Soghdia and Ṭukhāristān.

The division between the well irrigated river valleys of the south and the dry steppe of the north created a geographic division which lasted millennia. The different lifestyles which developed on either side of this divide contributed to the sense of this

²⁹ Called the Jayhūn by our medieval sources.

³⁰ Sometimes called the Sayhūn by our medieval sources.

³¹ Including the Pamir, Himalayas, Tian Shan, Karakoram, Kunlun, and Hindu Kush ranges.

³² Rafis Abazov, *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), see notes to “Map 6: Political Map of the Ancient World.”

region as a frontier. From the perspective of the Islamic world in the centuries following the conquests, the difficulties inherent in expanding agricultural development into the steppe made the limits of the fertile regions of the south a somewhat “natural” point at which to end expansion.

Chapter 2

Viewing the Eastern Frontier

2.1 al-Rāsht and the Gate of Iron

“[Khurāsān] is the Gate of Turkistān.”¹

A number of geographic writers working in Arabic and Persian during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries refer to al-Rāsht as the furthest point of Khurāsān in its particular direction. By describing al-Rāsht in this manner, they define the city as a border. In political terms, this is the end of an imperial administrative unit, Khurāsān, the grand province of the East. Culturally, it is the dividing line between the Islamic world, signified by those areas under a Muslim ruler, and the *bilād al-Turk*, “the lands of the Turks.” The earliest extant author who describes al-Rāsht in these terms, Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. 300/911), also tells us that this is the point where the Turks used to enter the Muslim territories in order to raid, until al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak (d. 183/808), governor of Khurāsān under the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd from 177/792 to 180/796, built a gate there to protect against such incursions.² These details accentuate

¹ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūdiḥ (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Danīshgāh-i Tehran, 1340/1962), 88.

² Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 6. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 34.

the dynamic of this border; first the Turks raid the lands of Islam, and then the Muslims take control of the border, in this case by building a gate. Ibn al-Faqīh (d. after 290/902-903), writing a few decades after Ibn Khurradādhbih, gives a similar description of a gate being built to prevent raids by the Turks.³ This description of al-Rāsht will continue to reappear in geographical texts until the seventh/thirteenth century, when Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) states in his geographical dictionary that al-Rāsht is where al-Faḍl al-Barmakī built a “strong gate.”⁴

Other authors who place al-Rāsht at the borders of Khurāsān do not provide these same details. al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905), a contemporary of Ibn Khurradādhbih and Ibn al-Faqīh, tells of a “Gate of Iron,” giving both the Persian *Dar-i Āhanīn* and the Arabic *Bāb al-Ḥadīd*, located north of al-Rāsht, which is the border with the lands of the Turks.⁵ Clearly, al-Ya‘qūbī is describing the same place as our previous authors, but without the historical details of the construction of the gate or any indication that he means this to be a real gate. Qudāma (d. before 337/948), writing in the early fourth/tenth century, describes al-Rāsht as “the most distant land of Khurāsān from this direction; it is what borders Farghāna, and it is from where the Ghuzz Turks enter.”⁶ Here any mention of a gate, real or figurative, is absent.

The notion of a gate along a border is not entirely unique to al-Rāsht in these sources. Ibn Khurradādhbih mentions a *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* two miles from “the mine of

³ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 5. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 324-325.

⁴ Yāqūt, *Muj‘am al-buldān*, (Beirut, 1957), 3:15.

⁵ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1882), 290.

⁶ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā‘at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī, (Baghdad: Dār al-rashīd li-l-nashr, 1981), 109.

silver,” seven *farsakhs* from al-Shāsh.⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh also mentions a *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* two miles from a silver mine near al-Shāsh, specifying that this silver mine is al-Fanjahīr.⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī mentions a *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* on the road from Bukhārā to Balkh, placing it in roughly the same area as al-Rāsht, without describing al-Rāsht or the region as a border of any kind.⁹ The fourth/tenth century Persian *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* mentions a place known as Dar-i Tāziyān, “the Gate of the Arabs,” located on the fringes of Khurāsān. This may or may not be al-Rāsht, as it is difficult to tell from the text, but in any case it is here a gate through which the caravans go out, having been built between two mountains by the Caliph al-Ma’mūn.¹⁰ The same text mentions a similar gate far to the east called the Dar-i Tubbat, “the Gate of Tibet,” where watchmen levy tolls.¹¹ We may even look at modern nomenclature and find a place known as Dar-i Āhanīn, a defile in the Baysuntau Mountain Range between Balkh and Samarqand, near the modern village of Derbent in southern Uzbekistan.

All of the authors mentioned here tell us that al-Rāsht is the border of Khurāsān while a number of them place a “Gate of Iron” at this location. We can be fairly certain that no such gate existed and that the name, either *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* or *Dar-i Āhanīn*, was a figurative reference to a narrow passage through the mountains.¹² If these texts are therefore not necessarily describing a geographic or historic reality, what do the stories of

⁷ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 27.

⁸ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 327. The location of this mine near al-Shāsh means this is not an odd spelling of the famous silver mine of Panjhīr, which is closer to Balkh.

⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir ‘Abd al-‘Āl al-Ḥīnī (Cairo: 1381/1961), 188.

¹⁰ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 105.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹² Barthold does take these passages at face value and states that “To protect the country from their raids walls were built in Rāsht, in the neighbourhood of Bukhārā, and in Shāsh.” Vasily Vladimirovich Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. C.E. Bosworth, (1968; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub., 1992), 201.

the gates north of al-Rāsht say about the situation on the ground in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries along the eastern frontier of the Muslim world?

First and foremost, these descriptions of the “Gate of Iron” are evidence for the existence of a frontier and a border, a dividing line between the lands of Islam and the lands of the Turks. These authors attempt to denote a place where these two realms meet, namely al-Rāsht, where people from one side (either raiding Turks or traveling merchants) can enter the other side. The way the situation at this particular site along the border is described points to the issue of the meaning of borders and frontiers to the Islamic world. In all of the sources, with the exception of the *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, this border represents danger through the raiding Turks. In some of the sources, this danger can be overcome if the Muslims take physical mastery over the border, through the construction of a gate. Even in those examples where the frontier is not an actual danger, the frontier is still physically mastered through the construction of gates which allow the collection of tolls from merchants.

2.2 What Do We Mean by “Frontier”?

This chapter focuses on a conceptual analysis of the image of the eastern frontier of the Muslim world as we find it in the works of contemporary medieval geographers writing in Arabic and Persian. The Muslim world can be seen as synonymous with the ‘Abbāsīd Empire and its successor states such as that of the Sāmānīds in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries for our intents and purposes. This chapter will not be a summary of the history of the eastern frontier or its development, which will come in later chapters, but will rather provide a conceptual framework for understanding how contemporary

authors viewed the eastern frontier. In order to address this issue, we must first articulate the meaning of the term “frontier” itself. The French jurist Geoffre de Lapradelle, writing in the early 20th century, explained the necessity of this inquiry.

Le caractère marquant de la notion de frontière est son universalité d’acception. De l’homme de rue ou du paysan jusqu’au politique et au savant, elle est susceptible, selon les catégories et les classes, de rencontrer les interprétations les plus diverses.¹³

Lapradelle’s statement, coming from an interest in the proper application of international law, is concerned with the situation in the early twentieth century as colonial empires were dissolving and reconfiguring and European border disputes continued until and after the First World War, but it can still apply to the present day.

J.R.V. Prescott, in reviewing theories related to frontiers and boundaries in 1965, including Lapradelle’s, highlighted not just the different meanings people hold for frontiers and borders, but the different ways people interact with them in a practical sense, in a manner which expands upon Lapradelle’s sentiment.

Lawyers, soldiers, and politicians have a practical interest in boundaries. For the lawyer they mark the area of contact between separate sovereignties and judicial systems. To the soldier they represent the first area which must be defended and the position from which attacks must be launched. Lastly, to the politician boundaries mark the limits of administration which should be maintained or extended, and the sensitivity to the state’s boundaries make them a vital subject to politicians, since they can be used to generate national loyalty...¹⁴

When we look at ancient and medieval frontiers and borders, we need to approach these questions of what we mean by and how we look at borders and frontiers from two

¹³ Geoffre de Lapradelle, *La frontière: étude du droit international*, (Paris: Editions internationales, 1928), 9.

¹⁴ J.R.V. Prescott, *The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries*, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965), 26.

directions; one which clarifies our modern understanding of these terms and another which focuses on medieval terminology.

2.2.1 Frontiers, Borders, Borderlands, and Boundaries

First, it is important to clarify the meaning of “frontier” and to disarticulate its meaning from the similar concepts of border, borderland, and boundary in a modern, twenty-first century context. Often, these terms are treated as interchangeable, but the distinctions between them are important and meaningful. Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, looking beyond the preference of American scholars for “frontier” and of British scholars for “boundary” and “border,” have attempted to make the distinctions between these terms clear.¹⁵

The terms also imply a conceptual difference. *Boundary* is often used in diplomatic discussions on the precise location of borders, but it also has the more general meaning, pointing at the dividing line between different peoples or cultures. When discussing psychological differences and when emphasizing regions rather than lines drawn on the maps, the term *border* is normally preferred. *Frontier* commonly refers to the territorial expansion of nations or civilizations into “empty” areas.¹⁶

For the purposes of the project at hand, “boundary,” as distinct from “border,” is the least applicable term, insofar as we want to use Baud and van Schendel’s definitions. The idea of a diplomatically negotiated boundary existing over a millennium ago in Central Asia,

¹⁵ Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands,” *Journal of World History* 8 (1997): 213. For a detailed discussion of the development of the differences between British and American uses of the term “frontier,” see Fulmer Mood, “Notes on the History of the Word ‘Frontier,’” *Agricultural History* 22 (1948): 78-83.

¹⁶ Baud and van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands,” 213.

much less anywhere else in the world, is highly improbable, even if we can use the concept of boundary to identify, by distinction, the definition of frontier.

It is clear that the eastern frontier of the medieval Muslim world through Central Asia is a division between two political and/or cultural zones, not necessarily marked on a map, but rather negotiated, and constantly negotiating, through a series of historical circumstances. It is important to keep in mind that, in a real sense, borders are defined by the actual power that states wield over their own societies.¹⁷ Thus the border, as a meaningful expression of the extent of a state, represents the extent to which a state can convince populations, forcibly or not, that they belong to and should participate in life on one side of a border as opposed to another. The definition of a physical border is often a negotiation between a centralized authority and the populations living in proximity to the border, in the borderlands, and may remain open to negotiation indefinitely as people choose to accept or ignore a border as it suits them.¹⁸ In cases where another political or military power lies across the border, borders also represent a point of equilibrium between the strengths of the two powers, as argued by Jacques Ancel in 1938 in response to German designs on French territories.¹⁹ The difference between border and frontier, as we understand it, often pivots on how one sees the territory on the other side of the line. Borders divide two groups that are differentiated politically, culturally, or by a combination of the two.

¹⁷ Ibid., 215. Here Baud and van Schendel are discussing formation of borders in a modern, and specifically post-colonial, context, but this element of their definition is more than appropriate for use in reference to pre-modern states as well.

¹⁸ Ibid., 211.

¹⁹ Jacques Ancel, *Géographie des frontières*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

Frontiers on the other hand mark the limit of a state, or at least its ability to wield power, into an “empty” space open to expansion. Frontiers, in this sense, do not recognize those people living across the line as having an equal standing or claim to sovereignty; they convey an understanding of dynamic territorial change. This is best illustrated by those frontiers which stand out most clearly in our mind. For example, the American West, where a whole continent stretched out inviting territorial expansion by a state which claimed a manifest destiny to master the land; or Space, the “final frontier,” where a whole universe seems open to mankind’s exploration and exploitation.

2.2.2 *Hadd* and *Thaghr*: Classical Arabic Terminology for Borders and Frontiers

The second way we must look at the question of what we mean by frontier and border is to examine how such terms were understood by our literary sources and by the people inhabiting this study. As we move backwards in time and think about the terminology applicable to the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century geographers, we should think about how the differences between our understandings of borders and frontiers have developed since then. The conceptual divide between a line separating political and cultural groups organized around centralized states and an opening into land available for territorial expansion depends upon an understanding of an inalienable sovereignty of states. On the one hand, this is the fulcrum on which the distinction between boundary and border made by Baud and van Schendel lies. A boundary is the result of a “Westphalian concept” of sovereignty and territoriality, which turns a conceptual border into a diplomatically negotiated line. The sacrosanct status of boundaries, borders, and the states defined by those boundaries and borders – a sacrosanct status which requires us to think of spaces

open to territorial expansion in different terms, frontiers - is a function of a world which encourages international cooperation towards maintaining peace. Of course, such a situation which promoted the mutual sovereign rights of nations did not exist in medieval Central Asia.

The terms that the medieval geographers used for borders and frontiers have their own nuances which need to be examined. *Hadd* (pl. *ḥudūd*) is most often translated, in a geographical context, as border, boundary, or limit. In more general usage, including the realm of theology, *ḥadd* denotes a limit or finiteness, which then carries on to mean “definition” in that the limits of a thing define that thing.²⁰ Defining *ḥadd* in such a way gives us a meaning similar to our understanding of border as a dividing line between political and cultural groups in that such a border defines the limits of a state and therefore the state itself. In the sense that a *ḥadd* is a limit, it also fits with our understanding of a border as being defined by the extent to which a state can effectively wield power. The border is the physical representation of that limit of power.

The Arabic term *ḥadd* should be paired with *thughūr*, the plural of *thaghr*, usually defined as frontier. As *ḥadd* has a basic meaning of “limit,” *thughūr* has a basic meaning of “gaps,” “breaches,” or “openings” and typically applies to “points of entry between the Dār al-Islām and the Dār al-Ḥarb beyond it.”²¹ More specifically, *al-thughūr*, as a definitive or specified noun (i.e., “the frontier”), points to one of two frontier regions of pre-modern history, the Arab-Byzantine frontier in south-eastern Anatolia and the marches between Arab and Christian kingdoms on the Iberian Peninsula. However, Arab and Persian geographers use the term more widely to discuss any point on the fringes of

²⁰ B. Carra de Vaux, “Ḥadd,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

²¹ J.D. Latham and C.E. Bosworth. “Thughūr.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

the *Dār al-Islām* or Islamic world from the Mediterranean coast of North Africa to the eastern frontier of Central Asia where invasions from the outside may take place. As gaps or openings, *thughūr* are focused on potential entry points for foreign threats but also potential exit points for aggressive military action.

The difference between the conceptual meaning of frontier and *thughūr* is important for us to consider. Frontier is a word which implies expansion into “open” or “empty” territory. *Thughūr* implies the danger of outside intrusion through “openings,” meaning that there is someone occupying the opposite side who desires your territory and/or property. Yet both include an idea of the potential for dynamic territorial changes, unlike border and *ḥadd* which have a more static resonance. Keeping in mind that both frontier and *thughūr* hold a potential for changes in territorial possession, we need to think in terms of the changes in geopolitical notions that took place between the tenth and twenty-first centuries. For the English speaker, “frontier” implies the possibility of territorial expansion because the territory beyond the frontier is seen as open, vacant, and available because no one has legitimate claims to it. *Thughūr* implies the possibility, and perhaps the imperative, of territorial expansion, or simultaneously the threat of contraction, for the very reason that the territory beyond the frontier is occupied by someone else.

In his article “Jihad and the Modern World,” Sherman Jackson explains the effect of the changing historical dynamic at play here in the context of the role of *jihād* as “holy war,” in order to address the post-9/11 “mantra” that “Islam is a religion of peace.”²² The important argument to understand here is that the pre-modern world existed in a constant

²² Sherman A. Jackson, “Jihad and the Modern World,” *The Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 7 (2002): 1-26.

“state of war,” compared to the modern assumed “state of peace” assured by institutions like the United Nations. Jackson notes Jonathan Fletcher’s summary of the situation in pre-modern Europe, namely that “individual lords *had* to engage in warfare to save themselves and their families. If they did not, then sooner or later they would be overtaken by another lord and have to submit to his rule or be killed.”²³ Such dynamics between neighbors drives the idea that a frontier, which exists in a situation where dynamic territorial change is a possibility, is actually defined by the presence of a competing power, whereas a border is defined by the lack of a competing power, and thus symbolizes the extent to which a state may actually wield effective power. Without assured sovereignty, a shared border represented a danger that can only be completely removed through aggressive action.

There is one serious drawback to understanding the idea of frontiers and borderlands in such terms as these. By proceeding in this way, we define the physical and geographic frontier and borderland in terms of a centralized state versus its periphery. Studies of frontiers, borders, and borderlands have indeed tended towards a focus and view from the center, privileging the role of borders in defining centralized states. Much as the term *ḥadd* can mean the definition of a thing by exposing the limits of that thing, frontiers, borders, and borderlands are examined in an attempt to define the centralized state by the limits of its periphery. If one is to work from this perspective, it is the presence of a state, or states, which cause a frontier, border, or borderland to exist in the first place; similarly, these regions are important because of their relationship to the state. It is difficult to move away from such an image since, in fact, these phenomena are

²³ Jonathan Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 33. Emphasis not added. Quoted in Jackson, “Jihad and the Modern World,” 16.

intimately tied to the existence of a territorial entity like a state. At the same time though, this view of frontiers, borders, and borderlands privileges the presence of the center in the periphery in a way that seeks to homogenize the state in unrealistic ways.

2.3 The Modern Historiography of Frontiers and Borders

You may ransack the catalogues of libraries, you may search the indexes of celebrated historical works, you may study the writings of scholars, and you will find the subject almost wholly ignored.²⁴

Lord Curzon made the preceding remarks on the subject of frontiers at a time when four-fifths of all political treaties and conventions concerned frontiers and the British Empire controlled twenty-one thousand miles of frontier in Canada, India, and Africa.²⁵ He was also making this statement in the midst of a growth of literature on this topic, much of it interested in the political importance of frontiers. The following portion of this chapter will provide a largely chronological examination of the theories on frontiers and borders developed over the last century and a quarter among American and Western European scholars. The intent of this discussion is to provide a framework for examining and understanding the ways our medieval authors viewed the eastern frontier.

2.3.1 Frontiers and the American West

The historiography of frontier studies in the United States has been largely driven by the historical experience of westward expansion. At the center of this has been Fredrick Jackson Turner whose thesis, summarized as “The existence of an area of free land, its

²⁴ George Nathaniel Curzon of Kedleston, *Frontiers*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 5.

²⁵ C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994): 2.

continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development,”²⁶ has become so familiar in studies of the American West that some have declared that “even to summarize it is to engage in ritual.”²⁷ Turner first presented his argument in a lecture entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” given in 1893, a year after the U.S. Census Bureau had declared the American frontier closed. Turner delivered this lecture at a meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition. He argued that the frontier is a “process” whereby people of different cultures struggle with each other over economic resources and political power across a frontier zone and that these struggles are reflected back upon the political center, often driving the political and economic development of that center.²⁸ For the American West, the key part of this process is that the interaction between European immigrants and the wilderness of America created an American identity distinct from its European origins. However, what is of primary interest to this study is the more general notion of a frontier process: that the frontier is a zone in which negotiation occurs between conflicting parties over limited resources and that such interactions generate a specific frontier society uniquely different

²⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), 1.

²⁷ William Cronon, “Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (1987): 157.

²⁸ Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” 30-38. For a description of the Turner Thesis, reactions to it, and its applications to medieval European studies, see Robert I. Burns, “The Significance of the Frontier in the Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 307-330. For a neo-Turnerian approach to the issues of economic and political process on the frontier, see Cronon, “Revisiting the Vanished Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner,” and David J. Weber, “Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 66-81. Much of this discussion is illuminated by the work of the cultural geographer Marvin Mikesell who formulated a model of zones of exclusion and inclusion. See Marvin Mikesell, “Comparative Studies in Frontier History,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 50 (1960): 62-74; reprinted in *Turner and the Sociology of the Frontier*, ed. Richard Hofstadter and Seymour M. Lipset (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 152-171.

from the society of the center. Even though many aspects of Turner's work have been debated over the years,²⁹ his idea that the frontier creates competition which results in the creation of a unique, hybrid identity has survived and flourished.

Following Turner in the American historiography of frontier studies, Walter Prescott Webb, writing in the 1930's through the 1950's, brought to light a number of important points related to the distinction between the American frontier and the European use of the term frontier, which was often more akin to the American usage of border.

The American thinks of the frontier as lying *within*, and not at the edge of a country. It is not a line to stop at, but an *area* inviting entrance. Instead of having one dimension, length, as in Europe, the American frontier has two dimensions, length and breadth. In Europe the frontier is stationary and presumably permanent; in America it *was* transient and temporal.³⁰

Webb reinforces the notion that the frontier is a zone, with depth as well as length. He also brings forward the important idea that frontiers move outward as states expand. In describing frontiers as both transient and temporal, he not only emphasizes the movement of the frontier, but also the process by which a frontier matures beyond its frontier status.

2.3.2 European Frontiers

The European historiography of frontiers and borders has focused more on conditions where states meet at the frontier or border. In this way, the densely-packed European continent has flavored writing and thinking on the topic as much as the open spaces of the American West have influenced American writers.

²⁹ See Cronon, "Revisiting the Vanished Frontier," 157-176 for a summary of a number of these issues.

³⁰ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 2-3. Emphasis not added.

Contemporary with Frederick Jackson Turner, Friedrich Ratzel demonstrated how these differences between conditions in Europe and America developed different arguments about frontiers and borders. Writing in 1895, Ratzel described how national borders were arbitrary when it came to the identities and cultures of the people on either side of the border. He argued that borderlands (*Grenzraum*) have three distinct parts, two of which are peripheries of the two states which meet at the border and the third is a zone which crosses the political border where elements of both sides have mingled.³¹ With this understanding, he describes the border (*Grenzlinie*) as an abstraction of a complex and intermingled borderland (*Grenzraum*).³² Ratzel emphasizes the concept of the borderland to express the unique zone surrounding the linear national border where the influences of the two neighboring states are in active competition. This is similar to the arguments of Turner and Webb, but the wilderness has been replaced with a foreign state.

The recognition that borders are abstractions and do not accurately reflect geopolitical and cultural realities led to many discussions of natural versus artificial borders. Charles Bungay Fawcett made an interesting contribution to this discussion in 1918. By demonstrating that no natural phenomenon has hard and fast linear borders, he argued that all intersections between two phenomena result in a transitional zone, as in the tidal zone between the ocean and the land. Following this reasoning, Fawcett argued that, while all geographic regions are transitional, it is only when the transitional feature is the dominant characteristic that the region becomes a true frontier.³³ Fawcett argued this point mainly on the basis of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic conditions, demonstrating that

³¹ Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, (Berlin, 1895).

³² *Ibid.*, 538.

³³ Charles Bungay Fawcett., *Frontiers*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), 17-24.

it was the transition between different groups of people in a super-national manner that defined a frontier zone.

Lucien Febvre, one of the founding figures of the Annales School of history, argued against the notion of natural borders in his 1922 work *La terre et l'évolution humaine*, a work that is framed largely as a refutation of Ratzel, stating that so-called natural frontiers are themselves goals of expansion and limits of desire which can be violated at any time, citing the example of the Normans' violation of the natural border of the sea to conquer the Saxons.³⁴ It is the people behind state expansion and formation who set the so-called natural borders, not the natural borders that determine the shape of the state or its ambitions, and as expansion continues, new natural borders may be defined. Accordingly, it is not the study of borders and frontiers that are most important to Febvre but, rather, it is their development and the histories and motivations of the people who formed the states which are at the center of these borders and frontiers. "La chronologie des limites, rien de plus important. Il ne faut jamais ratiociner sur des limites considérées comme constantes."³⁵ Borders and frontiers are constantly moving as states expand and contract.

Febvre's description of the movement of borders and frontiers has implications for the people living in proximity to a border or frontier. Returning to Ancel's argument, written in 1938, that a border represents an equilibrium between two states, we find that the border is the line between two states negotiated at their centers.³⁶ Because this process is largely a political negotiation, the intermingling of cultural elements from both

³⁴ Lucien Febvre, *La terre et l'évolution humaine*, (Paris: Renaissance du livre, 1922), 375.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 374.

³⁶ Ancel, *Géographie des frontières*.

sides of the border does not receive the preeminent consideration. Therefore, the line drawn on a map is an abstraction of a complex zone of exchange which crosses the border, the frontier zone or borderland, leaving a mixed population who may have more in common with similar populations living on the other side of the border than with their fellow countrymen. Such sentiment can be seen in the work of Stanley R. Ross on the Mexican-U.S. border, which he describes as “a region where two different civilizations face each other *and overlap*.”³⁷ The defining characteristic of a borderland, then, is that it is a zone defined by a border which runs through it. The assumption here is that there are shared traits within the borderland, found on both sides of the political border, which make the borderland culturally distinct from the political centers lying on either side. Borderlands “have their own social dynamics and historical developments”³⁸ which differ from the more centrally located regions of the states found on either side.

2.3.3 The Frontiers and Borders of the Roman Empire

Growing out of these theories came a sub-field of borderland studies which has sought to apply these ideas developed around particular contemporary issues to historical circumstances. The main argument of borderland studies has emphasized the transitional and liminal natures of borderlands as well as of frontiers. For instance, recent studies of the Roman frontiers have tried to disentangle borders (and thereby borderlands) from frontiers as well. Green and Perleman in their work on the archaeology of frontiers and boundaries have argued that frontiers reflect political and economic expansion, whereas

³⁷ Stanley R. Ross, *Views across the Border: The United States and Mexico*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), xii; emphasis added.

³⁸ Baud and van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands,” 211-212.

boundaries concern the interaction and exchange between two social and economic systems.³⁹ Here Green and Perleman rely on that primary function of frontiers discussed earlier, as places where territorial expansion and contraction are possible, while they continue to emphasize the necessary dialogue between two or more states to constitute a border. C.R. Whittaker, writing on Roman frontiers, has responded to Green and Perleman by saying that “while Roman boundaries could be identified territorially (sometimes by marker stones, cadasters, monuments and the like), frontiers remained dynamic, but ill-defined zones of power.”⁴⁰

Taking these ideas as a whole, we may define frontiers as loosely-organized liminal zones of transition on the periphery of states where territorial expansion or contraction is possible. From our understanding that these are ill-defined zones of transition, we may infer that there exists a dynamic whereby the central authorities strive to become the dominant force, even as the extent of their power remains in a process of negotiation. During this period of negotiation, it is often noted that those people living along a border or frontier tend to resemble those immediately on the other side of the border or frontier more strongly than they resemble those living at their respective centers.⁴¹ As frontier zones mature, the state may expand into new frontier zones which will then begin a similar process all over again.

³⁹ S.W. Green and S.M. Perleman, eds., *The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries*, (Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1985), 4.

⁴⁰ C.R. Whittaker, *Rome and its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 6.

⁴¹ Oscar Martinez, *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 18-20; Baud and van Schendel, “Towards a Comparative History of Borderlands,” 216, 221-222. This argument has also been made in connection with the development of the Ottoman Empire and the role of *ghāzīs*. See Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938), 18, 20 and Linda Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 137. While this point is made by a great number of scholars working in a variety of fields and has come to be broadly accepted, this phenomenon of cross-border similarity and

2.4 Frontiers and the Muslim World

As we move back towards the question of the eastern frontier of the medieval Muslim world, we find that many scholars have taken an approach which privileges the frontier in their studies of Islamic history, putting the agency for state and cultural development in the hands of actors living on the edges of the state or cultural sphere. These scholars have applied such an approach to various aspects of Islamic history, some more directly than others. Khalid Yahya Blankinship's study of the fall of the Umayyad Dynasty has created an image of the Umayyad collapse as the result of the end of imperial expansion and the inward redirection of efforts by people living along the frontiers.⁴² For Blankinship, the end of expansionist *jihād* meant that attentions and energies were now re-focused on the proper organization and establishment of the center, resulting in the 'Abbāsīd Revolution. Such a view is shared by Patricia Crone, who, while not directly addressing the frontier, has argued that major political upheavals in early Islamic history were primarily concerned with renegotiating and reorganizing the dynamics of the center rather than overthrowing, avoiding, or doing away with it.⁴³ Accordingly, for both Blankinship and Crone, the greater narrative of early Islamic history is one which is based primarily in negotiations taking place on the frontiers of the Muslim world. Here, however, we need to keep an important distinction in mind. While we often see frontiers as the very periphery of states, the experiences of the Arab-Muslim conquests of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries rapidly created an empire which consisted largely of frontier or,

connectivity must be understood to occur in varying degrees depending on a wide assortment of geographic, chronological, cultural, religious, economic, and social variables.

⁴² Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

⁴³ Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government and Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 36-39.

at least, of territory that had recently been conquered and whose relationship to the Arab-Muslim powers had to be negotiated at a time when territorial expansion was still moving forward at full force. Linda Darling has pointed out, for example, that the assassination of the Caliph ʿUthmān in Medina in 35/655 was the result of frontier interests coming to roost in the capital.⁴⁴

Using a less political approach, Richard Bulliet has made a convincing argument for the preeminent role of the frontiers in defining religious doctrine, in his *Islam: The View from the Edge*.⁴⁵ Bulliet argues that too much attention has been paid to the effect of political centers on the development of Muslim belief and that real power of change and evolution were located away from the political center, among groups of believers brought together by local religious leaders. At its core, Bulliet's argument is very much like Turner's. It is in the process of frontier, where various groups - in his case Arab Muslims and Persian converts - intermingle and compete, that a new and distinct identity is developed. Bulliet's thesis can also be connected to the ʿAbbāsīd era and frontier warfare, specifically along the Arab-Byzantine frontier, in the work of Michael Bonner who shows the defining of the frontier and the motivations for volunteer fighters of the *jihād* as paralleled with the development of the more scholarly and legalistic traditions in Sunni Islam and the resulting reactions and responses of the political centers.⁴⁶

Bonner's writing on the Arab-Byzantine frontier is of further importance here due to his interest in the region attached to the frontier known as the *'awāṣim*. The *'awāṣim*

⁴⁴ Darling, "Contested Territory," 141.

⁴⁵ Richard Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ Michael Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier: Awasim, Thughur, and the Arab Geographers," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 (1994): 17-24; *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*, (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1996); and *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practices*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

was the region south of the Arab-Byzantine *thughūr* or frontier and was often considered to be a buffer zone between the frontier and the political centers of Syria during the Umayyad period and then Iraq during the 'Abbāsīd era. It was a place of retreat and a final line of defense beyond the directly militarized frontier. In Bonner's argument though, the *'awāṣim* become something more akin to the peripheries of state in Ratzel's three-tiered borderland. While the *thughūr* are a frontline frontier where fighting and expansion takes place, the *'awāṣim* are a place of settlement, where the negotiations of frontier are becoming more finalized in favor of the Caliphate.⁴⁷ Bonner's arguments here highlight the possibility that if a frontier as a zone of possible expansion and territorial dynamism exists, then what lies behind it may be former frontiers which are maturing and where the negotiations about political power which take place along frontiers are coming to a conclusion. Bonner's argument, however, focuses on these developments from a legalistic perspective rooted within particular textual traditions, leaving many questions as to how such a development may have actually occurred on the ground.

Linda Darling has shown in her study of Ottoman origins a particular tension - visible in different literary genres, epic poems and religious catechisms - between the inhabitants of frontiers and borderlands and representatives of the central Ottoman authorities typical of the tensions at the heart of many of the issues important to borderland studies.

The epic celebrated individual heroism that took advantage of the boundarylessness of border society to make friends, converts, and marriages among the putative enemy, extolled the bonds of comradeship and the acquisition and generous disposal of personal wealth, and in general embodied the romantic and individualistic aspects of border

⁴⁷ Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier," 23-24.

warfare. The catechism, on the other hand, sought precisely to set controls on the fluidity of border society, to impose boundaries between warriors identified primarily as Muslims and their unbelieving opponents, and to interpose the state and its demands into the collection of wealth and the disposition of the spoils of campaign.⁴⁸

Darling's case study of frontier warfare in the early Ottoman period demonstrates this tension between the realities of frontier society and the ideals imposed upon it by the constraints of a centralized state. While she emphasizes the tensions at play, she also brings to light the fantasy of a state which shares a homogenous identity from center to periphery.

For many of these approaches, the role of the frontier which emerges is one which reflects back upon the political center. Blankinship's thesis results in a revolution which overturns the center, while Crone argues that revolutionary movements did not seek to remove themselves from the center, but rather to alter the center. Bulliet's argument shows the frontier acculturating itself with the dominant society of the center, in this case through certain expressions of Muslim religion and culture, but then reconfiguring the culture of the dominant society to meet its own needs. Bonner focuses on the interaction between what is often seen as the predominant occupation of frontiers, warfare and its conduct, with the expression of dominant religious and political ideologies at the center at a time when a frontier is maturing into a region without the characteristic attributes of a frontier. Similarly, Darling shows the tension between the dominant ideologies of the center and the lived experiences of the frontier. All told, the focus here is on a dichotomy between the center and the periphery, but with an emphasis on the agency of the periphery in determining the direction of the center. Accordingly, these studies overturn

⁴⁸ Darling, "Contested Territory," 141.

long-held views of the periphery as entirely subjected to the center, while still preserving an emphasis on the relationship between center and periphery.

What stands out in the work of Blankinship, Crone, Bulliet, Bonner, and Darling is the role of conquest in defining the extent of frontier. If frontiers are ill-defined zones of transition and negotiation, then the whole of the Muslim world in the first centuries of its history can be seen as either one large frontier or as a series of frontiers.⁴⁹ Seeing the Muslim world in this light gives us an understanding of just how much geographic depth a frontier may have and how long this period of negotiation along the frontier may last. It may even be possible to read the history of the various civil wars and revolts of the first centuries of Muslim history in a manner similar to Blankinship and Crone, as a period in which the center itself was also a frontier. It is also possible to read the development of early history of the Muslim world through Turner's ideas and see the availability of land open for conquest, the spoils produced by this conquest, and the negotiation between the Muslims and conquered peoples as the key factors in the development of the Muslim world in this early period. These ideas of geographic depth and long duration of negotiation must be kept in mind as we proceed to the eastern frontier itself.

2.5 The Arabic and Persian Geographical Writers of the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the conceptual understanding of the eastern frontier found in a series of works, primarily geographic in content, written in Arabic and

⁴⁹ Michael Bonner has made an argument for viewing the pre-modern Islamic world as a series of frontiers and has emphasized the roles of frontier warfare and *jihād* in the history of its political and social development. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History*, 118-156.

Persian from the third/ninth to fourth/tenth centuries. These works are considered geographic because they take as their primary focus the description of the world of their time. Within this broad framework there is much variety from one author to the next as to how this material is presented. Before continuing to a discussion of these authors' presentation of the eastern frontier, a brief note regarding each author and his work is necessary.

Here we will divide these authors between the two schools of thought into which the Arabic geographical writers of the medieval period tend to be categorized, the so-called Iraqī and Balkhī Schools. We will present them in roughly chronological order within each school. The identification of an Iraqī and Balkhī School of geographic writing is largely a modern construction. The Balkhī School, which begins with the founding figure of Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934), shows more signs of consciously being a school of thought, with each subsequent member of the school working closely with and borrowing heavily from the texts of his predecessors. The Iraqī School, in contrast, is largely defined by those geographers who went before the Balkhī School; many of them lived and wrote in Iraq and made Iraq the center or starting point of their texts. Brief biographies of the authors and the influence of their background on their approach to geography will be covered. Their texts will then be presented with special emphasis on their systems for organizing the world between itineraries which move readers through both the text and the world described by the text and administrative districts which try to organize the world into discrete units. The place of the eastern frontier within the grand itineraries of these texts will be explored, demonstrating how the region fits within a particular author's greater understanding of the world.

2.5.1 The Iraqī School of Administrative Geography

Beyond the fact that the majority of the geographical writers of the Iraqī School were associated with imperial administration - especially Ibn Khurradādhbih (director of the posts and intelligence), al-Ya'qūbī (secretary of the Ṭāhirid Dynasty in Khurāsān), and Qudāma (bureaucrat in the office of control and audit) – the texts produced by these authors appear to have an administrative purpose and style. Adam Silverstein has suggested that the emergence of this genre of literature within an administrative context is not the product of an imperial administration “whose empire is still being built of whose borders have yet to be fixed. Rather, these works set out to delineate in a practical manner the various regions of the known world and the major routes that link them as a summary of the *status quo*...”⁵⁰ In this sense, the tradition of medieval geographical literature in the Islamic world is one of the end results of a long process of empire building. These texts lay claim to a territory which is under Muslim authority and, in a symbolic or figurative manner, play out the successes of the Arab-Muslim conquests and the consolidation of political authority under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate by systematically describing the territories which make up the Islamic world. Inasmuch, Silverstein makes a strong connection between the production of the earliest administrative geographical works and the earlier erection of milestones and postal stations.⁵¹

The earliest non-mathematical⁵² geographical work in Arabic which has survived in something resembling its original form is the *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik* of Abu

⁵⁰ Adam Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁵² Prior to Ibn Khurradādhbih, writers such as al-Khwārazmī (who lived in the first half of the third/ninth century) wrote geographical works inspired by Ptolemy. These earlier texts were often little more than tables

‘l-Qāsim ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khurradādhbih (b. 205/820 or 211/825, d. 300/911).⁵³ Ibn Khurradādhbih holds a unique place in the medieval Arabic geographical literature not only for the earliness of his text but also for his position as the *ṣāhib al-barīd wa ‘l-khabar* (director of posts and intelligence) under the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid (r. 256-279/870-892). Many of Ibn Khurradādhbih’s writings, of which we know of nine but only have access to four, appear to be strongly influenced by his relationship with the court of al-Mu‘tamid and his official role as *ṣāhib al-barīd*.⁵⁴ The text of the *Kitāb al-masālik wa ‘l-mamālik* itself takes on a form which implies a strong connection to Ibn Khurradādhbih’s official function as *ṣāhib al-barīd*, consisting primarily of itineraries which we can safely assume to be related to the ‘Abbāsīd postal routes of the time. While presenting the lands of the caliphate, Ibn Khurradādhbih’s approach is far from descriptive. Instead, the text tends towards long lists of cities, villages, and resting places with distances between each, a rather traditionally-formed itinerary.⁵⁵ What details are given tend to be associated with the needs of travelers, most commonly highlighting

of geographic coordinates based upon astronomical and astrological observation, much like Ptolemy’s geographical works which functioned as a guidebook to preparing maps.

⁵³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa ‘l-mamālik*; French translation as C. Barbier de Meynard, trans., “Le livre des routes et des provinces,” *Journal Asiatique* Ser. 6 vol. 5 (1865). Barbier’s translation was enlarged and clarified by De Goeje and included in the *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* edition of the text published in 1889. Portions of this text have been translated in various other publications, typically focusing on a single geographic region.

⁵⁴ For example, he is associated with a number of works related to courtly life on topic such as singing and music (*Adab al-samā’* and *Kitāb al-Lahw wa ‘l-malāhī*; the first is mentioned by Ibn Nadīm in his *Fihrist* but has not survived while the second has been edited from a unique manuscript by I.A. Khalifé (Beirut 1964), the culinary arts (*Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh* which is mentioned by Ibn Nadīm but has not survived), wine drinking (*Kitāb al-Sharāb* which is mentioned by Ibn Nadīm but has not survived), and proper behavior for boon-companions (*Kitāb al-Nudamā’ wa ‘l-julasā’* which is mentioned by Ibn Nadīm but has not survived). M. Haj-Sadok, “Ibn Khurradādhbih,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁵⁵ The simplicity of Ibn Khurradādhbih’s itineraries has led to comparisons with the Roman *Peutingier Map* and its accompanying tables as well as Isidore of Charax’s *Parthian Stations*. Adam Silverstein has referred to Ibn Khurradādhbih’s text as a “caliphal equivalent of such works” and has gone as far as to conjecture that the popularity of Ibn Khurradādhbih’s text and its successors may have led to the disappearance of milestones in the Islamic world, implying that his text provided similar data and function which were simple to use and accessible. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World*, 64.

difficulties a traveler may encounter on a particular stage of an itinerary, or provide some information about political situations along a given itinerary.⁵⁶ His itineraries are divided up as they reach major stopping points, usually defined by their role as local administrative centers. When he reaches such an administrative center, he may break from the straight itinerary and give a short description of the city, typically focusing on the presence of different military or government facilities, and a list of cities and villages which are dependent upon the city. Ibn Khurradādhbih begins his description of the *Mamlakat al-Islām*, “the Realm of Islam,” with Iraq and then proceeds to the other regions of the Islamic world. After Iraq, however, lands to its east, al-Mashriq, receive pride of place. Ibn Khurradādhbih’s initial itineraries follow the path from Baghdad to Khurāsān and then across Transoxania. It is only after this description of the itineraries in the points furthest east that he returns west to fill out Fārs and southwestern Iran.

Contemporary with Ibn Khurradādhbih was Abu ‘l-Abbās Aḥmad b. Abī Ya‘qūb b. Ja‘far b. Wahb b. Wādiḥ, more commonly known as al-Ya‘qūbī (d. after 292/905). Like Ibn Khurradādhbih, al-Ya‘qūbī came from an administrative background. He was a trained member of the secretarial class and served under the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān until 259/872-873, when the Ṭāhirids fell to the Ṣaffārids. al-Ya‘qūbī then settled in Egypt where he wrote and lived until his death. This administrative background is apparent in

⁵⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih also includes passages of a more literary nature, including wonders (*a’jāb*), reports of strange journeys to distant lands, and sailors’ tales. André Miquel has noted that the text of the *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik* appears in two versions, one dating from 232/846-847 and the other from 272/885-886, with these non-technical portions added in the later version. Miquel argues that this shows a development by Ibn Khurradādhbih from a strict bureaucrat (*kātib*) to a more cultivated man of letters (*adīb*), a development which is seen across the history of medieval Islamic geographical writing. André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle: Géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050*, (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 90-91.

al-Ya'qūbī's two major works: his *Ta'rīkh*,⁵⁷ a universal history from Creation to the reign of al-Mu'tamid that employs such administrative sources as letters, speeches, and lists, and his *Kitāb al-buldān*,⁵⁸ an administrative geography of the *Mamlakat al-Islām* and beyond that contains historical, topographical, and statistical information about the places he describes.⁵⁹

Much like Ibn Khurradādhbih, al-Ya'qūbī begins his *Kitāb al-buldān* with descriptions of Baghdad and Sāmarrā' followed by a long itinerary leading from Iraq to Transoxania and the lands of the Turks. His itineraries are nowhere as detailed as those of Ibn Khurradādhbih, his focus is on administrative centers and, instead of measuring distances in *farsakhs*, al-Ya'qūbī measures his stages in days traveled between administrative centers, leaving out the smaller villages and way stations that Ibn Khurradādhbih includes. al-Ya'qūbī has a greater interest in administrative divisions, making administrative centers the key organizing feature of his geography. As he reaches each administrative center, he gives information about the cities and districts which depend upon it (these are often overlooked in his itineraries), key political figures who reside in the city or have authority over the region, and the land tax for the region. For al-Ya'qūbī, administrative districts are organized around large and important cities with a number of dependent cities, villages, and agricultural regions under their authority. al-Ya'qūbī is keenly interested in the history of these regions, explaining the conditions

⁵⁷ al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1883).

⁵⁸ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. T.G.J. Juynboll (Leiden: Brill, 1861) and Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), French translation as G. Wiet, trans., *Les pays*, (Cairo, 1937).

⁵⁹ al-Ya'qūbī is the author of one other known work, a short treatise on the influence of a caliph's life and tastes on his subjects. *Mushākalat al-nās li-zamānihim*, ed. W.G. Millward, (Beirut, 1972), English translation as W.G. Millward, trans., "The adaptation of men to their times. An historical essay by al-Ya'qūbī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84 (1964): 329-344.

under which a region was conquered but also giving long and detailed accounts of the succession of governors over a given province.⁶⁰ These histories begin with the initial conquest of the province and continue up to the author's lifetime. Within this long list of governors, al-Ya'qūbī gives details about the conditions under which they were appointed and by whom as well as the conditions under which they lost their position. The narratives provided here give a great amount of detail about the complex politics of the region for roughly two centuries. al-Ya'qūbī's descriptions of cities show a fairly regular pattern, with his primary interests being the date and situation under which a place was conquered by the Muslims and by whom, the condition of its water, the ethnic makeup of the population, and its annual *kharāj* or land tax. The social and historical focus in al-Ya'qūbī's work highlighted by these interests is noted by André Miquel as a key step in the development of a field of human geography in the medieval Islamic world.⁶¹

Writing around the same time as Ibn Khurradādhbih and al-Ya'qūbī is Abu Bakr Ahmad b. Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī, known as Ibn al-Faqīh. Little is known of the life of Ibn al-Faqīh. Only his *Kitāb al-buldān*⁶² survives but in an abridged form, taken from four known manuscripts. A few bits of information about his life have been culled from this text and references found in the works of Ibn Nadīm, al-Muqaddasī, and Yāqūt. On this basis, it is estimated that he compiled his *Kitāb al-buldān* sometime around the years 289-290/902-903, on the basis of his references to the caliphs al-Mu'taḍid (r. 279-289/892-902) and al-Muktafī (r. 289-295/902-908). What is most noted about his text is that, especially in comparison to his contemporaries and predecessors, Ibn al-Faqīh had a

⁶⁰ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, (1892), 282-296 for Sistan and 295-308 for Khurasan.

⁶¹ Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle*, 102-104.

⁶² Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*; French translation as Henri Massé, trans. *Abrégé du livre des pays*. (Damascus, 1973).

strong interest in *adab*, which al-Muqaddasī referred to as a series of irrelevant digressions.⁶³ It is somewhat ironic but certainly not absurd or impossible, then, that Miquel has identified Ibn al-Faqīh as the model which bridged the gap between earlier technical and administrative geographies and the later human geographies epitomized by al-Muqaddasī.⁶⁴ In many ways, it can be said that Ibn al-Faqīh’s text is much closer to the works of the Balkhī School than the Iraqī School. This interest of Ibn al-Faqīh’s brings a combination of folklore, poetry, history, and religious traditions into his text. These traditions span the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, emphasizing, at least in his discussions of Khurāsān and Transoxania, the origins of cities, the deeds of pre-Islamic rulers, the conquest of Khurāsān, the role of the Khurāsānīs in the ‘Abbāsīd revolution, and the origins of important Khurāsānī families such as the Barmakids and the Ṭāhirids. Ibn al-Faqīh’s interest in poetry is apparent in a work of Ibn al-Faqīh’s listed by Ibn Nadīm as a no longer extant “work on the best recent (Arabic) poets.”⁶⁵ Another aspect of Ibn al-Faqīh’s broader interests is found in his inclusion of discussions on Qur’anic passages, *ḥadīth*, and other religious traditions referring to the geographic regions he is describing, but here we should note that, as Yāqūt mentions, both Ibn al-Faqīh and his father were well-known traditionists and that the inclusion of such material relates to this aspect of his life.⁶⁶

In understanding the content of Ibn al-Faqīh’s *Kitāb al-buldān*, it is important to note that the text we are working with is based on four manuscripts, all of them

⁶³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 3 ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 5, a.

⁶⁴ Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle*, 187-189. Miquel dedicates an entire chapter, chapter five, to Ibn al-Faqīh and the development of human geography.

⁶⁵ H. Massé, “Ibn al-Faqīh,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁶⁶ Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma’rifat al-adīb [Mu’jam al-udabā’]*, ed. I. ‘Abbas (Beirut, 1993), 1:459-460; Massé, “Ibn al-Faqīh.”

abridgements of the original text.⁶⁷ This makes it difficult for us to understand the organization of Ibn al-Faqīh's text with any certainty. In de Goeje's edition, Khurāsān, Transoxania, and the lands of the Turks come at the very end of the text, but the loss of the introduction and conclusion makes it difficult to say if this was the author's original intent. In comparing Ibn al-Faqīh's coverage of different regions, we see that Iran receives pride of place in terms of numbers of pages, followed by Arabia and Iraq. When it comes to the actual content of the text, Ibn al-Nadīm noted that much of Ibn al-Faqīh's work is a compilation of previous authors, especially al-Jayhānī,⁶⁸ and in reference to the discursions into *adab*, al-Muqaddasī recognizes heavy influence from al-Jahīz (d. 255/868-869).⁶⁹

Qudāma b. Ja'far al-Kātib's biography is similarly difficult to decipher from the limited and often contradictory information we have available. He was born as early as 260/873-874 and died as late as 337/948. He was a convert from Christianity, having converted during the reign of al-Muktafī (r. 289-295/902-908).⁷⁰ He appears to have been a life-long bureaucrat in Baghdad, and around 297/910 he was appointed to the *majlis al-zimam* (the office of control and audit) in the *dīwān al-mashriq* under Abu 'l-Ḥasan b. al-

⁶⁷ Three of these manuscripts were used by de Goeje for his edition while the fourth was discovered afterward. This fourth manuscript, discussed by A.Z. Validov (Z.V. Togan), includes extensive additions related to Central Asia. A.Z. Validov, "Meshkhedskaya rukopis Ibnu-l-Fakikha," *Izvestiya Russkoi Akademii Nauk* (1924): 237-248.

⁶⁸ A Sāmānid vizier who wrote a no longer extant *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*. The actual identification of al-Jayhānī is difficult because the Sāmānids employed three different viziers with the *nisba* al-Jayhānī. The first, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr, served Naṣr b. Aḥmad until 310/922. Minorsky, Barthold, and Miquel have argued for him to be the author of the lost geography. Vladimir Minorsky, "Translator's Preface," in *Ḥudūd al-'ālam: 'The Regions of the World,'* 2nd ed., (1970; repr., Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1982). xvii; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 12-13; and Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle*, xxiii. In contrast, Pellat has suggested that the work was a family project with contributions by all three Jayhānīs. Pellat, "al-Djayhānī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁶⁹ Massé, "Ibn al-Faqīh."

⁷⁰ Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb*, 5:2235.

Furāt’s son al-Muḥassin. While he is credited with numerous works on a variety of topics, one of the few works that we can assign to him with certainty is a *Kitāb al-kharāj*, which has only survived in part (more on this following). His other works include the *Kitāb al-alfāz* or *Jawāhir al-alfāz*, which “lists synonyms and phrases in *saj*’ for use by orators and writers of artistic prose,”⁷¹ and the *Kitāb naqd al-shi’r*, which explains how to distinguish between good and bad poetry.⁷² Throughout his works, Qudāma has a strong interest in composition and literary and oratory style, an interest which has led some to label him the master of eloquence.⁷³

Qudāma’s *Kitāb al-kharāj* originally consisted of eight *manāzil*,⁷⁴ but only the fifth through the eighth have survived in a unique manuscript.⁷⁵ The full title of the work is *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-ṣinā’at al-kitāba* (Book of the Land Tax and the Arts of the Secretaries), and the work, at least as much of it as is extant, covers a variety of topics which would have been important to a member of the secretarial class of the central administration including various governmental departments, the historical, geographical, and legal foundations of taxation, linguistic usage, literary traditions, and the proper forms of official correspondence. This text appears to be heavily influenced by Qudāma’s life in the ‘Abbāsīd administration in Baghdad. Selections from the fifth and sixth *manāzil* have been edited and published by De Goeje as part of the *Bibliotheca*

⁷¹ S.A. Bonebakker, “Qudāma b. Ja’far al-Kātib al-Baghdādī, Abu’l-Faraj,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁷² Yāqūt adds a list of another dozen titles in his entry on Qudāma, many of these appear to focus on rhetoric and poetry for particular occasions such as during periods of grief. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma’rifat al-adīb*, 5:2235.

⁷³ Bonebakker, “Qudāma b. Ja’far al-Kātib al-Baghdādī, Abu’l-Faraj.”

⁷⁴ Literally “stopping place” or “residence,” but, in the case of a book, “volume” would be a better translation.

⁷⁵ Manuscript 1076 of the Köprülü Library, ed. F. Sezgin in Facsimile Editions, Series C, Volume 42, Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Sciences, Frankfurt am Main, 1986. Some sources claim that a ninth *manzil* was added to the text. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma’rifat al-adīb*, 5:2235.

Geographorum Arabicorum. This portion is a geographical study of the *Mamlakat al-Islām* similar to the work of Ibn Khurradādhbih, to the extent that De Goeje assumed them to be at least working from the same sources.⁷⁶ Still, the content of the texts are distinct enough that Qudāma's text should not be considered an edition of Ibn Khurradādhbih's. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī edited a new edition, published in 1981, which contains the entire known text, including *manāzils* five through eight.⁷⁷

Regardless, Qudāma's work is rather similar to Ibn Khurradādhbih's in content and style, focusing primarily on itineraries in his geographical chapters. Qudāma's itineraries begin with the pilgrimage routes from each region to Mecca, starting with the route from Baghdad. He then provides an itinerary, starting from Baghdad, traveling across southern Iran, through Fārs, Isfahān, Kirmān, and Sīstān. From there Qudāma employs a repeated element of his itineraries, returning to a node where multiple itineraries meet, in this case Hamadhān, and then following a new itinerary in a different direction, in this case toward Khurāsān and Transoxania. Throughout the text, these nodes are a key organizing feature. Qudāma will often "return" to a spot, initially describing it as the intersection of two or more itineraries, after having taken one of these itineraries to their conclusion, along with all the "tributary" itineraries which branch off from the main itinerary, and then following another itinerary. These itineraries do extend beyond the *Mamlakat al-Islām*, into the lands of the Turks and China, but only to the edges of Chinese territory in the case of the latter.

⁷⁶ Qudāma, *Nabdh min Kitāb al-Kharāj*, xxii.

⁷⁷ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī, (Baghdad: Dār al-rashīd li-l-nashr, 1981).

2.5.2 The Balkhī School and the Geographical Sciences

The Balkhī School, named after its founder Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934), developed later than the Iraqī School and its work is primarily focused on the Islamic world, describing each province as its own clime.⁷⁸ The authors of the Balkhī school are said to have given a more Islamic emphasis to the study of geography, primarily by restricting their work to the lands of Islam (*bilād al-Islām*), and by emphasizing geographic concepts more in line with Qur’anic cosmology and notions found in *hadith* of the Prophet and the Companions.⁷⁹ For example, many authors describe the world’s land-mass as a large bird whose head is in China, its right wing in India, its left wing in al-Khazar, its chest in Mecca, Hijaz, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, and its tail in North Africa (on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. ‘Ās), although the world maps of the Balkhī school tend to show the head of the bird in Arabia with Asia and Africa as the wings and Europe as the tail.⁸⁰ Similarly, Mecca is assigned the preeminent place among the writers of this school. The Balkhī School also developed its own method of division of the world, not based in the Greek climes but rather the Persian *keshwar* systems, even though they still used the term “*iqlīm*” (“clime”). In their writings they deal only with the *bilād al-Islām* and divided it into twenty *iqlīms*, based upon territorial and physical boundaries. al-Muqaddasī differs here from the other Balkhīs by dividing the world into only fourteen *iqlīms*, seven of them *‘arab* (Arab) and seven *‘ajam* (non-Arab). In this way, the writers of the Balkhī School presented the concept of regions with defined geographical

⁷⁸ S. Maqbul Ahmad, “Djuḡhrāfiyā,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Gerald R. Tibbetts, “The Beginnings of a Cartographic Tradition,” in *The History of Cartography, Vol. 2, Book 1: Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 90-1.

boundaries, which they often described in detail. This school is likewise credited with an attempt to popularize geography by expanding the scope of information that it contained, so as to make it useful and interesting to a wider audience.⁸¹ The wider audience the Balkhī School was attempting to appeal to was most likely the educated classes of contemporary Muslim society. Their hope was to elevate the standing of geography as a legitimate and praiseworthy science (*'ilm*) alongside such fields as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Geographical writing in the *al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik* tradition appears to have already had a wide, but more popular, audience who used these texts for purposes of travel and trade, as mentioned earlier.

One of the more unique aspects of the Balkhī School compared to the Iraqī School is its use of maps. Few if any of the original works by the Iraqī School seem to have included maps. On the contrary, the works of al-Balkhī, al-Istakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and al-Muqaddasī were all illustrated with numerous regional maps and their texts make the necessity of the inclusion of maps quite apparent. These maps were meant to provide the audience with an idea of the relative size and position of each of the regions discussed by the authors and were based primarily on physical evidence instead of mathematical formulas, unlike the mathematical Ptolemaic tradition. Maps were produced in the Muslim world during the heyday of the Iraqī School, such as the famous world map produced for the Caliph al-Ma'mun, but the literary tradition of the Iraqī School appears to be separate from the contemporary cartographic tradition. The maps produced prior to the advent of the Balkhī School were not created by the writers of geographical texts nor were they included in geographical texts.

⁸¹ See Ibn Ḥawqal for an example of such a statement. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2, ed. J.H. Kramers, (Leiden: Brill, 1939), 3.

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fārisī al-Karkhī al-Iṣṭakhrī, a native of Fārs, is the earliest author of the Balkhī School whose work is extant, writing in the fourth/tenth century. Little is known about his life. His *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*⁸² takes as its basis al-Balkhī's, *Ṣuwar al-aqālīm*, a work which is no longer extant although much of it can be reconstructed from the works of his successors.⁸³ Despite its title, al-Iṣṭakhrī's work, belongs to the "atlas of Islam" tradition,⁸⁴ in which the text focuses almost exclusively on describing a series of maps. al-Iṣṭakhrī's adherence to this model has sometimes been seen as extreme, so that al-Muqaddasī described his work as "a book with very carefully prepared maps, but confused in many places and superficial in its commentaries, and it does not divide the provinces into districts."⁸⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī's text and maps, like those of the Balkhī School in general, show considerable Persian influence, most notably in the use of the Iranian *keshwar* as a model for organizing the world into countries rather than the Ptolemaic "climes," even though al-Iṣṭakhrī still uses the Arabic term *iqlīm*. In a similar vein, the Persian world receives the fullest coverage in al-Iṣṭakhrī's text and his work was translated into Persian and later into Turkish, unlike any other work in this genre.⁸⁶

As a school developing from the work of a founding figure, al-Balkhī, the writers of the Balkhī School show a definite trajectory of development from one author to the

⁸² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 1, ed. M.J. de Goeje, (Leiden, 1870) and Muḥammad Jābir 'Abd al-'Āl al-Ḥīmī (Cairo: 1381/1961).

⁸³ See M.J. de Goeje, "Die Iṣṭakhrī-Balkhī Frage," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 25 (1871): 42-58 and J.H. Kramers, "La question Balkhī-Iṣṭakhrī-Ibn Ḥauqal et l'Atlas de l'Islam," *Acta Orientalia* 10 (1932): 9-30 for a complete discussion of these relationships.

⁸⁴ "The Atlas of Islam" tradition is a modern description, much like the more general division of the medieval geographical writers into two schools. The majority of writers in the Balkhī School, al-Muqaddasī is the exception, also fall into "the Atlas of Islam" tradition. The use of this term is primarily in contrast to the itinerary based style of writers of the Iraqī School such as Ibn Khuradādhbih.

⁸⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 5.

⁸⁶ Vladimir Minorsky, "A false Jayhānī," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1949): 89-96.

next. Following al-Iṣṭakhrī in this tradition is Abu ‘l-Qāsim b. Ḥawqal al-Naṣībī, a younger contemporary of al-Iṣṭakhrī. Ibn Ḥawqal is noted for his reliance on first-hand observation in preparing his text. As a merchant, and possibly a missionary for the Fāṭimids,⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥawqal traveled from his native al-Jazīra as far west as Morocco and Spain, including a later trip to Sicily, and as far east as Transoxania during the middle of the fourth/tenth century. He wrote his *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*⁸⁸ in a series of successive redactions from sometime before 356/967 until 378/988. This work was initially intended to be a series of additions and corrections to previous works of the Balkhī School. In a famous passage, Ibn Ḥawqal describes how he met al-Iṣṭakhrī in Sind and how the latter designated him as intellectual heir.

I met Abu Ishāq al-Fārisī [al-Iṣṭakhrī] and he had drawn this map of Sind, but he had mixed it up, and he had drawn a map of Fārs, which he had done very well. As for me, I had drawn a map of Adharbayjān, which is on the following page and of which he approved, and al-Jazīra, which he approved of very much. He dismissed [the map which I had drawn] for Egypt as rotten and [the one for] al-Maghrib as mostly wrong. He said “I have looked into your birth and your astrological sign. I ask you to correct my book wherever I have erred.” I made corrections to it, but not to the form (*ghayr shakl*), and I attributed it to him. Then I decided that I should stand alone [as the author] in this book.⁸⁹

Ibn Ḥawqal’s work relies heavily on al-Iṣṭakhrī’s but his additions and modifications, many of them presumably based on his travel experiences, make this a work of his own.

He moves further away from the annotated maps of the “atlas of Islam” tradition, and

⁸⁷ André Miquel, “Ibn Ḥawqal, Abu’l-Qāsim b. ‘Alī al-Naṣībī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*; and *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle*, 275.

⁸⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1873), which has been supplanted by ed. J.H. Kramers, (Leiden: Brill, 1938). A French translation by Kramers and revised by G. Wiet is available as J.H. Kramers and G. Wiet, trans., *Configuration de la terre*, (Paris-Beirut, 1964).

⁸⁹ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 329-330.

focuses more on the text, although he still discusses his maps explicitly in his text. Ibn Ḥawqal's use of first-hand experiences allows him to describe the current conditions of the Muslim world, to a greater extent than other geographical writers who worked largely from older texts and traditions. This appears especially in his discussions of economic conditions, where he focuses on day-to-day issues of agriculture and manufacturing, more than on the rare and precious goods which so interested other writers.

A contemporary of Ibn Ḥawqal, Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Bannā' al-Shāmī al-Muqaddasī is often considered the culmination of geographical writing of this period. al-Muqaddasī's work, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*⁹⁰ written sometime between 375/985 and 380/990, presents a systematized geography containing elements of physical, economic, political, and human geography in a manner unlike previous authors. Whereas earlier geographical writers either organized their texts around routes and itineraries (the *al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik* or "routes and kingdoms" tradition) or universal cosmographies (the *ṣūrat al-arḍ* or "image of the world" tradition), al-Muqaddasī works to create a scientific and systematic ordering of the world based on a number of principles. Beyond dividing the *mamlakat al-Islām* between its Arab (*mamlakat al-'arab*) and non-Arab (*mamlakat al-'ajam*) provinces, al-Muqaddasī creates a vocabulary for understanding each individual *iqlīm*, seen here as individual geographic wholes. Each province is centered on a metropolis (*miṣr*) surrounded by several districts (*kūra*) which each contain a *qaṣaba* or major city surrounded by other main towns (*madīna*). Beyond this, further distinguishing terms are

⁹⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*; English translation as Basil Anthony Collins, trans., *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing., 1994). French translation as Charles Pellat, trans., *Description de l'Occident Musulman au IVe-Xe siècle*, (Alger, 1950).

used to bring out the individuality of relationships between the various provinces. Within each province and each subdivision of a province, al-Muqaddasī provides specific local details which have wide-ranging use for various classes, from merchants to men of letters. Because of his systemic approach and his use of authorities and the challenges he makes to them, it has been argued that it is his work that gave the field of geographical writing its literary and scientific legitimacy.⁹¹

The anonymous Persian geographical text, the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*,⁹² known through a unique manuscript copied in 656/1258, was compiled in 372/982-983 and dedicated to the ruler of the Farīghūnid dynasty of Jūzjānān Amīr Abul-Ḥārith Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. We know very little about the anonymous author, but previous scholarship has given us a good idea about his sources.⁹³ An interesting aspect of the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, is that its author was most likely reading a map while composing the text: this was noted initially by Abul-Faḍl Gulpāyagānī, who originally brought the manuscript to the attention of A.G. Toumansky in 1892, and later by V. Minorsky in the introduction to his translation of the text.⁹⁴ This map appears to have contained detailed itineraries, not all of which made their way into the text itself. For example, the route from Rukhud to Multān appears on the map but not in the text.⁹⁵ The author does not give distances or travel

⁹¹ André Miquel, “al-Muqaddasī, Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Abī Bakr al-Bannā’ al-Shāmī,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*; and *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du 11e siècle*, 322-330.

⁹² *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, ed. Manūchīhr Sutūdīh (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Danīshgāh-i Tehran, 1340/1962); translated as Vladimir Minorsky, trans., *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam: ‘The Regions of the World,’ 2nd ed.*, (1970; repr., Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1982).

⁹³ Minorsky included a study in his “Translator’s Preface” to *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam: ‘The Regions of the World,’* xiv-xix. Barthold’s preface, also translated by Minorsky, includes a similar study of the anonymous author’s sources, but Barthold focused on the author’s sources for individual pieces of information rather than the more general survey of sources provided by Minorsky. *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam: ‘The Regions of the World,’* 1-44.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, xlix.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, xv and 121.

directions in the kind of programmatic manner used by other authors such as Ibn Khurradādhbih. Instead, he lists places that fall within a single geographic region, making the administrative divisions the primary operating system for his discussion.

A primary aim of the *Hudūd al- 'ālam* is to define the boundaries of the various regions of the world, thus, making administrative districts the most important organizing element of the entire work. All told, the *Hudūd al- 'ālam* lists fifty-one countries or *nāḥiyāt* covering the entire world, and not just the Muslim world. For each of these, the author begins his descriptions of the countries with a detailed look at the limits (*hudūd*) of each territory, making this the key element of each entry. Within his discussion of each region, the author is interested in a number of its attributes, including but not limited to important administrative centers, markets, agriculture, water sources and irrigation, and descriptions of the inhabitants. The *Hudūd al- 'ālam* gives some of the most detailed descriptions of places and people found within the entire tradition of geographic writing under study here.

2.6 Defining the Eastern Border

In discussing our sources' views of the eastern frontier, it is important first to understand how our authors define the frontier itself. Where do they specifically place it? What defines it as a frontier, and what distinguishes one side of the frontier from the other? Here, these questions will first be addressed by identifying where our sources specifically state a place to be on, along, or near a frontier. The description of the frontier will then be analyzed to understand what kind of frontier they are writing about and what defines the entities on either side of the frontier. This look at how our sources define the eastern

frontier is divided into two parts, based largely on the preceding discussion. The first part will look at situations in which our sources define the eastern frontier in terms of borders. Borders, again, are defined here as linear phenomena indicating either the dividing line between two states or societies or the extent to which a state can wield effective power. For the eastern frontier of the Muslim world in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, to imagine a border in this region meant to define a limit of Muslim political authority in territory inhabited primarily by various Turkic groups. Such definitions of the borders of the Muslim world are a key element in many of our sources, which take as their focus a description of the Muslim world and the regions around it. These sources are interested in cataloguing and categorizing places and, in doing so, in defining the extents and limits of regions.

For our earliest authors, borders do not seem to be a primary concern. The worlds they describe are largely “borderless” societies. Ibn Khurradādhbih’s focus on itineraries and roads leaves him primarily discussing just those places along major roads. Except where a road crosses a border, as in the case of al-Rāsht mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, he has little interest in defining borders. On the other hand, al-Ya’qūbī, who is very much interested in defining administrative units, is more focused on defining centers and webs of dependents around administrative centers. His geography is centripetal, or perhaps even fractal, down to the local level, and is not so much concerned about extreme limits as about relationships towards the center. When references are made to borders in these earlier authors, such as Ibn Khurradādhbih and al-Ya’qūbī, they seem incidental.

When they describe specific places, our authors may associate a particular place with a border. Again, the discussion of al-Rāsht which began this chapter is an excellent example of this, where a single place becomes representative of the entire border or frontier. Our sources are filled with other examples of this phenomenon. Qudāma describes Qum as situated between Ṭarāz and Kūlān to the north and lying two *farsakhs* from the border (*ḥadd*) of the Kīmāk.⁹⁶ al-Muqaddasī says that Badhakhshān is adjacent to the land of the Turks (*mutākhim li-bilād al-turk*) above Tukhāristān and is a first-rate *ribāṭ* with a fortress.⁹⁷ The *Hudūd al-ʿālam* says that Azīv is a town at the end of (*bi-ākhir-i*) the province of Gūzgānān.⁹⁸ Samarqandāq is described as the furthest limit (*ākhir ḥudūd*) of Transoxania in its direction.⁹⁹ Ūzgand is the border (*ḥadd ast*) between Farghāna and the Khajand Turks.¹⁰⁰ Isbjāb is a region on the border between the Muslims and the infidels (*ḥadd miyān-e musulmānān va-kāfirān*).¹⁰¹ Internal borders between administrative divisions within the Muslim world may also be defined in this way. Ṭāyaqān is at the border (*bar ḥadd*) between Ṭukhāristān and Khuttalān.¹⁰² Vayshagirt is at the border (*bar ḥadd*) between Chaghāniyān and Khuttalān.¹⁰³ Vāthkath is the border (*ḥadd ast*) between Khujand and Farghāna.¹⁰⁴ Yahūdliq, Abarliq, Itlukh, Alkh.n.jās are at the border (*bar ḥadd*) between Farghāna and Īlāq.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣināʿat al-kitāba*, 101.

⁹⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 303.

⁹⁸ *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, 98.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

These instances of specific places being marked as borders demonstrate an important aspect of medieval political geography. Despite our desire to see pre-modern states as fully-formed polygons on a map, it is in cities and towns and possibly the roads connecting them where state authority is concentrated and expressed. The border between Khunjand and Farghāna actually extends beyond the town of Vāthkath, but our sources identify this town - the inhabited place along that border and the place where state authority may be manifested - as the border itself.

Qudāma, perhaps because he is one of the earlier authors who is not overly concerned with defining borders, gives us an example of a location which fits this understanding of the extent of control within pre-modern states rather clearly. Kashmīhan is a great village five *farsakhs* from Marw and six *farsakhs* from al-Dīwān on the road from Marw to Amul, along a path of continuous desert, which happens to be in the land of the Ghuzz (*bi-l-ghuzz*).¹⁰⁶ Here the issue can be as simple as the Muslims' ability to control a city and maintain a path of travel without actually taking full control of the region from the Ghuzz. In other situations, Qudāma marks places as important points for the Turks moving through Muslim lands, such as Jīnānjakat, four *farsakhs* from Banākat and across the Syr Darya from Satūrkāt, which is where the Turks would cross the Nahr Turk (the Jaxartes or Syr Darya River).¹⁰⁷ Further on, Qudāma provides descriptions of an elongated type of frontier, where an itinerary connects a number of places, but only a few *farsakhs* to the north lie the lands of the Kīmāk.¹⁰⁸ Here the roads or paths and major

¹⁰⁶ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 98.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 100. The name Jīnānjakat was proposed by de Goeje in his 1889 edition (p. 204), but was omitted from al-Zubaydī's 1981 edition.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

points along these roads and paths are under Muslim control, but this tells us nothing about what lies immediately beyond these specific locations.

One place where a border is described as linear and is defined in concrete terms is where it corresponds to a particular geographic feature. Qudāma describes Kūk as being north of mountains which marked a border with China (*wa-mā yalī al-janūb min hadhā l-mawḍi' jibāl ilā bilād al-Šīn*).¹⁰⁹ The *Hudūd al-'ālam* sees the northern border of Khurāsān as the Jayḥūn or Oxus River.¹¹⁰ The Jayḥūn also marks the northern border of Gūzgānān.¹¹¹ Herat is connected with a river which comes from the border (*az ḥadd*) between Ghūr and Gūzgānān and waters the district.¹¹² Īlāq is bordered by the Khashart River.¹¹³ The rivers which mark borders, especially the Jayḥūn, are often associated with internal borders between different administrative divisions of the Muslim world. Mountain ranges are similarly used to define borders in a linear fashion. Sūkh lies in the mountains which form the frontier between Buttamān and Farghāna.¹¹⁴ Though not strictly described as a border or frontier, watchers (*pāsbān*) and scouts (*dīdabān*) are posted in the mountains around Ūsh to observe the infidel Turks, making the mountains as an important feature in observing a “foreign” threat.¹¹⁵ Our sources also frequently note natural phenomena shared between the Muslims and others. A river passes between Panjhīr and Jāriyāna and then travels into Hindūstān.¹¹⁶ Ūzkand is watered by two rivers,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹¹⁰ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 88.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 95.

¹¹² Ibid., 91.

¹¹³ Ibid., 114.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 101.

the Yabāghū which comes from Tibet, and the Barskhān which comes from the lands of the Khallukh Turks.¹¹⁷

For the earliest of our sources, the discussion of borders seems subordinate to the description of specific places. It is only when a place that is of interest to the author on its own merits happens to be on or along a border that the border itself is defined. As the field of geographical writing developed over the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, writers attempted to apply a larger conceptual framework to the world they were studying. We can see this phenomenon in the beginnings of the Balkhī School, but the concept of borders and regions at that point was dominated by the structures of the maps which were the major focus of their works. Ibn Ḥawqal, for example, will begin his discussion of each region with a reference to the map of that region. He will then give a detailed explanation, often lasting several pages, of the layout and design of the map.¹¹⁸ While such a description does provide borders to a region and, in the cases where a geographic region is along the frontier of the Muslim world itself, the *Dār al-Islām*, it is not the realities of administrative geography on the ground which matter, but rather the form of the maps which determines where borders are located. By the time of al-Muqaddasī's writing, the organization of the world into pre-conceived discrete units was a major part of geographical writing.

al-Muqaddasī's interest in the proper organization of the world breaks it down into smaller units, as implied by the title of his work *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* or "the Best Division for Knowledge of the Climes." Instead of focusing on the limits and/or

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁸ The description for the map of Khurāsān, for example, lasts almost four pages. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-ard*, 427-430.

borders of these units, however, al-Muqaddasī organizes the world around central cities and the cities, towns, and villages which are dependent upon that central city. In this framework, individual units, taken as a conglomeration, may be described as a frontier or border region. Farghānā is the first of the districts of Haytal or Mā warā' al-Nahr (Transoxania) towards the point where the sun rises and the border with the Turks.¹¹⁹ Isbījāb, as a region (not just the city), is the border of Transoxania.¹²⁰ Speaking more generally, the border with the Turks is important in defining the region of Mā warā' al-Nahr as a whole, as the area between the Jayhūn River and the border with the Turks.¹²¹

The definition of Mā warā' al-Nahr as the region between the Jayhūn and the land of the Turks is not uncommon and shows the indefinite nature of the borders of this region. It has often been noted that the limits of Mā warā' al-Nahr were defined by the point “where the power of Islam ceased and depended on political conditions” for much of the period in which this term was used.¹²² Such a definition is, in the truest sense, an example of *ḥudūd* or borders defined by limits: the region is defined almost entirely by the ability of the state to wield effective power to a particular limit.

Among our sources for this chapter, the *Ḥudūd al- 'ālam* is the text most focused on the idea of borders (*ḥudūd*), beginning each section with a description of the borders of the region under study. These are usually broadly defined, quite unlike the earlier authors who would define borders by the specific places which fell along the border. Khurāsān is bordered by Hindūstān on the east, its own borders (*ḥudūd*) and the Kargaskūh Desert to the south, Gurgān and the limits of the Ghūz to the west, and the

¹¹⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 261-262.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹²² V.V. Barthold, “Mā warā' al-Nahr, 1. The Name,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

Jayhūn River to the north.¹²³ The Khurāsānian Marches are bordered by Hindūstān to the east, the deserts of Sind and Kirmān to the south, Herat to the west, Gharchistān, Gūzgānān, and Ṭukhāristān to the north.¹²⁴ Transoxania is bordered by Tibet to the east, Khurāsān and its Marches to the south, the Ghūz Turks and the borders of the Khallukh Turks to the west, and the Khallukh Turks to the north.¹²⁵ The Marches of Transoxania are divided between the eastern and western marches. The eastern marches are bordered by Tibet and Hindūstān to the east, the marches of Khurāsān to the south, Chaghāniyān to the west and Surūshana, which belongs to Transoxania, to the north.¹²⁶ The western marches are not given borders, but seem rather to consist of the entire region of Khwārazm.¹²⁷ These descriptions can be given for smaller regions as well. For example, Gūzgānān is bordered on the east by the borders of Balkh and Ṭukhāristān down to Bāmiyān, on the south by the borders of Ghūr and Bust, on the west by the borders of Garchistān down to the borders of Marw, and on the north by the Jayhūn River.¹²⁸ These descriptions of borders demonstrate the notion of *ḥudūd* rather nicely. Instead of speaking about specific locations along the border or the way these borders function, our authors provide broad descriptions of the limits of each region, which define the region itself. Many of these borders are mutual, in that they define one another: the borders of one region are defined by the borders of another and vice versa.

These questions that arise from looking at the ways borders are presented and described by our sources may lead us to wonder how closely these descriptions

¹²³ *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 88.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

corresponded to what was actually on the ground and whether or not they mattered. It is only the *Hudūd al-ʿālam* which is really concerned with defining borders, but even its borders are broadly and vaguely defined. In other words, these are ideals at best. Our earlier authors speak of specific borders at specific locations, leaving us with many questions about what happened immediately outside of those places. As we dig deeper, the realities no longer appear so neat.

2.7 Nūshjān and the Border of China

The location of Nūshjān and its role as a border highlights many issues related to the defining of borders at a particular point across a number of our sources. Ibn Khurradādhbih describes Nūshjān as the border (*ḥadd*) of China, but unlike many other examples of crossing a border or frontier, it is Nūshjān, presumably located on the Muslim side of the border, which is at a great distance from other points on the itinerary” fifteen days’ journey by the caravan route and three by the path of the Turks.¹²⁹ In another itinerary which ends at the city, in this instance originating in Farghāna, Nūshjān lies six days away from Uṭbāsh with no villages along the way.¹³⁰ Qudāma also describes Nūshjān as the border (*ḥadd*) of China and at a great distance from other locations on his itinerary, fifteen days’ travel by the caravan route and three days’ travel by the path of the Turks from Sāghūr Kubāl.¹³¹ These passages are claiming Nūshjān as a limit or furthest extent of the Muslim territories, but its distance from nearby settlements makes this a border or limit in the extreme. Nūshjān is so distant as to be practically isolated from the

¹²⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 29.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³¹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā’at al-kitāba*, 103.

rest of the Muslim territories. How realistic is it, then, to say that Nūshjān is actually a border of the Muslim world? In other instances where a place is said to be along a frontier or border, we may be informed which side it is on. For example, the *Hudūd al-‘ālam* describes Ṭālaqān as lying on the border of Gūzgānān and belonging to its king.¹³² Ṭavāvis belongs to Bukhārā and is on the border with Sughd.¹³³ Dar-i Tubbat is on the border of Vakhān toward Tibet and is under the control of Muslims who levy tolls and keep watch over the roads.¹³⁴ This question of which side of the frontier Nūshjān belongs grows more complicated when we look in detail at the itineraries leading there.

Ibn Khurradādhbih places the city of the Khāqān of the Türgesh in an itinerary with three more stages, including stops at Nawākat and Kubāl, before arriving at Nūshjān which, again, he identifies as the border (*ḥadd*) of China.¹³⁵ This complicates both Qudāma’s and Ibn Khurradādhbih’s descriptions of Nūshjān as a border, leaving us with the question of how the Turks living west of Nūshjān fit into their itineraries and schemas for the region. Similarly, Ibn Khurradādhbih lists Ūzkand, the city of the Khūrtakīn, on the path from Farghāna to Nūshjān, again with a number of stops between Ūzkand and Nūshjān.¹³⁶ Qudāma also identifies Ūzkand as the lands of Khūrtakīn the *dihqān*,¹³⁷ along the road from Farghāna to Nūshjān. Here, in any case, we are dealing with a valley which

¹³² *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 97.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³⁵ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 29.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁷ The combination of a Turkish name and a Persian title, *dihqān* or landholding gentry, is worth noting here. As will be discussed in chapter five, as the power of the *dihqāns* as a class of small landholding aristocracy grew in the late Sāsānian period, when they were given expanded military and tax collection duties, their title became more broadly applied to all kinds of local rulers. Here we see this title, originally associated with a specific Persian social class, applied to a local ruler we presume to be a Turk.

is impassible for most of the year because of the deep snow between Ūzkand and Nūshjān, making Nūshjān seem even more remote.¹³⁸

At other points, Nūshjān's border status is made clearer by references to Turkish lands beyond Nūshjān. For example, the journey from Nūshjān to the city (*madīna*) of the Khāqān of the Tughuzghuz, better known as the villages of Kubār and Khaṣab, requires three months, marking the city as the last bastion before a long trip to a remote, alien location.¹³⁹ Ibn al-Faqīh identifies Nūshjān as the border to the lands of the Turks, also citing the distance from Nūshjān to the city of the Khāqān of the Tughuzghuz as a journey of three months if you travel through the villages with fertile agricultural lands.¹⁴⁰ Qudāma puts the distance between Nūshjān and the city of the Khāqān of the Tughuzghuz as only six days.¹⁴¹

Nūshjān appears to be surrounded by “foreign” lands, Turks to the west, north, and east and China to the east. This leaves us with the question of what it means for this place to be described as a border. Is Nūshjān some kind of outpost, rather than part of the larger body of Muslim-controlled territories? It is important to think about the possible intents our sources may have in laying claim to a place like Nūshjān. By placing it at the border of the Muslim world, our sources are stating that everything to the west of Nūshjān belongs to the Muslims and everything to the east belongs to China, despite the presence of Turkish rulers in several specific locations. The presence of these Turkish rulers west of Nūshjān demonstrates that while Nūshjān may be the furthest point where Muslims can effectively wield power, it does not necessarily mean that they can do so in

¹³⁸ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 105.

¹³⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 30-31.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 328.

¹⁴¹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 105.

all the points contained within these limits. These areas that lie within the physical limits of the Muslim world but not completely under Muslim rule are in a process of becoming a part of the *Dār al-Islām*. The areas west of Nūshjān that are under Turkish rulers are still parts of a frontier and are still in the process of political negotiation as Muslim power solidifies in the lands where the Muslims have made political claims. In defining the limits of the Muslim world, our sources make claims about the extent to which Muslim rulers may wield effective power, but they are not necessarily saying that that power is spread evenly throughout the territory within its limits.

2.7.1 al-Ghūr and the *Dār Kufr*

We may compare the way Nūshjān is presented in our sources with the way al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal describe al-Ghūr. They express no claim for Muslim political control or sovereignty over al-Ghūr. In fact, they clearly state al-Ghūr is a part of the *Dār Kufr* (Abode of the Infidels), but because of the presence of Muslims living in the area, our authors include it in their descriptions of the Muslim world. This is the case even though, as al-Iṣṭakhrī later states, al-Ghūr is situated in mountains surrounded on all sides by the *Dār al-Islām*, implying that the only reason it is still a place inhabited by infidels is because the mountains themselves are insurmountable (*jibāl manī'a*).¹⁴² According to Ibn Ḥawqal, this is a situation that is repeated nowhere else in the *Dār al-Islām*, with the possible exception of certain tribes living in al-Maghrib.¹⁴³ He (and his fellow-authors) recognize that al-Ghūr lies beyond the reach of Muslim political authority and, therefore, is outside the geographically defined domains of Islam, but he still considers it part of the

¹⁴² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 157.

¹⁴³ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 444.

Muslim world because of the presence of Muslims and because of its location firmly within the Muslim side of the frontier and surrounded by Muslim controlled territory. These arguments for the inclusion of al-Ghūr within the lands of Islam are somewhat circular; al-Ghūr is among the lands of Islam because it is physically surrounded by the lands of Islam. Nevertheless, al-Ghūr presents an interesting challenge to our sources in defining the Muslim world. There is not the pretention found in the description of Nūshjān to push the limits of the Muslim world and Muslim political authority beyond the point where such control is effective, but there is also recognition that this is an anomalous situation. In grappling with the presence of al-Ghūr, as a land under the authority of non-Muslims, fully within the *Dār al-Islām*, our sources must address questions of how the *Dār al-Islām* is defined and the relationship between Muslim political authority, the places where Muslims live, and the presence of non-Muslims and especially non-Muslims with political authority within the lands of Islam. al-Ghūr requires a mixed approach. Our sources recognize that al-Ghūr is outside the *Dār al-Islām*, it is in fact *Dār Kufr*, but they also acknowledge that it is a place connected to the Muslim world and a part of the Muslim world due to its geographic position and the presence of Muslims living there.

2.8 The Eastern Frontier

If our sources call a place such as Nūshjān a border and mark it as the furthest extent of Muslim power, we must then ask what is this Muslim-controlled territory bordered by Nūshjān and what do the lands west of Nūshjān, on the Muslim side of the border, look like. What is the entity whose furthest extent is Nūshjān? What our sources tell us is that

these places look like a frontier: a zone of negotiation where political power is often tenuous and uneven, as described earlier in this chapter. At this point, we will shift our focus to those areas that are not directly called a border, but are rather referred to as a frontier, in order to see how their representations differ from those areas which are used to define the borders of the Muslim world.

The terms *thaghr* and *thughūr* are used rather infrequently in comparison with *ḥadd* or *ḥudūd*, and they tend to require a pairing of groups facing off against each other at the point in question. Sometimes this pairing is made explicit. The towns of Tīl and Durghush are frontier forts directed against (*bar rūy*) Ghūr, for example.¹⁴⁴ Sh.lāt is a frontier post situated towards the Turks.¹⁴⁵ al-Muqaddasī specifies Sawrān in Isbījāb as the frontier against the Ghuzz and Kīmāk. Turks¹⁴⁶ and Shaghlijān as on the frontier against the Kīmāk only.¹⁴⁷ Ūshar lies in the direction of the Turks.¹⁴⁸ Jīt is a fortified frontier town close to the lands of the Ghuzz and the point where one enters Ghuzz territory.¹⁴⁹ These pairings tend to be in an oppositional relationship, befitting the sense that a frontier is defined by the potential for conflict and territorial expansion or contraction. Unlike those cases where cities and towns represented specific points where the furthest extent of Muslim power could be seen, whenever frontiers are defined by single locations, they have a military purpose, whether defensive, offensive, or both.

al-Ya'qūbī describes al-Wāshjird as a city of the great frontier (*madīna thaghr 'azīm*) four *farsakhs* from Turkistān, the center of Khuttal, a region with seven hundred

¹⁴⁴ *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

fortresses for the purposes of raiding against the Turks.¹⁵⁰ Here the city is only a part of a broader frontier, defined by the presence of the Turks against whom military action is organized and taken, and the city in al-Ya'qūbī's description becomes emblematic of the broader region. At the same time, the identification of Wāshjird as a frontier shows the frontier to be a space with depth. Wāshjird is a part of the frontier, but it lies four *farsakhs* from the opposing side of the frontier, Turkistān.

Furthermore, as a frontier, this region is ill-defined in many ways. So for instance, Wāshjird is part of a frontier, but is not the border. The border, if we want to say that one exists in this area, lies somewhere between Wāshjird and Turkistān; Wāshjird's role as a marshalling point, together with the presence of so many fortresses intended presumably both for defense and for the organization of raids against the Turks, all shows that a military negotiation over the border is taking place between the Muslims of Khuttal and the Turks. al-Iṣṭakhrī calls Farāwa the frontier facing the Ghuzz in the steppe (*Farāwa thughur... fī wajh al-Ghuziyya*).¹⁵¹ al-Muqaddasi describes Sawrān as the frontier against the Ghuzz and Kīmāk Turks, yet he also describes the rural village of Turār Zarākh as lying beyond Sawrān towards the Turks.¹⁵² While Sawrān is considered the frontier city, there is still plenty of territory found between Sawrān and the border itself, including settled communities. Samarqand is similarly described, but rather casually, as part of a frontier with the Turks.¹⁵³ We may assume that this means similar actions to those ascribed to Wāshjird are taking place in and around Samarqand.

¹⁵⁰ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 291-292.

¹⁵¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 154; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 445.

¹⁵² al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

¹⁵³ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 293.

2.8.1 Crossing the Frontier

Beside the oppositional and military nature of many frontier locations, the ill-defined nature of the division between opposing sides is a key attribute of frontiers, as compared to borders. In his itineraries Ibn Khurradādhbih will at times appear to traverse a border, or at least a division between different political or cultural groups, without actually marking a location for the border, highlighting the ill-defined nature of such divisions along a frontier. Sometimes these “foreign” lands are marked by vast distances between them and other stops on his itinerary. For example, the “place” (*mawdi'*) of the king of the Kīmāk is eighty days' travel from Kūykat¹⁵⁴ in an offshoot of an itinerary originating in Ṭarāz from the road that leads from al-Shāsh to the lands of the Turks; in none of this is a border specifically crossed.¹⁵⁵ Any claim to the territory covered in these eighty days of travel is complicated and, presumably, of little importance to our authors. Qudāma discusses two villages at a place known as Kawākat near Ṭarāz which is eight days' travel on a fast horse, during which time you must carry your food, from the place of the king of the Kīmāk.¹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Faqīh also describes the place of the king of the Kīmāk as eighty days' travel, packing your provisions, from Isbjāb, citing this as a very truncated itinerary from al-Shāsh to the place of the king of the Kīmāk.¹⁵⁷ We may assume that this open territory is of little consequence since these stretches are typically described as lacking cities or villages and the traveler must carry his own supplies for the entire journey. Defining a precise border in such areas is not a key concern for either side.

¹⁵⁴ Perhaps this is Qudāma's Kawākat, mentioned later, which reportedly lies only eight days' travel from the place of the king of the Kīmāk but also lays near Tarāz. Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 105.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 105.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 328.

At other times, it appears as if the traversing of a border is taken for granted. Though he never mentions actually entering the lands of the Tughuzghuz, Ibn Khurradādhbih gives a detailed discussion of them and the Khāqān's capital. The people there are Turks who are fire-worshipping Magians and Manichaeans, which marks them as distinct from the Muslims, and the city is great with twelve iron gates.¹⁵⁸ Even though at some points Ibn Khurradādhbih defines these places as foreign, i.e., the land of the Turks in contrast with the lands of Islam, he does not emphasize the existence of a border between these two. He seems to imply a situation in which the lands of the Turks are interspersed within Muslim-controlled territory. Qudāma will provide a similar example in the case of the village (*qarya*) of the Khāqān of the Turks, lying four *farsakhs* from Sārgh and two *farsakhs* from Karmarāw along the road from al-Shāsh to the border of China.¹⁵⁹ Here you have the cities and places not only of Turks but also of Turkish rulers, *khāqāns* for example, described as falling between Muslim-controlled territories along an itinerary. What does this mean for the division between the two entities assumed to be found on either side of the frontier and the necessity of an actual defined border in the midst of the frontier at all?

This strange phenomenon of areas which seemingly belong to one side of the frontier but which are actually located on the other leads us to further questions: What exactly is meant by border and frontier? And what is meant by the two geopolitical entities on either side of the border or frontier? Our sources give the impression, through the language they often use (lands of Islam versus lands of the Turks) that one side of the frontier is subject to some form of Muslim political authority, namely through the

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 31.

¹⁵⁹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 102.

ʿAbbāsids or their successor states such as the Sāmānids, while the other side consists of largely nomadic Turkish tribes. We have already seen points where this is obviously difficult to visualize, given the information we have. Places such as “the city of the Khāqān of the Turks” appear to be fully within the Muslim side of the frontier, from the perspective of a Muslim writer, but the very fact that it is referred to as the capital of a Turkic ruler puts its place within a realm of Muslim political control into flux. Similarly, Ibn Khurradādhbih lists Ūzkand, the city of the Khūrtakīn, on the path from Farghāna to Nūshjān.¹⁶⁰ Here is another situation in which an area under a Turkic ruler seems to fall within the Muslim-controlled territories, more precisely on the itinerary between Muslim territories, which indicates that movement from one Muslim-controlled territory to another can require travel through “foreign” lands.

In the context of this question, Ibn Khurradādhbih does not necessarily see the lands of the Turks as entirely beyond the reach of Muslim rule and authority. For example, when he reproduces his tax registries, he says that 46,400 *dirhams* are collected in *kharāj* or land tax from the cities of the Turks (*madāʿin al-Turk*) including both Khwārizmī and Musayyabī *dirhams*, as well as 1,187 rough cotton robes and 1,300 pieces of iron.¹⁶¹ He gives no indication of precisely which Turkic cities these may be, but instead includes them together as a lump payment. Of course, Ibn Khurradādhbih often refers collectively to tribute payments coming into the ʿAbbāsīd domains as *kharāj*, as for example in his inclusion of Kābul which had yet to be brought under Muslim control at

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik waʾl-mamālik*, 30.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

the time when his registries supposedly were written, though Kābul was known to be making tribute payments to the Muslims at that time.¹⁶²

Kābul makes for an interesting case here. We understand that the city was beyond Muslim control at the time Ibn Khurradādhbih describes, yet he not only claims that Kābul makes payments of land tax to the 'Abbāsids, but he also uses the city to define the borders of the Muslim world, with Kābul specifically on the Muslim side.¹⁶³

The possibility of Turks living within the lands of Islam is taken as a matter of fact by the *Hudūd al-'ālam*, which describes the Khallukh Turks living in the steppes of Ṭukhāristān.¹⁶⁴ The Khalaj Turks live in Ghaznīn, Balkh, Ṭukhāristān, Bust, and Gūzgānān.¹⁶⁵ Sometimes these Turks do not simply live within Muslim lands, but do so under an agreement with the Muslims. Sutkand, for example, is described as the home of the trucial Turks (*jā-yi Turkān-i āshtī*), many of whom have converted to Islam.¹⁶⁶ These converts inhabit a thousand felt tents on the grazing land around Isbījāb.¹⁶⁷ Shiljī, Ṭarāz, Takābkath, Farūnkath, Mirkī, Navīkath, and Afrūnkath are also home both to Muslims and to numerous Turks.¹⁶⁸ Khwārazm is home to a number of Ghuzz and other Turks, to the extent that the local Persianate population is said to have Turkish features.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, not all the Turks living on the Muslim side of the frontier do so under the terms of a truce. The Kunjīna Turks live in the mountains between Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān and

¹⁶² Ibid., 37.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁶⁴ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 99.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 117.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 117-118.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 118.

¹⁶⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm.*, 285-286. According to al-Muqaddasī these similar features have made the people of Khwārazm afraid that they may be captured and enslaved by Muslim slave traders to the point that they tie bags of sand around the heads of infant males to create a uniquely shaped head which allows them to stand out from the Turks.

are professional thieves and looters of caravans, conducting predatory expeditions at a distance of forty to fifty *farsakhs* from their district, even though they make a show of loyalty to the amīrs of Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, even the converts to Islam may be a danger. Barūkat and Balāj are described as frontier posts against the Turkomen, indicating a need to defend against these people, but it is also said that the Turkomen have converted to Islam out of fear.¹⁷¹

The desire to see the lands of Islam as culturally different from the lands of the Turks is an understandable impulse but, as we understand from the previous discussion of the nature of borderlands and frontiers, homogeneity is rarely, if ever, a reality. What is most important for defining opposing sides of a frontier is the issue of political authority. In our sources we see situations where Turks living within Muslim territory pay taxes or tribute to Muslim authorities or have entered into truces with local Muslim authorities. Actions such as these do more to cement a group's belonging to one side of a border or frontier than do any cultural similarities. Those Turks who have yet to convert to Islam but have entered into truces with local Muslim populations have a more stable place within the lands of Islam than those Turks who have converted to Islam but continue to raid Muslim communities.

Other non-Muslim, non-Turkic populations live within the Muslim side of the frontier as well. The Kumījiyān, who are considered remnants of the Hephthalites,¹⁷² live within the limits of Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān in the mountains and dales, but under the orders of the amīrs of Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān and are liable for military service

¹⁷⁰ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 120.

¹⁷¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

¹⁷² B. Spuler, "Čaghāniyān," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

whenever needed.¹⁷³ R.kht.j.b. is a village of Vakhān where the *vakhī gabrakān* (“infidels,” probably Zoroastrians) live.¹⁷⁴ The capital of Vakhān is a mixture of Muslims and the *gabraḳān* (again “infidels,” probably Zoroastrians).¹⁷⁵ Khamdādh is the location of Vakhī idol-temples where Tibetans are also found in sufficient numbers as to occupy a fortress there.¹⁷⁶ Samarqandāq has a mixed population of Indians, Tibetans, Vakhīs, and Muslims.¹⁷⁷ Andrās, two days travel from Kashmir, is home to Tibetans and Indians.¹⁷⁸ Takābkath in Isbījāb is said to have a population which is half non-Muslim.¹⁷⁹ Harrān, also in Isbījāb, has a population which is mostly non-Muslim but has a Muslim ruler.¹⁸⁰ This variety of peoples living in close proximity is an attribute of a frontier society, especially in areas which have recently been brought over to one side or another.

2.8.2 The *shīr* of Bāmiyān and the Survival of Pre-Islamic Local Rulers

In order to demonstrate another variant of the complexity of this question of heterogeneity and political authority on the Muslim side of the frontier, we may turn away from the case of the Turks and instead look to the position of pre-Islamic Persian ruling classes in the descriptions given by our geographical writers. Bāmiyān¹⁸¹ is a mountainous city overseen by a *dihqān* who holds the Persian title of *shīr* (which al-

¹⁷³ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 120.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁷⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Bāmiyān, located today in central Afghanistan, is perhaps best known for the giant standing Buddha statues carved into the cliff walls of the Bāmiyān Valley. The two largest of these statues, both built in the sixth century, were the largest standing Buddha statues in the world until they were destroyed by the Taliban in March, 2001. The *Hudūd al-‘ālam* is the only one of our geographic sources that makes direct reference to these giant Buddhas, referring to them as the Red Idol and White Idol (*surkh-but* and *khing-but*). *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 99-100.

Ya'qūbī mistakenly wants to associate with the literal Arabic translation of *asād* or lion, the term itself being a local royal title) and who converted to Islam at the hands of Muzāḥim b. Bisṭām during the reign of al-Manṣūr (136-158/754-775). It seems this *dihqān* was allowed a certain level of independence until al-Faḍl al-Barmakī put Muzāḥim's grandson, Ḥasan, in charge of the region.¹⁸² In 176/792-793, al-Faḍl sent troops under the command of Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl, together with the kings and *dihqāns* of Ṭukhāristān, including Ḥasan the *shīr* of Bāmiyān (the only participant specifically named),¹⁸³ against the Kābul-Shāh, whose capital at Jurzabadīn was considered unapproachable and impregnable. They went on to conquer Ghūrawand, Sārḥūd, Badīlistān, and Shāh-Bahār where they destroyed idols and captured prisoners.¹⁸⁴ The *Hudūd al-'ālam* describes Bāmiyān as under the rule of a king called *shīr* and places it on the border between Gūzgānān and Khurāsān.¹⁸⁵ Here we have clear examples of areas which are under Muslim political control, but still maintain a pre-Islamic local political structure, including persons and titles, though now as converts to Islam. These groups presumably recognize Muslim rule and will respond, as in the case of the invasion of the lands of the Kābul Shāh, to orders sent from provincial governors such as al-Faḍl al-Barmakī.

As we think about this region as a frontier zone, we need to remember that the key elements of a frontier zone are their transitional nature and the political negotiations occurring within the region. These areas were conquered by force and brought under

¹⁸² al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 289.

¹⁸³ Is this Muzāḥim's grandson, Ḥasan? This would make for an even more interesting case in which a Muslim ruler, installed by a representative of the caliphate, maintains the independent and local traditions of rule including taking on an indigenous, Persian title.

¹⁸⁴ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 290-291.

¹⁸⁵ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 99-100.

Muslim rule through a process of imperial expansion.¹⁸⁶ In our sources we see that this military expansion reached certain limits, points which our sources like to define as the borders of the *Dār al-Islām*. However, the process bringing both the newly-conquered areas and areas which remain unconquered (despite their being surrounded by conquered areas) into alignment with the new state is uneven, leaving areas whose position within the Muslim political structures remains tenuous. An important part of the frontier process along the eastern frontier is thus the integration of these areas and populations into the Muslim political system, as we see in situations like that of the *shīr* of Bāmiyān. On the one hand, our literary sources' desire to declare hard limits to the lands of Islam at particular places leads to the creation of a border which they can point to clearly. But on the other hand, the uneven application of Muslim political leadership within these borders creates a world of transition and negotiation, the characteristics that we associate with a frontier zone.

2.9 Is There a Distinction Between Borders and Frontiers?

In our sources, the creation of an eastern border by our literary sources appears to be an attempt to quantify the extent of the Muslim world, setting an extreme limit to the object under examination by these geographical texts. The descriptions of what falls on the Muslim side of this border, however, shows us an ill-defined zone of negotiation or a frontier, with various groups in competition over the political and economic future of the

¹⁸⁶ The nature of the Muslim conquest of Khurāsān and Transoxania will be discussed in detail later in chapter five. At this point, it is important to mention that even though most of the region appears to have come under Muslim authority through treaty (*ṣulh*), as opposed to force (*'anwatan*), these were treaties which were agreed upon in the face of military expeditions and were often only concluded after long sieges or, at the least, the arrival of a Muslim army in the region. Therefore, it is more appropriate to refer to the conquest of the region, as a whole, as a military conquest.

region. Our sources' intense interest in listing and describing borders may grow directly out of their desire to organize their world and to make sense of it. Accordingly, they place much value on establishing borders and limits for a region. But when our sources move from this abstraction of the world into discrete units meant to help organize and describe a particular region and to provide details about specific places, we see that these borders are less than firm or determinative as to what one might expect to find on one side of the border or the other. Is there a distinction, though, between what our sources call a border and what they call a frontier?

Certain locations may be described as both of these. Ibn Khurradādhbih describes Kābul as part of the frontier of Tukhāristān (*min thughūr Tukhāristān*) and a border of the land of Hind.¹⁸⁷ al-Shāsh is a frontier on multiple levels. First, it is two days' journey from the frontier of Isbījāb. Second, it is the furthest principality of Samarqand.¹⁸⁸ In both these cases, there are distinctions between the descriptions of a place as a frontier and as a border. The frontiers of Tukhāristān and Isbījāb are presumably not so well-defined, facing areas which have a potential for territorial change. As the border of the land of Hind, Kābul faces a more clearly-defined region, where expansion, at least at the time when Ibn Khurradādhbih wrote, was not a primary concern. al-Shāsh, as the limits of Samarqand, demonstrates the furthest extent of a political unit, Samarqand. These two phenomena are conceptually different, though they both appear in the same place. Qudāma describes Kūk, three *farsakhs* from al-Ṭuwāwīs and four *farsakhs* from Kirmīnā on the road from Bukhārā to Samarqand, as being regularly subjected to raids by the

¹⁸⁷ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 37-38.

¹⁸⁸ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 295.

Turks and north of a mountain which leads to the land of China.¹⁸⁹ Here Kūk is a border as a point of political division and simultaneously a frontier as a point open to outside attack. Dāwar is an important frontier post with a well-organized garrison at the border of Ghūristān.¹⁹⁰ It functions as the limit of Ghūristān, but also as a frontier, since, it has an important military role.

The image of frontiers that we find in these texts does not necessarily give us a single definition. We may come away with a basic understanding that the frontier is an area between or at the intersection between two political entities, which most often (along the eastern frontier) are the lands under the authority of a Muslim ruler and the Turks. Such a frontier can be visualized as occurring at a specific point, or it can be seen as a line of locations running parallel to the frontier, or it can be a broadly-defined zone represented by particular points. Since frontiers can have depth, an area identified as being on the frontier may actually lie at some distance from an actual border where this political transition takes place or from any identifiable point on the opposing side of the frontier. Finally, the opposing sides of a frontier are not necessarily homogenous and one may find Turks holding political authority in areas which are clearly on the Muslim side of the frontier, or you may find Muslim outposts, such as we may hypothesize is the case with Nūshjān, on both the Chinese and Turkish sides of the frontier. The idea that a frontier represents a boundary between two opposing political spheres may be fairly accurate and broadly useful, as for instance when we think about the totality of the *Dār al-Islām*, but on the ground the situation is much too complicated to allow us to see it as an absolute line with a clearly defined location.

¹⁸⁹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 99.

¹⁹⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 305.

2.10 From Frontier to Border

It is much more favorable in the minds of those who are either in charge of maintaining the political or cultural unit delimited by a border or are attempting to catalogue and describe such a unit that the border be a firmly-defined line containing a unified political or cultural unit rather than the messiness of an ill-defined zone of transition. It is the goal of those political authorities charged with maintaining authority and those writers looking to describe and catalogue the world to transform frontier areas and define with certainty the borders of different regions. This is the end result of the process of frontier, a point where negotiations of power have come to a resolution. Our sources, especially al-Muqaddasī, show this preference in their comparisons between the Khurāsānī side of the Jayhūn River and Mā warā' al-Nahr.

The preference of our sources tends to fall towards the Khurāsānī side of the Jayhūn because it has been under Muslim rule longer and has adopted more Muslim and, by extension, Arab customs and practices. al-Muqaddasī describes Khurāsān as follows;

You should know that the territory on this side of the [Jayhūn] river is indeed Khurāsān, and it is the more important of the two sides, since, the larger metropolis is here, its people are more elegant, wiser, and more knowing about good and evil. They are, moreover, closer to the regions and the customs of the Arabs; their capital is more pleasant and better, and they have the least cold in the weather, and in the disposition of the people. They are more honorable, have more righteous and intelligent people, and profound knowledge, and remarkable mental retention of the Qur'an; they have wealth aplenty, and right mindedness.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 294.

Besides the presence of larger, more pleasant cities, it is the adaption of Arab customs and particular Muslim practices, such as the memorization of the Qur'an, which set Khurāsān apart from Mā warā' al-Nahr. The adoption of these practices is attributed to the duration of time spent under Muslim rule. "Since [the Khurāsān side of the Jayhūn River] was delimited first, was introduced to Islam first, and is nearer to the regions of the Arabs, it has been mentioned and known by its *nisba*."¹⁹² The Arabization of Khurāsān is more complete than the similar process taking place in Mā warā' al-Nahr, because of the different amounts of time spent under Muslim rule. Certain practices, such as dress, are perceived as different because of the different circumstances seen on either side of the Jayhūn. "No one wears the *ṭaylasān* in Mā warā' al-Nahr, unless he be an important doctor of the law or a foreigner; they just wear the *qabā'*, because this side is in the area of the *jihād*."¹⁹³ Finally, it is the exposure to Arabs from the more centrally located lands of Islam which encourages this transformation. "My own impression is that the people [of Balkh] only adorned themselves, and adopted Iraqī habits because of the stopping-off of the caliph [al-Ma'mūn] there, when the people of the country adopted from his mercenaries and followers the manners of al-Iraq."¹⁹⁴ Here the people of Balkh adapt Iraqī customs in imitation of a caliph and his entourage.

Alongside this process whereby frontier territories become more engrained in the politics and culture of the center is the presumed hope that borders and frontiers will keep expanding as ill-defined frontiers become more stable and formalized borders. Ghaznīn, for example, described as lying in Hindūstān and formerly belonging to it, is now

¹⁹² Ibid., 293.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 328, n. f.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 311-312.

included among the Muslim lands, on the frontier between the Muslims and the infidels.¹⁹⁵ Gurgānj formerly belonged to the Khwārazmshāh but is now under the *mīr* of Gurgānj.¹⁹⁶ As the frontier pushes outwards and older frontiers mature, the process of frontier is replicated in newly-conquered and incorporated territories.

The longer a region stays under centralized control and the more direct interaction people have with representatives of this authority, the greater the homogeneity between center and periphery. Khurāsān, having been conquered first and being closer to Iraq, is further along in this process and is losing many of the frontier attributes which formerly defined it. Transoxania is still a frontier and engaged in frontier activities, like the *jihād*, and has therefore not adopted the practices and customs of Iraq so completely, but if the process of frontier succeeds, someday Transoxania may follow Khurāsān's example, which for our authors would be the most favorable outcome.

2.11 Return to al-Rāsht and the Gates of Iron

Having gone through a discussion of frontier and borders and how they operated along the eastern frontier of the Muslim world in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, we may ask if we see anything new or different in the descriptions of al-Rāsht and the Gates of Iron presented by our sources. al-Rāsht, in almost all our sources, represented a frontier by virtue of it being a point through which the Turks used to enter the Muslim world in order to raid. It was an opening and a place where territorial expansion or contraction were possibilities. All this changes, however, with the building of a gate, which closes the opening and keeps the Turks from entering the lands of Islam through

¹⁹⁵ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 104.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

al-Rāsht. At the same time, the gate prevents the Muslims from moving against the Turks through the same point. As a symbol, it fixes the border between the lands of Islam and the lands of the Turks in an overtly physical manner. It is important in this context to see that the building of this gate is attributed to important political figures, such as governors and caliphs. The frequent mention of al-Faḍl al-Barmakī is significant, since he was of local descent and became a part of the administrative machinery of the caliphate. al-Faḍl represents not just the transformation of frontier into border, but also the incorporation of the frontier into the cultural and political center of the *Dār al-Islām*.

If the process of the frontier favors the solidification and delimitation of borders and the integration of frontier regions into the political and cultural center, then the story of al-Rāsht can be emblematic of the frontier as a whole. The frontier is dangerous, ill-defined, and under constant negotiation and conflict. The building of a gate keeps the dangers at bay and defines the place of the border and, by association, the place of those on each side of the border. Even if the Gates of Iron did not really exist, the building of a gate there is tantamount to the idea of transforming a frontier and defining a border.

Chapter 3

Defending the Eastern Frontier

3.1 A Turkish Raid

In al-Jāhiz's *Risāla ilā al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-'āmmat jund al-Khilāfa* (*Epistle to al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān regarding the Traits of the Turks and the Peoples of the Army of the Caliphate*), al-Faḍl b. al-'Abbās b. Razīm narrates a story about a band of Turks raiding a group of Muslim fortresses.

One day some horsemen from the Turks came upon us. Not one of us remained outside but each man entered his fortress (*ḥiṣn*) and locked its gate. They surrounded one of those fortresses. One of the horsemen saw an old man looking at them from above. The Turk said to him, "If you do not come down to me, then I will kill you in a way I have never killed anyone." He came down to him and opened the gate for him. [The Turks] entered the fortress and plundered everything that was in it. [The Turk] laughed at his coming down and his opening [the gate] for him because [the old man] had been in the strongest and the securest place.¹

The old man was then brought before al-Faḍl, who was in another fortress, and the Turk released him for a ransom of a single *dirham*. The Turk was paid and went away with his

¹ al-Jāhiz, *Risāla ilā al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-'āmmat jund al-Khilāfa*, in *Tria Opuscula Auctore: Abu Othman Amr ibn Bahr al-Djahiz Basrensi*, ed. G. Van Vloten (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1903), 54-55.

companions, only to return briefly and announce that the old man was not worth a full *dirham*, calling it “a shameless swindle” (*hadhā ghabn fāḥish*). The Turk broke the coin in half and threw back one of the halves. al-Faḍl and his companions then interrogated the old man.

And we knew that man was a coward. He had heard of the cunning of the Turks in entering cities and crossing rivers in war. The opinion had come to him that they wouldn't have threatened him to open the gate unless they were prepared to use some [trick] like this.²

In the end, the old man had decided that the Turks must have had a trick for breaking into the fortress and so opened the gates for them. If the Turk had a trick up his sleeve, it seems to have been convincing the old man that he had a trick so that he would open the fortress.

Here al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-869) provides us with a rare look into a Turkish raid on a Muslim fortress complex along the eastern frontier. The story presented here is entertaining, featuring a foolish old man tricked by an arrogant Turkish raider. Within the broader contexts of al-Jāḥiẓ's text, it also demonstrates the cunning of the Turks, the fearsome opponents of the Muslims across the eastern frontier. Certain details in this narrative are useful in understanding how a frontier outpost may have operated in the third/ninth century, details which create a believable setting for the narrative and are therefore unlikely to have been greatly embellished. The primary audience of this work would have been familiar with conditions on the eastern frontier, especially since this work was dedicated to al-Faḥ b. Khāqān (d. 247/861), the son of Khāqān b. 'Urṭūj, a

² Ibid.

descendant of Turkish ruling family of Farghānā.³ In response to the arrival of the raiding Turks, fortresses acted as refuges behind whose gates people would take shelter. These fortresses may be manned by as few as a single individual. At least in this narrative, no fighting seems to take place during these raids and the Muslims appear to be simply waiting out the Turks who cannot enter their fortified positions without some form of trickery. There are goods worth plundering inside these fortresses and when the Turks are successful and get their plunder they take off, not concerning themselves with the contents of other fortresses or the people who were manning them. These details highlight the types of raids which might occur along the eastern frontier, the role of fortifications in preventing these raids, and the systems for manning such fortifications. Our sources often describe the eastern frontier as a dangerous place where fighting between the Muslims and their Turkish neighbors is a common occurrence. Encounters like the one just described took place across the region on a regular basis, though with varying results.

The previous chapter explored the conceptual understanding of frontiers and borders in both our own modern perception and, more importantly, in the writings of third/ninth and fourth/tenth century geographers writing in Arabic and Persian and their application to the eastern frontier. This chapter will focus on a more specific aspect of the eastern frontier, namely its military function. Just as the previous chapter was not a history of the development of the eastern frontier, this will not be a history of military exploits. Instead, this chapter will examine the ways in which the eastern frontier was

³ For a full discussion of the two Khāqānīd families who served the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate, see Matthew Gordon, “The Khāqānīd Families of the Early ‘Abbāsīd Period,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001), 236-255.

defended against Turkish raids and how these defenses shaped the region. After a discussion of the Turks and the raids which they conducted in the region, this chapter will then move to a discussion of the defensive infrastructure in place throughout the eastern frontier. This discussion will look at the eastern frontier as a series of interconnected nodes and networks focused on the major urban centers which worked their way outward towards the actual physical frontier. Finally, the chapter will examine the people who manned these defenses, focusing on both the practicalities of recruitment and supply and the motivations of those who fought along the frontier.

The Arabic term *thughūr*, as discussed in the previous chapter, has the basic meaning of “gaps, breaches, or openings,” most often implying points of entry between the *Dār al-Islām* and the *Dār al-Ḥarb*. For these reasons, the term is most often translated as “frontier.” More often than not, in actual usage, the term is applied to the fortifications defending these openings rather than the openings themselves (a single place along the frontier is called a *thaghr* instead of the entire line of the frontier).⁴ In the previous chapter, frontiers were defined as loosely-organized liminal zones of transition on the periphery of states where territorial expansion or contraction is possible. Here we can see that the use of the term *thughūr* clarifies certain aspects of the military nature of the frontier. This is an area where there are openings that enemies may exploit to raid and to seize territory; accordingly, self-defense is necessary. These are also openings which may be used to raid and to seize the territory of one’s enemies. The gate swings both ways. Frontiers are simultaneously the first line of defense against outside aggression and the

⁴ J.D. Latham and C.E. Bosworth, “al-Thughūr,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*. This was seen in the previous chapter when borders or frontiers were associated with a single location. When focus is placed on a single location, borders are being described as point level phenomenon rather than linear phenomenon.

marshalling point for offensive military action against an outside foe. The potential for military activity taking place along the frontier was thus a defining aspect of frontier society. Along the eastern frontier, the depredations of the Turks and the need to defend against them required particular infrastructures, including both physical structures such as fortresses and the organized manpower to maintain and to operate such edifices. In turn, the need to maintain such defenses affected the society of the eastern frontier in meaningful ways.

3.2 The Turks

We find that the Turk does not fight in his land for religion nor for interpretation [of Scripture] nor for sovereignty nor for taxes nor out of *esprit de corps* nor out of jealousy – except in the case of women – nor for defense nor out of hostility nor for homeland nor for denying [his] home [to others] nor for wealth, but he fights only for plunder and the wealth [he can carry] in his hand.⁵

The most common enemies reported by our sources along the eastern frontier are the Turks. Turk, as an ethnonym, was used by the Muslims to refer to a number of Turkic-speaking, pastoralist, nomadic tribes across the Central Asian steppe.⁶ Our sources often speak of the Turks as a collective, as are the lands they occupy (*bilād al-Turk*). At the same time, our authors will, on occasion, enumerate the many divisions among the Turks, such as the Toghuzghuz, Yaghmā, Ghuzz/Oghuz, Kīmāk, and Qarluq, and will speak of them inhabiting particular lands, thus showing an understanding of some of the complexities of the Turkic world. Political unification among the Turks was uncommon

⁵ al-Jāhīz, “Risāla ilā al-Fath ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-‘āmmat jund al-Khilāfa,” 32-33.

⁶ There is evidence throughout the geographical sources of sedentary Turks, living in cities and villages throughout Transoxania at this time.

but not out of the question, as it had happened previously with the Türk Qağānate in the sixth and seventh centuries.⁷ Barthold has argued for a new set of Turkic kingdoms in the late eighth century, one led by the Qarluqs on the Kazakh steppe spreading into Semirechye and the other of the Oghuz or Ghuz “on the lower reaches of the Syr-Darya” or Jaxartes River.⁸

The Turks living along the eastern frontier in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries were largely pastoral nomads traveling from the Central Asian steppes down into the settled communities along the Oxus and Jaxartes Rivers. Their interactions with the settled communities of the *Dār al-Islām* are akin to the relationships between nomadic and settled peoples in many parts of the world throughout history. While there are peaceful interactions, particularly for the purposes of trade, the most noticeable element of their interactions are the nomads’ predatory raids against the settled communities. Predatory raiding is, after all, a key element of the nomadic economy. Nomads tend to travel light and survive on what they can carry with themselves, creating an economy and society centered on their animal herds. The trading with and raiding of settled communities provides those things that such a lifestyle lacks, primarily agricultural goods. It has been argued that the decision to raid or to trade is often based upon the relative strengths of the nomads versus the settled populations and each side’s

⁷ See Peter B. Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 115-153 for a full discussion of this period.

⁸ Vasily Vladimirovich Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. C.E. Bosworth, (1968; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub., 1992), 201.

ability to define the terms of interaction. When nomads are stronger, raiding occurs. When the settled communities are stronger, trading occurs.⁹

Descriptions of the Turks in the medieval Islamic world and beyond often focus on their strength and military prowess.¹⁰ Their skills as mounted archers had made them an asset to the armies which recruited them as fighters throughout history and a threat to the settled communities who lived in proximity to the Central Asian steppes. Even early Islamic prophetic traditions recognize the Turks as mighty warriors. The Prophet Muhammad is said to have encouraged his followers to avoid the Turks, as in his alliterative command to “leave the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone” (*utruku l-atrak ma tarakukum*).¹¹ Other prophetic traditions associate fighting the Turks with the coming of the end times. “The Hour will not come until the Muslims fight with the Turks, a people whose faces are like hammered shields wearing clothes of hair and walking (with shoes) of hair.”¹²

This dichotomy of respect for the military skills of the Turks along with fear for those same skills can be seen in al-Jāhīz’s *Risāla ilā al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-’āmmat jund al-Khilāfa*, an epistle written to al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān, a secretary and

⁹ See Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 6-11; Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994); Sechen Jagchid, “Patterns of Trade and Conflict Between China and the Nomadic Peoples of Mongolia,” *Zentralasiatische Studien* 11 (1977): 177-204; and Sechen Jagchid and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War and Trade Along the Great Wall*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

¹⁰ See Denis Sinor, “The Inner Asian Warriors,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101 (1981): 133-144 for a lengthy discussion of the reception of Turkic and Mongol warriors throughout history.

¹¹ Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, Book 37, Number 4288. The full *ḥadīth* reads “*da’u al-ḥabasha mā wada’ukum wa’truku l-atrak ma tarakukum*,” which has led some to speculate that the alliterative second half is a later addition.

¹² Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book 41, Number 6959. A similar tradition is found in al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book 52, Number 179 and Abū Dā’ūd’s *Sunan*, Book 37, Number 4292.

close companion of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861)¹³ of Turkish (but not slave) origins.¹⁴ The first two parts of this work discuss the status of Arabs and non-Arabs in Islam, the groups who made up the armies of Sāmarrā’ such as the Khurāsānīs, the *mawali* of the Arabs, and the *Abnā’*, in the end coming to the conclusion that all peoples give credit and honor to the Muslim community when they serve the caliph, even the Turks¹⁵ (an appropriate message in an epistle written to a powerful Turk who is also a close confidant of the caliph). The third and longest portion deals with discussions of the military prowess of the Turks, focusing primarily on the Central Asian steppe Turks, but also including examples of the Sāmarrān Turks. This third part is divided itself into two main parts, the first of which deals with the Caliph al-Ma’mūn asking a group of men “at the forefront in the science of war” (*al-mutaqaddimīn fī-l-‘ilm bi-l-ḥarb*) who is the more dangerous enemy, the Khārijites or the Turks. The military commander Ḥumayd b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ṭūsī, who had led al-Ma’mūn’s forces to victory over Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in 202-203/818-819, gives a long description of the superiority of the Turks which al-Ma’mūn chooses as the correct response.¹⁶ The second part consists of a number of sayings by various individuals, including a number of noted soldiers and commanders, about the military prowess of the Turks.¹⁷ The text balances the two images of the Turks as warriors who must on the one hand be feared and on the other be respected and admired.

¹³ al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān is best remembered for his death alongside al-Mutawakkil. When al-Mutawakkil was attacked by members of the Sāmarrān Turkish guard, al-Faṭḥ tried to shield the caliph. Both were killed.

¹⁴ al-Jāhiz, *Risāla ilā al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-‘āmmat jund al-Khilāfa*, 1-56; English translation as C.T.H. Walker, trans. “Jahiz of Basra to al-Fath Ibn Khaqan on the ‘Exploits of the Turks and the Army of the Khalifate in General,’” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1915): 631-697.

¹⁵ al-Jāhiz, *Risāla ilā al-Faṭḥ ibn Khāqān fī manāqib al-Turk wa-‘āmmat jund al-Khilāfa*, 1-22.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35-56.

The fearsome image of the Turks of the eastern frontier that we find in our geographical sources is unflattering to say the least. Here we see, in the words of Rudi Lindner, “the prejudices of their literate, fleeing enemies.”¹⁸ The Turks left little written record of themselves before the Seljūqs established themselves as the masters of the eastern half of the Muslim world in the late fifth/eleventh century, assuming the trappings of sedentary kingship along the way, including literary production.¹⁹ The result is a portrayal that is biased from the perspective of the victims of the Turks’ depredations. The Turks often appear as the counterpart of the settled, civilized Muslims. al-Ya’qūbī, for example, describes them as possessing no fortifications, but rather camping in felt tents; they subsist on millet, mare’s milk, and wild game and, since they lack iron, they make their arrows of animal bones.²⁰

The *Hudūd al-‘Ālam* gives a more detailed discussion of the Turks and other peoples living beyond the realm of Islam, providing individual descriptions of the lands of various Turkish tribes and confederations, and portraying them as warlike peoples. The Toghuzghuz are said to be “warlike people possessing great numbers of arms.”²¹ The Yaghmā are “strong, warlike, and have plenty of arms.”²² The Khallukh (Qarluq) are “a

¹⁸ Rudi Paul Lindner, “What Was a Nomadic Tribe?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24 (1982): 690. Lindner is speaking here of nomads in general, or particularly those who raided settled communities, though the thoughts certainly applies to our 3rd-4th/9th-10th century steppe Turks.

¹⁹ Two texts written in Turkish survive from the Qarakhānid period, the 5th/11th century. One is a dictionary of Qarakhānid Turkish which was presented to the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs, Maḥmūd Kāshgārī, *Türk şiveleri (Dīvānū Lugāt-it Türk)*, eds. and trans. Robert Dankoff and James Kelly, Parts I-III (Duxbury, Mass.: Tekin, 1982-1985). The other is a “mirror of princes” written in a Persianate style, Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory: A Turko-Islamic Mirror of Princes*, trans. Robert Dankoff, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

²⁰ al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1882), 295.

²¹ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūdiḥ (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Danīshgāh-i Tehran, 1340/1962), 76.

²² *Ibid.*, 79.

warlike people, prone to forays.”²³ Not surprisingly, given their proximity to the lands of Islam and the regularity of their incursions, the Ghuzz receive what is probably the harshest treatment in this sense. They are described as having

arrogant faces and [they] are quarrelsome, malicious, and malevolent... They possess arms and implements and are courageous and daring in war. They continually make inroads into the lands of Islam, whatever place be on the way, and (then) they strike, plunder, and retreat as quickly as possible.²⁴

The Turks are also seen here as fighting among themselves, with the Kīmāk, Khallukh (Qarluq), and Yaghmā Turks all plundering J.mlikath, the village of the Yabghū, a title which indicates a Turkish population.²⁵ This rivalry can reach the point of breaking down the peace within a single Turkish group, such as the Ghuzz, who must have a separate chief for each of their tribes “on account of their discords with each other.”²⁶ In other places however, various Turkish groups may live together in peace, as in Khīrm.kī, where Yaghmā, Khallukh (Qarluq), and Toghuzghuz all live together with the Artūjians.²⁷ This condition does not have to be permanent or regular, as in the case of the Kīmāk who winter near the Ghuzz “whenever there is peace between them.”²⁸

When positive traits are ascribed to the Turks, they have to do with their military prowess. Their fighting can sometimes be seen as simultaneously a negative, since it tends to be against the Muslims, and a positive, or at least they can be said to fight in a manner which deserves a certain level of respect and admiration. For example, the

²³ Ibid., 81.

²⁴ Ibid., 86-87.

²⁵ Ibid., 78. Yabghū had also been the title of the Turkish overlord of Transoxania before the arrival of Islam.

²⁶ Ibid., 87.

²⁷ Ibid., 79.

²⁸ Ibid., 85.

Kumījiyān Turks who live in the mountains between Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān are “professional thieves and looters of caravans and look arrogant” but “in their predatory expeditions they behave gallantly”²⁹ and they are later described as being “courageous and warlike and professional thieves.”³⁰ Similarly, the Khallukh (Qarluq) Turks of Tūn.l and Tālkh.za are “warlike, courageous, and valiant.”³¹ The Turks constitute a threat in this scheme, but they may commit their acts of violence in a gallant, courageous, or valiant manner. Their conduct and ability in war is admirable, even if dangerous.

In the period under study here, it is important to underscore that the threat the Turks represent is largely one of small scale raids. These are not forces of conquest. It is not until the end of the fourth/tenth century when a confederation of Turks - under the Qarakhānid dynasty - began to capture Muslim territories and to create a state of their own carved out of Muslim lands. Where the Turks had made inroads into the Muslim world during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries it was through the armies of the caliphs and various provincial governors, usually as slave soldiers.³² For those authors who spent time in Khurāsān and Transoxania, it is the raiding steppe Turks who are probably at the forefront of their minds. The majority of our sources, however, were written by individuals from Baghdad, whose experiences of the Turks was primarily with the slave soldiers of Sāmarrā’. Of course, as Matthew Gordon has argued, the differences between the steppe Turks and the Sāmarrān Turks was often negligible in the minds of

²⁹ Ibid., 120.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 82-83.

³² See Matthew Gordon’s *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001) for a detailed study of the Turkish slave soldiers of Samarra.

the Baghdadī authors who viewed even those Turks employed in the service of the caliphate as savages, unfit for urban, civilized life.³³

In the view of our authors, even though the Turks are primarily predatory raiders, they are a threat to the *Dār al-Islām* as a whole. al-Ya'qūbī says that the Turks “surround the province of Khurāsān and make incursions into all parts; in this way there is not a region of Khurāsān where the inhabitants are not in combat with the Turks and where the Turks of all races do not perform raids.”³⁴ The previous chapter has demonstrated that the Turks were not entirely a foreign enemy crossing the frontier to raid, but a threat within the lands of Islam as well. This situation, in which the Turks are intermixed with other ethnic groups within the Muslim territories, finds expression in al-Ya'qūbī's fears and warnings. It is not only those places directly along or within striking distance from the frontier that are objects of concern; it is rather the frontier region as a whole which is threatened by these raids. The dangers resulting from this intermixed population are all the greater because of the mobility of the Turks and the distances they are willing to travel on their raids. The Kinjīna Turks, located between Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān, will travel forty to fifty *farsakhs* (approximately 120 to 150 miles) on their predatory expeditions, for example.³⁵ Even if they were not already living on the Muslim side of the frontier, they could still loot far within the lands of the *Dār al-Islām*.

The threat of such raids was not illusory. Places where Turkish raids occurred with greater regularity could see entire communities disappear if they were not equipped to defend themselves. Qudāma refers to Kūk, on the road from Bukhārā to Samarqand, as

³³ Gordon, *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords*, 50-55.

³⁴ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 295.

³⁵ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 120.

being deprived (*jarrada minha*) by the king of the Turks (*malik al-Turk*) who conducts raids there.³⁶ Tirmaqān similarly suffers from raids and, according to Qudāma, people would not settle there for fear of the Turks.³⁷ While these aren't raids of conquest, the disruptions they cause can make certain territories completely useless to the Muslims, having the same effect of territorial regression as out and out conquest. Precautions must be taken to prevent such disruptions.

Ibn al-Faqīh quotes Sharīk b. ʿAbdallāh,³⁸ in describing the Turks as “the most powerful enemies in strength,” who encroach upon the people of Khurāsān. They use rude language towards the Khurāsānīs and blaspheme against them.³⁹ Luckily, the people of Khurāsān are well suited for this fighting because they are “the protection for the Muslims against the Turks and are firm in killing and capturing them.”⁴⁰ A dichotomy found in Ibn al-Faqīh’s statements here is important for understanding the role of the eastern frontier within the greater Muslim world. The frontier acts as the first line of defense against the Turks and it is the bravery and skill of the Muslims of the eastern frontier which protect the rest of the Muslim world from them. al-Iṣṭakhrī gives us a similar description of Transoxania, saying that there is not in Islam an enemy stronger than the Turks who face the frontier of Transoxania. Since the majority of Transoxania is frontier, the people of Transoxania are thus the defenders of Islam.⁴¹

³⁶ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣināʿat al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī, (Baghdad: Dār al-rashīd li-l-nashr, 1981), 99.

³⁷ Ibid. 104.

³⁸ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Sharīk b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Nakhaʿī al-Kūfī al-Qāḍī (95-177/713-794) see Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tarīkh Baghdād*, no. 4838.

³⁹ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 5. ed. Michael Jan de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1885), 316.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik waʾl-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir ʿAbd al-ʿĀl al-Ḥinī (Cairo: 1381/1961), 163.

Keeping in mind the threat posed by the steppe Turks of Central Asia, we must next examine how this threat shaped the eastern frontier. Now we will shift our focus the Turks themselves to the ways in which the Muslims sought to protect themselves from them, including defensive infrastructure and the enlistment of warriors in defense of the *Dār al-Islām*.

3.3 The Military Frontier

The medieval geographical texts under examination here are filled with sites which either have names that indicate a military function, such as places with the terms *hiṣn*, *qaṣr*, *qal'a*, or *ribāṭ* as a component of their names, or are explicitly described as having certain pieces of military or defensive infrastructure, such as fortresses or city walls. The assumption is that these sites played a role in defending the region against the raids of the steppe Turks and in organizing counter raids as well as defending against any other military threat which may appear in the region. Our sources give few details for most of these sites and we have little information about what may have actually happened at any of them. As Paul Wheatley pointed out, “In the medieval Islamic world, fortification was an almost universal attribute of settlement.”⁴² Therefore, overly-detailed descriptions of such fortifications may not have appeared important to the authors of our sources. In a frontier context, however, the nature, use, and importance of these fortifications take on different forms and duties, all related to the frontier itself. Therefore, despite the fact that

⁴² Paul Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press; 2001), 256.

fortifications were “an almost universal attribute of settlement,” it is important to consider the specific attributes of these fortifications within the frontier context.⁴³

The following sections will look at these examples of fortifications in the eastern frontier and examine their roles in the larger frontier society. These fortifications created an interconnected defensive network across the eastern frontier which also represented a larger network connecting cities, villages, and agricultural regions. Cities appear to act as nodes, much as they do in the itineraries provided by our geographical sources, while roads lined with defensive structures branch out from the cities creating a frontier defensive network. The following sections are organized based upon this principle. Beginning with a discussion of the defenses found in cities and their immediate suburbs, this chapter will move on to discussions of the agricultural hinterlands found around the cities, then the roads which connected these urban nodes, and finally the broader frontier itself.

Before discussing individual sites and their defensive infrastructures, a general word regarding certain types of military or defensive architectural edifices is in order. Two Arabic terms are commonly translated as fortress, *ḥiṣn* and *qaṣr*. *Ḥiṣn*, related to the root *ḥaṣana* (to be well fortified, strong, or inaccessible), clearly connotes a fortress, a fortified place, or stronghold. *Qaṣr* has a similar meaning to *ḥiṣn*, with the general meaning of a fortified place.⁴⁴ It may also have a meaning that is more akin to a castle or

⁴³ Wheatley acknowledges the more specific interests along the frontier regarding fortifications when discussing Khurāsān and Transoxania, but seems to want to only give this specific interest to the outer limits of the frontier. Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together*, 179, 185.

⁴⁴ It had been understood that *qaṣr* was a loanword from the Latin *castrum*, which itself came from the Greek *kastron*. J.P. Van Staël, “*Qaṣr*,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*. L. Conrad has argued that it is an original Arabic term related to the root *qaṣara*. L.I. Conrad, “The *Qusūr* of Medieval Islam: Some Implications for the Social History of the Near East,” *al-Abḥāth* 29 (1981), 7-23. For a response and

palace (as in the residence of a governor).⁴⁵ While both *ḥiṣn* and *qaṣr* are common components of Arabic place names, *ḥiṣn* appears much less frequently in the Persianate world.⁴⁶ Conversely, when a site is mentioned as possessing a fortress, without a fortress word being a part of its name, *ḥiṣn* appears almost exclusively along with other adjectival forms of the same root, generally marking places which are fortified. The term *qal'a* may also appear in our texts, referring to fortresses.

The *ribāṭ* is an architectural form which has left scholars with a number of questions. At its base, the *ribāṭ* is a kind of frontier guard post or small fortress which takes on a number of different architectural forms found from Andalusia in the west to Transoxania in the east along both land and sea-based borders. A number of other functions may be given to these edifices, creating confusion in giving a precise definition to the term. Due to the complexity of these issues, the *ribāṭs* of the eastern frontier will be given their own detailed treatment later in this chapter.

Citadels, known as *quhandiz*, are a widespread part of the defensive infrastructure of cities along the eastern frontier. The *quhandiz* is a particularly Persianate form of military edifice, a citadel often found near the center of the city. These structures appear to be found only in cities with a pre-Islamic foundation and take on a number of different roles in urban life after the conquests. The term *quhandiz* is frequently glossed or misunderstood by modern scholars and is often left untranslated. In many cases, scholars have followed the lead of Barthold, who argued that both *quhandiz* and *ḥiṣn*, when

refutation to Conrad's argument, see Irfan Shahīd, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 2, part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 67-75.

⁴⁵ Van Staël, "Kaṣr."

⁴⁶ A.D.H. Bivar, "Ḥiṣn ii-Iran," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*. This observation bears out in our sources with only one site found in our sources with a "*ḥiṣn*" name (Ḥiṣn Umm Ja'far) compared to no less than eight with "*qaṣr*" names.

attached to a city, imply simply a walled inner city.⁴⁷ A *quhandiz* may look or act like a *hiṣn*, but our sources will take special note when this occurs as in al-Iṣṭakhrī's description of Kābul, where the *quhandiz* is described as a fortification (*lahā quhandiz mawṣūf bi-l-taḥaṣṣūn*),⁴⁸ indicating that this is an anomaly. The location and appearance of these *quhandiz* indicate a difference from *hiṣn* and a structure more particular than that of a walled urban quarter. First, we have a number of locations which feature both a *quhandiz* and a *hiṣn*, signaling a distinction between the two.⁴⁹ Second, we have the locations provided for *quhandiz* in our sources; either within a walled *madīna*, thus making the definition of a walled inner city redundant,⁵⁰ or outside the walls of the *madīna* or in the suburbs making it distinct from the walled inner city,⁵¹ or outside the city entirely.⁵² The *quhandiz* is certainly a fortified part of the urban infrastructure, but it resembles a citadel, a strongly fortified edifice with a commanding position over a city, rather than a walled inner city. The role of the *quhandiz* will be discussed later in this chapter.

In order to provide some insight which may be helpful in looking at the fortifications of the eastern frontier, especially when thinking about roads and agricultural hinterlands, we may compare them with the forts of the Roman and Byzantine *limes*

⁴⁷ Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 118. See similar assessments in Lisa Golombek, "Urban Patterns of Pre-Safavid Isfahan," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974): 23 and Jürgen Paul, "The Histories of Herat," *Iranian Studies* 33 (2000): 111.

⁴⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 157.

⁴⁹ Turār Zarākh (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Dih Nūjikath (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Jikil (al-Muqaddasī: 274-275), Mīrkī (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Urduwā (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Harrān (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Zarmīthan (al-Muqaddasī: 282), Wakhsūn (al-Muqaddasī: 282), Tirmidh (al-Muqaddasī: 291), Herat (Ibn Ḥawqal: 437, al-Muqaddasī: 307), and Nīshāpūr (al-Muqaddasī: 316).

⁵⁰ Herat (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 149, Ibn Ḥawqal: 437), Ūzkand (al-Muqaddasī: 272), Harrān (interestingly has its *quhandiz* inside its fortress, al-Muqaddasī: 275), and Samarqand (al-Muqaddasī: 279).

⁵¹ Bukhārā (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 171), Akhsīkath (al-Muqaddasī: 271), Bārāb (al-Muqaddasī: 273), Binkath (al-Muqaddasī: 276), Bunjikath (al-Muqaddasī: 277), and Nīshāpūr (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 145, Ibn Ḥawqal: 432, al-Muqaddasī: 316).

⁵² Numūjikath (al-Muqaddasī: 280).

arabicus. The *limes arabicus* was a 1,500 km frontier zone⁵³ containing numerous fortifications running from northern Syria to southern Palestine through the Roman province of Arabia Petraea until the early sixth century, when troops were progressively withdrawn. The 150-kilometer “outer *limes*” or “central sector” of the *limes arabicus*, consisting of the major forts Qasr Bashīr, Lejjūn, Jurf al-Durāwish, and Daʿjāniyeh, have been seen by some as a defensive zone against raids by Arab tribes coming out of the desert.⁵⁴ The exact nature of these fortifications has been subject to a lively debate in recent decades,⁵⁵ which we will recall further on as we discuss the fortifications of the Muslim eastern frontier. There are numerous similarities between the fortifications of the *limes arabicus* and those of the eastern frontier of the Islamic world, particularly in that both were located along imperial frontiers and, presumably, used for defense against nomadic or semi-nomadic raiders coming from beyond the frontier. A major difference between them is the much greater amount of scholarly attention the *limes arabicus* have received.

⁵³ Many have argued that the *limes* were a militarized border, but more recent scholarship has begun to see them as a frontier zone without necessarily the militarized aspect. David F. Graf, “The *Via Militaris* in Arabia,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 271; B. Isaac, “The Meaning of *Limes* and *Limitanei* in Ancient Sources,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988): 125-147; and P. Mayerson, “The Meaning of the Word *Limes* in the Papyri,” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 77 (1989): 287-291.

⁵⁴ Graf, “The *Via Militaris* in Arabia,” 271 and S.T. Parker, “The Nature of Rome’s Arabian Frontier,” in *Roman Frontier Studies, 1989: Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, ed. V. Maxfield and M.J. Dobson, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991): 499.

⁵⁵ David F. Graf, “Rome and the Saracens: Reassessing the Nomadic Menace,” in *L’Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel: Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce Antiques*. vol. X, ed. T. Fahd (Leiden: Brill, 1989): 341-400 and “The *Via Militaris* in Arabia,” 271-281; B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

3.4 Defending the Cities

In a variety of ways, the cities of the eastern frontier formed the nodes of political and economic networks across the region, as cities did throughout much of the medieval world. Urban centers of varying sizes dominated smaller villages and rural communities in their vicinity, most notably in their roles as centers for trade and tax collection. The responsibilities of some cities in this regard may stretch farther than others, as in the case of the provincial capitals of Khurāsān in Marw⁵⁶ and Nīshāpūr⁵⁷ and Transoxania in Bukhārā.⁵⁸ Other cities dominated smaller regions within these larger provinces.

The actual physical make-up of the cities of the eastern frontier is often difficult to decipher from our sources. A number of these cities are rather ancient, such as Balkh, Samarqand, and Marw which date back to the third century BCE and earlier. Over the centuries, as different powers rose and fell in the region, cities expanded, fell into ruin, and were rebuilt. By the third/ninth century, Marw, for example, had three distinct layers of development; the Achaemenid city of the fifth century BCE which was later converted into a citadel, the Seleucid city of the third century BCE, and the neighboring Islamic city of the eighth century CE which quickly overshadowed the older cities and relegated them to the status of suburbs (see figure 3.1). Our sources do not regularly provide us with descriptions of these cities which would allow us to reconstruct them in detail, but they do provide lists of notable places and infrastructures within them sometimes with details of these specific places. Archaeological reconstructions are also difficult as centuries of

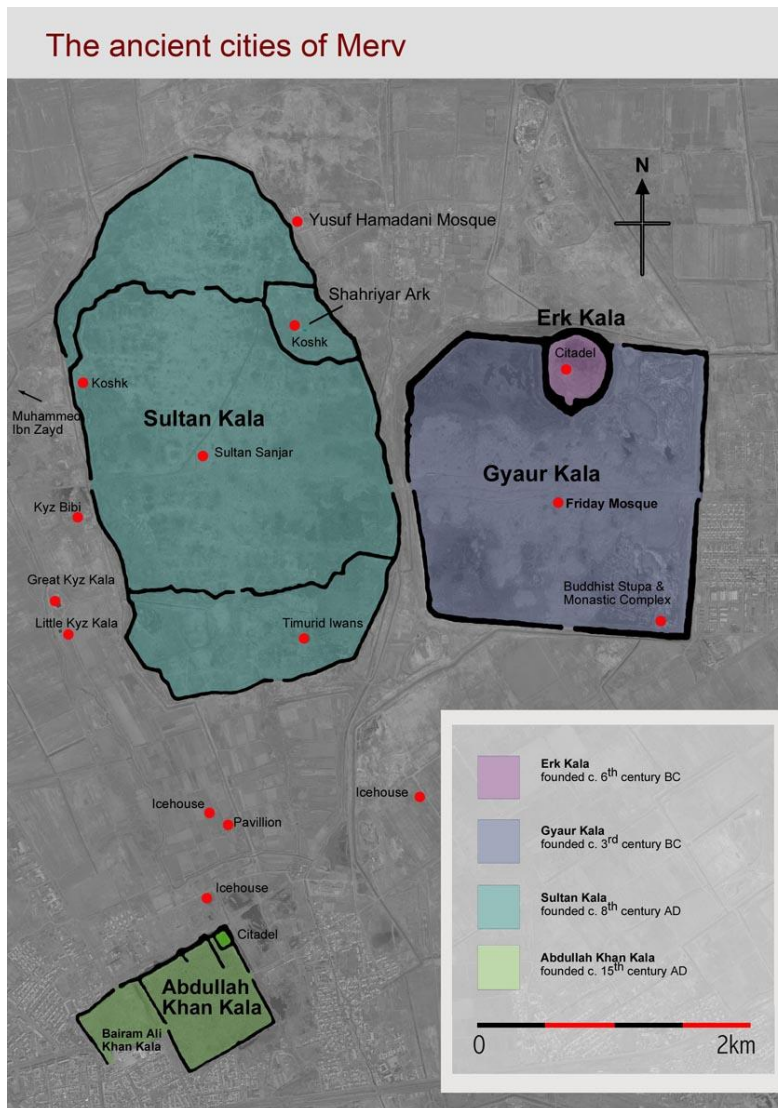
⁵⁶ Which had acted as the provincial capital from the Sāsānian era(224-651CE) into the Islamic period until the Ṭāhīrīds moved the capital in 205/821.

⁵⁷ Which was the Ṭāhīrīd capital from 205/821 until it was sacked by the Ṣaffārids in 259/863. From that point on it remained the capital of Khurāsān, but was no longer the capital of the ruling dynasty.

⁵⁸ Which had remained fairly independent under the Bukhār Khudāt before becoming the Sāmānīd capital of Transoxania in 260/874 until the fall of the dynasty in 389/999.

development, destruction (both natural and man-made), and new construction (often currently inhabited) stand in the way of the ancient remains. For these reasons, the defensive infrastructures of the cities of the eastern frontier will be discussed here in almost abstract generalities, as this is the best we can achieve with our sources.

Figure 3.1The Ancient Cities of Merv⁵⁹



⁵⁹ Ancient Merv Project, “The urban landscapes of Ancient Merv, Turkmenistan: Where to draw the line?” (London: Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 2006)
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/merv/Research/Publications/LEAP/Overview/index.htm> (accessed 6/26/2009)

Very broadly, the cities of the eastern frontier take on an urban form typical of the cities of the Persianate, world composed of concentric rings of urban development. The inner city, known as the *shahristān* in Persian or *madīna* in Arabic, stands at the center surrounded by the *arbāḍ* or suburbs and then finally an agricultural hinterland. Sometimes the *quhandiz* is included as a fourth layer in this schema, forming the absolute nucleus of the city, even though in actuality the *quhandiz* is not always so centrally located, as mentioned earlier. These divisions are often separated by walls of some sort. Standing over these cities are citadels and fortresses, *quhandiz* and *ḥiṣn*.

3.4.1 The *Quhandiz*

Though the role of the *quhandiz* is primarily defensive, it appears to have a number of other functions within the cities where it is found. One of the most common of these non-military functions is housing the residence of the governor or local ruler. The *quhandiz* of Samarqand holds the residence of the *ṣulṭān*.⁶⁰ The *quhandiz* of Tirmidh holds the *dār al-imāra* or governor's palace.⁶¹ The *dihqān* of Ḥarrān resides in the *quhandiz*.⁶² The *dār al-imāra* or governor's palace of Tūnkath is in the *quhandiz*.⁶³ Qāyin, the capital of Qūhīstān, has a *quhandiz* which houses the governor's palace (*sarāy-i sulṭān*).⁶⁴ According to al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, it also contains the congregational mosque in addition to the *dār al-imāra*.⁶⁵ Beyond the palaces of local rulers, the *quhandiz* of

⁶⁰ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 326.

⁶¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 167.

⁶² al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 3 ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 275.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶⁴ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 90-91.

⁶⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 154; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2, ed. J.H. Kramers, (Leiden: Brill, 1938), 446.

Bukhārā is said to hold the palace of the Sāmānid governor over all of Khurāsān.⁶⁶ Other administrative buildings may also be found in the *quhandiz*. Though the *quhandiz* is outside the city proper, the *sulṭān* of Numūjikath has taken over the *quhandiz* and placed the treasury and prison inside it.⁶⁷ He has also placed his palace outside the city, across from the *quhandiz*.⁶⁸ While not residing in the *quhandiz* proper, he still maintains a link between it and his palace. Those institutions which are then placed within the *quhandiz* still have a strong link to the position of the local ruler, housing his treasury and prison. Though he is a non-Muslim ruler or at least a ruler outside the structures of the caliphate, the *quhandiz* of Urduwā is the residence of the king of the Turkmen.⁶⁹

Other *quhandiz* are noted as being generally inhabited without specifying who inhabited them. Thus, according to al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, both the *quhandiz* and *madīna* of Nīshāpūr are inhabited.⁷⁰ This *quhandiz* is in the suburbs, specifically noted as being outside the *madīna*.⁷¹ Besides the possibility that the *quhandiz* may be inhabited beyond the palace of the local ruler, it may be a large part of the urban infrastructure. The *quhandiz* of Bukhārā, for example, is said to be about the size of a small city itself.⁷²

The *quhandiz* as a citadel is a defense of last resort, potentially behind the city walls and other defenses. As such, the palaces and other government buildings found within the *quhandiz* are those institutions which would traditionally be the centers of resistance during an invasion or siege. The *quhandiz* is not there to protect the city *per se*, but particular portions of it, especially the palace of the ruler (and the ruler himself) and

⁶⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 171.

⁶⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 280.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁷⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 145; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 431.

⁷¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 146.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 171.

the treasury. In this case, the term “citadel” stands as the strongest definition for these very reasons, but the presence of government institutions within its walls must be reinforced. In this sense, the *quhandiz* also acts as a political focus in the city by representing the local ruler through his residence within it.

In every case, it is clear that the *quhandiz* is a pre-Islamic architectural form appearing only in cities with pre-Islamic foundations;⁷³ sometimes these *quhandiz* have rather ancient origins. Following the arrival of Islam, the *quhandiz* appears to undergo a slow death. Marw is an excellent example of a city with an ancient *quhandiz* which declined following the arrival of Islam, even though the city itself continued to flourish. Ibn al-Faqīh and al-Muqaddasī both report a story in which Ṭahmūrath, the second king of the ancient and legendary Pīshdādīd dynasty of Iranian kings, built the *quhandiz* of Marw with the aid of 100,000 men.⁷⁴ This tradition cannot be rooted in historical fact since, besides the lack of attestation for the Pīshdādīds outside of literary traditions, the earliest firm evidence we have for the foundation of the city is during the reign of the Achaemenids in the fifth century BCE; subsequently we see the transformation of this original city into a citadel during the reign of the Seleucid king Antiochus I Soter (r. 280-261 BCE).⁷⁵ All this does, however, is reinforce the notion of an ancient foundation for the *quhandiz* of Marw. al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal address this matter in an interesting way by ascribing the *quhandiz* to Ṭahmūrath while stating that the old city was built by

⁷³ Hugh Kennedy, “From Shahrīstan to Medina,” *Studia Islamica*, 102/103 (2006), 31.

⁷⁴ In both versions, the tale focuses largely on the wisdom of Ṭahmūrath who would pay each of his workers one *dirham* a day, but then built a market near the workers’ quarters where everyone of his workers spent their days wages in the evening. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 319; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 299. Ṭahmūrath building the *quhandiz* is also mentioned by al-Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, and in the *Ḥudūd al-‘Ālam* but without the details given elsewhere. al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 434; *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 94.

⁷⁵ A. Yu. Yakubovskii, “Marw al-Shāhidjān,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

Alexander the Great, who was in fact much closer in chronology to Antiochus I.⁷⁶ This dating actually fits with the archaeological evidence which shows a fifth century BCE Achaemenid city, not nearly as old as Tahmūrath but sufficiently ancient, being converted into a citadel, with a Seleucid city being built around it in the third century BCE. In the *Hudūd al-ʿĀlam*, the latest of our sources, the *quhandiz* of Marw is filled with numerous castles (*kūshk*, which may also mean “fortress” similar to the duality of Arabic *qaṣr* which may mean either “palace” or “fortress”).⁷⁷ Within the Balkhī traditions, the *quhandiz* lies in ruins. al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal state that the *quhandiz* is similar in size to the inner city, except that it lies in ruins.⁷⁸ al-Muqaddasī reports that the *quhandiz* of Marw is situated on an elevation in the inner city and in ruins.⁷⁹ These reports place the *quhandiz* firmly in the past. In Marw, the *quhandiz* is a magnificent construction, built by an ancient, legendary king and filled with castles, but by the fourth/tenth century it has fallen into disuse and disrepair.

Ruined *quhandiz* are found throughout the region. Isfijāb has a ruined *quhandiz*, which seems to have been replaced by a number of *ribāṭs*.⁸⁰ It is an area noted for its role in frontier fighting, but what one would assume to be an important part of the defenses in the case of an attack directly on the city itself have been left to ruin. Both Kish’s *quhandiz* and the entirety of its *madīna* are in ruins, but this does not mean that the area is completely unused since the congregational mosque is still found in the *madīna*.⁸¹ Nasaf

⁷⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 434. Ibn al-Faqīh generally credits Alexander with the founding of Marw, though he later rebutes this with a tale of Tahmūrath constructing the *quhandiz*. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 316, 319.

⁷⁷ *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, 94.

⁷⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 435.

⁷⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 312.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 272-273.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

has a ruined *quhandiz*.⁸² Evidence from Kāth shows that the destruction of a *quhandiz* can be the result of mere neglect rather than of war or purposeful destruction. In this case it is the river flowing too close to the walls of the *quhandiz* which has ruined it.⁸³ The ruined and outmoded condition of a *quhandiz* can be so extreme that sometimes our authors think it is important to mention that a *quhandiz* is still functioning. al-Muqaddasī notes that Farabr's *quhandiz* is still active, but also mentions that the *quhandiz* is furnished with fine *ribāts*.⁸⁴ That so many of these *quhandiz* are left in a state of ruin shows that they had lost much of their utility by the third/ninth century. That *quhandiz* were important at some point in time is apparent through specific mentions of places that lack one. Khūrlūgh is said to have neither a fortress nor a *quhandiz*, for example.⁸⁵

The decline of the *quhandiz* can most likely be associated with the changing nature of warfare in Central Asia once the Muslims had established control over the area. Instead of the defense of cities against invading and besieging forces, we find the need to defend cities and, perhaps more importantly, their agricultural hinterlands from raiding nomads, for which an urban citadel is notably less useful. All this may also result from the changing political and military order of the region as armies of Arab Muslims took control of Transoxania and Khurāsān and integrated the area south and west of the steppe into the Caliphate, bringing an end to a period of individual kingdoms in Transoxania and on the fringes of Khurāsān.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 287.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 291.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 273.

3.4.2 Urban Fortresses

Other forms of fortresses are associated with cities, typically with the Arabic term *ḥiṣn*. As mentioned earlier, these appear to be distinct from the *quhandiz*, but we must ask in which ways. Frequently *ḥuṣūn* (plural of *ḥiṣn*) are described as being “over” or “near” (*‘alā*) a place compared to other types of urban infrastructure, including the *quhandiz*, which are typically described as being “in” (*fī* or *bi-*) or “for” (*li-*) a place.⁸⁶ The term *‘alā* seems to imply that the fortresses are actually outside the city itself, unlike the *quhandiz* which, it seems to be assumed, is normally placed within the city. The clearest example of this is found in Mazdākhkan which has twelve thousand fortresses over it in all directions.⁸⁷ On occasion certain *ḥuṣūn* will be specifically mentioned as being inside the city, as in the fortress of Nīshāpūr, which is located at the center of the city,⁸⁸ or the fortress of Herat which has four gates corresponding to the city gates which surround it.⁸⁹ The wording that these fortresses are “over” a city conveys the sense that their role is to oversee or observe the city, instead of providing the kind of last-ditch defense provided by a citadel in the middle of the urban center.

Like the *quhandiz*, which often houses the local ruler’s palace, the *ḥiṣn* also has non-military functions. In this case, however, the most common functions are religious

⁸⁶ Examples of fortresses “over” or “near” a place include, Herat (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 149, Ibn Ḥawqal (using the term *ḥiṣār* instead of *ḥiṣn*): 437, al-Muqaddasī: 307), al-Ṭabasīn (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 154, Ibn Ḥawqal: 446), Sanābāth (Ibn Ḥawqal: 434), Wasīj (al-Muqaddasī: 273), Shāwaghar (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Shaghlajān (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Adhakhkath (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Jikil (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Utlukh (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Jamūkat (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Sūs and Kūl (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Urdulā (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Harrān (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Binkath (though in this case it is two fortresses over two suburbs; al-Muqaddasī: 276), Ushtürkath (al-Muqaddasī: 277), Ghardamān (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Wāyikhān (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Ardakhīwā (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Jashīra (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Zardūkh (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Nūzwār (al-Muqaddasī: 289), Zamakhshar (al-Muqaddasī: 289), Quwādiyān and Bīz (al-Muqaddasī: 290), Tirmidh (al-Muqaddasī: 291), Ṭābarān (al-Muqaddasī: 319), Qāyīn (al-Muqaddasī: 321), Ṭabas al-Tamr (al-Muqaddasī: 321), and Khwāst (al-Muqaddasī: 321).

⁸⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 288.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁸⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 150.

and economic rather than political. The congregational mosques of a number of cities are found within the walls of the fortress, as in Jamūkat,⁹⁰ Zandana, Khujādā,⁹¹ Sadūr,⁹² Tirmidh,⁹³ and Mahana.⁹⁴ Sometimes you find the congregational mosque paired with a market in the fortress, reminiscent of the pairing of the two in the early Islamic garrison cities of Iraq. The congregational mosque and markets may be found in the *ḥiṣn* of Bārāb.⁹⁵ The fortress of Baykand (which has only one gate indicating either limited access or small numbers of visitors) contains both a busy market and the congregational mosque (whose *mihṛāb* is noted for being decorated with jewels).⁹⁶ Unlike the *quhandiz* whose non-defensive functions focus on the ruler, the non-military functions of the *ḥiṣn* appear to focus on those aspects of communal life which have a close tie to Islam and the Muslim ruling establishment. Therefore, these *ḥuṣūn* seem reminiscent of the *amṣār* garrison cities of the early conquests which became a focus for Muslim spiritual life through the construction of congregational mosques and trade through the establishment of highly regulated and taxed markets while maintaining a physical separation between the Muslim conquerors and the local populations. If these *ḥuṣūn* were in fact outside conquered cities, then they would have provided separation for the soldiers occupying the fortresses from local populations, even while drawing local populations into the fortresses through the markets and, as conversion happened, the mosque.

Narratives from the Muslim conquests of the region provide evidence that, at least in some cases, this is exactly what happened initially in the east. For example, after

⁹⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 288.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 321, n. b.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.

conquering Balkh in 43/663-4 the Arabs built a garrison two *farsakhs* from the city at a place called Barūqān. Later, under the governor Asad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qasrī, the garrison moved into Balkh itself in 107/725.⁹⁷ While many of these garrisons may have been integrated into local urban communities by the third/ninth century, the physical and architectural remains of these earlier extra-urban garrisons still dotted the region and may very well still have served a defensive (or other) function.

Our sources show that there were locations outside of the cities with a military presence, along with fortresses with a standing military presence. According to Qudāma, outside the walls of al-Shāsh and two *farsakhs* from the city is a military encampment (*mu’askar*).⁹⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal also mention a place known as *al-mu’askar* as a neighborhood in the suburbs of Nīshāpūr where one would also find the congregational mosque.⁹⁹ Though this military encampment lies within the suburbs of the city, it resembles the garrisons mentioned above, inasmuch as it contains the congregational mosque. Its presence in the suburbs may be the result of sprawl consuming an area which previously, most likely at the time of the Muslim conquests, lay outside the limits of the city and its suburbs. Other locations have armies attached to them, even if they do not have encampments. al-Iṣṭakhrī notes a place along an itinerary as the *’askar* of Panjhīr, or army of Panjhīr, separate from the city itself.¹⁰⁰ The fortress of Wasīj, which hovers over (*’alā*) the city, has a strong military commander (*amīr qawī*) presiding over it.¹⁰¹ These

⁹⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Series II, ed. M.J. de Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1885-1889), 2: 1490.

⁹⁸ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā’at al-kitāba*, 100.

⁹⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa ’l-mamālik*, 146; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 431.

¹⁰⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa ’l-mamālik*, 160.

¹⁰¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 273.

were sites of standing armies which continued to remain outside the city, even as Muslims became integrated within the cities themselves.

As with the *quhandiz*, you can also find a number of fortresses in ruins throughout the region. The fortress of al-Ṭabas is in ruins.¹⁰² Both Balāj and Barūkat's fortresses are in ruins, even though they are a frontier against the Turkmen. It may be that they remain in this state because, as al-Muqaddasī points out, the Turkmen have converted to Islam (out of fear) and are therefore no longer a threat requiring the maintenance of these fortresses.¹⁰³ The fortresses of al-Ṭabas,¹⁰⁴ Barskhān,¹⁰⁵ Ṭawāwīs,¹⁰⁶ and Abīward are similarly in ruins.¹⁰⁷ These do not appear to be the results of willful neglect or of their replacement by other structures, as in the case of certain *quhandiz*, but rather of particular developments on the ground. If these fortresses did function in the manner of *amṣār*, as mentioned above, their use would necessarily change over time as the populations became more integrated and the locals converted to Islam. This would open the door for the *hiṣn* to be slowly replaced by other forms of defensive architecture, as the garrisons integrated into local communities and moved into the pre-existing cities, as we have seen in Balkh, or for the fortresses to develop into settled communities in their own rights as local populations began to move into the *hiṣn* and the surrounding areas, losing their specifically military purposes along the way. It is possible that the garrison built on the outskirts of a city may grow until it becomes more important than the city itself. In the diagram of Marw discussed above (see Figure 3.1), the second/eighth century city built

¹⁰² Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 446.

¹⁰³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

¹⁰⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 154.

¹⁰⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 281.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

by the Muslims (marked as the Sultan Kala) replaced the pre-Islamic towns of Erk Kala and Gyaur Kala, which became suburbs of the newer Muslim city.

3.4.3 City Walls

As mentioned above, the cities of the eastern frontier can be described in terms of concentric rings of development; the *shahristān* or *madīna*, the *arbāḍ* (plural of *rabaḍ*) or suburbs, and the agricultural hinterland. Each of these areas can be separated by or surrounded by walls of various kinds. The walls surrounding the agricultural hinterland and the make-up of concentric rings of walls will be discussed shortly. Here we examine the walls surrounding the *shahristān* or *madīna* and *arbāḍ*.

When it comes to the inner city walls, we see that they employ a variety of defensive measures beyond a simple wall. City walls are often matched with a second set of defenses in the form of either a trench (*khandaq*)¹⁰⁸ or moat (*khandaq mal'ān min al-mā'*, *khandaq wa-l-mā'*, or *khandaq yadūru fihi al-mā'*).¹⁰⁹ The moats can be associated with the systems of canals which bring water into the city, channeling water into the moat as it travels through the city. Sometimes these are rather large, as in the case of Ghardamān whose moat is the width of an arrow's flight.¹¹⁰ In other instances, the difficulty in passing through them is shown by the presence of bridges¹¹¹ or drawbridges which are raised at night (*jīsr yurf'u kull layla*).¹¹² These are measures meant to limit

¹⁰⁸ Qāyin (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 154, Ibn Ḥawqal: 446, *Hudūd al-'Ālam*: 90-91), Būshanj (al-Iṣṭakhrī: 151, Ibn Ḥawqal: 440, al-Muqaddasī: 308), Ṭarāz (al-Muqaddasī: 274), Wāyikhān (al-Muqaddasī: 288), Rūzawand (al-Muqaddasī: 289), Kardarānkhās and Hazārasb (al-Muqaddasī: 289), Nīshāpūr (al-Muqaddasī: 316), one of the three fortresses at Afrāwa (al-Muqaddasī: 320).

¹⁰⁹ Urduwā (al-Muqaddasī: 275), Samarqand (al-Muqaddasī: 279), and Barakhshā (al-Muqaddasī: 282)

¹¹⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 288.

¹¹¹ Jāz (al-Muqaddasī: 289).

¹¹² Nūzwār (al-Muqaddasī: 289) and Zamakhshar (al-Muqaddasī: 289).

access to the walls, or more importantly the gates of the city, and they appear to be designed for these defensive purposes.

In other locations, natural features are similarly employed. Ibn Khurradādhbih describes al-Tirmidh by saying that the Jayhūn or Oxus River strikes al-Tirmidh's walls and that its inner city (*madīnatahā*) is made out of stone.¹¹³ This placement of the city walls along the banks of the river, so that the river strikes the walls themselves, seems like a more traditional defensive measure, somewhat similar to the Propontis and Golden Horn Walls of Constantinople which prevented seaborne attacks. Unlike trenches or moats, which limit access to the city's walls, walls built put to a river, especially a river as large as the Jayhūn, blocks access from that direction entirely. The construction of city walls up to the banks of a river takes forethought at the foundation of a city, in order for the city to come up to the riverbank without crossing it. While this brief description is almost all that Ibn Khurradādhbih has to say about al-Tirmidh, it emphasizes the city as a strong point with a wall and stone structures. Ūzkand also makes use of rivers. Its wall, which encircles the suburbs, is surrounded by a stream without any bridge, so that people must wade across it to pass through the city gates.¹¹⁴

The walls of Akhsīkath, the capital of Farghāna and the furthest city of Transoxania, have an interesting relationship with the Jaxartes, according to al-Iṣṭakhrī. Here we are given two routes for approaching the city from Khawākand. The first has the traveler reaching the gate of Akhsīkath before crossing the Jaxartes and then entering the city itself. The second has the traveler crossing the Jaxartes and then going a further five

¹¹³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 6. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 33.

¹¹⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 272.

farsakhs until he reaches the gate of Akhsīkath.¹¹⁵ The walls of the city appear to cross the river with gates appearing on both sides as one approaches the city from different directions.

In only two instances do we see walls in situations where specific military capabilities are mentioned. Samarqand is unique in that its outermost walls are specifically noted as designed for fighting. Ibn al-Faqīh says that the towers of the walls are towers for fighting (*abrāj lil-ḥarb*).¹¹⁶ This “fighting” wall, however, is the wall surrounding the city’s agricultural hinterland, not the urban center itself (on which see below). Wāyikhān is noted for having onagers¹¹⁷ or small catapults (*‘arrādāt*) upon its gates.¹¹⁸ An interesting example of city-walls with combined military purposes is found in Herat, where a wall taller than a man’s height at all points (*kulluhu aṭwal min qāma*) surrounds the *ḥiṣn*, which is inside the city itself.¹¹⁹ These walls have a defensive character and they are designed with fighting in mind. It does not appear, however, that fighting along city walls in this region took place with much frequency or in many different locations during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. The remainder of the walls, trenches, and moats have the effect of limiting access to the cities, but there is little discussion of their being useful in preventing concentrated attacks.

The cities of the eastern frontier make use of a variety of defensive measures.

Concentric circles of walls protect not only the city, but also its suburbs and agricultural

¹¹⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 188.

¹¹⁶ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 326.

¹¹⁷ Onagers are a specifically Roman style of siege engine, named after the wild ass because of its kicking action. Lane says *‘arrādāt* are “smaller than the [*manjanīq*] but resembling it... an engine of war, app. similar to that called by the Romans onager.” Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 1:1998.

¹¹⁸ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 288.

¹¹⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 437. Ibn Ḥawqal adds that there is a distance of greater than thirty paces between the two walls.

hinterlands. *Quhandiz* and fortresses are found within and attached to a number of cities. It appears, however, that *quhandiz* tend to be defenses of last resort, located within the cities themselves while other fortresses are often found outside of the cities and may have had earlier histories as garrison points. In these fortified sites, particular urban infrastructures are protected, such as palaces, mosques, and markets, with the *quhandiz* being attached to those institutions most closely connected with the local ruler and the *ḥiṣn* with more communal institutions such as mosques and markets. All in all, however, the defense of cities does not seem a major priority. Fortifications are allowed to fall into ruin and there is little talk of recent construction. The concern is not with the possible siege or conquest of cities, but rather with protecting the dependent regions around them, a defensive concern born from the experiences of real military threats found in the region. The cities of the eastern frontier act as the nodes of regional networks, and as we go further out along the branches of these networks we see a greater emphasis on functioning defensive infrastructures against the raiding Turks.

3.5 Defense of Agricultural Lands

It has been argued that the forts of the Roman and Byzantine *limes arabicus* would have been connected by a *via militaris* (military road) which ran along the imperial frontier. David F. Graf has built a counterargument around archeological evidence to the effect that there was in fact no continuous *via militaris* directly connecting the frontier forts which these forts were meant to defend.¹²⁰ What he finds instead is that the individual forts and watchtowers of the region were located at the edge of *wadis* which penetrated

¹²⁰ Graf, "The *Via Militaris* in Arabia," 280-281.

into the desert, with the major highway passing several kilometers behind the forts. Graf has connected this layout of forts and highways with an imperial policy which encouraged the development of agriculture on the margins of the empire by creating agricultural estates in border regions.¹²¹ Graf then argues from the presence of the remains of agricultural estates along these *wadis* that “in many cases, the cultivated zone itself extends eastward into the desert along the wadi formations with the military structures, leaving the clear impression that the forts are associated with the enterprise, if not the instigators, of this thrust outward.”¹²² In Graf’s argument, the fortifications of the *limes arabicus* were meant to protect agriculture and not the roads. Now if we ask what is the greatest threat posed by small raiding bands of nomads on the fringes of a settled society, the likely answer is that the threat to outlying agricultural communities is comparable to the threat to caravans traveling on roads near the frontier. Regardless of the results of the modern debates about the purposes of the frontier estates of the Roman Empire, these estates would have needed protection.

Along the eastern frontier of the Islamic world, we see a similar interest in defending agricultural land from raids and other (possibly environmental) threats. The clearest evidence for this, however, involves the construction of city walls surrounding massive areas of agricultural land. The urban centers of the eastern frontier tended to be surrounded not just by a single wall protecting the center of the city (as discussed above), but rather by concentric circles of walls dividing the *shahristān* or *madīna* from the

¹²¹ D.J. Crawford, “Imperial Estates,” in *Studies in Roman Property*. ed. M.I. Finley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976): 54; D. Kehoe, *The Economics of Agriculture on the Roman Imperial Estates in North Africa*. Hypomnemata 89 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988): 200-221; R. Delmaire, *Largesses sacrées et Res private: L’Aerarium imperial et son administration du IVe au VIe siècle*, Collection de l’École française de Rome 121 (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1989): 679-682.

¹²² Graf, “The *Via Militaris* in Arabia,” 280.

suburbs, the suburbs from the rural areas beyond, and in some instances the rural areas from the areas beyond the “limits” of the city. The use of such concentric walls shows that if these walls were meant to have a defensive function, it was not necessarily the city itself that was important to defend, but rather an entire urban network including the agricultural hinterland.

Descriptions of a number of cities along the eastern frontier feature these concentric rings of walls. al-Ya‘qūbī describes Balkh as having two sets of parallel and concentric walls, with the inner wall having three gates and the outer having twelve.¹²³ He then goes on to describe a situation where Balkh is actually surrounded by three walls. The central wall circles the city. A *farsakh* further out stands a wall which surrounds the suburbs of the city. This wall has four gates. The third wall is five *farsakhs* further out and surrounds the villages and cultivated lands of Balkh, beyond which there is only sand. This wall has twelve gates.¹²⁴ Ibn al-Faqīh describes the walls of Samarqand; a wall with twelve gates, designed with towers meant for fighting, surrounding agricultural lands, developed suburbs, and irrigated lands (some 6000 plots). Another wall with four gates surrounds the suburbs, which includes 5000 plots. A third wall brings you into the inner city and the *quhandiz* where the *sulṭān* resides.¹²⁵ Smaller cities and towns may also have multiple walls in a similar configuration. Sawrān has seven fortifications, not necessarily walls, one behind the other, with suburbs within them (*huṣūn sab‘a ba‘duha khalfa ba‘d wa-l-rabaḍ fihā*).¹²⁶ These types of fortifications are important because Sawrān is also the frontier against the Ghuzz and the Kīmāk. Other towns have large

¹²³ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 287.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹²⁵ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 326.

¹²⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

walls which protect a network of dependent regions. Bamijkath's wall encircles five villages.¹²⁷

If we consider the danger of predatory raids by the Turks on the agricultural lands of the eastern frontier, we see that the outermost of these concentric circles is the most important. These walls can deny easy access to farm lands and agricultural communities, while providing for multiple layers of defense in case the city itself falls under attack. If a siege takes place, the outer walls may prevent the besiegers from starving the city while living off of the city's own resources, a common tactic of besieging forces. Accordingly these walls demonstrate that the cities of the eastern frontier absolutely did not stand alone. They were the centers of networks made up of the villages and rural areas on which the cities depended.

Although the itineraries do not state explicitly that a city's wall functions in a similar way, at times they can provide us with evidence of these concentric rings. In Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma's reports, the gate of the wall of Bukhārā stands two *farsakhs* away from Baykand. The itinerary then goes on to describe the village of Māstīn, a *farsakh* and a half from the gate, after which come another five *farsakhs* from Māstīn to Bukhārā itself.¹²⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī confirms our reading here, saying that Bukhārā, its villages, and agricultural lands are surrounded by a wall of ten *farsakhs* within which everything is populated (*kulluhā 'āmara*).¹²⁹ He later goes on to include buildings, fortresses (*quṣūr*), gardens, postal stages, and a walled *madīna* including fortresses

¹²⁷ Ibid., 281.

¹²⁸ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 25; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 98.

¹²⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 165.

(*huṣūn*) within this wall.¹³⁰ al-Muqaddasī adds that Bukhārā has a wall of twelve *farsakhs* surrounding five dependent towns within which there is no untilled land (*laysa fīhi arḍ bā'ir*).¹³¹ The *Hudūd al-'ālam* also mentions a wall built around the whole of Bukhārā, without any interruption, and all of the city's *ribāṭs* and villages are within the wall.¹³² The situation resembles that of the walls of Balkh (see above). In this case, there are at least six and a half *farsakhs* (over twenty miles) between the wall and the city itself, with entire villages existing within the wall's outer circumference. The implication is clear that walls were not meant to protect the cities alone, but rather an entire network of dependent lands and villages. The city gate of Akhsīkath, here simply called Farghānā, is similarly described as standing four *farsakhs* from the city according to Ibn Khurradādhbih's itinerary.¹³³

al-Iṣṭakhrī gives detailed descriptions of the hinterlands around Bukhārā inside the city's walls, focusing on what lies along the various tributaries of the Zarafshān River. Here we see a situation similar to the fortresses at the heads of cultivated *wadis* found along the Roman *limes arabicus*, where fortifications were connected to areas with numerous agricultural estates. Along the river Nūkandah there are nearly two thousand gardens¹³⁴ and fortresses (*naḥwa alf bustān wa-qaṣr*).¹³⁵ Along the river Nuwaybār there are also a thousand gardens and fortresses (*alf bustān wa-qaṣr*).¹³⁶ Along the river

¹³⁰ Ibid., 171.

¹³¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 266-267.

¹³² *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 106.

¹³³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 30.

¹³⁴ The term *bustān* may also imply orchards or at least a larger agricultural enterprise than a decorative or kitchen garden. In this and the following instances, *bustān* (pl. *basātīn*) should probably be thought of in terms of these larger, agricultural enterprises. See G. Marçais, "Bustān," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

¹³⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 172.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Kushnah there are many fortresses, estates, and gardens (*quṣūr wa-ḍiyā' kathīra wa-basātīn*).¹³⁷ The river Rabāḥ, which reaches Qaṣr Rabāḥ, irrigates a thousand gardens and fortresses (*alf min al-basātīn wa-l-quṣūr*).¹³⁸ The river Zaghārkaḍah flows along many fortresses, gardens, and estates (*'alīhi quṣūr wa basātīn wa arāḍī kathīra*).¹³⁹ This pairing of fortresses with agricultural lands implies a relationship between the two, with the fortresses in place primarily to protect the agricultural lands. Furthermore, when specific fortresses are mentioned out of the thousands scattered across the agricultural hinterlands of Bukhārā, they are identified with particular individuals or families. References are made to Qaṣr Abī Hishām al-Kinānī¹⁴⁰ and Qaṣr Jalāl Dīzah,¹⁴¹ for example. These appear to be private estates with their own personal and privately-owned fortifications. The use of the term *qaṣr* further supports this conclusion through its identification not only with fortifications but also with palaces or mansions.¹⁴²

Such a defensive system, surrounding not only the city but also its associated network of agricultural lands, is a necessary and effective defensive measure, given the conditions of the region. The walls make it difficult for raiders to abscond with agricultural products, but do not prevent invaders from conquering the city outright. Combined with the networks of fortresses described later in this chapter, the purpose of this system is to deny the Turks easy pickings when they conduct their raids. An example is the tale which began this chapter, where the defenders planned to stand behind their

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 173.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 172.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁴² In arguing such, I am choosing to use the traditional understanding of the term *qaṣr*, not the definition proposed by Conrad. Conrad, in seeking an Arab origin for *qaṣr*, connects these structures with pastoralists and stables instead of palaces. Conrad, “The *Quṣūr* of Medieval Islam: Some Implications for the Social History of the Near East.”

fortifications and wait out the Turks. Further demonstrating the importance of preventing such raids before they even reach the agricultural lands, military installations, such as the *ḥiṣn* discussed above, are often located outside the city walls themselves. However, this does not mean that the villages and smaller cities found within these large encircling walls were not individually defended. al-Iṣṭakhrī says that each of the cities (*mudun*) within the wall of Bukhārā has its own fortress (*li-kullu minhā ḥiṣn*).¹⁴³ al-Ṭawāwīs, within the walls of Bukhārā is also specified as having a *quhandiz* of its own as well.¹⁴⁴

Such walls surrounding not only a city but its suburbs and agricultural hinterland as well bring to mind the forts found at the end of *wadis* along the *limes arabicus*. A raiding band - the typical threat in both regions – would usually be neither large enough to attack large population centers, nor interested in taking control of settled communities. Instead, the band would typically aim to capture the moveable goods that it needed to supplement whatever it produced through pastoralism. And these moveable goods were, for the most part, the agricultural produce that the forts of the *limes arabicus* and the city walls of the eastern frontier were intended to protect.

Our geographical sources' descriptions of the walls of Balkh gives us a clue to a secondary function for the outermost walls surrounding large swaths of agricultural land, namely, protection against environmental threats. The outermost wall is said to encompass an area of cultivated lands with only sandy desert found outside of it.¹⁴⁵ In other words, this wall appears to be important in preventing the spread of desertification in the cultivated lands of the city. Accordingly, al-Iṣṭakhrī says there are neither

¹⁴³ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 175.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 288.

mountains nor deserts within the walls of Bukhārā, reinforcing the idea that the area within the wall is dedicated to agriculture and settlement.¹⁴⁶

Desertification can occur where winds blow sand across cultivated or fertile lands. As the sand builds up, it covers the soil and thus prevents the growth of plants. A simple wall may act as a breaker, keeping sand from spreading into an area at rates high enough to cause desertification. The evidence from cities where walls have been destroyed by invaders shows that agricultural zones may turn into desert in a very short period of time. In discussing Dandānqān, near Marw, for example, Yāqūt's firsthand observation is that the desert has taken over the urban site entirely in the century since its destruction.¹⁴⁷ Accounts of areas where the Turks, Mongols, or later invaders have caused wholesale destruction of walls and buildings regularly tell of lush agricultural regions turning to desert in a generation or two from this type of process. A similar phenomenon of using walls to prevent desertification can be seen in other regions of the world in different eras, for example ancient Mesopotamia.

Cities depend upon the villages and agricultural regions which make up their suburbs and hinterlands. It is not enough to think of a city by itself in this sense, but one must also consider those areas which have a mutual dependence on the city as an interconnected network. The construction of city walls took the interconnected nature of these metropolitan areas into account. With regard to the threat posed by the Turks, it was really the walls surrounding the outlying agricultural regions that provided the primary

¹⁴⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 174.

¹⁴⁷ Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, (Beirut, 1957), 2:477. Dandānqān was destroyed by the Ghuzz Turks in 553/1158, Yāqūt would have seen these ruins a century later.

line of defense to insure the safety and longevity of the city, and not the walls around the inner city itself.

3.6 Defensive Networks

Benjamin Isaac has argued that in order to understand the forts of the Roman *limes arabicus*, one must first understand the road networks that connected them. “Mapping and dating forts without considering the road-network is an unstructured procedure which can not lead to an understanding of the system.”¹⁴⁸ Isaac argues that the roads are the reason for the forts and not the reverse. In other words, the forts were built in order to protect roads which then supplied the forts, rather than roads being built to supply the forts which then protected the roads. More specifically in the case of the *limes arabicus*, the forts have been viewed as associated with an “outer road” between Amman and Udruh which would have functioned as a *via militaris* used for movement of troops between a number of interconnected forts.¹⁴⁹

In the case of the Muslim eastern frontier, because our sources – especially the *al-masālik wa’l-mamālik* (“roads and realms”) works of Ibn Khurradādhbih and others – focus so strongly on itineraries it is not difficult to see connections between the fortifications and the network of roads. Of the fortresses along the eastern frontier described by our sources, many appear to be along roads, since they are listed in

¹⁴⁸ Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*, 128.

¹⁴⁹ B. Isaac, “Bandits in Judaea and Arabia,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 88 (1984): 191 and *The Limits of Empire*, 228; S.T. Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 6 (Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1986): 126.

itineraries. Ḥiṣn Umm Ja'far is on the road from Amul to Bukhārā.¹⁵⁰ Qaṣr al-Najār¹⁵¹ and Qaṣr al-Rīḥ (also known as Dizbād in Persian)¹⁵² are on the road from Nīshāpūr to Marw. Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays¹⁵³ and Qaṣr Khūt¹⁵⁴ are on the road from Marw to Tukhāristān. Qaṣr 'Alqama is on the road from Bukhārā to Samarqand.¹⁵⁵ Qaṣr Mūhnān is on the road from al-Shāsh to “the mine of silver” (*ma'din al-faḍḍa*).¹⁵⁶ Qaṣr al-Amīr is on the road from Marw to Balkh.¹⁵⁷ These are only the fortresses which include terms like *ḥiṣn* and *qaṣr* in their names, both meaning “fortress,” and not those places which are said to include a fortress, because the names indicate that the fortresses served as one of the primary functions or defining features of these sites. In fact, only three of the above-mentioned sites are said to have any non-military purpose. al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal mention that Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays has running water, gardens, vineyards, and nice fruits.¹⁵⁸ The *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, which translates the place name into Persian as Diz-i

¹⁵⁰ Six *farsakhs* from Farabr (which Qudāma identifies as Quriya 'Ali) and six *farsakhs* from Baykand. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 25; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 98.

¹⁵¹ Three *farsakhs* from Sarakhs and five *farsakhs* from Ushurmaghāk. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 24; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 97.

¹⁵² The first stage from Nīshāpūr towards Sarakhs which is on the way to Marw. al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

¹⁵³ Four *farsakhs* from Hawzān and five *farsakhs* from Marwarrūth. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106. al-Iṣṭakhrī says Qaṣr Aḥnaf is one stage from Marw al-Rūdh on the road to Balkh. al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 152. al-Muqaddasī says Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays is two stages from Hawzān, certainly more than four *farsakhs*, and one stage from Araskan on the road from Marw to al-Yahūdiyya. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 347.

¹⁵⁴ Five *farsakhs* from Arghayn and five *farsakhs* from al-Fāryāb. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 107.

¹⁵⁵ Five *farsakhs* from Zarmān and two *farsakhs* from Samarqand itself. Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 99.

¹⁵⁶ Two *farsakhs* from al-Khurba. Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 104.

¹⁵⁷ One day's travel from al-Yahūdiyya and one day's travel from Fāryāb. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 347. al-Muqaddasī does not put Qaṣr al-Amīr directly on the road from Marw to Balkh, instead it is on a road from al-Yahūdiyya to al-Ṭālaqān which can then be interpolated into a route from Marw to Balkh by comparing al-Muqaddasī's shorter routes with the itineraries found in other texts. Admittedly, this reconstructed itinerary would be rather long in comparison to the others mentioned here.

¹⁵⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 152; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 442.

Aḥnaf, also mentions fields and running water.¹⁵⁹ al-Muqaddasī adds that Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays has a mosque in a market, implying that this was also a site for religious and commercial activities though these facilities may have been meant primarily to serve a military garrison.¹⁶⁰ Qaṣr Khūṭ is a prosperous and populated village in the midst of the desert.¹⁶¹ Qaṣr al-Rīḥ is identified as a village in the region of Nīshāpūr.¹⁶²

It has long been thought that the *via militaris* of the Roman *limes arabicus* was a frontier road, running the length of the physical frontier, connecting the forts as well as *mansiones*,¹⁶³ caravanserais, guardposts, and signal stations.¹⁶⁴ As mentioned earlier, David F. Graf has disproved this assumption and has shown that the road actually ran a few kilometers behind the frontier.¹⁶⁵ Even if this is so, however, this road was still relatively close to the actual, physical frontier. By contrast, in the case of the Muslim eastern frontier, the roads which connect its fortresses do not run along the physical frontier itself, or even within a few kilometers of it. Instead, these roads connect major cities located well within the frontier zone. So for instance, Qaṣr Mūhnān is the only fortress named above that is located beyond Samarqand. Accordingly, if we follow a line of reasoning similar to Benjamin Isaac's, we may argue that the roads that connected the major cities of Khurāsān and Transoxania were the reasons for these fortresses, rather than the establishment of a militarized frontier line.

¹⁵⁹ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 94.

¹⁶⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 314.

¹⁶¹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 107.

¹⁶² al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

¹⁶³ Official post stations where travelers could find shelter and refreshment, located every twenty five to thirty kilometers along Roman roads.

¹⁶⁴ Graf, "The *Via Militaris* in Arabia," 273.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 280-281.

The fact that the fortresses of the eastern frontier did not form a single line along the frontier says something about the nature of the frontier and the threats which existed along it and within the zone as a whole. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Muslim side of the frontier was far from homogeneous and many groups of Turks, including some who preyed upon the Muslim communities, lived well within the Muslim side of the frontier. al-Ya'qūbī explains that the Turks “surround the province of Khurāsān and make incursions into all parts; in this way there is not a region of Khurāsān where the inhabitants are not in combat with the Turks and where the Turks of all races do not perform raids.”¹⁶⁶ Against this widespread raiding, it was not only the extreme limit of the frontier which needed to be defended, as in the case of the Roman *limes arabicus*, but the entire region. The presence of these fortresses along the roads connecting the major cities of region indicates an emphasis on maintaining safe routes of travel.

Perhaps the most important city of early Islamic Khurāsān was Marw, the provincial capital from the Muslim conquests of the region in 31/651 until the Ṭāhirids moved their capital to Nīshāpūr in 205/821. Marw had also acted as the provincial capital and the seat of the Ispahbadh (military chief) under the Sāsānians prior to the Muslim conquests. It had been one of the furthest points of the Sāsānian domains, although cities further north and east were often Sāsānian allies or vassals. If we look at the fortresses mentioned above, six of them out of a total of eight are located on routes which radiate out from Marw (if we consider the Amul – Bukhārā road to be a sub-section of a larger Marw – Bukhārā road), though none of these are in the immediate vicinity of Marw itself.

¹⁶⁶ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 295.

Looking further into these itineraries radiating out from Marw we see that along a number routes or portions of routes every stop is noted as being fortified. Between Sarakhs and Marw, for example, every stop is protected by a fortress (*ḥiṣn*) where the local people defend against the Turks who raid there often.¹⁶⁷

It is important to note that these fortresses would be the ones furthest from the actual limits of the *Dār al-Islām* mentioned so far in this section. (An exception is Qaṣr al-Rīḥ which is along the route from Nīshāpūr to Sarakhs, which we may consider an addition to the Sarakhs-Marw route mentioned above.) On the other side of Marw, between Marw and Amul, every stop, with the exception of the first stop upon leaving Marw (Kushmāhan), is fortified, though here we find no direct mention of raids by the Turks.¹⁶⁸ For the Marw-Amul road, besides being the only unfortified site, Kushmāhan is not only the only stop, but it is the only stop which is named by al-Ya'qūbī. We can identify from other sources that the rest of these stops are al-Dīwāb, al-Manṣaf, al-Aḥsa', and Bi'r 'Uthmān.¹⁶⁹ Aside from the fact that all of these sites are on roads leading to Marw, the only other unifying factor among them is that they are all noted as being in the desert.

Of the fortresses surrounding Marw mentioned above, Ḥiṣn Umm Ja'far, Qaṣr al-Najār, Qaṣr al-Rīḥ, Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, Qaṣr Khūṭ, and Qaṣr al-Amīr all have Arabic names, indicating either a post conquest construction or, at least, a rededication. In fact, we know that at least two of these fortresses were pre-Islamic constructions. Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, according to Yāqūt, is named after al-Aḥnaf b. Qays Abu Sa'īd

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 279.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 280. Ibn Ḥawqal says that Kushmāhan, near the location of al-Ya'qūbī's Kushmāhan and most likely the same location, does contain multiple *ribāṭs*. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 436.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 25.

Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Naḡāsh, whom he describes as a *ghazī* active in Ṭukhāristān in the year 32/652-653. According to Yāqūt, al-Aḥnaf led a two-year siege of the fortress and supervised the distribution of the spoils after it fell; the fortress was renamed after him.¹⁷⁰ Our sources regularly refer to al-Aḥnaf b. Qays and his role in the conquests of the region, and not only in the context of *qaṣr* named after him. This is an example of the history of conquest leaving a strong imprint on the region, but it is also an example of these highway fortresses being pre-Islamic constructions.

The naming or renaming of fortresses after important figures did not only occur in the context of conquest by individual military leaders. Ḥiṣn Umm Ja‘far is most certainly named for Ḥārūn al-Rashīd’s wife and the mother of the Caliph al-Amīn, Umm Ja‘far Zubayda (d. 216/831-2). Zubayda was known for her many charitable donations, most famously the construction of wells at Mecca and along the pilgrimage route from Baghdad (known as the *darb Zubayda*). Some of these charitable enterprises included the construction of fortresses and defenses along the Arab-Byzantine *thughur* and throughout the east, the most famous being the fortress at Badhakhshān mentioned by al-Muqaddasī.¹⁷¹ Though Ḥiṣn Umm Ja‘far is usually not listed among these, its construction has at least been accredited to Umm Ja‘far Zubayda through the use of her name in some of our sources, though we are not certain if this was a new construction during her lifetime or an older fortress which was rededicated in her honor.

¹⁷⁰ Yāqūt, *Muj‘am al-buldān*, 7:55. Yāqūt’s comments about the conquest of Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays are important for the way the history of the Muslim conquests of Khurāsān were memorialized locally, in this case through place names. al-Balādhurī gives a very different account of the conquest of the fortress in which any mention of a siege has been removed and the fortress simply agrees to a treaty (*ṣulḥ*) worth 300,000 *dirhams*. They also allowed some Muslims to settle in the fortress until al-Aḥnaf b. Qays had left Khurāsān, presumably to prevent the fortress being used for organizing resistance against the Muslims. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*. (Egypt, 1932), 396-397.

¹⁷¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 303.

al-Ya'qūbī gives us less detailed information about another fortress with a possible pre-Islamic past, Qaṣr al-Rīḥ, which he says is also known as Dizbād in Persian.¹⁷² The existence of both an Arabic and a Persian name implies that this was a pre-existing site which was rededicated post-conquest. Dizbād is also the name of a river in the area, flowing towards Nīshāpūr, which could lead one to think the Persian term is not so specifically tied to the fortress itself, except that this is one of the three fortresses mentioned above noted as having a village attached to it. Here not only has the fortress been renamed, but perhaps the new name of the fortress had been applied to the entire village below it.

The road networks around Marw are not exclusively defended by fortresses with Arabic names. A number of locations between Sarakhs and Marw are said to be fortified while maintaining Persian names, namely Astarmu'āth, Maksānah, Dandānqān, and Bakird.¹⁷³ Through Yāqūt, who saw its ruins, we know that until Dandānqān was destroyed by the Ghuzz in 553/1158 the city was protected by a wall and a *ribāṭ*, whose ruins stood alone together with those of the minaret in Yāqūt's time. These fortifications were large enough that the army of Khurāsān was able to hide within them when engaged by the Ghuzz in 553/1158.¹⁷⁴ Even though Dandānqān lies in the desert and is primarily noted in our sources for its military role, it was also a population center by the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, which we know because the Ghuzz are said to have expelled its population. From this we may assume that each of these fortified stops along the road

¹⁷² al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, 2:477.

may have likewise been a fully developed settlement, perhaps growing out of a fortified site which originally had a purely military purpose.

Even though a number of the fortresses surrounding Marw have Arabic names and names which specifically note the Muslim conquests of the region, they are largely older constructions with pre-Islamic precedents. It is important to make note of this as we consider the development and role of the defensive infrastructure of the eastern frontier. Marw's long history as a center of agriculture, trade, and provincial governance in the region pre-dates the emergence of Islam. As the Sāsānian provincial capital and a site on the official imperial frontier, the defense of Marw must have been a priority. After the conquests, the Muslims renamed a number of these sites, especially where resistance had been fierce, as in Qaṣr Aḥnaf b. al-Qays, and made changes in their infrastructure, building mosques for example. All the while, however, this emphasis on the defense of Marw did not necessarily change. Marw remained the primary node of the region, at least until 205/821, and protecting travel to and from the city for economic and government purposes remained a priority.

As our sources move closer to the frontier, and therefore farther out from the Sāsānian domains, they show an increase in fortresses with Arabic names. This may indicate that the especially fortified road network around Marw is a remnant of a Sāsānian defensive network. As our sources come to the cities of Transoxania which had been largely independent prior to the arrival of Islam, we may be seeing indications that the Muslims had to be more directly involved in the foundation of new fortresses, as part of a process of integrating Transoxania within the broader networks of the caliphate. This can even be seen in the area immediately around Marw. The names found between Marw

and Amūl, on the northern side of Marw, are Arabic: al-Dīwāb, al-Mansaf (the halfway point), al-Aḥsa', and Bi'r 'Uthmān (the spring of 'Uthmān). In contrast, the majority of the names to the south, between Marw and Sarakhs, are Persian. This distribution of names may have its origins in the settlement patterns of Arab migrants during the Arab-Islamic conquests. As Parvaneh Pourshariati has argued, Khurāsān should be seen as having two parts, an "Inner Khurāsān" focused on Nīshāpūr where Arab settlement was light, and an "Outer Khurāsān" centered on Marw where Arab settlement was much heavier.¹⁷⁵ Those fortresses with Arabic names north of Marw are fully within "Outer Khurāsān," while those with Persian names are along roads heading into "Inner Khurāsān" where Arab settlement was less prevalent or occurred later.

Though our sources discuss the fortresses which protected the network of roads around Marw in greater detail than those fortresses found around other cities, Marw is not the only city which appears to have such a network. Working from the names of city gates and the roads radiating out from cities, we can reconstruct similar defensive networks. Among the roads leaving Binkath, al-Muqaddasī lists roads with explicitly military names, such as Darb Ribāṭ Aḥmad and Darb Qaṣr al-Dihqān, though he doesn't refer to either a Ribāṭ Aḥmad or a Qaṣr al-Dihqān outside the names of the roads. Besides these, he notes that Binkath also has two fortresses (*ḥiṣn*), one in each of its suburbs.¹⁷⁶ This leaves us to assume that Binkath is surrounded by no fewer than four fortresses or fortress-like structures.

¹⁷⁵ See Parvaneh Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquests of Iran*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 417-420.

¹⁷⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 276.

An important element of the defensive infrastructure of the eastern frontier was the defense of the roads which linked major urban centers. Such fortifications were not concentrated along the frontier itself, but appeared in high concentrations around urban centers far from the actual frontier. In our geographical sources, especially the earlier texts of the Iraqī school, the highest concentrations of these fortifications are found near major administrative centers, such as Marw. The placement of these fortifications demonstrates the importance of travel to and from these urban centers and the dangers which threatened travelers on such roads. Other types of fortifications existed in other places along the frontier, contributing to a wide network which defended the frontier against Turkish raiders.

3.7 *Ribāṭs*

Before continuing to a discussion of defensive networks away from urban centers, we should return to the topic of *ribāṭs*. As stated earlier, the *ribāṭ* is an architectural form which has left scholars with a number of questions. Paul Wheatley has put the issue most clearly: “*Ribāṭ* is a term virtually incapable of unequivocal definition and consequently requires a... less apodictic treatment.”¹⁷⁷ Understanding the meaning and use of the term requires careful consideration of geographic and chronological context.¹⁷⁸ *Ribāṭs* have primarily been associated with guard posts or frontier outposts, but also with a number of other more or less specific duties. The most discussed of these extra-military duties involve their association with Sufis who resided in *ribāṭs*, combining military and

¹⁷⁷ Wheatley, *The Places Where Men Pray Together*, 256.

¹⁷⁸ See J. Chabbi, “*Ribāṭ*,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition* for a careful consideration of the chronological development of the term along with its major geographic variations.

religious occupations, giving the *ribāṭ* the feel of a “military monastery,” which tends to stand as the common definition. While there certainly were mystics who took to the *ribāṭs* for religious purposes and urban institutions known as *ribāṭs* which housed Sufis, these were mainly a later phenomena which should not be applied to all times and places.¹⁷⁹ The broad definition of *ribāṭ* as “military monastery” tends to connect the phenomenon to a notion of a generalized *jihād*, and an image of volunteer “warriors of the faith” launching attacks against the Turks from guard posts strewn across the eastern frontier.¹⁸⁰

In actuality, *ribāṭs* appear in a variety of forms with a variety of functions, which is one reason why it has been such a tricky topic for scholars. As a solution to the problem, scholars have provided a variety of translations for this single term based upon individual contexts, especially when preparing translations of single texts. Following phrases like “guard post” or “frontier outpost,” *ribāṭ* has been translated as “guesthouse,” “caravanserai,” or “postal relay.” Chabbi, following Albrecht Noth,¹⁸¹ has provided a solution to variability, stating that

It seems that what is involved is the simple imposition of a noun, probably denoting the existence of danger and the need to take precautions against it, upon various pre-existing constructions, without any suggestion that there is, at the outset, such a thing as a unique type of edifice which could be called *ribāṭ*.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Chabbi, “Ribāṭ.”

¹⁸⁰ A point stressed by Georges Marçais, “Note sur les *ribāṭs* en Berbérie,” in *Mélanges René Basset*, (Paris: Éditions Ernest Leroux, 1925): 2: 395-430; even though Marçais was speaking about North Africa and not the eastern frontier.

¹⁸¹ Albrecht Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf in Islam und Christentum*, (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1966), 66-87.

¹⁸² Chabbi, “Ribāṭ.”

The earliest usage of the term, as a *maṣdar* (verbal noun) of *rabaṭa*, implied the mustering of cavalry in preparation of a *ghazw* or raid. By the early ‘Abbāsīd era, the term was applied to a variety of fortified edifices, ranging from observation towers to small fortresses, located in positions of danger. Across both sets of definitions, the sustaining idea is that a *ribāṭ* is a place where one prepares for combat, probably on a small scale. Picard and Borrut have recently addressed the development of both *ribāṭs* as institutions and their meaning on the western and eastern edges of the Islamic world, arguing that, while *ribāṭs* are not particular edifices, their role changed from secular frontier defenses to religious institutions as frontiers became increasingly stabilized and pacified.¹⁸³ Following Noth, Chabbi, Picard, and Borrut’s interests in seeing *ribāṭ* as a general function applied to non-specific constructions, we can look at places where sites identified as *ribāṭs* are located across the eastern frontier and consider what is necessary for a place to become a *ribāṭ*.

One situation in which we see the idea of *ribāṭ* as a function applied to a place most clearly is in cities which are described in their entirety as *ribāṭs*. So for instance, al-Muqaddasī describes Badhakhshān as a fine *ribāṭ* (*hiya ribāṭ fāḍl*) while also containing the fortress of Zubayda mentioned above.¹⁸⁴ Afrāwa is noted as an important *ribāṭ* as well as the site of three fortresses, one of them surrounded by a trench.¹⁸⁵ In other cases, a place may be associated with a specific *ribāṭ*. Kūfan is said to be the *ribāṭ* of Abīward,

¹⁸³ A. Borrut and C. Picard, “Rābata, ribāt, rābita: une institution a reconsidérer,” in P. Sénac and N. Prouteau (eds.), *Chrétiens et Musulmans en Méditerranée Médiévale (VIIIe-XIIIe s.): échanges et contacts*, p. 33-65 (Poitiers, 2003).

¹⁸⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 303.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 320.

distinct from its fortress (*hiṣnhā*) in Mahana.¹⁸⁶ With the exception of Badhakhshān, located south of the Alai Mountains from the Farghānā valley, these sites are all found between Sarakhs and Marw, far from the physical frontier and in areas with a heavy concentration of fortified sites, as described above. They all appear to be fortified to some extent, but none of them are said to have a particular edifice called a *ribāṭ*. Instead, it is the city itself which functions as the *ribāṭ*.

Though not identified as the *ribāṭ* itself, Dandānqān, also near Marw, is the place of the *ribāṭ* against Dihistān. It is described as a fortified place with a *ribāṭ* outside of it and many fortresses.¹⁸⁷ When we come to the description of Dandānqān, we see that independently of the city's being a place of *ribāṭ* it also contains an individual edifice known as a *ribāṭ* as well as other fortresses. Dandānqān, as the place of *ribāṭ* against Dihistān (a region north east of Herat which remained under the control of a Persian *dihqān* until the Seljuqs took control of it in 426/1035), appears to have some responsibilities in relationship to Dihistān beyond its own personal defense, as is implied by the presence of fortifications. What these specific responsibilities may be remains in question. For Dandānqān and other cities which act as *ribāṭs*, there is an activity known as *ribāṭ* which occurs there, most likely associated with some kind of marshalling or preparation for combat.

Being a *ribāṭ* does mean something different than being simply fortified or a fortress. Much as a distinction was drawn between fortresses, walled inner cities, and *quhandiz* through the highlighting of places where two or more of these different edifices could be found in close proximity, a similar distinction can be drawn between fortresses

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 321.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 312.

and *ribāṭs*. As noted above, both Badhakhshān and Dandānqān are or contain *ribāṭs* while also possessing fortresses. The fortress (*ḥiṣn*) of Mīrkī has a *ribāṭ* outside of it, putting these two not only in the same city but in immediate proximity to each other.¹⁸⁸ Gharj al-Shār has fortresses or palaces (*quṣūr*) which contain a congregational mosque and a number of *ribāṭs* inside the fortifications themselves.¹⁸⁹ The walls of Bukhārā contain not only villages and agricultural lands, but a number of *ribāṭs* as well.¹⁹⁰ A number of other fortifications within the walls of Bukhārā have already been discussed and we may place these *ribāṭs* in the same category, associating them with particular agricultural estates within the walls. Farabr contains *ribāṭs* attached to the *quhandiz*.¹⁹¹ In these particular cases, *ribāṭs* cannot simply be a form of fortress, but must have a function distinct from the functions fulfilled by fortresses and walls. Though fortresses and *ribāṭs* have similar associations, with all of them having to do with some kind of military practice, the presence of both in close proximity to each other indicates a nuanced difference, much like the distinction between fortresses and *quhandiz*.

Beyond the cities which are described as these kinds of *ribāṭs* writ large, we see other urban *ribāṭs* within cities. The wall of Isfījāb, for example, has four gates with a *ribāṭ* for each gate.¹⁹² Ibn Ḥawqal says that Kushmīhan, near Marw, includes *ribāṭs* among the amenities in the city, including fruits, markets, inns, and bath houses.¹⁹³ In the neighborhood of Baykand, near the wall of Bukhārā, there are a thousand *ribāṭs*, some of

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 275.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 309.

¹⁹⁰ *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, 106.

¹⁹¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 291.

¹⁹² Ibid., 272. al-Muqaddasī actually says these *ribāṭs* are found at the entrances of the congregational mosque, but this has been commonly understood to be an error and the city walls were meant.

¹⁹³ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 436.

them inhabited and some ruined.¹⁹⁴ Baykand is also home to a fortress which contains a market and the congregational mosque. The large number of *ribāṭs* mentioned here, obviously an exaggeration, does put into question what an urban *ribāṭ* might look like. Many of these must be outside Baykand itself and are probably associated with the walls of Bukhārā. The *ribāṭs* associated with other fortress types mentioned above are also located in urban settings. What this tells us is that the function of *ribāṭs* is not limited to that of a frontier outpost, especially when we consider that few of these sites are located in any real proximity to the actual frontier, but can occur within a more fully developed and inhabited environment.

The emphasis thus far on *ribāṭs* found in urban environments should not be taken to mean that this is the context in which the majority of *ribāṭs* are found. The majority of those specifically-named *ribāṭs* or *ribāṭs* that are described in detail are found in urban areas and villages, but this is clearly a bias of our sources, with their concern with describing conditions in urban centers and their subsidiary villages. Other *ribāṭs* are specifically mentioned along itineraries or in large concentrations in particular regions. The majority of the *ribāṭs* described by al-Muqaddasī, for example, are found in his itineraries. Here you find *ribāṭs* on the road from Bukhārā to Tirmidh,¹⁹⁵ Bukhārā to Amzah,¹⁹⁶ from Fāryāb to Karkū,¹⁹⁷ from Marw to the Oxus,¹⁹⁸ from Abshīn to Herat,¹⁹⁹ Abshīn to al-Ṭālaqān,²⁰⁰ and from Ghanzīn to al-Bāmiyān.²⁰¹ Ribāṭ Māsh receives its own

¹⁹⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 282.

¹⁹⁵ Ribāṭ ʿAtīq and Ribāṭ Khwārān, (al-Muqaddasī: 343).

¹⁹⁶ Ribāṭ Tāsh, Ribāṭ Ṭughān, Ribāṭ Jikarband, Ribāṭ Ḥasan, Ribāṭ Māsh, and Ribāṭ Sandah, (al-Muqaddasī: 343).

¹⁹⁷ Ribāṭ Afriḡhūn (al-Muqaddasī: 347).

¹⁹⁸ Ribāṭ al-Ḥadīd, Ribāṭ Naṣrak, and Ribāṭ Bāris, (al-Muqaddasī: 348).

¹⁹⁹ Ribāṭ Shūr, Ribāṭ Shār, and Ribāṭ Miyānah, (al-Muqaddasī: 348).

²⁰⁰ Ribāṭ Kurzuwān and Ribāṭ al-Rūdh, (al-Muqaddasī: 348).

itinerary to Ardhakhīwa.²⁰² Some routes have more general descriptions of *ribāṭs*, such as the route from Bukhārā to Nakhshab, where you encounter a number of unnamed *ribāṭs*.²⁰³ These instances are more conducive to the idea of *ribāṭs* as frontier outposts than are those *ribāṭs* found in the cities. Here we find them, lining the roads of the eastern frontier, similar to the fortresses mentioned earlier in the chapter. Instead, these *ribāṭs* located along itineraries have been seen as fortified postal stations or caravanserais.²⁰⁴ The activity which appears to make these places *ribāṭs* seems to be largely defensive. These are places where postal agents, merchants, and other travelers may seek refuge and safety from raids and bandits while traveling the roads of Transoxania and Khurāsān.

al-Iṣṭakhrī gives us a detailed description of the *ribāṭ* of Farāwa, near Sarakhs. He says that the *murābiṭūn* settle at Farāwa with their equipment, but that there is no village there nor is anything attached to it nor does anyone live there.²⁰⁵ In other words, this is neither an urban *ribāṭ* nor a *ribāṭ* on the frontier itself, but rather a *ribāṭ* where people interested in engaging in these activities gather, marking it as more of a marshalling point for fighters than a mere place of refuge. This is not a place for long-term settlement, since it lacks all amenities beyond the bare essentials necessary for a *ribāṭ*, which could be as little as a wall with a gate.

The urban *ribāṭs* have been described in terms of marshalling points in preparation for certain military activities. The *ribāṭs* found along al-Muqaddasī's itineraries appear to be more closely related to refuges for travelers. In both contexts, the

²⁰¹ Ribāṭ al-Bārid, (al-Muqaddasī: 349).

²⁰² al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 344.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Chabbi, "Ribāṭ."

²⁰⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 154.

role of the *ribāṭ* implies a location of potential danger which the *ribāṭ* allows people either to avoid by hiding behind its walls or to engage by marshalling forces behind its walls. However, in cases where *ribāṭs* are found at the gates of cities, such as in Isfījāb, urban *ribāṭs* may be playing a similar role to those *ribāṭs* found along roads, providing refuge to travelers when they are unable to enter the city walls. The most important factor in defining a place as a location which can function as a *ribāṭ* appears to be the walls which limit access and provide safety. Such a definition, though, requires that the *ribāṭ* be differentiated from the other walled defensive structures found throughout the eastern frontier, especially fortresses. This distinction may be made through an analysis of what other functions a *ribāṭ* may play.

Fortresses throughout the eastern frontier have an important connection to certain communal edifices, particularly mosques and markets. Very little information is given about the make-up of particular *ribāṭs*, so much so that it is difficult to tell if a *ribāṭ* makes up the entirety of a location or is just a single edifice among others. In one instance where we are given detailed information about the make-up of a *ribāṭ*, the Ribāṭ Dhu al-Qarnayn, located in Kālīf across the Jayḥūn from Ribāṭ Dhu al-Kifl, houses a mosque.²⁰⁶ One *ribāṭ* about which we have a great deal of details makes the question of the make-up and function of the *ribāṭ* rather difficult. Kufān is described as a *ribāṭ* with a fortress (*ḥiṣn*) over it; in its corner is a *ribāṭ* in which there stands a large mosque with a cistern and two pools.²⁰⁷ In this one site we have a city that is identified as a *ribāṭ*, which has a physical *ribāṭ* as a specific edifice, in which there is a mosque, and which is located inside a fortress. Similarly, the *quṣūr* of Gharj al-Shār mentioned above contain a number

²⁰⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 291.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 321, n. b.

of *ribāṭs* along with a congregational mosque. *Ribāṭs* thus appear to have a connection with mosques, but in many instances the *ribāṭ* and the mosque are found within another form of fortification, complicating this relationship.

These associations between *ribāṭs* and fortresses and other institutions within cities have led some scholars to argue that it is mistaken to ascribe a military function to all *ribāṭs*. These urban *ribāṭs*, it has been argued, should be seen as hospices for travelers and not military edifices. Claude Cahen has argued that urban *ribāṭs*, and specifically those maintained by *waqf*, are in fact merely hospices meant to house travelers.²⁰⁸ A number of *ribāṭs* across the eastern frontier are maintained by *waqf*, religious endowments, and named after the individual who made the donation. This association between *ribāṭ* and *waqf* is one point where we can draw a distinction between the *ribāṭ* and other fortifications, which do not appear to be associated with such endowments. The *ribāṭ* maintained by *waqf* may also act as a tomb for its donor in these situations. Yakānkāt is known as the city of Kharākharāf, where both his *ribāṭ* and tomb are located.²⁰⁹ One of the four *ribāṭs* attached to the walls of Ifsījāb (see below) is named after the Sāmānid commander Qarātagīn. His grave is attached to it, and both are maintained by a *waqf* from a nearby market which generates 7000 *dirhams* monthly.²¹⁰ Abu al-Qāsim al-Mikālī, noted for his service as a *muṭṭawwi'* (volunteer fighter) along both the Byzantine and eastern frontiers,²¹¹ established two *ribāṭs*, equipping them with his own money and supported by a *waqf*, where his tomb is located.²¹² These were built

²⁰⁸ Claude Cahen, "Réflexions sur le waqf ancien," *Studia Islamica* 14 (1961): 37-56.

²⁰⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

²¹¹ C.E. Bosworth, "Mikālīs," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

²¹² al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 333-334.

with treasuries, fortifications, and mosques.²¹³ Provisioning a *ribāṭ* by *waqf* indicates that *ribāṭs* were intended to function for the benefit of the Muslim community as a whole. They provided some kind of service which was necessary for the wellbeing of the community. That a number of the people who established these *waqfs* had some kind of military connection with the region may imply that the purpose of these *ribāṭs* was also military in nature, possibly connected to the proper conduct of *jihād* along the frontier, as in the earliest forms of *waqf* which functioned as *al-ḥubs fī sabīl Allāh*, or “inalienable property dedicated to the path of God,” and often consisted of houses for the sheltering of frontier warriors.²¹⁴ Even if these *ribāṭs* are physically found within cities, they may still play a role in frontier warfare as marshalling points. More likely, though, is that these *ribāṭs*, both those found in urban spaces, along roads, and spread across the frontier itself, are also specific forms of hospices established in areas of danger and meant to provide safety for travelers from raiders and bandits, while simultaneously functioning as marshalling points for fighters.

These “*waqf*” *ribāṭs* have a variety of facilities attached to them, which are not necessarily associated with other *ribāṭs*, beyond the presence of tombs. The *ribāṭ* of Qarātagīn is associated with a market, although the location of this *ribāṭ* in an urban space makes the market’s presence less surprising, as we may suppose the market to have been established for the maintenance of the *ribāṭ*. The *ribāṭs* of Abu al-Qāsim al-Mikālī have treasuries and mosques. al-Mikālī’s *ribāṭs* appear more fully developed than other *ribāṭs*, in a manner which would allow them to operate independently. Though not

²¹³ Ibid., 320 n. s.

²¹⁴ See Joseph Schacht, “Early Doctrines on *waqf*,” in *Mélanges Fuad Köprülü*. (Istanbul: Osman Yalçın Matbaası, 1953): 443-452.

attached to a *waqf* endowment, Ribāṭ al-Nūr, outside Bukhārā, hosts an annual fair.²¹⁵

Unlike other forms of defensive infrastructure which are associated with a variety of non-military institutions, *ribāṭs* seem not to have these kinds of standardized, mixed purposes. It is only these outlying examples which are noted for having infrastructure beyond what is needed for military activities.

Another set of *ribāṭs* with attributes unique from other forms of fortification are those connected with shrines. Two *farsakhs* from Marw stands a *ribāṭ* with a small tomb, said to contain the head of the Shi'ite Imam al-Ḥusayn.²¹⁶ Ribāṭ Suhayl, between Nīshāpūr and Quhistān, is connected with a group of Companions of the Prophet. al-Muqaddasī reports a story that these Companions arrived at the location of Ribāṭ Suhayl when cold overtook them. They prayed to God and he made a hot spring arise there. Some of these Companions were then buried there.²¹⁷ Between the *waqf*-endowed and the “shrine” *ribāṭs*, we can detect a pattern of association between *ribāṭs* and certain religious practices that we do not see in other types of fortifications, though we cannot always tell if it was the *waqf* or shrine or the *ribāṭ* which came first. This association may be a precursor of the later association between Sufis and *ribāṭs*, but it also may be a result of a more informal system for establishing and financing *ribāṭs* in contrast to other fortifications, which may have been more closely directed by the state.

The construction and maintenance of *ribāṭs* appear to be, at least in part, a communal responsibility. al-Iṣṭakhrī states that “The majority of the people of property in Transoxania direct their expenses towards the *ribāṭs* and the buildings along the roads

²¹⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 334.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 333.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 334.

and the way stations in the path of *jihād*, except for a few of them.”²¹⁸ He then goes on to make a direct association between the presence of *ribāṭs* and agricultural estates, stating that “the estates (*maghna*) of Transoxania have over ten thousand *ribāṭs*.”²¹⁹ Beyond this connection between the landholders and the maintenance of the *ribāṭs*, there is an association between the people of Transoxania and their staffing. People from all over Transoxania head to the *ribāṭs* and the way stations along the roads in order to repair and improve them and while they stay in the *ribāṭs* and way stations they are supplied with fodder for their animals and food for themselves.²²⁰

Ribāṭs appear to be defined by function more than form, though this function may be vague itself. In order for a place to function as a *ribāṭ* it must, at the minimum, provide safety in an area of danger. The people seeking refuge in *ribāṭs* may be travelers, but they also may be involved with military duties of some kind, in which case the *ribāṭ* acts as a marshalling point for them. The two functions may actually be combined, inasmuch as the presence of fighters is necessary for maintaining the *ribāṭ* as a point of refuge for travelers.

3.8 Defending the Frontier

Few of the sites that we have mentioned thus far are located directly on the edge of the frontier, or at any rate, we have not emphasized their location on the edge of the frontier. None of these sites have formed a militarized line along the frontier, like the one which was formerly proposed for the Roman *limes arabicus*. These sites did not even form a

²¹⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 163.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

line within a close distance to the actual frontier like the road reconstructed by David Graf. Instead these defenses have focused around urban and agricultural centers, sometimes deep within the Muslim side of the frontier and the roads which connected them. This is not to say that the frontier itself was not defended. It is important, however, to think about what we mean by frontier when pondering this issue. We have described the eastern frontier as an ill-defined zone with great depth which is neither culturally nor politically homogenous on either side. With that in mind, it is the entirety of the frontier zone which needs to be defended, especially from nomadic raids by the Turks. Still, there are certain aspects of the military infrastructure of the eastern frontier which have been more directly associated with activity along the frontier itself.

Our sources tend to view regions closer to the frontier as being, on the whole, more heavily fortified. al-Ya'qūbī describes al-Ṣughd, for example, as made up of well-defended and fortified towns (*mudun jalīla manī'a ḥaṣīna*).²²¹ Other frontier regions are noted for the large number of fortresses that can be found there. Ushrūsana, the kingdom of the Afshīn, is described as an expansive place with four hundred fortresses (*ḥiṣn*).²²² Ishtīkhān is similarly noted as having a number of fortresses (*ḥuṣūn*).²²³ The connection between expansive defensive infrastructure and specific frontier duties is made explicit for a number of sites. Wāshjird is an important frontier city (*madīnat thaghr 'aẓīm*), the capital of al-Khuttal, and oversees an area with seven hundred strongly-built fortresses (*ḥiṣn ḥaṣīna*).²²⁴ These fortresses are there because the people of the region “raid the

²²¹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 293.

²²² *Ibid.*, 293-294.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 294.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

Turks” from them.²²⁵ Isfijāb is noted for having 2,700 *ribāṭs* because it is “an important frontier and the abode of *jihād*.”²²⁶ Though not of the same magnitude, Athakhkath is said to have many *ribāṭs*.²²⁷ Farabr has both multiple *ribāṭs* inside the city, which may be attached to the still inhabited *quhandiz*, and the *ribāṭ* of the Sāmānid *amīr* Naṣr b. Ahmad, which is specifically stated as containing guesthouses for travelers, outside of it.²²⁸ Baykand is a region with one thousand *ribāṭs*.²²⁹ The large numbers given for particular areas are almost certainly exaggerations, but we can be certain that these were in fact areas with high concentrations of fortresses and *ribāṭs*.

As we reach the actual frontier of the *Dār al-Islām*, our sources give us an image of broad areas filled with fortified edifices of various kinds. At the same time, these sources also begin to give us far less detail than they do for areas further from the actual physical frontier. There is no pattern given for such fortifications. Are they concentrated near cities or along roads? Are they individually associated with particular agricultural estates? Who is responsible for the maintenance and staffing of these fortifications? Jürgen Paul, in his study of the relationship between the Sāmānid state and military, has made a linkage between the vast array of fortifications, which he calls castles, found throughout Transoxania and the *dihqān* landed-gentry, though without much supporting evidence.²³⁰

An important aspect of claiming control over the frontier is portraying it as a zone of action. Our sources do this by declaring that these eastern reaches of the Muslim world

²²⁵ Ibid., 292.

²²⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 273.

²²⁷ Ibid., 274.

²²⁸ Ibid., 291.

²²⁹ *Hudūd al-ʿālam*, 106.

²³⁰ Jürgen Paul, *The State and the Military: The Samanid Case*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1994), 10.

are an abode of *jihād*, a place where military struggle in the name of the *Dār al-Islām* takes place. A number of our sources make general statements about the eastern frontier's role in *jihād*. al-Iṣṭakhrī says that the strength and might of Transoxania stem from the fact that “there is not in Islam a region with a greater share in the *jihād* than them, because most of the borders of Transoxania are towards the *Dār al-Ḥarb*.”²³¹ He then goes on to state that “there is not in Islam a *Dār al-Ḥarb* which is stronger in might than the Turks.”²³² al-Muqaddasī refers to the entire region north of the Jayḥūn as *Dār al-Jihād*, “Abode of Jihād.”²³³

The frontier appears to be highly fortified, but not in a particularly systematic manner. Fortifications are spread out across a broad area and the region as a whole is considered a place where fighting takes place, in contrast to the specific locations found around cities and roads. This haphazard manner by which fortifications are established the closer one gets to the actual frontier implies either a lack of concrete knowledge about the actual frontier from which our sources are working or a gradual decrease in anyone's ability to control the frontier and maintain an organized defense of the region, with fortifications being built by individuals in order to oversee particular lands, perhaps agricultural estates, or in specific locations when a certain necessity is seen. More importantly, this lack of organization implies a lack of state involvement in the construction of fortifications on the frontier. We will return to the relationship between frontier fortifications and estates, particularly those of the *dihqāns*, in Chapter Five.

²³¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 163.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 261 n.e.

Having examined the network of fortifications which across the eastern frontier, we may now turn our attention to the people who manned these fortifications and to the ways in which certain populations were employed within this defensive network.

3.9 Defenders of the Frontier

Our sources attribute responsibility for defending portions of the frontier to particular groups. It is not always clear what this means; whether, for instance, this is an economic responsibility requiring the maintenance and provisioning of frontier fortresses and *ribāts*, or a responsibility for providing frontier fighters to man these fortresses and *ribāts*, or a combination of the two. The geographic relationship between the people who are responsible for a frontier and the frontier for which they are responsible can be deduced from the texts. Responsibility for maintaining frontier fortifications may be a local one, as in areas which are physically near the frontier taking on military responsibilities for defending that frontier. Wāshjird is in the middle of a region with 700 fortresses (*ḥiṣn*) only four *farsakhs* from Turkistān. The presence of these fortresses is explained through the role the people of Wāshjird play in “raiding the Turks.”²³⁴ Isfījāb, called the great frontier, is “the land from where war is waged against the Turks” because “it is the furthest district of Samarqand.”²³⁵

The people of one area may also be given responsibility for a region at a distance from their immediate surroundings. Marw is said to have responsibility for the frontier at Farabr, “[Farabr] is the frontier of the people of Marw, which means that when the Turks

²³⁴ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 292.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 295.

come to this city, the people of Marw hasten to it and what is attached to it.”²³⁶ In this example, Marw’s responsibility, at least in part, is to send men to fight along the frontier and defend against the Turks. al-Ya’qūbī makes it seem that the people of Marw come rushing to Farabr in response to particular Turkish aggressions. Farabr is approximately thirty-seven *farsakhs* from Marw, a distance greater than a day’s journey across the Jayhūn from Āmul. al-Ṣaghāniyān, which neighbors the lands of Turks known as Kījī and Kinjīna, provides approximately 10,000 fighters (*muqātil*) with provisions and riding animals if the *ṣultān* were to be attacked by foreigners.²³⁷

Naming conventions can also be an indication of the origins of soldiers stationed at particular defensive infrastructures. The four *ribāṭs* attached to the mosque of Ifsījāb all have names which indicate the origins of their inhabitants. They are the *ribāṭs* of the Nakhshabīs, the Bukhārīs, and the Samarqandīs, implying that the people of these cities who in their respective *ribāṭs* (the fourth, which was mentioned above, is named for the Sāmānid commander Qarātagīn, whose grave is attached to it).²³⁸

Besides the geographic origins of the fighters who gather at these sites, we also have, in some instances, what we might call occupational descriptions. For example, many retinues (*kathīr min al-ḥasham*) gather at Jamshalāghū.²³⁹ Dāwar, on the border of al-Ghūr, is noted as an important frontier with salaried/organized watchmen overseeing it (*ḥurrās murattabūn*).²⁴⁰ The role of volunteers versus professionals is an important one. Certain elements of the descriptions of the eastern frontier seem to emphasize the

²³⁶ Ibid., 292.

²³⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 283.

²³⁸ Ibid., 273.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 305.

importance of a professional military. In the neighborhood of Ghaznīn there is a location simply called al-‘Askar (“the army”) where the local *sultān* resides.²⁴¹ In other locations we find indications of general importance of standing armies when our sources specifically note the lack of such an army. Sarakhs, for instance, is cited as having no army.²⁴² At times, the professional military can be directed by military leaders from far behind the frontier. Nīshāpūr is the seat of the army commanders (*sipāh-sālārān*).²⁴³

As Jürgen Paul has argued, much of the military of the eastern frontier consisted of volunteers or “peasant levies” attached to the state through various local intermediaries, including local *dihqāns* and religious leaders.²⁴⁴ The numbers of volunteers or conscripted soldiers in use along the eastern frontier were quite high. al-Iṣṭakhrī provides a narrative in which the Sāmānid *amīr* Naṣr b. Aḥmad went on a raid in the steppe with 300,000 men. Later in the same passage, another Sāmānid *amīr*, Nūḥ b. Āsad, explains that it is possible to organize an army of this size because there are 300,000 villages in Transoxania, each of which sends a cavalryman and an infantryman.²⁴⁵

Certain sites are given key roles in the mobilization of volunteer fighters, without any particular identification of the people who gather at these spaces. The city of Fārāb is described as an armory of the Muslims (*musallah li-l-muslimīn*), indicating a point of gathering for war, and is matched by an armory for the Turks at al-Kharlukhiyya.²⁴⁶ Ūsh is said to have a great *ribāṭ* where volunteer fighters (*muṭṭawwi‘a*) come from all

²⁴¹ Ibid., 304-305.

²⁴² Ibid., 313.

²⁴³ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 89.

²⁴⁴ Paul, *The State and the Military*, 11.

²⁴⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa ‘l-mamālik*, 162.

²⁴⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa ‘l-mamālik* 31.

directions.²⁴⁷ Afrāwa is a great *ribāṭ* and in it there are gallant men (*rijāl shihām*) and numerous horses and weapons, but this is a problem because they are brutes (*juḡāh*) who have destroyed social life (*mu'āmala*).²⁴⁸ The *murābiṭūn* gather at Farāwah and prepare themselves to man the *ribāṭs*.²⁴⁹ These are places where people who wish to engage in frontier fighting may gather in preparation for such activities. Whether this is a professional or volunteer responsibility or a personal commitment remains unclear.

The movements of people from one place to another and their assignments from one place to military responsibilities in another location all demonstrate that the make-up of the defenses of the eastern frontier were truly a network. A danger to one area was also a danger to others and, in order to maintain stability throughout the region, groups of people had to take responsibility for the defense of the region as a whole. What our sources leave out is how such responsibilities were assigned, whether by the state, tradition, or on an ad hoc basis. The large number of references to volunteer fighters and local conscripts demonstrate a strong communal aspect for these activities.

3.10 Conclusions

In the previous chapter, our sources gave us an image of a zone largely under Muslim rule but with pockets which remained outside it. In this chapter, a slightly different picture starts to emerge. Here we see networks of fortified positions, focusing on cities and then moving out along roads and major itineraries until they spread out in a broad fan across the frontier itself. The defensive nature of these fortified positions and the need for

²⁴⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 272.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 445.

them indicate that it is only within the walls of these fortifications that the Muslims actually have firm control. These fortifications form an archipelago of Muslim rule across Khurāsān and Transoxania, reaching out across a region otherwise dominated by the nomadic Turks. In the process of consolidating power along the eastern frontier, the building of fortifications is, much like the construction of the Gate of Iron near al-Rāsht, both the practical and the symbolic way of taking control. By declaring this a region of *jihād*, our sources have emphasized the active nature of this process. They have declared that seizing control of the frontier through military action is the primary function of the region.

The fortifications of the eastern frontier created oases of security for the settled populations of the region. These fortifications were not built only for the safety of the immediately local population, but also to protect a broader network comprising the larger population of the eastern frontier. Cities were protected by walls and fortresses, but so were their agricultural hinterlands. The roads which connected cities and their surroundings were protected by fortifications where travelers could seek refuge as they moved about. Throughout the frontier region, the countryside appears to be dotted with similar fortifications which defended against incursions from the steppe. Throughout this whole network, the people of the eastern frontier moved from one place to another to provide the man-power necessary to maintain and to garrison this wide variety of fortifications. Thus, while the eastern frontier was neither homogenous nor consolidated under the authority of any single political entity, much of it was interconnected. It is in the defenses of the region that we best see this interconnectedness most clearly.

Chapter 4

The Coins of the Eastern Frontier

4.1 The Right of *sikka*

While coins are an important source for the study of the history of the medieval Islamic world, our understanding of the practices associated with the minting of coins tends to be reconstructed from the coins themselves. Coins are only occasionally discussed by written sources and in these rare cases it is not the standard coinage which is discussed but those coins which stray far from the norm. One such case of a written source giving attention to the minting of coins is al-Ṭabarī's discussion of the coins of the Ṭāhirid military commander and, later, rebel Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Khujistānī.

In this year (267/882-883), (Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allāh) al-Khujistānī struck for himself *dinars* and *dirhams*. The weight of the *dinars* was ten *dawāniq* and the weight of the *dirhams* was eight *dawāniq*. Upon them (was written), "Sovereignty and power are for God and strength and power are by God.¹ There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." On the same side as this (was written), "the one who relies upon God

¹ "al-malik wa-l-qudra li-llāh wa-l-ḥaul wa-l-qūwat bi-llāh"

(dwells) in good fortune and prosperity.”² On the other side (was written), “The faithful Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh.”³

Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khujistānī had served as a military commander under the Ṭāhirid governor Muhammad b. Ṭāhir until 259/853 when the Ṭāhirid capital of Nīshāpūr fell to the Ṣaffārid Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth. Following this, al-Khujistānī led an ongoing military opposition against Ṣaffārid authority in Khurāsān and Ṭukhāristān until his death in 268/883-884.⁴ During the last two years of his life, following an incursion into the Ṣaffārid heartland of Sistān, al-Khujistānī minted the above mentioned coins.

The coins of al-Khujistānī are interesting for two main reasons. First is the fact that he struck coins in his own name at all. As will be discussed in more detail later, the right to be named on coinage (known as *sikka*) is understood as properly belonging to the caliphs and only available to the caliph and those to whom he granted it, typically his heirs and certain viziers or military commanders. By minting coins in his own name, al-Khujistānī claimed that he had the authority to do so, thereby stating he possessed power either legitimated by the caliph (whom he also, in an unusual manner, named on his coins) or in contradiction or opposition to the caliph. Second is the fact that he struck coins that were so different from the standard coins struck in the Islamic world during the ‘Abbāsīd period that al-Ṭabarī found it necessary to comment on them. These deviations from the typical ‘Abbāsīd coins focus primarily on the program of inscriptions found on the coin. The choice of inscriptions found on al-Khujistānī’s coins have no known

² This is an extended version of the name of the Caliph al-Mu‘tamīd ‘alā ‘llāh (r. 256-279/870-892), “*al-Mu‘tamīd ‘alā ‘llāh bi-l-yumn wa-l-sa‘āda*”.

³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Series II, ed. M.J. De Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1885-1889), 3:2009.

⁴ For details on the career of al-Khujistānī see C.E. Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz (247/861 to 949/1542-3)*, (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1994), 126-134, 194-200.

parallels on other medieval coins (the standard contemporary inscriptions will be outlined shortly).

Coins are not objects that receive many references in the written sources. In fact, when major reforms of coinage were enacted by the caliphs, modern scholars are left to reconstruct the rules of minting from the extant coins themselves.⁵ Most coins which deviate from the “standard” coinage of the main imperial mints of Iraq tend to do so with regard to the people named on the coins, not in the actual content of the inscriptions. Examples of the coins of al-Khujistānī, close to the description given by al-Ṭabarī and corroborating his report, have been catalogued from the mints of Andarāba, Herat, and Nīshāpūr by modern numismatists.⁶

The tale of al-Khujistānī’s coins highlights an important role of numismatics in historical research, namely their role as markers of political changes and events. The striking of coins, besides being an economic activity, is a political action, expressing one’s right and ability to strike coins in one’s own name, even if from a position of subservience to the caliph. It takes a certain level of resources, both economic and political, to strike one’s own coins, especially in a number that allows them to survive long enough for researchers a millennium later to find and study them. Access to the raw materials of copper, silver, or gold is probably the least daunting of these limitations.

⁵ For a detailed look at the reconstruction of these rules for the third/ninth century, see Tayeb El-Hibri, “Coinage Reform under the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mūn,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 36 (1993): 58-83; and Michael Bates, *The Expression of Nobility in the Abbasid Caliphate, 218-334H./833-946 CE*, (Working title: *forthcoming*) and “Who Was Named on Abbasid Coins? What Did It Mean?,” (*forthcoming*).

⁶ Richard Vasmer, “Über die Münzen der Ṣaffāriden und ihrer Gegner in Fārs und Ḥurāsān,” *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 63 (1930), 137; *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, ed. Florian Schwarz, (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 2002), nos. 14-15. The al-Khujistānī *dirhams* from Herat are normally found muled with a reverse die of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861).

What is much more difficult is finding a market for your coins which will accept them as coins and not simply melt them down to be re-struck in a more acceptable form.

It is without question that al-Khujistānī's coins represented a major break from the norm in both the placement of his name on the coins and his changes to the formulaic inscriptions found on typical 'Abbāsīd coinage. That al-Ṭabarī included a description of these coins in his history is testament to their uniqueness. While the coins al-Khujistānī minted were unique, the striking of coins with the names of local rulers and notables in apparent contradiction to the standard practices of the time was not unique, especially along the eastern frontier. Throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, a wide variety of coins featuring the names of numerous local governors and notables appears. Some of the individuals named on these coins are well known to us today. Others remain mysterious, complicating the questions surrounding who would (or could) place their name on coinage and under what conditions. This chapter will examine the coinage of the eastern frontier and situate the variety of coin types struck in this region within the economics and politics of the region.

Rather than focus on a single theme, this chapter will examine a particular body of material evidence for the study of the eastern frontier in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century. This chapter will walk through the major developments in numismatic production over this period in Khurāsān and Transoxania with an emphasis on those coins which speak to larger economic and political trends and highlight the economic and political networks which connected the urban centers of the eastern frontier. Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter will stick much more closely to a chronological narrative as it covers the numismatic history of the eastern frontier.

4.2 The Standard Coinage of the “Second ‘Abbāsīd Era” and Dynastic Variations

Much as historians have divided the history of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate into “early,” “middle,” and “late” periods,⁷ numismatists have divided the history of ‘Abbāsīd coinage into five numbered periods.⁸ This periodization is defined primarily by major changes in the standard coinage of the central mints of Iraq. The “second ‘Abbāsīd era,” which will be the focal point of the current study, begins with the reforms of al-Ma’mūn in 206/821-822. These reforms, which affected all mints directly under the control of the caliph until 334/946,⁹ were focused on a new epigraphic style and program which unified the inscriptions found on coinage produced throughout the caliphate. The typical coin of the “second ‘Abbāsīd era” (be they copper, silver, or gold) included the following inscriptions (Table 4.1).

⁷ Most notably in Hugh Kennedy’s *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 2nd edition (Harlow, England: Pearson-Longman, 2004). Kennedy’s periodization divides the history of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate into an “early” period of 132-218/750-833 and a “middle” period of 218-334/833-946. The “late” period of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate is more accurately described as the periods of Būyid and then Seljūq domination up to the final collapse with the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 656/1258.

⁸ William Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, (Beirut: Bank of Beirut SAL, 1983), 22-28.

⁹ This is the date proposed by Kazan, connected to the accession of the Caliph al-Muṭī’ and marked by the transition to the period of Būyid domination in Iraq. According to Kazan, “The Abbasid coinage between the accession of the Caliph al-Muṭī’ in 334 h. 946 m. and that of al-Mustanjid in 555 h. 1160 m. scarcely exists beyond a few issues of the highest rarity, despite the fact that their names continued to be included on all non-Fatimid coinages of the various local dynasties in the Middle East from Syria as far as Khurasan.” Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, 27. Stephen Album has proposed a different periodization, beginning the third period in 279/892 with the accession of the Caliph al-Muṭāḍid. This period is defined, according to Album, by the appearance of donative coins. Of course, this periodization says nothing about developments or changes in non-donative coins. Album then marks the accession of al-Muṭī’ as the beginning of an “Interim Period” when “there are virtually no proper issues of the caliphs.” This “Interim Period” ends in 555/1160. Stephen Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, second edition (Santa Rosa, CA, 1998), 28-29. For purposes of the current study, Kazan’s periodization will be used.

Table 4.1: Standard Inscriptions on Post-Reform Coinage

	Obverse	Reverse
Center Inscription	<p><i>lā ilāh ilā</i></p> <p><i>Allāh waḥdahu</i></p> <p><i>lā sharīk la-hu</i>¹⁰</p>	<p><i>Lillāh</i></p> <p><i>Muḥammad</i></p> <p><i>rasūl</i></p> <p><i>Allāh</i>¹¹</p>
Inner Marginal Inscription	<p><i>bism Allāh ḍariba hādha 'l-</i></p> <p><i>dirham bi-<insert name of</i></p> <p><i>mint> sana <insert year></i>¹²</p>	<p><i>Muḥammad rasūl Allāh</i></p> <p><i>arsalahu bi 'l-hudā wa-dīn</i></p> <p><i>al-ḥaqq li-yuḏhirahu 'alā</i></p> <p><i>al-dīn kullihī wa-law kariha</i></p> <p><i>al-mushrikūn</i>¹³</p>
Outer Marginal Inscription	<p><i>lillāh al-amr min qabl wa-</i></p> <p><i>min ba 'd wa-yawmaidhin</i></p> <p><i>yafraḥu al-mu 'minūn bi-</i></p> <p><i>naṣr Allāh</i>¹⁴</p>	

Under al-Ma'mūn's reforms, all coinage was anonymous. Prior to these reforms, a variety of individuals could be named on coins depending, much like the larger epigraphic program of the coins, on local preferences. Beginning with the reign of al-Ma'mūn's brother and successor, al-Mu'taṣim (r. 218-227/833-842), the name of the

¹⁰ "There is no god but Allāh alone. There is no partner for him."

¹¹ "For Allāh; Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh."

¹² "In the name of Allāh, this *dirham* was struck at <insert name of mint> in the year <insert year>."

¹³ Qur'ān 9:33; "Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh, who sent him with the guidance and the true religion, in order to make it triumphant over every religion, even if the polytheists should resent it."

¹⁴ Qur'ān 30:4-5; "For Allāh is the command before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice in Allāh's support."

caliph began to appear on the bottom of the reverse, below the central inscription. As time went on, more names appeared on coins and a hierarchy of position developed. Beneath the reverse central inscription was the first position, reserved for the name of the caliph. Beneath the obverse central inscription was the second position, reserved for the name of the caliph's heir, if included. If the name of the caliph's heir was not included, this position could be taken up by the name of a vizier, military commander, or governor. Third and fourth positions were included beneath the first and second respectively, if the coin included three or four names.

Table 4.2 Standard *dirhams* of the “Second ‘Abbāsīd Era” (images are not to scale)

<p>Anonymous (al-Ma'mūn) al-Rāfiqa 208/823-824¹⁵</p>	
<p>al-Mu'tašim Baghdad 225/839-840¹⁶</p>	

¹⁵ Zeno.ru – Oriental Coins Database, no. 76030.

¹⁶ Zeno.ru – Oriental Coins Database, no. 71208.



al-Ma'mūn's reforms are most noticeable in the coinage struck at mints directly under the control of the caliphs themselves, Baghdad being the earliest and most consistently compliant mint. It can be argued from close study of epigraphic style that dies used in certain provincial mints may in fact have been engraved in Baghdad and then sent out to the provinces, demonstrating a preference for centralization in the minting of coins.¹⁸ Coins produced outside of the direct supervision of the caliph, which certainly include all the coinage of the eastern frontier to be discussed in this chapter, maintain or at least acknowledge these post-reform rules in so much as they maintain the epigraphic program of the standardized coins, with the minor exceptions of odd striking such as those of al-Khurjistānī.¹⁹ For this reason, the shape and style of the coins of the eastern frontier is not their most important feature in relation to this study. Instead this chapter will focus almost exclusively on the names which appear on the coins.

The right to be named in the *khutba* during the Friday Congregational Prayer and the right of *sikka*, the right to be named on coinage, represented the two most prominent

¹⁷ Zeno.ru – Oriental Coins Database, no. 62329.

¹⁸ Bates, *The Expression of Nobility in the Abbasid Caliphate*.

¹⁹ Even in this case, when the inscriptions found on the coin deviate from the standard coinage so greatly, the separation and placement of the names of al-Mu'tamid and al-Khujistānī follow the rules.

public displays of caliphal sovereignty in the medieval Islamic world.²⁰ We have a much clearer idea through the written sources as to how the *khutba* was used as a political tool; how individuals could use the *khutba* to publicly announce their opposition to political powers or their intention to revolt.²¹ In contrast, the use of *sikka* is not entirely clear. It is important to remember here that the inclusion of one's name on coins was most likely not in itself a propagandistic act. Political messages were much more easily spread among the general population through sermons in mosques or announcements in markets and other public spaces. As Michael Bates has argued, "by the time the public saw coins with a new name, it would surely be old news to them."²² Having one's name inscribed upon coins was certainly a symbol of that individual's power and standing, but it was neither the most immediate nor most important way of publicizing one's status. On the other hand, looking at the numismatic evidence versus the written accounts of oral proclamations as a modern scholar, inscribing one's name on a coin is a more permanent expression of one's position. A coin could not be dismissed as hearsay or conjecture, it presented a message that could not be taken back or refuted once someone had seen or had possession of the physical coin. Of course, by the time someone had the inclination and collected the means to mint his own coins, he had most certainly tested the waters and had an amount of confidence in the expected reaction to this course of action. It was not a spur-of-the-moment decision.

If the striking of coins was a political act which required forethought, the question we must ask is what were the intentions of an individual who had his name inscribed upon coins and who actually put the name on the coin? These are especially important

²⁰ C.E. Bosworth, "Sikka," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

²¹ A.J. Wensinck, "Khutba," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

²² Bates, *The Expression of Nobility in the Abbasid Caliphate*.

questions considering that the standards of the reformed coinage were reconstructed by modern scholars from the coins themselves and are not laid out by any contemporary documents. Are our understandings of how these rules worked entirely accurate? An assumption is made, perhaps unintentionally, about who may put his name on a coin, the caliph and certain members of his inner-circle, and under what conditions, at the discretion of the caliph. Any coins that deviate from what is understood to be the standard are considered at the least “not ‘Abbāsīd” if not outright rebellious. It is as if including the names of local notables on a coin is a symbol of revolt against or, at least, discontent with the caliphate. Such an understanding also implies, perhaps unintentionally, that the act of striking coins itself is not a locally-mandated act. The inclusion of one’s name on a coin is seen in some way as equivalent to making a proclamation against the caliph in the *khutba*. These are people who have usurped the rights of the caliph and in doing so have entered into a position of opposition against him. But how can this be the case when the caliph’s name is typically included in its appropriate hierarchical position on these “non-‘Abbāsīd” coins? On a deeper level, we must ask whether it is the evidence of these coins which tells us that certain provincial rulers sought independence from the caliphate or whether we are reading this understanding retroactively into the coins.

The other set of questions we must ask pertain to how we classify coins which feature names of various local authorities. As mentioned above, for the most part coins produced along the eastern frontier during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries maintained the standard epigraphic program found on coins of the second ‘Abbāsīd period. If we did not know of the eastern provincial dynasties, their histories, and the names of their governors, there is no reason these coins would not be classified as

ʿAbbāsīd. Starting with Charles Frähn’s *Das Muhammedanische Münzkabinet des Asiatischen Museums der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St. Petersburg*, originally published in St. Petersburg in 1821, Islamic coins have been categorized by dynasties in a scheme which starts with the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsīd Caliphates and then follows through a progression, partially chronological and partially geographical, of all other dynasties known to have minted coins. When determining the provenance of a coinage, the names inscribed on the coin take preeminence in this scheme. Therefore, for the second ʿAbbāsīd period, coinage that matches the standardized types of al-Maʿmūn’s reforms and does not name an identifiable governor would be listed as ʿAbbāsīd regardless of the particular circumstances of the date or location of minting, but coins that include the names of any dynastic governors are cataloged under the name of that governor’s dynasty.

This system creates a disjuncture, which may or may not be representative of historical realities, between not only the coins of Iraq and the coins of the provinces, but also between coins minted at the same mint, even sometimes in the same year, based upon the names and titles inscribed upon them. For example, in the year 260/873-874, the mint of Panjhīr struck silver *dirhams* bearing only the name of the Caliph al-Muʿtamīd on the reverse²³ as well as silver *dirhams* with the name of al-Muʿtamīd on the reverse and the name of the Ṣaffārid *amīr* Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth on the obverse.²⁴ The former would be categorized as ʿAbbāsīd while the latter would be categorized as Ṣaffārid even though they are nearly identical and both were struck under the same political authorities in the

²³ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum, Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, ed. Florian Schwarz (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1995), no. 48.

²⁴ Stanley Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins*, (London, 1875-1890), vol. 2: no. 244; ANS 1935.36.842, ANS 1968.62.2

same mint during the same year, since the Ṣaffārids presumably maintained political control over Panjhīr the entire year.²⁵ Are the coins that name dynastic governors really not ‘Abbāsīd, even though they match ‘Abbāsīd coins in almost every way, shape, and form and may even be minted by agents of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, depending on how we choose to understand individual dynasties? These coins, in maintaining the epigraphic standards of ‘Abbāsīd coinage (most importantly with regard to the arrangement of names), still observe the caliph as the ultimate authority under whom the coins were struck. On the other hand, are coins struck at mints which, we must assume by location and date, fell under the authority of a dynastic governor but without the name of the appropriate governor not to be categorized with the coinage of that dynasty? Despite the exclusion of their names, these coins were still struck in territories under the governor’s political authority. These dynastic coins did not constitute different denominations and they did circulate together, both the ‘Abbāsīd and the dynastic. They were equally valued and equally accepted as currencies of exchange, as far as we know.²⁶ Yet, numismatists have historically catalogued these coins as markedly different, as coins which belong to different minting traditions entirely.

By categorizing coins by dynasties, continuity and change in minting practices often disappears. The location of coin production is largely removed from the equation and, instead, emphasis is placed on situating individual coins within a political and dynastic history. Recently, efforts have been made to examine coins based on their mint

²⁵ Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth had conquered Panjhīr sometime between 256/869-870 and 259/872-873. Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan*, 107-108.

²⁶ There are some references to different values given to the oversized Sāmānīd silver *dirhams* of the late fourth/tenth century, but such references are not entirely clear and the differentiation seems to have more to do with the amount of silver in the coins as well as their unusually large size than the fact that they are Sāmānīd and not ‘Abbāsīd *dirhams*. Yāqūt’s description of Panjhīr gives us an example of such a discussion. Yāqūt, *Muj‘am al-buldān*, (Beirut, 1957), 1: 498-499.

of origin and sylloges now organize coins chronologically by mint rather than by dynasty as in earlier catalogues. This allows us to study a mint or a group of mints, arrive at a hypothesis based upon the evidence of coin production, and then look for confirmation in written records. In this chapter, the coins of the eastern frontier will be examined as a body in this way in order to follow developments within a particular geographic area and then connect these developments in coin production to broader political and economic developments in the region.

4.3 The Coinage of the Ṭāhirids

An example of this dilemma of classification of provincial coinage is found in the treatment of Ṭāhirid coins by modern numismatists. In his *Checklist of Islamic Coins*, Stephen Album lists five types of Ṭāhirid coins, along with a handful of subtypes. Two of these are silver *dirhams* and three of these are copper *fulūs*. In the introduction to the Ṭāhirid portion of his checklist, he states that “Only coins of Tahir and Talha struck between 205 and 211, plus copper coins for Central Asian mints for the entire dynasty can justifiably be regarded as Tahirid coins.”²⁷ This is then clarified with the following footnote,

My own opinion is that there is no such thing as a Tahirid silver coin, and that all allegedly Tahirid dirhams should be regarded as Abbasid. Only the copper seems to be justifiably attributable to the Tahirids.²⁸

He then continues, “Later silver and gold coins (after 211) lack the name of the Tahirid ruler, and are thus indistinguishable from other Abbasid coins. They are now regarded as Abbasid.”²⁹ Again clarifying in a footnote,

²⁷ Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 67, n. 75.

Nineteenth century works routinely classify as Tahirid those coins struck in Tahirid territories with only the name of the caliph, contrary to current convention. Even the Tahirid types listed here, except perhaps the later coppers, should more correctly be regarded as Abbasid, but traditional usage is followed here, and the coins are listed as Tahirid.³⁰

In short, Album says that in the nineteenth century it was common practice to classify any coins minted in territories with a Ṭāhirid governor as Ṭāhirid regardless of what might be written on the coins. It later became common practice to only identify those coins which explicitly name a Ṭāhirid governor as Ṭāhirid. In Album's opinion, it is only the later coppers which should truly be called Ṭāhirid. In the end, modern numismatists initially cast a wide net in classifying Ṭāhirid coins, as time went by the category has narrowed to the point that it is, in Album's opinion, extraneous.

On a certain level, the changing attitudes towards classifications of Ṭāhirid coins are a commentary on our understanding of the Ṭāhirid dynasty rather than our understanding of Ṭāhirid numismatics. The coins themselves have not changed since the nineteenth century; they maintain the same names, dates, and mints. In the broadest definition of Ṭāhirid coins that included any coins minted within territory under Ṭāhirid authority, primarily Khurāsān, with or without the name of a Ṭāhirid governor, the implication is that there is some kind of geo-political entity that could be called a Ṭāhirid state that is unique and distinct from the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. By limiting that definition to only coins that include the name of a Ṭāhirid governor, the assumption of a Ṭāhirid state is also limited. This is no longer a geographic entity distinct from the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate; events which take place within its boundaries, such as striking coins, may be

²⁹ Ibid., 67.

³⁰ Ibid., 67, n. 76.

claimed by or attributed to the ‘Abbāsids, but there still exists the potential for individual Ṭāhirid governors to assert themselves by placing their names on what would otherwise be ‘Abbāsīd coins. This then leads us to Stephen Album’s assertion that there are no real Ṭāhirid *dirhams* (or *dinars* for that matter), but only Ṭāhirid coppers.

If the coins of the eastern frontier minted under the Ṭāhirid’s are examined as a corpus, is there anything we might discover beyond these issues of changing systems of classification? One of the first issues that must be pointed out in posing a question such as this is that the reforms of al-Ma’mūn first appear in the middle of the reign of the dynastic patriarch Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn (r. 205-207/821-822). Because of this, we should expect to see some overlap between the pre and post reform coinage. Ṭāhir’s name appears on ‘Abbāsīd coins as either Ṭāhir, Dhu ‘l-Yamīnayn,³¹ or both beginning in 198/813-814, following Ṭāhir’s military role in al-Ma’mūn’s victory over al-Amīn and his subsequent appointment as governor of the western provinces and *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* (commander of the police) in Baghdad.³² In 205/820-821, Ṭāhir was appointed governor of Khurāsān and his name began to appear on coins minted in the east, still as either Ṭāhir, Dhu ‘l-Yamīnayn, or both.³³ These names continue to appear on coins until Ṭāhir’s death in 207/822.

Considering that al-Ma’mūn’s reforms occur in the middle of Ṭāhir’s short reign and there is a continuity between coins minted in Ṭāhir’s name before and after 206/821-822, it may be enough to assume that the reforms had not spread all the way to Khurāsān by Ṭāhir’s death and, therefore, these coins do not necessarily signify the coinage of a

³¹ “The possessor of two right hands” or “the ambidextrous;” an official title given to Ṭāhir b. Ḥusayn in acknowledgement of his role in both the military and administration.

³² For an early example from al-Basra, see ANS 1972.169.386.

³³ For an early example from Samarqand, see ANS 1972.79.24.

new and distinct dynasty. It is equally important to note that the continuity between coins minted in Ṭāhir's name in the west before 205/820-821, when no one argues he was in rebellion and establishing his own dynasty, and in Khurāsān after his appointment as governor shows that the coins themselves do not represent a new direction in Ṭāhir's thinking or public presentation of himself.³⁴ Taking that into consideration, we may then follow Album's logic that these coins were not in fact Ṭāhirid, but represented the standards of coinage struck throughout the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate during the early years of al-Ma'mūn's reign.

Of course, arguing this goes against the long-held view that Ṭāhir had entered into open revolt against al-Ma'mūn before his death and that a number of Ṭāhirid coins that left off the name of the caliph are evidence of this revolt.³⁵ Even Album marks the silver *dirhams* of Ṭāhir as being produced "in rebellion," but he does not specifically mention anything about omitting the name of al-Ma'mūn.³⁶ Claiming that leaving al-Ma'mūn's name off a coin is a sign of open revolt assumes that including the name of the caliph was an absolute requirement, both before and after the reforms of 206/821-822. Before al-Ma'mūn's reforms, the caliph's name was not always included on coins, even if other

³⁴ This may very well be the result of people giving more attention to the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān over Ṭāhir's earlier career. Ṭāhir's "independent" streak can be seen in the immediate aftermath of the 'Abbāsīd Civil War, for example, when he refuses to submit tax revenues to the caliph until he had first paid his own troops in the year 198/813-814. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 3: 975.

³⁵ Such views are commonly expressed in broad statements regarding Ṭāhir's actions, "Soon after his arrival in the east, Ṭāhir began leaving al-Ma'mūn's name out of the *khutba*, and certain coins minted by him in 206/821-2 also omit the caliph's name; both these actions were virtually declarations of independence from Baghdad. However, at this point he died in Marv (207/822). It is obviously difficult to gauge Ṭāhir's motives, since we do not know how events might have turned out." C.E. Bosworth, "The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārīds," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 95. This quote appears paraphrased in C.E. Bosworth, "Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn b. Muṣ'ab b. Ruzayk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition.

³⁶ Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 67.

individuals were named.³⁷ These were not the coins of rebels revolting in the provinces; even some coins struck in Baghdad omitted the caliph's name while including the names of others. This did not change with al-Ma'mūn's reforms. A part of those reforms was making 'Abbāsīd coinage anonymous, which certainly held true for coins struck in the central mints from 206/821-822 until the end of al-Ma'mūn's reign. It can then be argued that coins which include the name of Ṭāhir but not al-Ma'mūn produced after 206/821-822 are either a result of the reformed standards not reaching Khurāsān or a negotiation of what the reforms actually meant. Does the anonymity of Iraqi coins mean that the caliph's name is omitted or all names are omitted? It is important to point out that coins struck in Iraq remained anonymous until the beginning of the reign of al-Mu'taṣim in 218/833, by which point Ṭāhir has been dead for over a decade, his son Ṭalḥa (r. 207-213/822-828) has reigned for six years and died, and his other son 'Abd Allah (r. 213-230/828-845) was five years into his tenure as governor of Khurāsān. Placed into the context of contemporary minting practices, the omission of the name of the caliph on the coins of Ṭāhir was neither unique nor necessarily controversial.

The assumption that the omission of the caliph's name from coins was an act of rebellion by Ṭāhir is, in the end, an assumption that the rules of *sikka* were similar to the rules covering the inclusion of the caliph's name in the *khutba*. The stories of Ṭāhir

³⁷ A selection of examples of coins not including the names of governors and other notables but omitting the name of al-Ma'mūn: a *dirham* of Baghdad (200/815-816) naming al-Faḍl b. Sahl as Dhu al-Riyāsātayn, ANS 1917.215.322; a *dirham* from Egypt (201/816-817) naming Ṭāhir Dhu al-Yamīnayn, ANS 1972.79.675; and a *dirham* from Samarqand (205/820-821) naming Dhu al-Yamīnayn, ANS 1972.79.24. The earlier of these coins do appear in the years immediately following the 'Abbāsīd Civil War or Fourth Fitna, which ended in 198/813 with al-Ma'mūn's victory over his brother al-Amīn, and therefore may reflect the confused political situation following the war, but in this regard it is important to note that the individuals these coins do name, al-Faḍl b. Sahl and Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, were two of al-Ma'mūn's most important supporters during the civil war and the recipients of high offices following al-Ma'mūn's victory.

omitting the name of al-Ma'mūn from the *khuṭba* are well attested, even if confused.³⁸ If a connection is to be made between Ṭāhir's coins and the *khuṭba* incident, the issue of chronology between the striking of coins and the omission of al-Ma'mūn from the *khuṭba* must be considered. Earlier, it was argued that the immediacy of a public announcement against the caliph, as in the *khuṭba*, would cause such an act to occur and elicit a response from the caliph, his representatives, and the public before the appearance of coins including an individual's name. That the omission of the caliph's name from the *khuṭba* would generate a strong and immediate response is well attested in the narratives of Ṭāhir's *khuṭba*.³⁹ Considering that the majority of the coins produced by Ṭāhir which omit the name of al-Ma'mūn were struck before he omitted al-Ma'mūn's name from the *khuṭba* and that these coins received little apparent response compared to the *khuṭba*, at least in the available sources, it can again be argued that the omission of the name of the caliph from a coin during the reign of al-Ma'mūn was neither a symbol of rebellion nor as controversial as the omission of the caliph's name from the *khuṭba* and therefore those coins could and should be classified as meeting the standards of 'Abbāsīd coinage and not be seen as the acts of a governor in revolt. Of course, none of this is to say that Ṭāhir did not attempt to break away from 'Abbāsīd authority; rather it is arguing that the coins are not evidence for such a revolt.

³⁸ For a detailed study of the various reports of Ṭāhir's *khuṭba* and death, see D. Sourdel, "Les circonstances de la mort de Ṭāhir I^{er} au Ḥurāsān en 207/822," *Arabica* 5 (1958), 66-69.

³⁹ See the plight of Kulthūm b. Thābit b. Abī Sa'd, *ṣāhib al-barīd* of Khurāsān, who witnessed Ṭāhir omit the name of al-Ma'mūn and had the unfortunate duty of reporting the news to the caliph. He is so certain of his fate that he prepares for death before bringing the news to al-Ma'mūn. Luckily the news of Ṭāhir's death comes before Kulthūm's execution. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 3:1064-1065.

4.3.1 The Naming of Sub-Governors

We are still left with the questions of why and how one came to have his name inscribed upon a coin. The focus thus far has been on the decision of a rather high-ranking governor who oversaw a large province to include his name on coins, but what about the inclusion of lesser local and regional sub-governors. As Ṭāhir served as governor over Khurāsān, he himself had a number of sub-governors who oversaw individual cities and regions in his name. The names of some of these local governors found their way onto coins as well. For the most commonly encountered local governor of Ṭāhir's reign, Album lists Ṭāhirid *dirham* type 1391A, minted only in Herat in the year 206/821-822, which includes the name of the governor of Herat al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm.⁴⁰ On these coins, the name of al-Ma'mūn is absent and Ṭāhir's name appears as Dhū al-Yamīnayn in the first position on the reverse and Ibn Ibrāhīm appears in the second position on the obverse. Outside these coins, Ibn Ibrāhīm is an unknown entity, but presumably he was governor of Herat in good standing with the Ṭāhirids in at least the year 206/821-822. These coins establish a relationship between Ṭāhir and Ibn Ibrāhīm, one in which Ibn Ibrāhīm has the authority to strike coins at Herat in his own name, but that authority comes from Ṭāhir.

A reliance purely on the names found on coins for understanding local histories has its own problems and a broader historical setting is necessary to understand why a local governor's name might appear on coins for a single year. In the case of the relationship between al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm and Ṭāhir, the greatest complication is that it is commonly understood that Ṭāhir supported the governorship of the Sāmānid Ilyās b.

⁴⁰ Album, *A Checklist of Islamic Coins*, 67. Examples of this coin are found in Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 301 and ANS 1917.215.95.

Asad as governor of Herat at this time. Ilyās, it is held, had been appointed governor of Herat in 204/819 by the then governor of Khurāsān Ghassān b. ‘Abbād. At the same time, Ilyās’ brothers Nūḥ, Aḥmad, and Yaḥyā b. Asad had been appointed governors in Samarqand, Farghāna, and al-Shāsh respectively. The appointment of the four sons of Asad is considered to be the beginning of Sāmānid political power. According to most discussions of the careers of the early Sāmānids, Ilyās remained governor of Herat until his death in 242/856, at which point his son Ibrāhīm became governor.⁴¹ Despite Ilyās maintaining power for the rest of his natural life, passing the position onto his son (a feat only Aḥmad was able to replicate while Nūḥ and Yaḥyā saw their governorships absorbed into the possessions of Aḥmad’s line), and his son Ibrāhīm holding on to the governorship of Herat until 253/867 when he was defeated by the Ṣaffārid Ya’qūb b. al-Layth, Ilyās’ career in Herat is largely seen as the failure of the early Sāmānids. Ilyās is the only one of his four brothers not to strike copper *fulūs* during his career.

What is to be made of al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm minting coins in Herat while Ilyās b. Asad was presumably governor? Herat is not the only mint where this kind of confusion takes place, interestingly during the same year. At Samarqand, while Nūḥ b. Asad is presumably governor, silver *dirhams* are minted with the names Dhu al-Yamīnayn on the obverse and al-‘Alā on the reverse in the years 205-206/820-822.⁴² There are two possible solutions to this problem. First is that Ilyās b. Asad was actually not governor of Herat in 206/821-822. The second is that al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm was not governor of Herat when his name appeared on the coins. al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm does not appear in any known histories of the period, so it is only the coins which are connecting him to Herat, the same

⁴¹ R.N. Frye, “The Sāmānids,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 136.

⁴² ANS 1972.79.24 and ANS 1980.35.8.

can be said of al-'Alā in Samarqand, so focus will have to be placed on locating Ilyās in the year 206/820-821. Here the sources provide us with a range of reports on the career of Ilyās. The rough outline of Ilyās's career given above is found in Ibn al-Athīr, where he is appointed by Ghassān, confirmed by Ṭāhir, and serves as governor until his death when his son takes over the governorship.⁴³ Gardizī simply notes that Ilyās was appointed governor of Herat, but does not elaborate.⁴⁴ At an opposite extreme, al-Narshakhī omits Ilyās and Yaḥya from the story of the appointment of Nūḥ and Aḥmad, as if Ilyās never held a governorship.⁴⁵

The text which gives the most detail about the career of Ilyās is the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*. Here Ilyās is repeatedly mentioned serving as temporary governor of Sīstān and as a Ṭāhirid military commander in the ongoing battles against the Kharijites in Sīstān, but no connection is given between Ilyās and Herat. Unsurprisingly, the Ṣaffārid-orientated text omits any mention of the appointment of the sons of Asad. The earliest reference to Ilyās comes in 208/823 when he is briefly sent as governor of Sīstān by Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir. When his replacement, Mu'addil b. al-Ḥuṣayn arrives, Ilyās becomes the center of a popular rebellion against Mu'addil which eventually drives him out and causes Ṭalḥa to send Muḥammad b. al-Aḥwaṣ as the new governor.⁴⁶ The portrayal of Ilyās throughout the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* is primarily that of a military leader who occasionally takes over the governorship of Sīstān in times of crisis. The same can be said of Ilyās's son Ibrāhīm. When Ya'qūb b. al-Layth conquers Herat, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* identifies Ḥuṣayn b. 'Abd Allah b. Ṭāhir as governor of Herat and Ibrāhīm b. Ilyās as the commander of the army of

⁴³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1417/1997), 6: 324-325.

⁴⁴ Gardizī, *Tārīkh-i Gardizī*, (Tehran, 1363/1984), 322.

⁴⁵ al-Nashakhrī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, (Tehran, n.d. [ca. 1939]), 90.

⁴⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar (Tehran, 1314/1935), 177-178.

Khurāsān.⁴⁷ Ibrāhīm is not even present for the fall of Herat, but is later defeated by Ya'qūb at Pūshang (the Ṭāhirid homeland of Būshanj).⁴⁸ The only other mention of Ibrāhīm b. Ilyās comes after Ya'qūb has defeated the Ṭāhirids, listing Ibrāhīm as one of many highway robbers (*sālūkān*)⁴⁹ who decide to join forces with Ya'qūb.⁵⁰

Outside of Ibn al-Athīr and Gardīzī, there is no evidence to assume that Ilyās b. Asad was ever governor of Herat, except perhaps on a temporary basis as he had served as governor of Sīstān. Perhaps most important to this argument that Ilyās was never formally governor is that out of the four sons of Asad said to have been given governorships by Ghassān, Ilyās is the only one whose name never appeared on a coin.⁵¹ What then can we say about the coins of al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm? First, it is most likely that al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm was governor of Herat when his name appeared on the coins. Second, if the history of Ilyās in Sīstān contributes anything, it is that local governorships along the eastern frontier could be fleeting positions. The governor of a city must cultivate loyalty from the local population and support from those above him, in this case from Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn; otherwise a figure like Ilyās b. Asad might be sent to prepare the way for a successor. The inclusion of a local governor's name on a coin for a brief run, as in al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm's case, may show a governor trying to promote himself in both directions. His name circulating in the city reinforces his position to the local population, especially if he has newly come to the position. Such a short run of coins could also indicate a total failure on al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm's part and that his governorship only lasted

⁴⁷ Ibid. 208.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ This is most likely a derogatory reference, at least in part, to remnants of the Ṭāhirid army who had taken to the hills following Ya'qūb's victory in Nīshāpūr.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 224-225.

⁵¹ His three brothers all appear at one time or another on copper coins.

for a single year, or less. It could be argued that Ilyās had been appointed governor in 204/819 as Ibn al-Athīr states, but within two years he had been replaced by al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm, perhaps because he was transferred to a military position. On the other hand, al-Shukr b. Ibrāhīm may have been demonstrating his loyalty and support for Ṭāhir by minting coins with both their names in an appropriate hierarchy. Probably the most important argument that could be drawn from a conclusion such as this is that local governors had the potential to direct the striking of coins in their own territories. This is a point we shall return to later.

4.3.2 The Striking of Standard ‘Abbāsīd Coins

The issues surrounding the coinage of Ṭāhir are on the one hand unique and, on the other hand, set up many of the questions which must be dealt with in discussing the coinage of not only the remainder of the Ṭāhirid dynasty but for the eastern frontier through the fourth/tenth century. What we see following Ṭāhir’s reign, possibly driven in part by events taking place and decisions being made in Khurāsān, is a greater standardization of gold *dinars* and silver *dirhams* to the point that the inclusion of the name of the caliph in a particular rank, along with the inclusion of certain other notables, does seem to become mandatory. The *dirhams* of Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir sometimes follow similar patterns to those of his father while others also include the name of al-Ma’mūn along with Ṭalḥa’s,⁵² but after Ṭalḥa (d. 213/828) the silver and gold coins of the eastern frontier follow the standard ‘Abbāsīd designs and omit the name of local officials until the end of Ṭāhirid rule in

⁵² For examples struck in Samarqand, see year 208 (ANS 1972.79.25 and 1963.172.2), 209 (ANS 1972.79.26), and 210 (ANS 1966.239.2).

259/873.⁵³ The inclusion of local governors follows a similar pattern. Often copper *fulūs* follow the patterns of *dinars* and *dirhams*, but not always; it is in the *fulūs* that you see the widest variety of names included on coins, for example. The variety of copper coins and their limited and uneven representation in the standard catalogs, unfortunately, make it difficult to make many general statements about the history of copper coinage along the eastern frontier during this period without giving them more attention than would be possible here.

For both gold *dinars* and silver *dirhams*, coins appear only to be struck at three mints during the later part of the Ṭāhirid era, Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh, until the end of Ṭāhirid rule in 259/873. Silver *dirhams* are minted regularly throughout this period at all three mints, but gold *dinars* are only struck from the 230's on, but not regularly until the late 240's. Gold *dinars* are minted in Marw (231,⁵⁴ 238,⁵⁵ 243,⁵⁶ 247,⁵⁷ 248,⁵⁸ 249,⁵⁹ 250,⁶⁰ 251,⁶¹ and 253⁶²), Samarqand (247,⁶³ 248,⁶⁴ 250-251,⁶⁵ and 253⁶⁶), and al-Shāsh (251⁶⁷ and 253⁶⁸). The limited number of mints striking coins and the standardized

⁵³ Remember that Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir only mints silver *dinars* in his name until 211/826-827, after that Album claims there are absolutely no non-copper Ṭāhirid coins.

⁵⁴ Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 139.

⁵⁵ Henri Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1887), no. 946.

⁵⁶ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 318; Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 947; ANS 1002.1.91 and 1918.74.1.

⁵⁷ Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 948.

⁵⁸ Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 155.

⁵⁹ ANS 1002.1.92.

⁶⁰ ANS 1922.211.9.

⁶¹ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 335.

⁶² Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 343; ANS 1917.215.85 and 1971.49.116.

⁶³ ANS 1977.127.4.

⁶⁴ Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 154.

⁶⁵ Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 969-971; ANS 1002.1.90.

⁶⁶ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 342; Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 979; ANS 1956.159.1 and 1971.49.111.

⁶⁷ Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 972.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 980; ANS 1917.216.50.

form of the coins make for a strong argument in favor of greater centralization in coin production during the later Ṭāhirid period. The selection of these three mints shows an interesting pattern that appears to have happened largely outside of the politics of the Ṭāhirid dynasty. Marw had been replaced as the capital of Khurāsān by Nīshāpūr with the rise of the Ṭāhirids in 205/821, but it appears that Nīshāpūr never replaced Marw as the primary minting center of the region. In fact, Nīshāpūr appears to stop minting coins in 205/821 and does not resume until after the fall of the Ṭāhirids. Despite losing its status as provincial capital, Marw maintained an important position as a center of trade throughout the Ṭāhirid period. Samarqand was both the most important center for trade in Transoxania at the time and in close proximity to the only source of native gold along the eastern frontier, at least according to al-Ya'qūbī who says the only source of gold in Khurāsān is in the valley of the river of Samarqand.⁶⁹ al-Shāsh was situated in proximity to a number of important silver mines, a possible explanation for the frequency with which *dirhams* are struck there. All three of these locations were chosen as mints for economic concerns over any kind of local political concerns, again implying that local concerns, and perhaps authority, were largely left out of the striking of these series.

If we look at the pattern of dates when we know these mints were producing coins, we see further evidence of centralized management of the mints of Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh during the Ṭāhirid period. Of the three mints producing coins during this period, in only two years do all three mints produce gold coins at the same time. Both of these years correspond to events surrounding the civil war in Iraq between the Caliphs al-Musta'īn (r. 248-252/862-866) and al-Mu'tazz (r. 252-255/866-869). In

⁶⁹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 294.

251/865, Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh all produce gold *dinars* naming the Caliph al-Mustaʿīn on the reverse and his son al-ʿAbbās on the obverse. These coins match the general patterns of that year when mints in Baghdad and the east named al-Mustaʿīn who had fled to Baghdad where he sought the protection of the Ṭāhirid Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allah b. Ṭāhir. The name of al-Muʿtazz, who was pronounced caliph in Sāmarrā by the Turkish military in 251/865, appears on coins minted in Sāmarrā and the west. In this case, the mints of Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh are following the lead of Baghdad and allying themselves with the Ṭāhirid-backed contender in the civil war. Following al-Muʿtazz's victory in the civil war, the mints of Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh all produce identical *dinars* and *dirhams* in the year 253/867. These coins all include the name of al-Muʿtazz as the caliph on the reverse, but mention no other names on the obverse.⁷⁰ That al-Muʿtazz is the only name included on the coins is an indication that these coins were struck early in the year, before al-Muʿtazz's son ʿAbd Allah was appointed his heir.⁷¹ Whether or not the simultaneous production of coins at all three mints was particularly orchestrated, perhaps a sign of acceptance of the caliph they had once sided against, is a point of speculation. These are the only two years for which we are certain all three mints struck gold coins, but that does not mean that these are absolutely the only years in which this occurred. What is striking about these dates is the

⁷⁰ Examples of silver *dirhams* struck in 253/867 include, Marw: ANS 1917.215.85, 1971.49.116, and 1992.149.2; Samarqand: Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 348; Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 987; and al-Shāsh: Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 349; Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 988.

⁷¹ There is no clear date for when al-Muʿtazz appointed ʿAbd Allah his successor, but it would appear he was never formally declared *walī al-ʿahd*. Some coins minted throughout the caliphate do not include the name of ʿAbd Allāh while others do, implying that those not including his name were struck earlier in the year before the announcement was made.

way they indicate a connection to the central mints of Iraq and respond to political events happening in the center.

The increased number of gold *dinars* struck in Khurāsān and Transoxania from the late 230's to the early 250's may more generally hint at the way the mints of the eastern frontier under the Ṭāhirids responded to developments in Iraq. Typically *dinars* were produced in the west, closer to the available sources of gold, while *dirhams* were produced in the east, closer to the available sources of silver. The increase in *dinar* production in Khurāsān occurs during a period of unrest in Iraq. The striking of *dinars* only becomes regular and expands beyond the mint of Marw after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 247/861 and ends following the conclusion of the civil war between al-Musta'īn and al-Mu'tazz. Is it possible that we are seeing in these coins a move by the Ṭāhirid authorities in Baghdad to move some gold from the former imperial capital of Baghdad to their brethren in the east so that a supply of *dinars* may be minted away from the threats of their Turkish rivals in Sāmarrā? Such a move would reinforce the connections between the two branches of the Ṭāhirid family in Baghdad and Khurāsān, as well as demonstrate involvement by the Ṭāhirids of Khurāsān in the politics of Iraq.

All of this shows that, at least in regard to numismatics, the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān were fairly well connected with political authorities in Iraq and responded to their centralized minting practices when it came to *dinars* and *dirhams*. Even the early coins of Ṭāhir, which have for so long been looked upon as a sign of his rebellious attitudes, did not stray from minting practices as seen contemporaneously throughout the caliphate. On the one hand, this could be an indication of loyalty to the caliphate. On the other hand, this could be an indication of connection to the Baghdad branch of the Ṭāhirid dynasty.

Especially in the coins struck during and after the civil war between al-Mustaʿīn and al-Muʿtazz, the loyalties shown on the coins of eastern Ṭāhirids seem to fall primarily with Baghdad, and the branch of the Ṭāhirid family which ruled there, over Sāmarrā. If one focuses on gold and silver coins of the Ṭāhirids along the eastern frontier, the coinage of the region appears to be standardized and centrally controlled. Following the end of Ṭāhirid power in Khurāsān, this uniformity and connection with central minting practices falls apart rather quickly.

4.4 Andarāba, Panjhīr, and Post-Ṭāhirid Coinage

Ṭāhirid power came to an end in 259/873 when the Ṣaffārid Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth marched out of Sīstān and conquered Nīshāpūr, capturing the last Ṭāhirid *amīr* of Khurāsān, Muhammad b. Ṭāhir II, in the process. As Ṭāhirid authority gave way to the Ṣaffārids, the numismatics of the eastern frontier show a rapid breakdown of centralization which results in a shift in the centers of minting and an explosion of names represented on coins. The earliest signs of these changes appear at the mints of Andarāba and Panjhīr. These two mints are located in close proximity to each other, in the region of Ṭukhāristān, and the history of coin production at each mint is closely tied to the other.

Panjhīr was both a mint and silver mine located along the Panjhīr River between Kābul to the south and the Khāwak Pass to the north in a valley of the Hindu Kush.⁷² Panjhīr was known for the large quantity of silver it produced which supplied many nearby mints. Recently, atomic absorption spectrometry analysis has demonstrated an unusually high level of purity in the silver mined there compared to the silver used in

⁷² Due to the lack of a “p” sound in Arabic, Panjhīr is written as “Banjhīr” on the coins under discussion here.

minting contemporaneously in other parts of the Islamic world.⁷³ According to some speculations, the mines of Panjhīr may have been a silver source for the Indo-Greeks of Bactria and the Hindū Shāhīs of Kābul before its use by the Muslims.⁷⁴ Silver Greek coins attributed to a mint named Panjhīr date back as far as the third century BCE, giving some support to these assumptions.⁷⁵ Still, the earliest known Islamic coins listing Panjhīr do not appear until 259/872-873.⁷⁶ These coins give the name of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mu‘tamīd on the reverse with the name of the Ṣaffārid *amīr* Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth on the obverse. Panjhīri silver *dirhams* including the name of Ya‘qūb appear also in 260-261/873-875.⁷⁷ These Panjhīri coins are the earliest known Ṣaffārid coins.

Andarāba was located north of Panjhīr across the Khāwak Pass. It is known as the mint of Panjhīr, as much of the silver mined at Panjhīr was sent to the city of Andarāba to be minted, and the mint of Balkh, as Balkh was the largest city in Ṭukhāristān. Andarāba is known for the large volumes of silver *dirhams* produced there for the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries. In fact, of the large number of Central Asian silver *dirhams* of this period which have appeared in hordes from Northern and Eastern Europe, Andarāba is the third most often encountered mint, behind the mints of the much larger cities of Samarqand and al-Shāsh.⁷⁸ While coins attributed to Andarāba appear in 247/861-862⁷⁹ and 258/871-872⁸⁰, it is not until 263/875-876 that we see evidence for

⁷³ M.R. Cowell and N. M. Lowick, “Silver from the Panjhir Mines,” *Metallurgy in Numismatics*, vol. 2, ed. W.A. Oddy, (London: The Royal Numismatic Society, 1988), 65-74.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁵ For an example in the ANS collection, ANS 1995.51.29.

⁷⁶ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, no. 47; ANS 1935.36.841, 1968.62.2.

⁷⁷ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 49-54; ANS 1927.179.8.

⁷⁸ Jere L. Bacharach, “Andarab and the Banijurids,” *Afghanistan Journal* 3 (1976), 148-149.

⁷⁹ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tübingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, no. 1.

regular annual minting there. The relationship between Andarāba and Panjhīr poses some interesting questions about the relationship between mining and minting and who held the authority to strike coins.

Silver *dirhams* minted at Andarāba in 258/871-872 neither match the standard coins of mints of Iraq nor name any dynastic governor. The coins simply name the Caliph al-Mu'tamid on the reverse,⁸¹ while coins minted in Iraq in that same year name al-Mu'tamid on the reverse along with his heir Ja'far on the obverse.⁸² In the years 263-269/876-883, more silver *dirhams* are struck at Andarāba with only the name of al-Mu'tamid,⁸³ while coins struck in Baghdad and the eastern half of the caliphate in those same years name al-Mu'tamid on the reverse along with the name of the 'Abbāsīd regent al-Muwaffaq on the obverse.⁸⁴ Similar *dirhams* with only the name of al-Mu'tamid were struck at Panjhīr in the years 260/873-874 and 262-264/875-878.⁸⁵ As minting moved away from the major economic centers of Marw, Samarqand, and al-Shāsh and towards the actual sources of precious metals in Andarāba and Panjhīr, they began to take a new form which is neither purely 'Abbāsīd nor representative of any particular provincial dynasty. These coins also tend to be of a rougher quality, thicker, and with less elegant lettering implying not just a change in inscriptions, but a total change in the methods of production and the authority under which they were struck. It should be noted that similar

⁸⁰ ANS 1949.163.7; R. Vasmer, "Beiträge zur muhammedanischen Munzkunde. I. Die münzen der Abu Da'udiden," *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 58 (1925), 51; Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 970.

⁸¹ Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 970; ANS 1949.163.7.

⁸² See ANS 1922.99.61 for an example from Baghdad.

⁸³ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 2-11, 16-19.

⁸⁴ See ANS 1972.79.472 for an example from Baghdad for the year 263/876-877.

⁸⁵ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 48, 57-59, 62; ANS 1972.79.85.

dirhams including only the name of al-Mu'tamid were minted at al-Shāsh during at least the year 260/873-874.⁸⁶

Yāqūt provides us with some information about the way the mines of Panjhīr functioned which may shed some light on the minting practices at both Panjhīr and Andarāba. Yāqūt writes in his entry on Panjhīr that

In it there is a mountain of silver. Its people are mixed (*akhlāt*). Among them there is partisanship (*'aṣabiyya*), malice (*sharr*), and murder (*qatl*)... The silver that is in the highest mountain is famous across the lands. The foothills (*al-sūq*) and the mountain are like a sieve from the numerous shafts (*al-ḥafr*). Furthermore, if they (the miners) follow its veins and come across it, they are shown that it arrives at precious metals (*jawahir*). If they find a vein that has never been excavated before, they take the silver. They agree that for a man from among them (he invests) in (opening) a shaft three hundred thousand *dirhams*, more or less. Perhaps he finds what he is satisfied with and he is done. Perhaps an adequate amount (*miqdār nafaqatuḥu*) comes to him. Perhaps it gives little and he is impoverished for it (the shaft) is overcome by water and other things. Perhaps a man follows a vein and it ends at another branch from its source. The two are taken together in (a single) shaft (or claim). The custom with them is such that whoever arrives first (*sabaqa*) opposes his (the other's) ownership. He is entitled to this vein and what comes from it. They work with this competition, working not unlike the work of devils (*al-shayātīn*). If one of the men arrives first the expenditures of the other become wasted. If they are equal, there is a partnership.⁸⁷

This passage shows that mining in Panjhīr was a competitive, cutthroat, and entrepreneurial endeavor. This opinion of the miners of Panjhīr is also found in al-Iṣṭakhrī's text, who says the mines employ ten thousand men and the majority of them are

⁸⁶ Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, no. 1033.

⁸⁷ Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, 1:498-499.

“causers of havoc and wickedness” (*al-’īth wa al-fasād*).⁸⁸ Individuals expended their own funds to work a silver vein and could see their gains lost if they came across someone else’s claim, thus forcing them to forfeit their claim to the miner who had arrived at the main vein first. If mining practices were such, can we argue that coins struck at Panjhīr and Andarāba were minted in a similarly entrepreneurial manner?

In his *Kitāb al-jawahiratayn al-’atīqatayn*, Abū Muhammad al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945) discusses the mine of Andarāba, probably meaning Panjhīr, saying,

It is the richest mine in Khurāsān. Every day, many pieces of silver are taken away from it... (The silver) is divided into three thirds. Representatives of the *sulṭān* take one third.

The gatherers (*al-laqaṭa*) take a third. The people of the place (*ahl al-mawḍi’*) seize a third. From among them are those who work their own claims (*ḥaqqahā*) and from

among them there are those who sell (their claim) to those who trade as their profession.⁸⁹

Beyond reinforcing the entrepreneurial nature of minting in the region, al-Hamdānī highlights a system of taxation and/or mint fees in use at the mine, demonstrating some level of organized authority over the process. The combination of coins being struck directly at the mine instead of in major urban centers, as had happen under the Ṭāhirids, and a system of accounting and tax collection established directly at the mine indicates that miners were converting their silver into coins as the silver was extracted. The authority to strike coins and collect taxes and mint fees were moved away from regional economic and political centers to the mines and to those who maintained political control over the mines. The opportunity for “on demand” striking of *dirhams* by miners is also demonstrated, moving minting further into a private or market economic sphere. It is

⁸⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa ’l-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir ‘Abd al-’Āl al-Ḥīnī (Cairo: 1381/1961), 156.

⁸⁹ al-Hamdānī, *Kitāb al-jawahiratīn al-’atīqatīn*, (Cairo: Egyptian National Library, 2004): 99.

most likely that the decline of centralized Ṭāhirid authority created an opportunity for other groups to lay claim to the lucrative taxation and mint fees on these mines.

4.4.1 Ṣaffārid Coins and Signs of Local Opposition

The early coins of Panjhīr and Andarāba were struck in the period between the collapse of the Ṭāhirid dynasty and the expansion of Sāmānid authority south of the Oxus. This is a period in which political authority along the eastern frontier changed hands regularly and often violently. It is not surprising therefore to find that the minting of coins in the region is notably less centralized than it had been under the much better-organized Ṭāhirids. This does not mean that these coins were not struck on the authority of local dynastic powers. The following section will address the coinage of this period, with particular attention paid to the dynastic coinage of the Ṣaffārids and the Bānījūrīds, and try to connect minting practices to larger political developments in the region.

In 259/872-873, the first Ṣaffārid coins appear at the mint of Panjhīr. These *dirhams* include the name of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth on the obverse and al-Muʿtamīd on the reverse.⁹⁰ Similar coins appear in the two following years, 260-261/863-865.⁹¹ Following these coins, another twenty years go by before the Ṣaffārids mint more coins in the region. This short three-year window for the striking of Ṣaffārid coins has been viewed as an example of Yaʿqūb’s restless adventuring, most noticeably by Deborah Tor, who wrote, “In a typical pattern of early Ṣaffārid crusading, Yaʿqūb came, fought the

⁹⁰ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, no. 47; ANS 1935.36.841, 1968.62.2.

⁹¹ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 49-54; ANS 1927.179.8.

Khārijites, and left (Panjhīr).”⁹² This analysis, while reflective of the brief appearance of Ṣaffārid coins at Panjhīr, demonstrates the often dismissive approach taken toward the early years of the Ṣaffārid enterprise, seeing Ya’qūb as little more than a wandering adventurer,⁹³ and fails to look at the production of these coins in a broader historical and numismatic context.

A number of events occur around 259/872-873 which highlight the importance of this date as the advent of Ṣaffārid coin production. First, this is the year in which Ya’qūb entered Nīshāpūr and brought an end to Ṭāhirid rule. As mentioned above, we can see a correspondence between the collapse of the Ṭāhirids and a decentralization of minting practices, manifested as early as 258/871-872. As the Ṣaffārids were conquering a number of territories within Khurāsān, they disrupted Ṭāhirid authority and the striking of coins at Andarāba which only included the name of al-Mu’tamid are representative of this disruption.

The pattern of Ya’qūb’s conquests is often difficult to decipher. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* has Ya’qūb and his army moving frequently during the years leading up to the conquest of Nīshāpūr.⁹⁴ C.E. Bosworth places the date for the conquest of Panjhīr sometime between the years 256 and 259 (869-873) during which time Ya’qūb conquered Kābul, Bāmiyān, and Balkh, but is inclined towards situating the conquest of Panjhīr

⁹² D.G. Tor, “A Numismatic History of the First Ṣaffārid Dynasty (AH 247-300/AD 861-911),” *The Numismatic Chronicle*, 162 (2002), 295.

⁹³ This is an image that has been recently revised, especially in Tor’s later work on ‘*ayyār*’ movements. In her book on the ‘*ayyār*’ movements, *Violent Order*, the ideological and religious motivations behind Ya’qūb’s conquests are emphasized, placing him in a broader context of contemporary ‘*ayyār*’ movements. Rather than being a military adventurer focused on booty and imperialist expansion with the overthrow of ‘Abbāsīd rule his ultimate goal, Ya’qūb’s career has instead been recast as one of a religious figure concerned with strengthening Islam and the ‘*ayyār*’ par excellence. D.G. Tor, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the ‘Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*, Istanbul Texts and Studien, 11 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007).

⁹⁴ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 214-220.

toward the end of these events.⁹⁵ Despite the exact date, it is clear that Ya'qūb's military conquests of the Ṭāhirid territories had opened the door not only for the striking of Ṣaffārid coins, but also coins which were neither truly 'Abbāsīd nor representative of any particular dynasty.

According to our sources, another important event occurred around this time. al-Ṭabarī tells us that in 257/870-871 al-Mu'tamid gave Ya'qūb investitures over Balkh, Tukhāristān, Kirmān, Sīstān, and Sind.⁹⁶ The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* puts these same events in the year 258/871-872 and includes an investiture for Fārs.⁹⁷ These events lead us to wonder whether these investitures gave Ya'qūb the right, or at least the perceived right, to strike coins in his own name. Perhaps more importantly, this reinforces our questions over who was actually striking coins at Panjhīr in the late third/ninth century. The Ṣaffārid coins struck at Panjhīr, much like the contemporary coins minted at Andarāba, do not include the name of the 'Abbāsīd heir, but rather replace the name of Ja'far with the name of Ya'qūb. This would imply that these were not coins minted under instruction from Iraq. Complicating this matter further is the fact that in 260/873-874, as mentioned earlier, coins are struck at Panjhīr both with the name of Ya'qūb and without the name of Ya'qūb (or anyone else's name on the obverse for that matter).

These Panjhīrī coins can be compared with Ṣaffārid coins minted elsewhere during the reign of Ya'qūb. Coins minted at al-Muḥammadiyya (near Rayy) in 262/875-876,⁹⁸ al-Ahwāz in 263-265/876-879,⁹⁹ and Fārs in 264-265/877-879¹⁰⁰ also replace the

⁹⁵ Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan*, 107-108.

⁹⁶ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 3:1841.

⁹⁷ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 216-217.

⁹⁸ G.C. Miles, *The Numismatic History of Rayy*, Numismatic Studies no. 2 (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1938), 129-130.

⁹⁹ Tor, "A Numismatic History of the First Saffarid Dynasty," 298-299; Vasmer, "Über die Münzen der Saffariden und ihrer Gegner in Fars und Hurasan," nos. 8-10; ANS 1980.141.6.

name of Ja'far or al-Muwaffaq with Ya'qūb's name. That no Ṣaffārid coins minted during Ya'qūb's life feature the name of the 'Abbāsīd heir demonstrates a pattern of divergence by the Ṣaffārids beyond the inclusion of Ya'qūb's name. This uniformity shows that the Ṣaffārids may have had some control over the coins which were minted in their name and that it was not simply a matter of local mint officials placating the new local military power. This argument is especially attractive considering the rivalry between Ya'qūb and al-Muwaffaq, whose name is most often omitted.

Returning to the eastern frontier, the question of why Ṣaffārid coins disappeared so suddenly from Panjhīr remains. Tor argued that this was a matter of Ya'qūb's adventurous whimsy and that he established himself in Panjhīr and immediately gave his attention to new military exploits. The counter argument to Tor's statement is that Ya'qūb's army had moved on well before the striking of coins in his name ceased, or in some cases even began. If we look at the pattern of Ya'qūb's minting (Panjhīr 259-261, al-Muḥammadiyya 262, al-Ahwāz 263-265, and Fārs 264-265), the coins always follow far beyond the path of his army. By the time the first coins appear at Panjhīr, Ya'qūb has already taken Nīshāpūr. He is in Fārs before coins appear at al-Muḥammadiyya and has been defeated by the 'Abbāsīd army outside Baghdad and has retreated to Jundīshāpūr before coins appear in al-Ahwāz or Fārs. That these coins were minted at all is a sign of sustained Ṣaffārid presence in the areas Ya'qūb's army had conquered, a notion enforced by the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* which consistently details the people Ya'qūb leaves behind to govern in his absence as he moves on with his army to new fronts.

Perhaps more important to the sudden decline of Ṣaffārid minting at Panjhīr is the local opposition faced by Ya'qūb throughout Khurāsān. This chapter began with the story

¹⁰⁰ Tor, "A Numismatic History of the First Saffarid Dynasty," 299; ANS 1980.141.4.

of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khujistānī and the coins he minted in Andarāba, Herat, and Nīshāpūr between 267 and 268 (882-884). al-Khujistānī was just one of a number of opponents to Ṣaffārid authority in Khurāsān. If we follow the mint of Panjhīr beyond the last Ṣaffārid coins, remembering along the way that Ṣaffārid coinage had already been “interrupted” by non-dynastic coins in 260/873-874, it is clear that other groups were ready to step in and take control of the mints, but identifying these new authorities is somewhat difficult.

4.4.2 The Bānījūrīds and Lack of Uniformity between Mints

In the years 261/874-875, 263/876-877, and 264/877-878, coins are struck at Panjhīr with the name Muhammad on the obverse and al-Mu‘tamīd on the reverse.¹⁰¹ Alongside these coins, other coins appear with only the name of al-Mu‘tamīd in the years 262-264/875-878.¹⁰² Minting appears to cease at Panjhīr for the years 265-267/878-881. The Muhammad named on these coins is difficult to identify with any certainty. Panjhīr is not a site that appears often in textual sources and Muhammad is much too common a name to narrow down the list of candidates. Coins struck at Panjhīr in 268/881-882 may provide us a clue. These coins include the name Muhammad b. ‘Umar or ‘Amr (only the first two letters are visible) on the obverse.¹⁰³ Bosworth, following Vasmer, argues that these are Bānījūrīd or Abū Dāwūdī coins referencing Abū Dāwūd Muhammad b. Aḥmad b. Bānījūr.¹⁰⁴ The Muhammad b. ‘Umar or ‘Amr coins complicate this identification, but these are an outlier separated by four years from the “Muḥammad” coins. Supporting this

¹⁰¹ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 55-56, 60-61.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, nos. 57-59, 62, ANS 1972.79.85.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, no. 63.

¹⁰⁴ Bosworth, *The History of the Saffarids of Sistan*, 108; Vasmer, “Beiträge zur muhammedanischen Münzkunde 1. Die Münzen der Abū Da’udiden,” 49-62.

identification, though, is the appearance in 265/878-879 of coins minted at Andarāba with the fuller name Muhammad b. Aḥmad on the obverse.¹⁰⁵

The connections between Panjhīr and Andarāba and the coins produced by their respective mints are surprisingly complex. As mentioned earlier, Andarāba is often referred to as the mint of Panjhīr because the Andarāban coins are minted with silver that has come from the mines of Panjhīr. This connection implies close geographic proximity and cooperation between those who control mining at Panjhīr and minting at Andarāba. With an assumption like this in mind, one would expect to see some uniformity between the coins minted at these two locations, but a comparison of these coins does not support this assumption at all.

Table 4.3: Comparison of names appearing on coins minted at Andarāba and Panjhīr, 263-270/876-884¹⁰⁶

	Andarāba Obverse	Reverse	Panjhīr Obverse	Reverse
263		al-Mu'tamid		al-Mu'tamid
			Muḥammad	al-Mu'tamid
264		al-Mu'tamid	Muḥammad	al-Mu'tamid
				al-Mu'tamid
265		al-Mu'tamid	n/a	n/a
	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid		
266		al-Mu'tamid	n/a	n/a
267		al-Mu'tamid	n/a	n/a
	Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allah	al-Mu'tamid		

¹⁰⁵ ANS 1959.165.14.

¹⁰⁶ The chart includes coins minted between the first year of regular, annual production at Andarāba (263/876-877) and the last year of regular production at Panjhīr (270/883-884). There is no evidence of coins struck at Panjhīr after this date until 293/905-906. A split cell indicates that more than one series was produced in a single year. "n/a" designates that no known coins were minted in that year.

268	Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allah	al-Mu‘tamid	Muḥammad b. ‘Umar/‘Amr ¹⁰⁷	al-Mu‘tamid
		al-Mu‘tamid		
269		al-Mu‘tamid	n/a	n/a
270	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu‘tamid		al-Mu‘tamid
	Sa‘īd	al-Mu‘tamid	Abū Dāwūd	al-Mu‘tamid

Of the five years in which coins were produced at both Andarāba and Panjhīr and the dozen coin types struck over those five years, there are only two years in which the two mints produced identical coins. In the years 263 and 264 (876-878), both mints produced coins which listed only the name of the Caliph al-Mu‘tamid on the reverse.¹⁰⁸ This is not evidence of cooperation between the two mints during these years for two reasons. First, coins which only include the name of the caliph should be considered as a sort of default coinage. They make no statements on their own and say nothing about the identity or motivations of the people striking the coins. Second, in both years Panjhīr also strikes coins with the name Muḥammad on the obverse while Andarāba does not, meaning that for at least part of the year the two mints were operating under different conditions.

This leads us back to the identification of the Muḥammad listed on Panjhīr coins as Abū Dāwūd Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. Abū Dāwūd is named on the coins of Andarāba as Muḥammad b. Aḥmad in 265, 270, 275, 277-280, and 282-284.¹⁰⁹ He more clearly

¹⁰⁷ Only the first two letters of the patronymic are legible on these coins, ‘ayn and mim. This leaves the possibilities of either ‘Umar or ‘Amr.

¹⁰⁸ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 59. 62; ANS 1972.79.85.

¹⁰⁹ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tübingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 20, 35-47, 51-53, 56; ANS 1959.165.14, 1917.215.97, 1917.215.98, 1954.119.20.

appears as Abū Dāwūd on coins from Panjhīr in the year 270¹¹⁰ and from Andarāba in the years 282-283 and 285.¹¹¹ The obvious question is why would he appear on coins under so many different names? One explanation is that they are not in fact the same person. Two series of coins put the theory of a single man with multiple names into question. The earliest are the coins minted at Andarāba and Panjhīr listed above in the year 270/883-884. Abū Dāwūd was the head of the branch of the Bānījūrid dynasty which ruled Balkh in the years 260-285/874-898.¹¹² As the ruler of Balkh, Andarāba and Panjhīr fell under his possession. This presumably means that coins struck at Andarāba were struck under the same authority as were coins struck at Panjhīr and that in both cases this authority was derived from Abū Dāwūd in Balkh. The Andarāban *dirhams* name Muḥammad b. Aḥmad while the Panjhīrī *dirhams* name Abū Dāwūd, meaning that two mints which were working under the same authorities in close geographic proximity to each other decided to mint coins giving the same man two different names in the same year. The second series of coins come from Andarāba in 282-283/895-897, naming Muḥammad b. Aḥmad on the obverse and Abū Dāwūd on the reverse along with the caliph al-Muʿtaḍid. These may be an example of muled coins mixing the obverse and the reverse of two different series, but this is unlikely since these coins are struck over two years. What reason could be given for presenting two names for the same person on the same coin? In 287/900 there is a similar example at Andarāba in which an Abū Ibrāhīm, the Sāmānid Ismaʿīl b. Aḥmad, is named on both the obverse and the reverse.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum. Tübingen: Gazna/Kabul XIV d Hurasan IV*, nos. 64-65.

¹¹¹ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 52, 57; ANS 1954.119.20.

¹¹² This remarkably long reign has been reconstructed from limited sources and should be considered problematic. C.E. Bosworth, "Bānīdjūrids or Abū Dāwūdids," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

¹¹³ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 62-63.

Another explanation for this confusing mix of *dirhams* with the names of Muḥammad, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, and Abū Dāwūd is that these mints were either not under a centralized Bānījūrīd authority or were not taking direct orders from Balkh as to whose name should appear on what coins or under what title. This also opens the door to a re-identification of Muḥammad and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad as someone other than Abū Dāwūd. If we examine the full run of names appearing on coins from Andarāba for the years 263-290/876-903, from the beginning of regular minting at Andarāba to the appearance of the first strictly Sāmānīd coins, we see that the complexity of the situation goes beyond the multiple Muḥammads.

Figure 4.4: Names appearing on Andarāban *dirhams*, 263-290/876-903¹¹⁴

Date	Obverse	Reverse
263		al-Mu'tamid
264		al-Mu'tamid
265		al-Mu'tamid
	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
266		al-Mu'tamid
267		al-Mu'tamid
	Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allah	al-Mu'tamid
268	Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allah	al-Mu'tamid
		al-Mu'tamid
269		al-Mu'tamid
270	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
	Sa'īd	al-Mu'tamid
271	Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb	al-Mu'tamid
272	n/a	n/a
273	Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb	al-Mu'tamid
274	Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb	al-Mu'tamid
275	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
276	n/a	n/a
277	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
278	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid

¹¹⁴ A split cell indicates that more than one series was produced in a single year. "n/a" designates that no known coins were minted in that year.

279	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
280	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'tamid
		al-Mu'taḍid
281	n/a	n/a
282	Abū Dāwūd	al-Mu'taḍid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad
283	Abū Dāwūd	al-Mu'taḍid Muḥammad b. Aḥmad
	'Amr b. al-Layth	al-Mu'taḍid
284	'Amr b. al-Layth	al-Mu'taḍid
	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'taḍid
285	Abū Dāwūd	al-Mu'taḍid Aḥmad b. 'Abd Allah
286	Ḥamdān	al-Mu'taḍid 'Amr b. al-Layth
	Aḥmad b. Muḥammad	al-Mu'taḍid
287	Abū Ibrāhīm	al-Mu'taḍid Abū Ibrāhīm
	Abū Ja'far	al-Mu'taḍid Abū Ibrāhīm
288	Abū Ibrāhīm	al-Mu'taḍid Abū Ja'far
	Aḥmad b. Muḥammad	al-Mu'taḍid Isma'īl b. Aḥmad
289	Isma'īl b. Aḥmad	al-Mu'taḍid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad
290	Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad	al-Muktafī Isma'īl b. Aḥmad
		al-Muktafī Isma'īl b. Aḥmad

Over the first seven years listed above, coins are produced with only the name of the caliph on the reverse. In one year, 265/878-879, a second series is struck including the name of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad on the obverse.¹¹⁵ In the year 270/883-884, a second series including the name of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad on the obverse is struck.¹¹⁶ In 267-

¹¹⁵ ANS 1959.165.14.

¹¹⁶ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV, no. 2.*

268/880-882, coins appear with the name of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khujistānī.¹¹⁷

Despite the presence of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad or al-Khujistānī at Andarāba, and more importantly at its mint, the al-Mu‘tamid-only *dirhams* persist for this entire seven year period. The attempts by different individuals to include their names on coins during this period, with Muḥammad b. Aḥmad continuing to promote his own name over the course of twenty years, shows that the “caliph-only” *dirhams* lacked the name of a governor, but not for lack of trying by individuals who felt that their name could appear on coins. These coins show that either political control over Andarāba was so tenuous during this period that no one could sustain authority long enough to include his name on coins beyond a brief moment or that the decisions about who was to be named on coins were normally being made by a politically unaffiliated mint official.

From the reconstructed timeline of names appearing on Andarāban coins we can try to come to some conclusions about the history of Andarāba and the identity of the individuals named on its coins. The earliest date that can be given for Muḥammad b. Aḥmad’s control over the mint is 265/878-879. If we presume he is the same Muḥammad who appeared on Panjhīrī *dirhams* in the two previous years, a pattern emerges in which Muḥammad strikes coins at Panjhīr for two years, alongside coins which only name al-Mu‘tamid, and then shuts down the Panjhīr mint, which produces only one series between 265 and 269 (878-883), and moves production to Andarāba. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad’s coin production is then immediately stopped, even though Andarāba continues to produce coins regularly with only the name of al-Mu‘tamid, but the appearance of al-Khujistānī in the area and on the coins explains this interruption. It is important to note

¹¹⁷ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 14-15.

here that one of the rare references to Abū Dāwūd in the chronicles appears in conjunction with his role in fighting against al-Khujistānī.¹¹⁸ Following the period of al-Khujistānī's control of Andarāba, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad returns for less than a year before his name is replaced with that of Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb, who controls the mint for five years (270-274/883-888).¹¹⁹ At this point, caliph-only *dirhams* disappear for a decade, indicating a firming-up of local control over the mint. The identity of Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb is difficult to uncover, but he was most likely governor over Andarāba in the early 270's. At the very least, he was capable of establishing his own control over the mint of Andarāba for an extended period. Then, beginning in 275/888-889, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad's name appears again on *dirhams* struck at Andarāba regularly until 284/897-898.¹²⁰

Clearly Muḥammad b. Aḥmad did not have firm control over the mint of Andarāba until 275/888-889, a decade after his name initially appeared on Andarāban *dirhams*. In 280/893-894, caliph-only *dirhams* returned to Andarāba listing only the name of the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid.¹²¹ Other coins struck that year included the name of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad and al-Mu'tamid, interesting in that al-Mu'tamid had died in the previous year, evidence that the Muḥammad b. Aḥmad coins come from the earlier part of the year. This is followed by a year in which there are no known Andarāban coins, after which Muḥammad b. Aḥmad returns to the coins alongside Abū Dāwūd in the years 282-283/895-897. It is clear that up until 275/888-889, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad had struggled to retain control over Andarāba. Could it be that the al-Mu'taḍid coins of

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi 'l-ta'rīkh*, 6: 338, 340.

¹¹⁹ Coins with the names Sa'īd and Sa'īd b. Shu'ayb: *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 21-23, 25-29.

¹²⁰ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 35-47, 51-53, 56; ANS 1917.215.97, 1917.215.98, 1954.119.20.

¹²¹ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 48-50.

280/893-894 are a sign that Muḥammad b. Aḥmad's authority was once again contested? Is it possible that, having lost control of the city (if he was not in fact himself Abū Dāwūd) he went to Balkh and requested the support of Abū Dāwūd in regaining control of Andarāba? Muḥammad b. Aḥmad's place in the presumed third position on these coins would indicate a position of subservience to Abū Dāwūd, making this plausible. We know from the textual sources that, in the early 280's, Abū Dāwūd was governor of Balkh and was involved in reinforcing his position in the region. According to al-Nashakhrī, following the ascension of al-Mu'taḍid, Abū Dāwūd made an alliance with the Ṣaffārid *amīr* 'Amr b. al-Layth.¹²² This alliance is seen in the Andarāban *dirhams* of 283-284/896-898 which name 'Amr along with al-Mu'taḍid.¹²³

The majority of the evidence argues toward the identification of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad as Abū Dāwūd. An important aspect of this identification is that they both appear to die around the same time. The last coins naming Muḥammad b. Aḥmad appear in 284/897-898 while the last coins naming Abū Dāwūd appear the following year. Over the next five years the number of names appearing on the coins of Andarāba continues to expand. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad's son, Aḥmad, appears on coins in the years 286/899 and 288-290/900-903.¹²⁴ Vasmer believes that the Abū Ja'far who appears on Andarāban *dirhams* of 287-288/900-901 is also Aḥmad b. Muḥammad.¹²⁵ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad's appearance on *dirhams* from Balkh in 292/904-905 and 297/909-910 also reinforce the connection between Muḥammad b. Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd.¹²⁶ 'Amr b. al-Layth appears

¹²² al-Nashakhrī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 102.

¹²³ *Sylloge numorum arabicorum Tubingen: Balk und die Landschaften am Oberen Oxus: XIV c Hurasan IV*, nos. 53-54.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 61, 64-69.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 64-68; Vasmer, "Beiträge zur muhammedanischen Münzkunde 1. Die Münzen der Abū Da'udiden," 53.

¹²⁶ ANS 1927.179.69, 1927.179.70, and 1966.247.4.

again in 286/899,¹²⁷ but in the following year the Sāmānid Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad appears on Andarāban coins, first as Abū Ibrāhīm.¹²⁸ It is of interest to note that Ismāʿīl's victory over ʿAmr occurred in 287/900 outside of Balkh, in close proximity to the mint of Andarāba. After 290/902-903, the coins of Andarāba become purely Sāmānid.

The numismatic evidence shows that the rise of the Ṣaffārids, or perhaps more importantly the decline of the Ṭāhirids, was a politically traumatic experience along the eastern frontier. The Ṭāhirids had presided over a period of fairly centralized and uniform control along the eastern frontier, at least as represented by the presumably state-run production of coins and its close connection to Iraq. During the thirty years between the collapse of the Ṭāhirids and the expansion of Sāmānid authority into Khurāsān, the authority to strike coins became more localized, centered around the sources of silver rather than politically and economically important urban centers, and local authorities were able (whether by permission or by force) to dictate the inscriptions found on coins minted in their territories. On the micro level represented by this detailed look at minting at Panjhīr and Andarāba during this period, uniformity of coin types was not always possible. Even when there is evidence for the prolonged reign of a single governor, his name may appear, disappear, change, and be replaced by others over time.

Still, this was not entirely a period of anarchy. Coins largely stuck with the standards of ʿAbbāsīd coinage, even if the coins themselves, along with their inscriptions, became rougher. The main epigraphic program remained intact and the name of the caliph remained in the primary position of authority. The only noticeable break was the removal of the name of the caliph's heir and, in most cases but not all, its replacement

¹²⁷ Ibid., nos. 58-60.

¹²⁸ ANS 1927.179.30.

with the name of a local authority. As we move this study of the numismatics of the eastern frontier into the Sāmānid era, we will see a move back towards uniformity while at the same time a continued divergence from the standard coinage of Iraq.

It may be important to note that, during this period, gold *dinars* continued to be produced at Samarqand maintaining the Iraqī standards, including the name of the heir al-Muwaffaq. These coins have been attested for the years 271-276/884-890.¹²⁹ This is an indication that despite what was occurring with the production of silver *dirhams*, information about the expected standards of Iraq was still available along the eastern frontier. This stability shown at Samarqand is also interesting for the study of early Sāmānid history. In the midst of the struggles occurring in Khurāsān, the Sāmānids appear to have been able to maintain a more centralized Transoxania despite the collapse of the Ṭāhirids.

4.5 Sāmānid Uniformity

The early Sāmānids had minted copper coins in their own names as early as the 240's, but it is not until 282/895-896 that Isma'īl b. Aḥmad began striking silver *dirhams* at Samarqand and al-Shāsh including the name of the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid and his own name on the reverse.¹³⁰ These coins return the production of *dirhams* to the economic centers which had been so important during the Ṭāhirid period. However, the Sāmānids do not limit their minting to these major urban centers; rather, under the Sāmānids minting expands to an unprecedented number of mints. In the 290's, as the Sāmānids consolidated

¹²⁹ Lavoix, *Catalogue Monnaies Musulmanes de la Bibliothèque National*, no. 1001-1003; Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 1: no. 355; Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, nos. 165-166.

¹³⁰ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 2: nos. 251-252.

their positions not only over Transoxania but also Khurāsān, the minting of Sāmānid coins expands to Andarāba, Balkh, Ma'din, and Nīshāpūr, each of which begin striking Sāmānid coins between 290/902 and 293/906. By the 330's, the mints of Badakhshān, Bukhārā, Farwān, al-Khuttal, Marw, and Panjhīr also struck Sāmānid *dirhams*, bringing the total number of mints to twelve. While gold *dinars* are attested for a number of these mints, during the early Sāmānid period the striking of *dinars* is primarily centered on Nīshāpūr and Samarqand. Interestingly, the striking of *dinars* appears to cease at Samarqand in the first decade of the fourth century, but carries on with regular strikings through the 330's at Nīshāpūr. Despite this expansion of mints, there is a great amount of uniformity in the coins struck by the Sāmānids. The old minting centers do maintain a certain preeminence and Samarqand and al-Shāsh remain the most prolific and persistent Sāmānid mints, followed closely by Andarāba.

The consistency of the coins struck across all these mints is one of the most notable aspects of Sāmānid coins. The Sāmānids maintain the practice established during the post-Ṭāhirid period of omitting the name of the 'Abbāsīd heir, but instead of replacing the heir's name on the obverse with the name of a governor or local authority, they typically leave the obverse anonymous. Unlike earlier dynastic coins, the name of the Sāmānid *amīr* appears on the reverse below the name of the caliph. This pattern first appears on the earliest Sāmānid *dirhams* of Samarqand and al-Shāsh in 282/895-896 and continues until the first appearance of coins which include the name of the Ghaznavid *amīr* along with the name of the Sāmānid *amīr*. In this pattern, the Sāmānids still place their own names in a position of subservience to the caliph; in fact according to the traditional positioning they have situated themselves in the tertiary position, but they

have clearly broken from traditional epigraphic standards. Interestingly, Būyid coins similarly move the name of the *amīr* to a position directly beneath that of the caliph. This change comes much later, in 334/946 with the succession of al-Muṭīʿ to the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate. When al-Muṭīʿ does not name an heir, the Būyids do not shift their own names on subsequent coins so that Muʿizz al-Dawla remains on the obverse but is now in the second position, while ʿImād al-Dawla remains on the reverse in the third position. In effect, this makes the last name on the reverse the secondary position and the first name on the obverse the tertiary position. It is as if they change the epigraphic program so that there is a first and second ʿAbbāsīd position on the reverse and obverse respectively followed by a first and second Būyid position also on the reverse and obverse respectively. Any meaning behind this change is difficult to understand with certainty. Luke Treadwell appears to ignore the problem in his die corpus study of Būyid coins.¹³¹

Only two mints break from the pattern of the Sāmānid *amīr* appearing on the reverse alongside the caliph, namely Andarāba and Balkh. As mentioned above, Andarāban *dirhams* continue to include the name of the Bānījūrīd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad until 296/908-909. *Dirhams* struck at Balkh also include the name of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad until 297/909-910.¹³² Despite the rise of the Sāmānids, Balkh and Andarāba remain directly under Bānījūrīd authority, even though the Bānījūrīds are now subservient to the Sāmānid *amīr*. Due to the unusual positioning of the name of the Sāmānid *amīr*, these coins would traditionally be read as identifying the Sāmānids as subservient to the Bānījūrīds, but it is highly unlikely that these coins would have ever

¹³¹ Luke Treadwell, *Buyid Coinage, A Die Corpus (322-445 A.H.)*, (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2001).

¹³² ANS 1927.179.69, 1971.316.391, 1927.179.70, and 1966.247.4.

been read in such a mistaken manner. If we examine the actual coins, a better explanation for this arrangement of names may appear.

Table 4.5: Sāmānid/Bānījūrid *dirhams* from Andarāba and Balkh (images are not to scale)

<p>Andarāba, 288 ANS 1917.215.684 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Rev: al-Mu'taḍid, Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad</p>	
<p>Andarāba, 292 ANS 1971.316.369 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Rev: al-Muktafī, Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad</p>	

<p>Andarāba, 292 ANS 1973.37.7 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Rev: al-Muktafī, Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad</p>	
<p>Balkh, 292 ANS 1927.179.69 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Rev: al-Muktafī, Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad</p>	
<p>Balkh, 297 ANS 1927.179.70 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Rev: al-Muqtadir, Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl</p>	

<p>Balkh, 297 ANS 1966.247.4 Obv: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Rev: al-Muqtadir, Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl</p>	
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If we consider the epigraphic programs of the standard *dirham* of the period, all the variable information is found on the obverse, namely the date and the mint. The reverse inscription is static, except for the name of the caliph and whoever occupies the tertiary position. It is only with the ascension of a new caliph, or *amīr* in the case of Sāmānid coins, that the inscription on the reverse die needs to change. Now if we look at the coins pictured above, we can see, especially on the later coins, that the hand used to inscribe the obverse, at least the name of the Bānījūrīd, is different from the hand used to inscribe the reverse. We can speculate from this that the reverse dies were engraved by the Sāmānids and distributed to the mints while the obverse dies were engraved at the mint, in these cases by the Bānījūrīds. A decision could be made at the mint to include the local authority on the locally produced obverse while maintaining the centrally mandated reverse. This helps to explain also why it is only at these two mints where a local dynasty has held control for twenty five years prior to the advent of Sāmānid coins that you see local governors named on the coins.

Perhaps supporting this assessment, or perhaps complicating it, is a series of *dirhams* that are struck contemporaneously at Andarāba and Balkh which move the name of the caliph to the obverse. At Andarāba in the years 291/903-904,¹³³ 294-295/906-908,¹³⁴ 298/910-911,¹³⁵ and 301/913-914¹³⁶ and at Balkh in the year 294/906-907¹³⁷ *dirhams* are struck with the name of the caliph on the obverse. Among these coins are those that also include the name of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, listed as only Aḥmad, on the reverse beneath the name of Ismaʿīl b. Aḥmad from both Andarāba and Balkh in the year 294/906-907. On these coins, the name Aḥmad appears at the very bottom of the central inscription, as if it was added to the die at a later time after it was initially cast. While there is evidence from every Sāmānid mint for the inclusion of the name of the *amīr* on the reverse alongside the name of the caliph, these are the only known Sāmānid coins that place the name of the caliph on the obverse. Because of this, it cannot be argued that the Sāmānids attempted to write the ʿAbbāsids off of the coins, but some kind of experimentation was happening at Andarāba and Balkh during these early years of Sāmānid rule. These experiments may have been dictated by the Sāmānids, but they apparently involved a negotiation over the place of the Bānījūrīds in the Sāmānid realm.

Aside from Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, only one other local governor appears beyond any outlier strikings on Sāmānid silver or gold coins. From 303-307/915-920, an individual named Aḥmad b. Sahl is named on the obverse of *dirhams* struck at

¹³³ ANS 1917.215.685.

¹³⁴ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 2: no. 276; ANS 1917.215.5215, 1917.216.444, 2000.46.1, 1917.216.445, 1971.104.104, 1971.316.373, 1971.316.371, 1971.316.372, 1917.216.443. The ANS database lists “293” for the date of the last three of these coins, but from images the date 295 is clearly legible. Regardless, 295 is the only year in which al-Muktafī, named on the obverse, was caliph and Aḥmad b. Ismaʿīl, named on the reverse, was the Sāmānid *amīr*.

¹³⁵ ANS 1927.179.31.

¹³⁶ ANS 1971.316.234, 1911.105.100, 1971.104.107, 1071.104.108.

¹³⁷ ANS 1971.316.391.

Andarāba.¹³⁸ Interestingly, Aḥmad b. Sahl appears on one series of coins minted outside Andarāba, gold *dinars* struck at Nīshāpūr in the year 306/918-919.¹³⁹ The connection here between Andarāba and Nīshāpūr is rather unusual and it is difficult to understand what relationship Aḥmad b. Sahl's appearance at these two mints in the same year may indicate, or even if they are the same Aḥmad b. Sahl. That Sāmānid coins featuring the name of local governors are primarily limited to the mints of Andarāba and Balkh is symbolic of a struggle which has been seen throughout the numismatic history of the eastern frontier throughout this period. This struggle represents a tension between major political and economic centers such as Marw, Samarqand, and Nīshāpūr and the major mining centers around Panjhīr. Immediate access to the largest source of silver in the region and the location of these mines on the fringes of the Islamic world provided local authorities with the ability to use this wealth to their own advantage. Local authorities, most notably the Bānījūrīds, used access to the mines as a means of self promotion and strength that afforded them a certain notoriety, most noticeable on the coins they struck in their own name, for half a century.

Returning to the question of coins which shifted the name of the caliph to the obverse, there is one moment in the history of Sāmānid numismatics where we clearly see the Sāmānids acting against the 'Abbāsids, or perhaps more clearly the Būyids at this point, and breaking away from the standards of Iraq in a meaningful manner. When the Būyids deposed the Caliph al-Mustakfī and replaced him with al-Muṭī', the Sāmānids never acknowledged the new caliph. Instead, coins minted throughout the Sāmānid realm

¹³⁸ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 2: nos. 303, 306, 308; ANS 1973.37.8, 1964.92.14, 1971.104.110, 1971.316.378, 1973.37.9, 1963.45.11, 1971.316.379, 1971.104.111, 1971.316.380, 1971.104.112, 1971.316.381, 1922.216.8 .

¹³⁹ Kazan, *The Coinage of Islam*, no. 972.

continued to include the name of al-Mustakfī on the reverse. These coins appear from the moment of al-Muṭīʿ's ascension in 334/946, beyond al-Mustakfī's death in prison in 338/949, until the rise of Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ in 350/961.¹⁴⁰ Both silver *dirhams* and gold *dinars* continued to include al-Mustakfī's name after he had been deposed.¹⁴¹ The refusal to acknowledge the ascension of a new caliph is a political action whose meaning is fairly obvious. The question is whether this was an action directed specifically in favor of al-Mustakfī, against al-Muṭīʿ, or, most likely, against the Būyid *amīrs*. The most powerful element of these *dirhams* is the uniformity with which they were struck across the mints of the Sāmānids.

The inscriptions on Sāmānid coins remain rather static during the early fourth/tenth century. In the latter half of the century, as the Turkish military becomes more prominent in the east and Sāmānid commanders break away to form the Ghaznavid dynasty, a proliferation of names appears. These are primarily the names of military commanders who were granted administrative positions over portions of the Sāmānid domains. The transition to the Ghaznavid period falls outside of the scope of the current study, but it is sufficient to note that as Sāmānid power gave way in the middle of the fourth/tenth century, the uniformity which defined early Sāmānid coinage also dissolved. This lack of uniformity is most noted in the history of the Sāmānid oversized *dirhams* which were struck from the 360's into the 390's. These unusual *dirhams* have received a great deal of attention in the literature, most notably in Michael Mitchiner's *The Multiple*

¹⁴⁰ Lane Poole, *Catalogue of Oriental Coins in the British Museum*, 2: nos. 360 ff.

¹⁴¹ For examples of *dinars* replacing al-Muṭīʿ with al-Mustakfī from Nīshāpūr, see ANS 1965.208.1, 1966.64.3, 1972.288.25.

Dirhams of Medieval Afghanistan.¹⁴² Relevant to the current discussion is the way the oversized *dirhams* have been seen as a breakdown of standardized coin production during the latter years of the Sāmānid dynasty when their political authority was similarly breaking down.

A final issue that has been the subject of much work on Sāmānid numismatics is the appearance of numerous Sāmānid *dirhams* in Northern and Eastern European hordes. These finds are typically connected with the Vikings and Volga Bulgars and demonstrate a pattern of trade from Central Asia towards the northwest.

The coinage of the Sāmānids is a demonstration of one dynasty's ability to reunify the eastern frontier after the divisions of the post-Ṭāhirid period. The amount of uniformity found among the coins produced at such a wide number of mints shows that this region maintained a connected political identity under a unified political authority. If the number of mints had been fewer, as in the earlier periods, the numismatic evidence could only be used to argue unified authority in those limited regions. The rearrangement of names on the coins may demonstrate some kind of reconfiguration in the ways the Sāmānids understood their relationship to the caliphate, but the precise meaning of that reconfiguration cannot be taken from the coins themselves. Finally, the limited number of mints including the names of local governors and their focus on the mints near the mines of Panjhīr continue a long-term tension between major urban centers, especially those

¹⁴² Michael Mitchner, *The Multiple Dirhams of Medieval Afghanistan*, (London: Hawkins Publications, 1973). Mitchner's work on the outsized *dirhams* superseded Gilles Hennequin's "Grandes monnaies Sāmānides et Ghaznavides de l'Hindū Kush, 331-421 A.H. – Étude numismatique et historique," *Annales islamologiques* 9 (1970), 127-179, which had worked with a corpus of ninety-four *dirhams*. Mitchner's study incorporated over 800 coins, but many of his conclusions must be read alongside prominent responses by Stephen Album and N.M. Lowick. S. Album, "Sāmānid Oversize Dirhams of the Fourth Century A.H. (Tenth Century A.D.)," *The Numismatic Chronicle* 16 (1976), 248-254; N.M. Lowick, "On the Dating of Samanid Outsize Dirhams," *The Numismatic Circular*, 85 (1977), 204-206.

which have acted as political centers under various dynasties, and the important centers of economic production such as mines.

4.6 Conclusions

On the whole, the most surprising aspect of the numismatics of the eastern frontier in the third/ninth century through the first half of the fourth/tenth century is the tendency towards uniformity. On the one hand, this uniformity is a drive towards the striking of coins which meet the standards of contemporary 'Abbāsīd coinage. On the other hand, this uniformity, especially in the ways coins diverge from the standardized coins of Iraq, is representative of broadly accepted political authority along the frontier.

Whether or not the striking of coins close to the standard 'Abbāsīd coins of Iraq is a sign of loyalty to the caliphs or at least symbolic of an attitude which favors the preservation of at least the semblance of a unified caliphate is difficult to decipher solely from the coins. Trends in the political history of the eastern frontier and its relationship with Iraq show that the striking of these coins often occurs within a gray area between loyalty and independence. Under the Ṭāhirids, the acceptance of Iraqī standards after the reign of Ṭalḥa¹⁴³ perhaps had more to do with the relationship between the two branches of the Ṭāhirid family in Baghdad and Khurāsān respectively than it did with the relationship between Khurāsān and the caliph. After the collapse of the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān, the coinage struck along the eastern frontier goes through a number of changes, but certain key aspects of the standardized 'Abbāsīd coinage remain. The general epigraphic program of the coins does not change and the name of the caliph

¹⁴³ It is important to keep in mind here the earlier discussion of the ways the coinage of Ṭāhir and Ṭalḥa maintained contemporary 'Abbāsīd standards.

appears, in almost every series, in the appropriate position, proclaiming that these coins are struck under the caliph's authority. Whether or not this represented any meaningful sentiments in favor of the caliph is questionable and one may make the comparison between the employment of the name of a distant caliph on a coin outside of his real jurisdiction and the use of the Athenian owl motif on coins of the Ancient Mediterranean within Athens' economic sphere of influence but outside of the reach of its political authority. In both of these cases, it is sometimes better just to make your money look like money.

Even in the points of divergence from the standard 'Abbāsīd coins of Iraq in the post-Ṭāhirid period, there is a surprising amount of uniformity within the divergences. The omission of the 'Abbāsīd heir remains strikingly consistent throughout the period. On the one hand, this can be seen as a major divergence from the rules of *sikka* which are meant to define the methods of coin production. Lack of acknowledgement of a known heir, in a sense, temporally limits the allegiance of the people striking coins to the 'Abbāsīds by failing to proclaim one's loyalty to the next generation of 'Abbāsīd rulers. On the other hand, the long history of intrigue in Iraq during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries shows that the acknowledgement of a particular heir was not even firm at the 'Abbāsīd court. The problematic relationship between al-Muwaffaq and Ya'qūb b. al-Layth at the time the heir was first left off the coins of the eastern frontier makes for a neat explanation as to the beginning of this practice. Despite the fact that these coins were recognizable as coins of the "Second 'Abbāsīd period," as described in the early parts of this chapter, the omission of the heir is a clear demonstration that representatives of the 'Abbāsīd authorities were not involved in their striking.

Finally, we see in the coins of the eastern frontier not only a tension between the larger dynasties which ruled over Khurāsān and Transoxania, the Ṭāhirids, Ṣaffārids, and Sāmānids, but also a tension between these dynasties and more localized authorities on the ground. These tensions are most noticeable at those mints which are in closest proximity to the sources of the precious metals used in the striking of coins, namely Panjhīr, Andarāba, and Balkh. These tensions run between the centers of political and economic power and demonstrate the influence smaller dynasties such as the Bānījūrīds may wield when they are able to maintain control over mines and the minting centers associated with the mines. More importantly, the coins of Panjhīr and Andarāba show an important move towards centralizing minting not at political centers but rather at the sources of precious metals. One conclusion which can be drawn from this is that we need to pay more attention to the groups who control sources of material wealth such as mines. Much attention has been paid to the role of *dihqans* along the eastern frontier (and will be in the following chapters) and their importance has often been limited to their roles as owners of agricultural lands, but we need to include the masters of other forms of immobile wealth in the same calculations of economic and political influence in the region.

A major question which was posed at the beginning of this chapter was the question of who has the right to include his name on coins and under what circumstances. After a detailed analysis of the numismatics of the eastern frontier, the answer to this question is still fairly elusive. There is a cynical answer: those who could include their names on a coin did so. The lack of silver and gold coins naming any Ṭāhirid after Ṭalḥa and the inconsistency of coins naming a Bānījūrīd governor during their quarter century

of authority complicates such a simple response. One missing piece of evidence to help explain changes in minting practices, especially those changes which seem most irrational, is a solid understanding of exactly how these coins moved. Was the proclamation made on a coin by including one's name meaningful in a way that had serious repercussions which required those with authority over mints to think carefully about the final destinations of the coins they were striking?

This chapter has used a particular set of material evidence, coins, to pose and explore a number of questions about the economic and political conditions on the ground along the eastern frontier during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. In the following chapters these two themes, economics and politics, will be explored in greater detail, in the context of the development of local networks during the early centuries of Muslim rule along the eastern frontier. The questions posed here will be readdressed and elaborated upon, along with new and different questions, approaching them primarily from textual sources. By bringing into conversation material and textual evidence in this manner, it is hoped that new light will be shed on a number of important problems in understanding the conditions of the eastern frontier during this period.

Chapter 5

Settling the Eastern Frontier

5.1 The Death of Yazdigird III and the Arrival of Islam

The arrival of Islam in Khurāsān in the year 31/651 coincided with the end of the Sāsānian Empire. Fleeing the advancing armies of the Arabs who had ventured out from the Arabian Peninsula in a series of conquests against the Byzantine and Sāsānian Empires, the last Sāsānian Shānshāh, Yazdigird III, found himself seeking the protection of the *marzbān* or “warden of the marches” of the frontier city of Marw, Māhūī Sūrī. Instead of finding protection, however, Yazdigird was murdered shortly after his arrival in Marw, an event which marked the end of the Sāsānian dynasty and empire. Meanwhile, by this time, the Arabs had moved through southern Iran, conquering the major cities and seizing control of the highways of Fārs, Kirmān, and Sīstān from the Sāsānians, either by force or through treaty with local populations, and had already entered the fringes of Khurāsān.

There are many variations on the tale of Yazdigird’s (and the Sāsānian Empire’s) final days - al-Ṭabarī alone gives no fewer than five versions of it¹ - but the narrative remains generally consistent. Yazdigird was killed in a mill along the Murghāb River, by

¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Series II, ed. M.J. de Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1885-1889), 1:2872-2884.

most accounts at the hands of a miller. Almost all versions of the tale, however, implicate his military commander Māhūī.² Yazdigird's body was dumped into the river and later recovered by a group of monks who provided him with proper funeral rites. According to al-Ṭabarī, Yazdigird's murder earned Marw the title of *khudāh-dushman* or "the Lord's Enemy."³ Soon afterward, the armies of the Arab governor of al-Baṣra, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Āmir b. Kurayz arrived at Marw.

The initial conquest of Marw in 31/651-652 was achieved through *ṣulḥ* or treaty. Māhūī or his son (depending on the report) made contact with Ibn 'Āmir as the Arabs progressed through Khurāsān and agreed to a truce which paid them between one and two million *dirhams* along with 200,000 *jarībs* of wheat and barley.⁴ Some of the initial tribute was paid in kind, including female and male slaves, mounts, and cattle (*waṣā'if wa wuṣafa' wa dawābb wa matā'*).⁵ The treaty recognized Arab overlordship in Marw and its environs, but it also confirmed the position of the local Persian aristocracy, especially the *dihqāns* or small land-holding gentry who were given the responsibility to assess and collect taxes in the name of the Arabs.⁶ At the same time, this treaty created the first Arab garrison in Khurāsān by requiring the people of Marw to quarter Arabs in their homes (*manāzilihum*); 4,000 fighters were garrisoned there in 31/651-652.⁷

² In most versions of this story, Māhūī gets Yazdigird to flee Marw by staging a battle with the Turkish ruler of Samarqand, during which he abandoned the Shāhanshāh. Yazdigird sought shelter in a mill along the Murghāb and when the miller discovers him, Māhūī orders the miller to kill him and deliver his crown and ring.

³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2872.

⁴ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, (Egypt, 1932), 396-397; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma (Leiden: Brill, 1883), 2:193; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2888.

⁵ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 396.

⁶ Specifically, al-Balādhurī says that it was the people of Marw's responsibility to assess the taxes and tribute (*al-māl*) and that the Muslims were not to be involved in collecting it (*wa laysa 'alā al-muslimīn al-aqbaḍ dhalik*). Even though the *dihqāns* are not specifically mentioned, their position as agricultural landowners and tax collectors under the Sāsānians make them the only group capable of effectively organizing the collection of taxes and tributes from the population.

⁷ *Ibid.*; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:193.

The conditions of the treaty concluded between the Arabs and the people of Marw were at once typical and unique in the history of the Arab conquests, both in Khurāsān and throughout the areas which fell under Arab rule in the first/seventh century. The confirmation of local elites as the collectors of taxes and the primary local authorities outside the garrison cities where Arab fighters were stationed occurred throughout the domains of the early caliphate. Even though the *dihqāns* or other local elites were not specifically mentioned in these treaties made with other cities in the region, we can assume that they had a role in the collection of taxes beyond Marw, because of their status as the primary land-owning class in the region, and their former position as tax collectors under the Sāsānians. The decision to garrison Arab fighters in an existing and populated city contrasted sharply with the Arabs' practices in Iraq and Syria, where they built new garrison cities (*amṣār*) to centralize and segregate the fighters of the conquests from conquered subject populations. The mixing of Arab-Muslims and non-Muslim Persians in close confines in Marw during the earliest years of the conquests of Khurāsān and Transoxania set a pattern that would continue throughout the early history of Muslim Central Asia and would contribute greatly to the unique character of the region in the early centuries of Muslim rule.

Frontiers are not only places where dynamic territorial change is possible, as we have discussed in previous chapters, but they are also the results of previous dynamic territorial change. A frontier becomes a frontier through a process in which a political or social unit expands from a center until it reaches a particular, and possibly temporary, limit. The eastern frontier of the Islamic world in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries is no different. In this instance, the frontier is the result of the Arab conquests of

the Sāsānian Empire and its immediate neighbors, the small kingdoms and principalities of Transoxania, during the first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries. Many of the conditions that resulted from these earlier conquests, especially those involving land tenure, the settlement of Arab fighters, and the establishment of systems of taxation and tribute collection, had on-going effects which shaped the frontier region for centuries following the initial conquest.

As the frontier became increasingly connected and attuned to the new cultural and political centers in the central Islamic lands of Syria and Iraq, the region and its inhabitants went through a process of reconfiguring economic and political relationships, both old and new. One place where this process can be seen is in the physical transformation of the frontier region through patterns of settlement. In cities, the urban fabric was altered by new migrants in a way which fit the necessities of the political and cultural sphere which was beginning to dominate the region. In the countryside, away from the largest clusters of new migrants and the agents of the new political authorities, these processes were much slower and perhaps less noticeable. This chapter looks at these processes as issues of settlement and renovation of existing spaces during a time of political and cultural change. It will examine issues of settlement of new migrant populations, preservation of older elite networks, changes in the urban fabric, and redefinition of older patterns of land use, particularly the redefinition of the rural estates of the *dihqāns* as *ribāʿts* will be examined. Here the old debate about the definition of *ribāʿts*, addressed in Chapter Three, will be reexamined in a context where we can track the origins of numerous *ribāʿts* in their pre-Islamic forms.

Unlike the previous chapters, which have focused on the “environment” of the eastern frontier in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, when the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids held political authority over the region, this chapter will examine the development of settlement and land tenure in Khurāsān and Transoxania from the Arab conquests of the first/seventh century through the Sāmānid era. The focus of this examination will be on the relationship between Arab settlers and the local, Persian-speaking,⁸ pre-Islamic land-holding elites, in particular the group of petty landholders known as the *dihqāns*. Previous chapters have explored the conceptualization of the eastern frontier by medieval geographical writers, the built environment of the frontier through the networks of military edifices which dotted the landscape of the frontier, and the economic and political networks which linked various frontier centers, perceptible to us now through the study of coinage. These previous chapters have attempted to illustrate the conditions along the eastern frontier during a particular historical juncture, when local dynasties arose in Khurāsān and Transoxania as the ability of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs in Iraq to rule these provinces directly waned. By stepping back and taking a deeper historical perspective, this chapter will focus on some of the underlying conditions which contributed to the development of the frontier environment described in earlier chapters as well as the political conditions that will be the focus of the final chapter.

⁸ The ethnic, linguistic, and cultural make-up of Khurāsān and Transoxania at the advent of Islam and during the first centuries of Muslim rule was complex, including Hephthalites, Sogdians, and Turks as well as the Persian Sāsānians. Here, much of this diversity will be simplified for convenience and those populations living in the cities and settled communities of Khurāsān and Transoxania, who spoke forms of Persian and held affinities for the Sāsānian Empire will be referred to as either Persianate or Persian-speaking. For a full discussion of the populations of the eastern frontier, see Marc Luce, “Frontier as Process: Umayyad Khurāsān,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 2009), especially Chapter Two.

5.2 The *Dihqāns* Before Islam

The peasants (*al-fallāḥūn*), the roads (*al-ṭuruq*), the bridges (*al-jusūr*), the markets (*al-aswāq*), the arable lands (*al-ḥarth*), and leadership (*al-dalāla*) were with a group (of people), from their two hands, by the measure of their ability. The *dihqāns* were this group...⁹

The *dihqāns*, as their title (which literally translates as “pertaining to the village/land”) indicates, were a class of Persian-speaking, small landholding gentry who held authority over villages and the countryside. Their origins as a notable political, economic, and social group date to the sixth century.¹⁰ Their appearance coincides with the reign of Khusraw I (r. 531-579), who made the *dihqāns* the backbone of the Sāsānian army and the official tax collectors.¹¹ It has been argued that their rise at this time was an attempt by Khusraw to limit the power and authority of the great noble houses and the landed aristocracy in favor of smaller landholders over whom he could exert more direct control.¹²

⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2470.

¹⁰ Some sources give a more ancient origin to the *dihqāns*, connecting them to Wikard the brother of Hūshang the founder of the legendary Pīshdād dynasty. See Ahmad Tafazzoli, “Dehqān,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* for a complete list of (mostly literary) sources and references. The status of the *dihqāns* in the late Sāsānian period is constructed from references in Pahlavi and early Islamic sources.

¹¹ Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 29.

¹² The image of Khusraw I as a powerful centralizing monarch has been primarily attached to the work of Arthur Christensen, especially his *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*, (Copenhagen, 1944). More recent studies have questioned the very idea of a centralized state under Khusraw, most notably the work of Zeev Rubin, “The Reforms of Khusrow Anūshirwān,” in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, III: States, Resources, and Armies*, pp. 227-297, (Princeton, 1995). The questions raised in this more recent work relate to the centralizing effect of Khusraw’s reforms rather than the role of the *dihqāns* in his reforms. For the purposes of the current project, I will be working with an understanding that these reforms did stabilize the military and tax collection under the *dihqāns*, to a degree, but actually decentralized the state and increased the importance of local political and economic concerns. As Zeev Rubin and Parvaneh Pourshariati have both demonstrated, this did not mean that the *dihqāns* created an effective military force which could be called upon in times of crisis without large-scale support from other segments of Sāsānian society and foreign mercenaries. See Rubin, “The Reforms of Khusrow Anūshirwān” and Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquests*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

Attempts to limit the power of the aristocracy in this way have often been seen as a continuation of the Mazdakite revolt of Khusraw's father and predecessor, Qubādh. Qubādh had sought to use the religion of Mazdak, which promoted communal property and a more egalitarian social structure in comparison to the state-sponsored Zoroastrianism,¹³ in order to alter the social order of the Sāsānian Empire by bringing down the aristocracy, which constituted the economic and military backbone of the empire and which held considerable influence over the Shāhanshāh, and by replacing them with a more pliant class which held less individual power and wealth.¹⁴ Even though Khusraw was adamantly anti-Mazdakite and brought about the downfall and execution of Mazdak and his followers, he still sought to achieve the same goals as his father had before him, namely the limiting of the power of the large noble families and the creation of a stable military and tax base. In Khusraw's case, instead of altering the state religion, he used the small landholding *dihqāns* to break the hegemony of the greater aristocratic houses.

The rise of the *dihqāns* as a prominent force in the Sāsānian army and, more importantly, as imperial tax collectors had a localizing effect on the Sāsānian state and economy by the late sixth century. As the empire faced multiple crises, especially those related to the revolt of Bahrām Chūbīn in 589 and the Byzantine intervention on behalf of Khusraw II in 591, this localizing effect meant that disruptions at the imperial center in Iraq did not cause great upheavals in other parts of the empire.¹⁵ Despite revolts, the rapid

¹³ It is difficult to understand the precise tenets of Mazdakism because most of our information on the movement comes from sources hostile to it. M. Guidi, "Mazdak," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

¹⁴ Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, 26-27, 88. On the military side, it is also important to note that during Qubādh's reign severe drought weakened the military base of the empire and Hephthalite incursions further diminished the army and forced the empire to make tribute payments which further weakened it.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

succession of monarchs, and the intervention of a foreign power, order was maintained in the provinces and taxes continued to be collected. These reforms of Qubādh and Khusraw became rapidly entrenched over the course of the sixth century and created an important buffer between, on the one hand, the functioning of the state and the wellbeing of the people and, on the other hand, the conflicts and fluctuations among the upper levels of the nobility. Since the *dihqāns* were locally based and collected taxes within small jurisdictions, and as they become more important to the imperial economy, local affairs became more important than imperial high politics for the overall stability of the empire.¹⁶

It can be argued that this localization of politics and economics became most apparent when the Sāsānian Empire suffered collapse and conquest by the Muslims. As will be discussed in more detail shortly, as the Muslims advanced through the Sāsānian lands, the *dihqāns*, as well as other local notables and regional authorities such as the *marzbāns* of the frontier cities of Khurāsān, were able to negotiate on behalf of the local communities over which they held authority. Daryaee has suggested that the localism which developed under the *dihqāns* put the interests of local landowners over those of the Sāsānian state. The *dihqāns* were perfectly willing, therefore, to submit to Muslim rule and pay *jizya* or poll-tax if that meant they could retain their property rights and their authority over the local populations.¹⁷ In fact, the strength and stability of Khusraw's reforms can best be seen after the Sāsānian Empire collapsed. The *dihqāns* did not depend on the Sāsānian state, and after its collapse the "system" of *dihqān*-centered local

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 54-55.

authority continued under the Muslim governors.¹⁸ Parvaneh Pourshariati has recently argued that a similar effect occurred not because of the *dihqāns* themselves, but rather because of competition between the Sāsānians and their eastern confederates, the Parthians, who, in Pourshariati's reading of these events, actually orchestrated the submission of Khurāsān to the Arabs.¹⁹

Another sign of the power held by the *dihqāns* at the end of the Sāsānian Empire was that by the time of the Arab conquests, a mere century after Khusraw I's reforms, the term *dihqān* had become nearly synonymous with "local ruler" or "headman." In our sources for the Arab conquests of Iran, written for the most part centuries after the events they report, and by Muslim authors,²⁰ there is much confusion about the use of *dihqān* and other titles such as *marzbān*²¹ and the individual titles of local princes with multiple titles assigned to the same individual in different reports within a single text. The reports of the murder of Yazdigird in Marw, for example, have al-Ṭabarī identifying the local ruler, Māhūī Sūrī, as both a *dihqān* and a *marzbān*.²² In the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, geographical writers continue to wrestle with this use of *dihqān* alongside other

¹⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁹ Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*. Chapter Three focuses specifically on the Arab-Muslim conquests of Iran. In Pourshariati's reading of the later years of the Sāsānian Empire, the Parthians can be viewed as an intermediate level of nobility between the Sāsānians and the *dihqāns* in the east, but it is important to remember that the Parthians were also one of the great noble houses which Qubād and Khusraw I tried to undermine.

²⁰ It is important to note that while the early historians writing on the Arab-Muslim conquests, including those who provided important accounts of the conquests as parts of larger universal histories, were Muslims writing in Arabic, they largely came from a Persian background or had important political connections to the Persianate world. al-Ṭabarī was born in Āmul in Ṭabaristān, where his father was a small landowner, perhaps a *dihqān*. al-Balādhurī is presumed to have Persian origins, but appears to have spent most of his life in Baghdad. al-Ya'qūbī spent time in the service of the Ṭāhirids in Nīshāpūr. al-Dīnawarī's grandfather was a Persian name Wanand. This list does not include the large number of local historians who were more likely to write in Persian. We will return to this issue in the following chapter.

²¹ *Marzbān* roughly translates to "margrave." The *marzbāns* of the Sāsānian Empire had authority over border provinces. In Khurāsān there were a number of *marzbāns* attached to major cities of the frontier, such as Marw and Herat.

²² al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2872-2877.

local titles. al-Ya'qūbī, for example, refers to the Shīr of Bāmiyān as a *dihqān*, even though the position he held as ruler of Bāmiyān and its dependent regions meant he must have been more of a king than a petty landholder.²³

In Transoxania, beyond the direct reach of the Sāsānian state, *dihqān* clearly came to mean “local ruler” as well as “small landholder.” Barthold suggested this was because local rulers in pre-Islamic Transoxania were merely “first noblemen” and largely on par with the mass of small landholding *dihqāns*.²⁴ Barthold saw local rulers or princes rising out of a larger body of *dihqāns*, and actually put more emphasis on the competition between the landholding *dihqāns* and the wealthy merchants whom al-Ṭabarī ranked among the princes (*mulūk*) of Transoxania,²⁵ and who owned large estates and lived in rural manors like the *dihqāns*.²⁶ The relationship between *dihqāns* and merchants, as well as other moneyed and urban elites, will be addressed later in this chapter.

This conflating of *dihqān* and “local ruler” results from the evolving role of the *dihqāns* in late Sāsānian society. As the *dihqāns* took on increased military and tax collection roles, they became the immediate representatives of state authority in their local areas, so much so that *dihqān* came to mean “authority” to local populations. The confusion on the part of Muslim sources must be connected to the introduction of the Arabs to the *dihqāns* as the individuals who could negotiate treaties with them. The

²³ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 289. These confusions go well beyond the mixing of titles. In the section entitled “the Titles of the Kings of Khurāsān and the East,” Ibn Khurrādādhbih confuses the name of the last *marzbān* of Marw, Māhūī Sūrī, for the title of the king of Marw, writing “The king of Marw is Māhūīh.” Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 6. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 39.

²⁴ Vasily Vladimirovich Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, (1968; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub., 1992), 180.

²⁵ al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1444.

²⁶ Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 181. Étienne de la Vaissière has also noted that the social distinctions between wealthy merchants and *dihqāns* were slight in the early years of Muslim rule in Transoxania. Étienne de la Vaissière, *Soghdian Traders: A History*, trans. James Wared (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 162-164.

Arabs' earliest forays into Sāsānian territory targeted the lands of the *dihqāns* of the Sawād in southern Iraq and from this early date it was the *dihqāns* who negotiated with the Arabs to protect their lands and local populations.²⁷ It is thus not difficult to infer that the *dihqāns* were in fact the local authorities.

5.3 Preservation of Elite Networks during the Arab Conquests

The conquest of Khurāsān and Transoxania by the Arabs is rightfully considered one of the more complex chapters in the history of the Arab conquests of the first/seventh century.²⁸ A large part of this confusion stems from the pattern of “capture-rebellion-recapture” which occurred partially as a result of the Arabs' inability to garrison large numbers of fighters throughout the area.²⁹ The arrival of the Arab armies in Khurāsān under the command of the governor of al-Baṣra, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Āmir b. Kurayz, in the year 31/651, corresponded with the final years of the reign of the Caliph ‘Uthmān (r. 23-35/644-655) and the beginnings of the First *Fitna*. The conflicts arising at Medina at the end of ‘Uthmān's reign complicated the conquest of the region. It prevented the Arabs from committing large numbers of fighters to maintain control over Khurāsān, until the conclusion of the *fitna* and the beginnings of the reign of the first Umayyad Caliph,

²⁷ Tafazzoli, “Dehqān.”

²⁸ I will not attempt to reconstruct a narrative of the Arab conquests of Khurāsān and Transoxania here, rather this portion of the chapter will take a more generalized look at these events with specific focus on the role of the *dihqāns* as local authorities and tax-collectors in the aftermath of the conquests. A few recent studies have focused on different aspects of the conquest of Khurāsān and Transoxania and the early years of Muslim rule in the region: Parvaneh Poushariati, “Iranian Tradition in Ṭūs and the Arab Presence in Khurāsān,” Ph.D. diss., (Columbia University, 1995); Pourshariati, *The Decline and Fall of the Sāsānian Empire*; Mark D. Luce, “Frontier as Process.” In addition, larger studies of the Arab conquests of the first/seventh century may also be consulted, the most recent to address Khurāsān and Transoxania is Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*, (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007). For Transoxania, see the classic study by H.A.R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, (London, 1923).

²⁹ Luce, “Frontier as Process,” 114. The phrase “capture-rebellion-recapture” used by Luce originates with Donald Hill's discussion of the conquest of Fārs: D.G. Hill, *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests: 634-656*, (London: Luzac & Company, 1971), 135.

Mu'āwiya (r. 41-60/661/680). The Arabs only entered Transoxania in earnest in 61/681 under the governor Salm b. Ziyād; prior to that we have evidence for small-scale raids which always returned to Khurāsān before winter. Even then, it was not until the arrival in the east of the military commander and governor Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bāhilī in 86/705 that the Arabs could establish anything resembling firm control over any parts of Transoxania.³⁰ During the half century between the first conquest of Khurāsān in the 30's/650's and the arrival of Qutayba b. Muslim, areas which had been nominally conquered now revolted and had to be re-conquered. A similar pattern of "capture-rebellion-recapture" occurred in Transoxania between 86/705 and the Battle of Talas in 133/751.³¹ At the same time, conflicts among the Arabs continued well into the second/eight century, as tribal rivalries and conflicts within the Umayyad family spread among the Arab fighters stationed in Khurāsān, culminating in the 'Abbāsīd Revolution which initially broke out there. Reports of the conquests of Khurāsān and Transoxania are often confused with later events when Arab armies returned to different regions in order to put an end to rebellions, which often amounted to little more than refusals to pay taxes or tribute at times when the Arabs' attention was focused away from the region. Meanwhile, narratives of multiple individual events, of conquests and re-establishment of Arab authority, are often combined into a single narrative. Our sources tend also to have

³⁰ It is worth noting here the case of Musā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Khāzīm who conquered Tirmidh in 70/689-690 and ruled the city with the support of a mixed army of Arab and Persian rebels until he was ultimately dislodged and killed by 'Uthmān b. Mas'ūd under the orders of the governor of Khurāsān al-Mufaddal b. al-Muhallab, in 85/704. Here an individual Arab, with a force of 700 men, managed to advance beyond the Oxus and establish a base in Transoxania earlier than the Umayyads. Interestingly, he was only able to establish his rule over Tirmidh with the help of a disgruntled *dihqān* who had been in the service of the Tirmidh Shāh. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1144-1162.

³¹ This battle between the Muslims and the Chinese Tang Dynasty, fought largely by proxy armies of Turkic groups allied with either side, is often cited as marking the end of imperial expansion in Central Asia by both the Muslims and the Tang, although it took another century for the Sāmānīd Amīr Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad to fully bring Talas (known in Muslim sources as Ṭarāz) under Muslim authority in 280/893.

more interest in the conflicts occurring between the Arabs themselves, which makes it difficult to focus on the effects of the conquests on the conquered populations.

The conditions under which Khurāsān and Transoxania were conquered are important for understanding how post-conquest settlement occurred. The conditions of the conquests not only determined the rights of local populations, especially with regard to property rights and taxation, but also determined the rights of the Arab fighters to take ownership of the lands which they had conquered. Conquest by *ṣulḥ* or treaty (as opposed to conquest by force or *'anwa* conquest), in most cases, allowed local populations to maintain their property rights and negotiate their rates of taxation with the Arabs, often in terms of tribute. It was this ability to negotiate favorable terms with the new imperial authorities which appears to have encouraged local populations, primarily under the authority of *dihqāns* and *marzbāns*, to negotiate treaties of surrender or submission with the Arabs during the early conquests. As Løkkegaard has noted in his study of early Islamic taxation in Iraq, “we have even frequent instances given in Balādhurī of *dihqāns* being very eager to enter on *ṣulḥ*. In short, at the outset we have few indications of the *'anwa* conquest or conquest by force having been prevalent.”³² We will return to this point shortly.

³² Frede Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation in the Classic Period: With Special Reference to Circumstances in Iraq*, (Copenhagen: Branner & Korch, 1950), 76.

5.3.1 Taxation, Land Tenure, and the Historiography of the Conquests

Here it may be useful to say a few words about Arabic historiography relating to the conquests. The genre, and later the theme,³³ of *futūḥ* or conquest narratives played an important role in the early development of historical writing in the Islamic world. One of the earliest genres of historical writing consisted of conquest narratives, first as texts which specifically dealt with reports of the conquest of specific regions,³⁴ and later as compilations of reports of the entire period of the conquests.³⁵ As the broad genre of history evolved, these early *futūḥ* texts were integrated into composite histories during the third/ninth century.³⁶ The early, regionally-specific *futūḥ* works often acted much like later local histories, in that they sought to glorify the region under study and attempted to elevate the position of a particular region within the context of an Islamic historical worldview.³⁷ The books which were compiled and devoted entirely to *futūḥ*, together with the conquest narratives which became included in universal histories, local histories, and geographies, often conveyed a more administrative view of these events, with emphasis on the precedents of taxation, tribute, and land tenure set by the conditions under which a region was conquered.³⁸ The conquest narratives integrated into texts with

³³ By “genre,” we mean a body of literature whose focus is *futūḥ* such as Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Futūḥ Miṣr*. By “theme,” we mean a subject area or topic of interest addressed by authors of texts with a focus either different or larger than the “theme” itself.

³⁴ Such as the *Futūḥ Miṣr* of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/870) and the no longer extant *Futūḥ Khurāsān* of al-Madā’inī (d. ca. 228/843).

³⁵ These broadly imagined studies of the conquests are best exemplified by al-Balādhurī’s *Futūḥ al-buldān* (d. ca. 279/892).

³⁶ Either as composite *futūḥ* texts like that of al-Balādhurī or as a part of larger universal histories such as that of al-Ṭabarī. It is within the pages of al-Ṭabarī’s *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* that we find remnants of much of al-Madā’inī’s *Futūḥ Khurāsān*. Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 34-35.

³⁷ Tarif Khalidi’s analysis of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s *Futūḥ Miṣr* illustrates this tendency nicely. Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65-67.

³⁸ Again, we can look at Tarif Khalidi’s analysis, this time of al-Balādhurī’s *Futūḥ al-buldān*, for a discussion of how this process worked. *Ibid.*, 67-68.

a scope broader than the conquests themselves often present the conquests as an important formative moment in the development of the Islamic community, setting the conditions by which different regions were integrated into the Islamic world.³⁹

Besides being a source for information about the history of the early Muslim community and its geographic expansion, reports of the Arab conquests, especially those which make a distinction between conquest by *ṣulḥ* and *'anwa*, were important in determining the legal and administrative rights of the conquered regions. This is doubly so in the cases where a report provides details of the treaties negotiated between local populations and the Arabs. Albrecht Noth has noted that reports related to the conquest of a particular region fit into two thematic groups. The primary group is that of *futūḥ* or conquests and the secondary thematic group is that of law and administration.⁴⁰ As these reports describe the conditions under which a territory was conquered, they address important legal questions regarding the incorporation of conquered lands into the Islamic state.

Above all, questions pertaining to law and administration had to be solved: what status was to be accorded to the conquered cities and newly acquired land? For the latter there arose yet another distinction, namely, between territories which remained with the original (non-Muslim) owners and those which had become the property of the Muslims.

³⁹ Within the geographical tradition, we can see this development most clearly in the work of al-Ya'qūbī who includes the conditions under which a place or region were conquered as a regular feature of his descriptions alongside more contemporary and specifically geographic information such as the quality of water. al-Muqaddasī makes a special note that since Khurāsān was conquered by *ṣulḥ*, despite the fact the people of Khurāsān could have fought the Muslims, and therefore its *kharāj* is light. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 3 ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 293.

⁴⁰ Albrecht Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, 2nd ed. in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1994), 48-49.

Beyond all this lay legal questions pertaining to the personal status of the Muslims who settled in the conquered lands, and that of the subjugated non-Muslim population.⁴¹

Evidence from local histories demonstrates that this concern with the legal and administrative aspects of *futūḥ* narratives was an overriding concern centuries after the conquests themselves. The *Tārīkh-i Nīshābūr* of al-Khalīfa al-Naysābūrī includes a passage in which ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, Ibn ‘Āmir’s deputy in Nīshāpūr, attempted to collect *kharāj* from the inhabitants of the city worth a quarter of the produce of the region while Ibn ‘Āmir was away in al-Baṣra. The locals refused, saying that the city had been conquered by *ṣulḥ* and therefore owed no *kharāj*.⁴² The local population threatened to rebel, saying they would let war decide the matter, unless ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir agreed that they owed no *kharāj*, which he then did. The passage ends with a declaration that this report confirms the status of Nīshāpūr as a city taken by *ṣulḥ* and not by force, here using the Persian *jang* rather than the more technical Arabic term *‘anwa*.⁴³ It is not so much the story of a conflict between ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir and the local population of Nīshāpūr which matters in the context of this local history, but rather the confirmation, through a historical account, of the nature of the conquest of Nīshāpūr and its impact on the legal status the city and its dependent regions. In this case, it is not even the historical account of the conquests that matters most, but rather a later confirmation by a deputy governor of one version of the story. The complications of the conquest of Nīshāpūr and the reasons

⁴¹ Ibid., 48.

⁴² *Kharāj* is used in conquest narratives both in the sense of land tax, but also in the sense of tribute paid to the Arabs by conquered peoples. Over time, the meaning of the term came to be associated only with the land tax. This development will be addressed in the following chapter.

⁴³ al-Khalīfa al-Naysābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nīshābūr*, (Tehran: Kitābkhāna Ibn Sīna, 1339 [1960-1961]), 130. I consider the Arabic terminology more technical because it is the language of contemporary legal discourse. al-Naysābūrī does use the Arabic “*ṣulḥ*” for treaty in this case, but does not use the Arabic legal terminology for conquest by force.

why the settling of this issue might have been such an important issue to al-Khalīfa al-Nīsābūrī and his predecessor Ḥākīm al-Naysābūrī before him will be examined shortly.

5.3.2 The *Dihqāns* and *ṣulḥ* or Conquest by Treaty

The most common understanding of the conquest of Khurāsān is that it involved a combination of conquest by force (*'anwa*) and treaty (*ṣulḥ*). Even in cases where a particular city or region was brought under Arab authority by treaty, a military engagement or siege may have preceded the negotiation of a treaty.⁴⁴ Due to the confusion in our sources over the specific events related to the conquest of a particular region, some regions are said to have been conquered both by force and by treaty. This may be the result of confusion between an initial conquest and the later re-establishment of Arab authority following a period of rebellion. In all cases, the limited number of fighters available to maintain Arab control over Khurāsān and Transoxania in the years immediately following the conquests meant that local notables maintained considerable authority over local populations and, perhaps, considerable autonomy as well. It also meant that local landowners were able to keep possession of much of their land. The small numbers of Arab fighters stationed in the region and the rights retained by local authorities contributed to a history of Arab settlement in Khurāsān and Transoxania that was slow and uneven.

The rapid decline of Sāsānian fortunes must have been a key contributor to the quick surrender of local authorities across Khurāsān; Transoxania's history of independent rule makes for a different story which will be examined later in this chapter. From our sources, it appears that Yazdigird III was an unwelcome guest in many of the

⁴⁴ Luce, "Frontier as Process," 117-118.

cities where he attempted to find refuge and to organize a counter attack against the Muslims. At least one tradition explains this response by local rulers as a result of Yazdigird's bloated entourage, which he could not even pay for himself.⁴⁵ Hugh Kennedy has suggested that Yazdigird suffered from a lack of loyalty in the east. He had only been Shāhanshāh for a short period (he had reigned for nineteen years at the time of his death in 31/651, but had spent all but four of those years on the run from the Arabs), had probably never traveled to Khurāsān before, and was tainted with a history of failure in the western half of the Sāsānian domains.⁴⁶ The only reason why local authorities in Khurāsān might have supported the Sāsānians once their western lands had been conquered was to preserve their own status, and not necessarily to preserve the dynasty itself.

From reports of treaties made between local authorities and the Arabs in Khurāsān, we see that the *marzbāns* and *dihqāns* were interested in maintaining their personal status and property, but were perfectly willing to do so under a new overlord. According to al-Ṭabarī, when the armies of al-Aḥnaf b. Qays approached Marw al-Rūdh, the *marzbān* sent an ambassador to meet with the Arabs and present them with the following demands.

I call on you to make a treaty between us on the conditions that I pay you *kharāj*⁴⁷ of sixty thousand *dirhams*, that you confirm to me what the Shāhanshāh⁴⁸ Khusraw granted

⁴⁵ This report, in which Yazdigird traveled with an entourage of 4,000 including nobles (*khāṣagān*), free and slave women (*zanān-i āzād va banda*), attendants (*rikāb-dārān*), old women (*ganda-pīrān*), children (*'iyāl*), and family members (*ahl bayt-i o*), is found in Bal'amī's translation of al-Ṭabarī's history. Bal'amī goes on to say that Yazdigird was not carrying any wealth (*khwāsta*) with him, and makes no reference to any kind of military retinue accompanying him. al-Ṭabarī, *Tarikh-nāmah-i Ṭabarī: gardānīdah-i mansūb bih Bal'amī*, (Tehran: Nashr-i Raw, 1366 [1987]), 1:537.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*, 187.

⁴⁷ In this context meaning tribute, but perhaps calculated in a fashion similar to the land tax, based upon the productive capabilities of the land. There is also the possibility that this is a later change to the document by al-Ṭabarī or one of his informants who translated the ambassador's Persian proclamation into Arabic.

my great-grandfather when he had killed the serpent that would eat people and block the roads between the lands and the villages and the people who lived in them, that you do not take from anyone from among the people of my house anything by way of *kharāj*, and that the office of *marzbān* does not leave the people of my house for another.⁴⁹

al-Aḥnaf agreed to these terms on the condition that the *marzbān* and his family convert to Islam.⁵⁰ The primary interest of the ruler of Marw al-Rūdh in this report was a guarantee that the Arabs would preserve his family's status and his own. The reports mentioned at the beginning of this chapter regarding the *ṣulḥ* made with Marw show a similar interest in preserving the *status quo* of the local elites. In the case of Marw, these interests are demonstrated first through Māhūī Sūrī's plots to eliminate Yazdigird III (at least from the city, but eventually from this life entirely) before the Arabs had even reached Marw; and second, through the role given to the *dihqāns* in collecting tribute for the Arabs. Ibn 'Āmir asked the people of Marw to pay tribute and to quarter Arab fighters in their homes in return for this acknowledgement of the status of the local elites. As treaties were concluded with the Arabs, the ruling classes of Khurāsān were willing to exchange one overlord for another as long as they did not lose much of their wealth or prestige in the process.

In reports where the status of local elites is not specifically addressed, we can still see a situation where local elites became supporters of the Arabs, administratively,

⁴⁸ Translated here by al-Ṭabarī or one of his informants as *malik al-mulūk*.

⁴⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2898. The opening of the *marzbān*'s letter to al-Aḥnaf, omitted here, is interesting to mention. It invokes the name of Allāh (perhaps another later change by al-Ṭabarī or one of his informants as the narrative was translated into Arabic), "who transfers kingship to whomever he pleases." This sentiment, appropriate for a moment in which a local ruler is changing loyalties, is also reminiscent of the Persian concept of the transference of royal *farr*, or royal fortune which divinely imbued rulers with the power to rule. Between references such as this and the odd translation of Persian terms into Arabic, this speech made by the ambassador and al-Ṭabarī's presentation of it shows how people of different cultures had to make sense of the conquests from their own perspectives and how these understandings then became translated as the different cultures became more integrated and connected.

⁵⁰ We are left to wonder if they did or not. *Ibid.*, 1:2899.

economically, and militarily. In a treaty concluded between Ibn 'Āmir and the *marzbān* of Herat, which offered the *ṣulḥ* to Herat, its plains and mountains, and the cities of Bādghīs and Būshanj, Ibn 'Āmir demands that the local population advise the Muslims (*munāṣaḥat al-muslimīn*), care for the lands covered by the *ṣulḥ*, collect the *jizya* or poll-tax, and apportion the payment of the *jizya* fairly. Anyone who refused to pay his share of the *jizya* would be denied protection (*lā 'ahd wa lā dhimma*).⁵¹ In this case, the treaty of *ṣulḥ* is tied directly to obligations placed upon the *marzbān* of Herat; and we may assume that these obligations, especially in regard to the collection of *jizya* from the surrounding regions and the cities of Bādghīs and Būshanj, were delegated to other individuals who had previously stood in a position of loyalty and subservience to the *marzbān* under the Sāsānians. In the rural areas and villages, this was most likely the *dihqāns*. That the Arabs were able to appropriate existing networks in Khurāsān is seen in the collection of the tribute, amounting to between 400,000 and 700,000 *dirham*, owed by Balkh. According to al-Balādhurī, after negotiating the *ṣulḥ* with Balkh, al-Aḥnaf b. Qays attempted to cross the Oxus and to enter Khwārazm, leaving Usayd b. al-Mutashammis as his deputy. al-Aḥnaf failed to cross the Oxus and returned to Balkh to find that the entire tribute had been collected.⁵² Presuming that al-Aḥnaf took the bulk of his army with him, leaving only a minimum number of troops to assist Usayd, and presuming that his failed attempt to cross the Oxus was merely a short march to the river and back, we must assume that pre-existing local networks were employed to raise this considerable tribute in such a short amount of time.

⁵¹ al-Balādhurī, *Futuḥ al-buldān*, 396.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 398.

If it appears that so many *marzbāns* and *dihqāns* were willing to transfer their allegiances from the Sāsānians to the Arabs and to collaborate with the Arabs in administering Khurāsān so quickly, what can we say about the combination of conquest by *ṣulḥ* and *'anwa* which we find in our sources? A close reading of the sources for the initial conquest of Khurāsān by Ibn 'Āmir in the 30's/650's shows that the confusion between conquests by force and by treaty may be over-stated.⁵³ Of the places in Khurāsān mentioned in the early conquest narratives, there is a total of 32 named locations. Fifteen of these locations are said to have been taken either *'anwatan* or without a specified treaty and five were taken purely by *ṣulḥ*. For the remaining twelve we find reports of conquest by both *'anwa* and *ṣulḥ* - depending on the particular report. Of the places conquered only by force, or rather without *ṣulḥ*, twelve are specifically mentioned as dependencies of Nīshāpūr and appear in only four reports, three of which form a single continuous passage in al-Balādhurī leading up to the conquest of Nīshāpūr itself.⁵⁴ In this report, the rural districts of Zām, Bākharz, Khuwayn, Bayhaq, Busht, Ashband, Rukhkh, Zāwa, Khuwāf, Asbarā'in, and Arghiyān⁵⁵ are conquered with no reference to the

⁵³ The compilation of sources for the conquest of North Persia (including Khurāsān) made by Donald Hill in his *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests* has been used here. Hill's work compiles reports of the conquests from a large corpus of sources, and his reports specifically on the conquest of Khurāsān are taken from al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī, Ibn Isfandiyār, Ibn A'tham al-Kufī, al-Dīnawarī, and al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. Hill, *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests*, 144-152.

⁵⁴ I am following Hill's numbering of reports. The three reports which are covered by a single passage in al-Balādhurī are numbers 413-415. Ibid., 144. In al-Balādhurī they appear as al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 394-395. The locations conquered *'anwatan*, but not included in this passage of al-Balādhurī include: Āmul, but there is no specific mention of conquest here, only that the army of the Arabs, led by the Imām Ḥasan b. 'Alī advanced on Āmul and encamped at a place called Mālīka-dasht, Ibn Isfandiyār, *An Abridged Translation of the History of Ṭabaristān*, trans. E.G. Browne (Leiden: Brill, 1905), 98; Bāghūn and Tāghūn, who were specifically denied *ṣulḥ* in the treaty made with the *marzbān* of Herat mentioned earlier, al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 397; and Ḥumrān which occurs following the conquest of Nīshāpūr and Ḥumrān is listed as one of many locations which fall under Arab rule in the aftermath of the conquest of Nīshāpūr, al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2887.

⁵⁵ According to Yāqūt, Arghiyān is a region of seventy-one villages (Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, (Beirut, 1957), 1:153) ; Bākharz is a region of 168 villages (1:316); Busht is a region of 226 villages (1:465); Bayhaq is a region of 321 villages (1:537-538); Khuwayn (listed as Juwayn) is a region of 189 villages

conclusion of treaties, but also with little reference to fighting: Zām is said to be conquered *'anwatan*, prisoners are taken at Khuwayn, and there is fighting at the walls of Bayhaq, in the course of which the commander al-Aswad b. Kulthūm is killed. The rest consist of rather short references to certain commanders “opening” (*fataḥa*) different regions, without any sort of detail.

Since the importance of each individual (rural) region’s conquest is overshadowed by the conquest of Nīshāpūr itself, the real focus of al-Balādhurī’s narrative is on the conquest of Nīshāpūr or Abarshahr, the old city of Nīshāpūr. According to al-Balādhurī, Ibn ‘Āmir laid siege to Abarshahr until representatives from the quarters of the city negotiated *amān* or protection for the people of each quarter. They then allowed the Arabs into the city, who then surrounded the *marzbān* and his supporters in the *quhandiz*. The *marzbān*, under siege and having lost control of the city, negotiated the *amān* and *ṣulḥ* for all of Nīshāpūr, agreeing to pay between 700,000 and one million *dirhams* annually.⁵⁶ Operating with the understanding that when a city or town entered into *ṣulḥ*, the treaty applied to the neighboring dependent regions (*rustāq*) as well,⁵⁷ the lack of detail in the conquest of Nīshāpūr’s dependent districts is more understandable. Whatever might or might not have happened in the countryside in the events leading up to the conquest of Nīshāpūr, it was only the *ṣulḥ* made with the *marzbān* of Nīshāpūr in Abarshahr that had any lasting impact on the rights of those living in the dependent regions. Therefore, despite what had happened earlier, the dependencies of Nīshāpūr had been conquered by *ṣulḥ* and had to be treated as such.

(2:192); Khuwāf is a region of two hundred villages and three cities (Sinjān, Sīrāwand, and Khurjird) (2:399); Zām is a region of 180 villages (3:127); and Zāwa is a region of 220 villages (3:128).

⁵⁶ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 395.

⁵⁷ Løkkegaard, *Islamic Taxation in the Classic Period*, 167-168. al-Balādhurī makes a similar statement about the villages of Marw. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 396.

The reason for looking at this one case in greater detail is to highlight the interests on both the Arab and Persian sides of the conquests in settling on a *ṣulḥ* agreement. For the Persians, *ṣulḥ* meant that they could preserve their status and property. For the Arabs, *ṣulḥ* meant they did not have to install a garrison and administration in each place they conquered. Despite their having fought at Bayhaq, for example, the Arabs were able to make the administration of Bayhaq the responsibility of the *marzbān* of Nīshāpūr.⁵⁸ Military force was an important part of the conquests, but more often than not the army's goal was not to conquer by force, but rather to encourage the local populations to agree to a treaty with the Arabs. al-Ṭabarī's report of the *ṣulḥ* of Marw al-Rūdh quoted above begins with the arrival of al-Aḥnaf b. Qays' army outside the city. Both sides prepared for an engagement before the *marzbān* sued for peace, telling al-Aḥnaf, "Oh you Arabs (*yā ma'shar al-'arab*), you are not what we expected."⁵⁹ The placement of this statement in the account implies that the *marzbān*'s willingness to fight went away once he saw the forces of the Arabs. In addition to the opportunity presented to him to preserve his personal and familial status, the *marzbān* had few options at this point, other than to sue for peace. In the end, though, it appears that in most cases the Arab fighters moved on shortly after the submission of a city, Marw being the one notable exception. It is this aspect of the conquests of Khurāsān, namely the lack of fighters to garrison cities conquered by force, along with the widespread use of *ṣulḥ*, which contributed greatly to the autonomy granted to local authorities throughout the region.

⁵⁸ Parvaneh Pourshariati has demonstrated that in both Bayhaq and Nīshāpūr, there was an almost total absence of Arabs following the conquests until the end of the Umayyad period. Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Local Histories of Khurāsān and Patterns of Arab Settlement," *Studia Iranica* 27 (1998), 41-81.

⁵⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 1:2897.

5.3.3 The Conquest of Transoxania

The political situation in pre-Islamic Transoxania was rather different from that of Khurāsān, and the outcomes of the conquests reflect these differences. Sāsānian political authority stopped at the Oxus and numerous small kingdoms and principalities were scattered across the region north of the river.⁶⁰ These kingdoms were often centered on major cities and held authority over rural districts and villages which were, in turn, ruled by vassal princes and *dihqāns*. Perhaps the best-known court of pre-Islamic Transoxania was that of the Queen of Bukhārā, Khātūn. The *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* describes the interactions between Khātūn and her vassals in great detail, including reports of audiences in which she received hundreds of representatives of these princes and *dihqāns* every morning so that she might enquire into the conditions in their territories.⁶¹ While most of the inhabitants of the cities along the rivers of the region, most notably Bukhārā and Samarqand, had cultural affinities with the Sāsānians of Khurāsān, especially in language, the remainder of the region was dominated by Turkic lords, while nomadic Turkish tribes inhabited much of the land between the settled kingdoms. Across the entire region, there was a strong sense of independence among these kingdoms which differed greatly from Khurāsān where recognition of a distant overlord was the norm, despite the amount of freedom individual local rulers and landowners may have possessed.

Competition and resentment among the various kingdoms of the regions and between local rulers and their vassals played an important role in the Arab conquests of the region. In the first permanent conquest in Transoxania by an Arab commander, Musā

⁶⁰ Many of these kingdoms were generally under the authority of regional overlords, such as the Turkish Jaghbū of Ṭukhāristān.

⁶¹ al-Nashakhrī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, (Tehran, n.d. [ca. 1939]), 8.

b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim – who was something of a rebel⁶² - managed to conquer Tirmidh in 70/689-690 largely because of the aid of a disgruntled *dihqān* in the service of the Tirmidh Shāh who offered Musā and his fighters access to the city.⁶³ Almost from the beginning, Musā’s force was composed, on the one hand, of Arabs, who were, to a large extent, supporters of his father who had been governor of Khurāsān and had often been in open conflict with other Arabs (most notably the Banū Tamīm, as Ibn Khāzim was a member of Muḍar); and also of Persians, who were largely bandits (*sa’ālīk*) who rallied under Musā’s banner. In another case, when the governor of Khurāsān, Umayya b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khālid b. Usayd, needed funds for an expedition against Bukhārā, he is said to have borrowed the money from Soghdian merchants, who appear to have been financing the conquest of their own people.⁶⁴ The support of Soghdian merchants seems to have waned during the later conquests,⁶⁵ but was replaced by the support of the *dihqāns*. When Qutayba b. Muslim reconquered Bukhārā,⁶⁶ he forced the population to give half of its houses and estates over to the Arabs. The houses he confiscated belonged to a wealthy group of traders of foreign origins known as the Kashkathah; and Qutayba deliberately left the homes and the estates of the *dihqāns*, dislocating one part of the population while

⁶² Musā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Khāzim did not conquer Tirmidh in the name of the Muslims, but rather as a refuge for himself and his family in their continuing conflict with the tribes of Rabī’a, Bakr, and Tamīm.

⁶³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1145-1147.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:1022.

⁶⁵ Or, as Étienne de la Vaissière has argued, there were conflicts between merchants who dealt primarily with Marw, and by extension the Sāsānian and than Arab world, and merchants who traded with China. Those who made Khurāsān and the south and west their primary market may have been pursuing more favorable taxation rates from the Arabs by allowing the Arabs to conquer Soghdia. de la Vaissière, *Sogdian Traders*, 273-276.

⁶⁶ According to Narshakhī, this was the fourth time Qutayba had to reconquer the city, sometime before 94/712-713. Nashakhī. *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*. 52. Bukhārā repeatedly fought Arab invaders and then sued for peace only to fight them the next time they arrived.

leaving the another to their lands.⁶⁷ The dislocated population built 700 palaces outside the city, each of which was surrounded by houses for their clients and servants, together with gardens and fields.⁶⁸ A similar division can be seen in Samarqand. Sometime before 91/710, the king of Samarqand, Ṭarkhūn, began paying tribute to the Arabs, but in that year an anti-Arab party in the city deposed him and killed him. Another Soghdian prince was presented to rule the city, but with an Arab garrison in his city.⁶⁹

From the earliest advances into Transoxania, we see signs of treaties being signed between local rulers and the Arabs at the conclusion of expeditions, even though the Arabs did not remain in Transoxania and did not establish direct rule over the region. As early as 54/674, when ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād defeated the armies of the Bukhār Khudah, we see Arabs returning with tribute: in this case ʿUbayd Allāh brought 2,000 archers, as prisoners, all the way back to Baṣra, using them to form a personal bodyguard.⁷⁰ During later expeditions, the army of Bukhārā is seen fighting alongside the Arabs.⁷¹ As mentioned above, these treaties with Bukhārā were never long-lasting and each new campaign meant another open conflict with the people of Bukhārā. In the midst of these military expeditions against the kingdoms of Transoxania, it appears that personal relationships were also developing between the Arab governors of Khurāsān, their military commanders, and the nobility of Transoxania. In 61/681, Salm b. Ziyād led a

⁶⁷ Ibid., 36-37. One problem with this narrative is that in 767, descendents of a *dihqān* by the name of Kadra-i Khīna presented a deed to the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr, claiming ownership to the quarter of the city Qutayba had confiscated for the Arabs. Ibid., 64.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 36-37. This may be the origin of the fortified estates found within the walls of the city in al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir ʿAbd al-ʿĀl al-Ḥīmī (Cairo, 1381/1961), 172-173. More on this later.

⁶⁹ al-Nashakhrī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 55-56.

⁷⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, 2:170.

⁷¹ Of course, this moment of collaboration does not mean that Bukhārā did not revolt or fight against the Arabs at a later date, which they most certainly did in 61/681. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, 20-22.

successful campaign which led to treaties of *ṣulḥ* from Khwārazm and Samarqand: this was the first time any significant Arab army spent the winter across the Oxus.⁷² During this campaign, Salm's wife gave birth to a son in Samarqand, whom he named Ṣughdī; the queen of Samarqand gave Salm's wife her crown as a gift for the child.⁷³

When the kingdoms of Transoxania threw off Arab rule, they solicited a much harsher response than had occurred in Khurāsān, and the punishments that the Arabs inflicted were much more severe. Of course, whether this should be referred to as “throwing off” Arab rule is questionable. Since the Arabs did not establish garrisons or install governors in Transoxania for the first decades of their conquests of the region, these early conquests established a relationship between the Arabs and the kingdoms of Transoxania, where the Arabs appeared to be only seeking tribute and then returning to Khurāsān. As we have seen in Qutayba's reconquest of Bukhārā and Samarqand, one response to this pattern of attack, treaty, and attack again was the establishment of garrisons on land that had previously belonged to locals who were seen as opposing Arab rule. On the one hand, this altered the social fabric of individual cities and may have aggravated divisions within the local populations; on the other hand, it also allowed these displaced social groups to establish themselves and to retain levels of authority and wealth in the countryside. In the case of Bukhārā, those displaced from the city were able to establish new estates and bring their supporters with them. These new estates appear to have shifted these urban merchants into a category of rural *dihqān*; our geographical writers comment on their estates, some centuries after their establishment.

⁷² al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, 2:392-395.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2:394-395.

In the end, while the Arab conquests eventually brought Khurāsān and Transoxania under Muslim political authority and into the Islamic political and cultural sphere of the caliphate, they failed to effectively break the economic, political, and social networks which existed in the region before the arrival of Islam. This “failure” resulted in a two-tiered society where Persian elites, sometimes converts but often not, were able to hold economic and political authority alongside and sometimes over Arab settlers. All this will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Here, meanwhile, we will look at the patterns of settlement and examine how Persian elites, especially the *dihqāns*, maintained ownership over the greater part of the eastern frontier in the centuries following the Arab conquests.

5.4 Arab Settlement Before the Ṭāhirids

The question of Arab settlement in Khurāsān during the centuries following the conquest of the region has long been at the heart of historiographical questions related to the nature of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and the popularity of the ‘Abbāsīd movement in Khurāsān. For the most part, the modern literature on Arab settlement in Khurāsān has been dominated by studies that focus on the origins of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution, as summarized by Parvaneh Pourshariati,

One of the central premises of the current scholarship on the ‘Abbāsīd revolution has been the notion that Arab settlement in Khurāsān was not only *substantial*, but also *widespread*. This assumption has itself been partially reinforced by the belief in the popularity of the ‘Abbāsīd revolution. The reasoning here has been somewhat circular. If the revolution was a *popular* Khurāsānī movement, it followed, almost by necessity, that

the Arabs – subsequent to whose arrival the transformations in the region are thought to have occurred – must have settled in the *vast extent* of the Khurāsānī territory.⁷⁴

The origins of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution are not the focus of this study, though the revolution’s aftermath will be a concern both here and in the following chapter. Instead, the debates revolving around issues of the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution will be discussed here as a means to understand the patterns of Arab settlement in the period between the Arab conquests and the rise of the Ṭāhirids.

Many have argued that the settlement of Arabs in Khurāsān was a widespread phenomenon.⁷⁵ In fact, we often see this point accepted as a given.⁷⁶ This idea of widespread settlement is partially the result of historiographical peculiarities. As Elton Daniel writes, “No traditional Muslim source, Arabic or Persian, deals directly with the subject of Arab settlement in Iran. Various incidental details may be gleaned and pieced together from the standard chronicles and narrative histories.”⁷⁷ Parvaneh Pourshariati adds that since these sources “chronicle the *movements* and wars of the Arabs in Khurāsān, the presence of Arabs in the region seems indeed overwhelming. The trails of the Arabs are to be found *everywhere* in Khurāsān in these works.”⁷⁸ Much the same can be said about the way our available sources treat Arab settlement in Transoxania.

⁷⁴ Pourshariati, “Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement,” 42.

⁷⁵ Parvaneh Pourshariati has summarized a number of these theories nicely in her article “Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement,” and I must acknowledge the contribution of her work to the following pages.

⁷⁶ For examples, see ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, “The Arab Conquest of Iran and its Aftermath,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 4, *From the Arab Invasion to the Seljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge, 1975), 28; D. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, (Cambridge, 1950), 118-119.

⁷⁷ Elton Daniel, “Arab III. Arab Settlements in Iran,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

⁷⁸ Pourshariati, “Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement,” 44-45.

The scattered evidence for Arab settlement during the conquests converges on large migrations of fighters, relocated to Khurāsān by the state.⁷⁹ The first settlement of Arabs in Khurāsān occurred in Marw in 31/651-652. The treaty which gave the Arabs authority over the city demanded that its people quarter Arab fighters in their homes (*fī manāzilihim*); accordingly, 4,000 fighters were garrisoned in the city at that time.⁸⁰ It is commonly understood that this garrison did not involve large-scale permanent settlement and that fighters were rotated between Khurāsān and Iraq during this early period. There is incidental evidence that settlement took place around this time in other parts of Khurāsān as well. Ibn A‘tham writes that, during the reign of Mu‘āwiya, Ziyād b. Abīhi appointed Sa‘īd b. ‘Uthmān as governor of Khurāsān. When he arrived in Nīshāpūr, Sa‘īd found a colony of Arabs from the days of Ibn ‘Āmir.⁸¹ A garrison which presumably housed Arab fighters was built two *farsakhs* outside of Balkh.⁸² Evidence such as this is sparse and gives little reference to the numbers of Arabs involved, the conditions under which they settled, or the nature of their settlement. We have to assume, however, that these settlements primarily consisted of male fighters, that they were small in number (with Marw’s 4,000 fighters being the largest group), and that migration to these garrisons was considered temporary, at least in the early period when these garrisons were regularly rotated.

The first large scale, permanent Arab settlement came in 51/671 when Ziyād b. Abīhi settled 50,000 fighters from Kufa and al-Baṣra, together with their families, along

⁷⁹ In this context, by the state we mean the governors of Iraq and the sub-governors they appointed to Khurāsān.

⁸⁰ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 396; al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:193.

⁸¹ Ibn A‘tham, *al-Futūḥ*, (Beirut, 1986), 4:310-311.

⁸² al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1490.

the river of Marw.⁸³ It has been estimated that the total number of Arabs migrating to Khurāsān at this time, including the wives and children of the fighters, was in the neighborhood of 200,000.⁸⁴ Even if these new arrivals were dispersed throughout Khurāsān, they were still primarily concentrated in Marw, the seat of the governor and the staging area for the upcoming conquest of Transoxania. Many scholars have noted this concentration of Arab settlement in Marw in these early years, but they have not often elaborated on the conditions under which it occurred.⁸⁵ The vast majority of settlers must have remained either within the city or very near it, while those who settled elsewhere may have amounted to little more than garrisons. As discussed in Chapter Three, garrison fortresses appeared outside the walls of many cities along the eastern frontier. The earliest dateable garrison outside Marw was that of Balkh, built in 43/663-4, two *farsakhs* outside the city at a place called Barūqān. This garrison was later moved into the city itself in 107/725, on the orders of the governor Asad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qasrī.⁸⁶ We find a number of other fortresses which appear to be garrisons outside the walls of cities, especially in Transoxania, including those at Bārāb,⁸⁷ Adhakhkath,⁸⁸ Jamūkat,⁸⁹ Zandana, Khujādā,⁹⁰ Baykand,⁹¹ Sadūr,⁹² Tirmidh,⁹³ and Mahana.⁹⁴ We should consider these fortresses Muslim garrisons because they combined mosques and,

⁸³ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 400; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:156; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh-nāmah-i Ṭabarī*, 2:716.

⁸⁴ Zarrinkub, “The Arab Conquest of Iran and its Aftermath,” 28.

⁸⁵ See M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A.D. 600-750, A New Interpretation*, (Cambridge, 1971); Faruq ‘Umar, *The ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate*, (Baghdad, 1969).

⁸⁶ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. 2:1490.

⁸⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 273.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 288.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 321, n. b.

occasionally, markets within the confines of a fortress.⁹⁵ The fact that the majority of these garrisons are found in Transoxania gives an indication of the approach of later Arab military commanders, especially Qutayba b. Muslim. Unlike in Khurāsān where fighters were concentrated around Marw with the intention of sending them into Transoxania and were often sent back to Iraq, the Arabs who arrived in Transoxania during Qutayba's governorship were more concerned with establishing a permanent presence.

Those who argue for a widespread Arab presence in Khurāsān also emphasize that migration to the region continued after the conquests.⁹⁶ Such arguments are, once again, based on scanty information. If we want to take our sources for the early history of Muslim Khurāsān at face value, it appears that the Arab population actually shrank between 51/671, when Ziyād b. Abīhi settled 50,000 fighters and their families in and around Marw, and 86/705, when Qutayba b. Muslim arrived to find a force of only 47,000.⁹⁷ It is probable that fighters, administrators, and their families were regularly migrating to Khurāsān during these years, and later on to Transoxania, but that many of them remained only for a limited time. The complicated narratives of the Arab conquests show us that conflicts in Iraq and Syria often drew much of the Arab population of Khurāsān back west, and that these fighters and their families were replaced by others when the political situation stabilized or when a new governor arrived, bringing along with him an entourage of fighters, administrators, and family members. Moreover, tribal

⁹⁵ In Transoxania, it is possible that Persians were also living in these garrisons, since Persian converts had begun to serve in the Muslim armies by the time the Muslims entered Transoxania. Figures given for the end of Qutayba b. Muslim's career in 96/715 indicate that Persian converts may have made up 12% of the fighters in Khurāsān. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1290-1291.

⁹⁶ Elton Daniel has said that "successive waves of colonists from Iraq converged on Khurasan. The Arabs were thus able to establish camp cities, small garrisons, and forward military bases throughout the area." Elton Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan Under Abbasid Rule: 747-820*, (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979), 20.

⁹⁷ The Arab fighters in Khurāsān in 86/705 included forty thousand from al-Baṣra and seven thousand from Kufa. al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 410.

conflict seems to have been an important cause of the movement of early settlers away from Marw. Conflicts broke out among Muḍar, Rabī'a, Bakr, and Tamīm following the death of the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd I in 64/683. When the Muḍarī Ibn Khāzim took over the governorship of Marw and began imprisoning and executing his rivals from Rabī'a and Bakr, many Arabs fled the city and settled in Herat.⁹⁸ These flights from tribal conflict appear to be temporary and not a full-fledged settlement, since we find the migrants returning to the garrisons of Marw to participate in later military campaigns.

In contrast to this notion of widespread Arab settlement, Parvaneh Pourshariati has advocated a division of Khurāsān into an "Inner Khurāsān" centered on the region of Nīshāpūr and those areas south of the Greater and Lesser Balkhān Mountains, and an "Outer Khurāsān" north of the Balkhān ranges, extending into Transoxania and containing the cities of Marw, Sarakhs, Nasā, Abīward, and Bukhārā.⁹⁹ Pourshariati has then argued that Arab settlement predominantly occurred in "Outer Khurāsān," and that it was only in the later years of Umayyad rule that settlement extended to "Inner Khurāsān."¹⁰⁰ If we take the evidence found in the scanty reports of settlement in our sources, this is clearly the case, but it is most likely that settlement outside Marw and its dependent regions was extremely limited. The earliest and largest settlements of Arabs in the region were concentrated in Marw and it was only later, during the governorship of Qutayba b. Muslim, that large-scale migrations of Arabs occurred. Now, however, the Arabs migrated to Transoxania, particularly Bukhārā and Samarqand.

⁹⁸ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:490-497.

⁹⁹ For her formulation of this division, see Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Ṭūs and the Arab Presence in Khurāsān."

¹⁰⁰ Pourshariati, "Iranian Tradition in Ṭūs and the Arab Presence in Khurāsān," Chapter Three; Pourshariati, "Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement."

Confirming this argument against widespread settlement is the fact that the *dihqāns*, for the most part, had successfully maintained their property rights and that consequently, any settlement outside the large-scale garrisons dating back to the time of the conquests would have involved the purchasing or renting of property from locals. In the rural areas, these would have been the *dihqāns*. The rights of *dihqāns* to hold onto their lands, and questions regarding taxes and tribute owed by lands in their possession appear to have been a very serious issue. This is largely because Khurāsān had been conquered primarily by *ṣulḥ*, and that accordingly its lands were considered *'ahd*, not liable to taxation but obligated to pay an annual tribute, negotiated at the time of the conquest. Land and poll taxes, or market taxes on merchants for that matter, were not differentiated within this tribute; local authorities were simply expected to collect a certain amount to remit to the Arabs. According to al-Ṭabarī, by 110/728-729, the proper application of this tribute on the population was becoming problematic and tribute which should have been removed from converts, and potentially from Arab settlers who had purchased lands from Persians, was still being collected by the *dihqāns* so they could meet their annual tribute payments.¹⁰¹ Daniel Dennett, who discussed these passages in detail in his *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, came to the conclusion that in order to facilitate conversion, the land of Khurāsān and then Transoxania (the application of these reforms to Transoxania are actually at the heart of al-Ṭabarī's report) was shifted from the category of *'ahd* to *kharāj*; the shift lifted the tribute payments, imposed an annual land tax (*kharāj*) on all lands, and placed a poll tax (*jizya*) specifically on non-

¹⁰¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, 2:1507-1510.

Muslims.¹⁰² Dennett focused on the mistreatment of converts by *dihqān* landlords who continued to collect tribute from them.

Other sources dealing with *dihqāns* who had Arab or Muslim tenants show that these same issues were generally involved in the sale of lands to Arabs who settled in conquered territories. The *Kitāb al-amwāl* of Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām is informative here on the transformation of tribute-paying land into *kharāj*-paying land, as conversion took place. These traditions cited by Abū ‘Ubayd confirm that *dihqāns* were responsible for raising a collective tribute from the lands under their authority.¹⁰³ They also demonstrate a process in which conversion by *dihqāns* required a readjustment of the fiscal terms employed, from tribute to *kharāj* (land tax), in order to prevent lands from moving beyond the treasury’s reach.¹⁰⁴ In most cases, the terminology used implies that conversion to Islam conferred ownership of a piece of land formerly in possession of a *dihqān* to the new convert, who now became liable for the *kharāj*.¹⁰⁵ Abū ‘Ubayd provides a number of traditions relating to the sale of land by *dihqāns* to Arabs and Muslims, particularly in Iraq. For instance, Ibn Mas‘ūd once bought land from a *dihqān*, which ought to have relieved the *dihqān* from paying the tribute associated with the land, but Ibn Mas‘ūd stipulated that the *dihqān* must now pay *jizya*.¹⁰⁶ As the status of land in Khurāsān and Transoxania changed from *‘ahd* to *kharāj*, we see a change in the status of the collectors of those taxes. al-Ṭabarī reports that taxes were collected from Arabs by

¹⁰² Daniel Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam*, 104-113.

¹⁰³ Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim, *Kitāb al-amwāl*, (Beirut, 1988), 61-62.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 81. In this tradition, the Caliph ‘Umar allows a *dihqān* to convert with the understanding that payment of *kharāj* will replace his payment of tribute.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57, 89-90, and 97-98.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

Persian converts, perhaps the very same families who previously collected tribute on privately-held lands.¹⁰⁷

Until the beginning of Ṭāhirid rule in 205/821, Marw continued to be the administrative center of Khurāsān and, by extension, Transoxania. Marw remained the central focus of Muslim rule in the region and the most important city of the region. The largest migrations to the region during the ‘Abbāsīd period, those associated with the entourages of caliphs and their heirs, continued to concentrate on Marw. Over time we should assume that the conditions which concentrated Arab settlement in Marw to such an overwhelming extent over other parts of the region weakened, and that Arabs spread out from the provincial capital. Focus will now be moved to conditions during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. Using our geographical sources, we can get a picture of how settlement patterns developed through the periods of Ṭāhirid and Sāmānīd rule, and whether these patterns were significantly different from the period following the conquests.

5.5 The Population of the Eastern Frontier During the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries

Our geographical sources give us a variety of indications about the extent of the Arab population and settlement in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. The earliest geographical authors, most noticeably in al-Ya‘qūbī, make direct note of cities and villages with a mixed population of Arabs and Persians (*al-‘ajam*). The list of cities with an Arab population is not surprisingly small and conforms in part to the areas discussed above as centers of Arab settlement in the first centuries of

¹⁰⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, 2:1152.

Muslim rule, including Ṭūs,¹⁰⁸ Nīshāpūr,¹⁰⁹ Marw,¹¹⁰ Sarakhs,¹¹¹ Herat,¹¹² Būshanj,¹¹³ Bāykand,¹¹⁴ Bukhārā,¹¹⁵ and Ushrūshana.¹¹⁶ Ṭūs and Nīshāpūr stand out in this list as cities with little evidence for Arab settlement following the conquests, but two events may help to explain this shift. Ṭūs became home to the shrine of the Eighth Shi'ite Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā, who died near the site of the tomb of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 203/818. Over the following centuries, Ṭūs, later renamed Mashhad in honor of al-Riḍā's tomb, became an important pilgrimage site and attracted a number of 'Alīds seeking to live near the shrine.¹¹⁷ At around the same time, Nīshāpūr became the capital of Khurāsān under the Ṭāhirids, and consequently attracted a new migration of administrators, soldiers, and others associated with the Ṭāhirid court.¹¹⁸ Many of these may have only been migrating from Marw, but another source of new arrivals was probably Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's courts in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. Nonetheless, we still have the sense that those Arabs who lived in Khurāsān and Transoxania were far outnumbered by the Persians. Of Ṭūs, it is

¹⁰⁸ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 277.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 278.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 279.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² al-Ya'qūbī specifies the nobles of the Persians (*ashraf min al-'ajam*). Ibid., 280.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 292.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 294.

¹¹⁷ See Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh al-Qummī's (d. 381/991) *'Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā*, (al-Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydarīyah, 1970) for what would become the standardized hagiography of al-Riḍā and Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. Qūlawayh (d. 368/978 or 369/979) *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, (Beirut: Dār al-surūr, 1997) for the earliest known guide for pilgrims to Mashhad, included in a pilgrimage guide focusing on the *ziyārat* of Karbala. Interesting in the context of discussions later this chapter, the site of both Hārūn al-Rashīd and 'Alī al-Riḍā's tombs are on an agricultural estate owned by a Muslim, and probably an Arab, known as Sanābādih. al-Iṣṭakhri, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147. By the time the *Hudūd al-'ālam* was written, the name of Sanābādih had changed, perhaps as a reflection of the increasing importance of the tombs over its original agricultural purpose, and it is called Nauqān and it is noted for its production of stone kettles, but not for its agriculture. *Hudūd al-'ālam*, ed. Manūchihr Sutūdi (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Danīshgāh-i Tehran, 1340/1962), 90.

¹¹⁸ This is of course what brought al-Ya'qūbī, our source for the Arab presence in Nīshāpūr, to the city himself.

specifically stated that the majority of the population is Persian.¹¹⁹ In Būshanj, the Arabs are described as migratory (*wa bi-hā 'arab yasayra*), probably herders; accordingly, the impact of their settlement as settlers and landowners may have been minimal.¹²⁰ al-Ya'qūbī describes the Persians and Arabs who live in Marw, saying that the people of Marw are the nobles of the Persian *dihqāns* (*ashrāf min dahāqīn al-'ajam*) and Arabs from the tribes of Azd, Tamīm, and others.¹²¹ Here al-Muqaddasī seems to describe the upper classes and not the majority of the population.

The sense we get from certain reports is that Arab settlement did not take place without input or permission from the local populations. al-Ya'qūbī makes a point of saying that the people of Usrūshana rejected Arab settlement until the arrival of the Banu Shaybān:

In the majority of the cities of Khurāsān there are groups of people from among the Arabs of Muḍar and Rabī'a and others from the tribes of Yemen, except in Usrūshana for [there] they used to prevent the Arabs from settling near them until some men from the Banu Shaybān arrived and settled there and intermarried with them.¹²²

Here we see the acceptance of a certain group of Arabs as neighbors, to the extent that intermarriage became common. This may also be a polite way of describing resistance to the Arab conquests, which was rather harsh around Usrūshana. There may have been as many as five attempts to conquer the region between 94/712 and 207/822, when the region finally came under Muslim authority.¹²³ It may thus have been only with the later attempts at conquest that Arabs managed to settle in or around Usrūshana.

¹¹⁹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 277.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹²¹ al-Azd and Tamīm were both tribes involved in the conquest and early administration of Khurāsān. *Ibid.*, 279.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 294.

¹²³ J. Kramers, "Usrūshana," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

As we move towards the later geographical texts, we begin to see a shift. The presence of Arabs and Persians no longer receives so much notice. It appears that by the time we reach the Balkhī School of geographical writers, the presence of a mixed Arab and Persian population, including people of both Arab and Persian descent as well as the products of inter-marriage, may be taken for granted, and it may be that by that time, the two groups have intermingled to such an extent that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them. That is not to say that Arab populations are completely ignored.

Barmādwā, a crossing point of the Oxus, is noted as being the village of the Bedouin (*al-'arab*).¹²⁴ The area around Balkh appears to be a major exception of al-Muqaddasī. Khulm is the village of Arabs from the Azd tribe, while neighboring Siminjān is the village of Tamīm. There are Bedouins in Khast.¹²⁵ In cases where it appears that our sources are talking about Arab migration, as when al-Muqaddasī says there are many émigrés (*ghurabā'*) in Shiljī, further details complicate this reading, among the migrants of Shiljī there are ten thousand from Isfahān implying that these very well may be Persians.¹²⁶

Instead of focusing on Arab and Persian populations, it appears that the most important populations to mention in later geographical texts are those which are non-Muslim. In the earlier texts, non-Muslim populations are presented as groups living beyond the reach of Muslim authority. But as the geographical tradition matures, our sources appear to be more open about the diversity of the lands under Muslim authority. As early as Qudāma (d. before 337/948), we are told of non-Muslims living near the center of Muslim rule along the eastern frontier, together with descriptions of their

¹²⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 292.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 275.

economic contributions to the region. In many cases, however, their remoteness from the actual centers of population is emphasized. The people of al-Qaraytīn, in the desert 25 *farsakhs* from Marw, are Magians who hire out donkeys.¹²⁷ On the peak of the mountain of Herat is a Zoroastrian fire temple known as Sirishk that, as al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal note, is populated. Between this mountain and the city lies a Christian church.¹²⁸ Barakdiz, on the bank of the River of Marw, has a population of Zoroastrians called Bih-Afrīdhī.¹²⁹ These groups are near centers of Arab settlement and Muslim political authority, but they are living in the remotest parts of those regions, in the deserts or mountains. There are some examples of non-Muslims living in the midst of the most important cities of the region. Within Samarqand there is a Manichaean monastery.¹³⁰ On the furthest fringes of Transoxania, a mixture of *vakhī* Zoroastrians, Tibetans, Indians, and Muslims are found in R.kht.j.b, Sikāshim, Khamdādh, Samarqandāq.¹³¹

The names of city gates give us some indication of non-Muslims living within the city as well, but in many cases this may be a population which is no longer in the city. The gates of Balkh include Bāb al-Yahūd, which, one would assume, is connected to the Jewish quarter of the city, and Bāb al-Nawbahār, which is the name of the famous Buddhist shrine the Barmākid family used to oversee before the arrival of Islam.¹³² It is assumed that al-Nawbahār was destroyed in the early centuries of Muslim rule, but its

¹²⁷ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī, (Baghdad: Dār al-rashīd li-l-nashr, 1981), 106.

¹²⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2, ed. J.H. Kramers, (Leiden: Brill, 1939), 438.

¹²⁹ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 94.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹³² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 155; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-ard*, 447-448; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 278, 302 n.d. Ibn al-Faqīh gives a detailed description of the temple and the Barmākids relationship to it. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 5, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 322-325.

memory was still strong enough to make it a landmark which could identify a neighborhood. Many other important cities also continued to invoke the name of the Nawbahār in their city gates, most likely for those gates leading to Balkh, including Samarqand¹³³ and Bukhārā.¹³⁴

Areas at the furthest extent of the Muslim world sometimes see this dynamic in reverse. Here it is the presence of Muslims which receive emphasis, because these are Muslims who have settled beyond the direct reach of Muslim authority. Muslims live in Kābul, but its suburbs are for Hindus. Later traditions emphasize the connection between Kābul and India, describing a tradition in which the kings of India, called the *raja* of Qinnauj¹³⁵ by the *Hudūd al- 'Ālam*, must visit the Kābul Shāh before they may rightfully claim their throne.¹³⁶ In Chapter Two we similarly discussed al-Ghūr, a region called the *Dār Kuffar*, in descriptions of the Muslim world.¹³⁷ al-Ghūr appears to be a place of conversion since, by the time of the writing of the *Hudūd al- 'Ālam* (372/982-983), most of its population is Muslim, as is the population of neighboring towns such as Baghnī.¹³⁸ Still, the foreignness of al-Ghūr receives emphasis: al-Iṣṭakhrī says that its language is not like that of Khurāsān.¹³⁹ Even if Muslim political authority is no longer spreading, the *Hudūd al- 'Ālam* makes it appear to have actually been waning, as individual Muslims spread beyond the eastern frontier and increased in numbers in areas where they had once been minorities.

¹³³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 278.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 280.

¹³⁵ Following Minorsky's transliteration; but even he seemed confused by this, marking it with a question mark. Vladimir Minorsky, trans., *Hudūd al- 'ālam: 'The Regions of the World,'* 2nd ed., (1970; repr., Cambridge: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1982), 111.

¹³⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 157; *Hudūd al- 'ālam*, 104.

¹³⁷ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 157; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, 444.

¹³⁸ *Hudūd al- 'ālam*, 101, 103.

¹³⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 157.

al-Muqaddasī lacks much of the specificity of our other authors when he speaks of Muslims and generally categorizes non-Muslims as heathens (*kuffār*). Half of the population of Takābkath is “heathen” (*kuffār*).¹⁴⁰ The majority of the population of al-Ḥarrān is similarly “heathen” (*kuffār*), but its *sultān* is a Muslim. Interestingly al-Muqaddasī also implies that this *sultān* is a Persian by mentioning that there is a *dihqān* living in the *quhandiz*, whom we may presume to be the local ruler.¹⁴¹

The *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* provides a picture of a complicated region with overlapping identities. The villages of Bik Tigīn, for example, located in the lands of the Tughuzghuz, fall under the authority of the Soghdians and are home to Christians, Zoroastrians, and heathens (*ṣābiyān*).¹⁴² Interestingly, it is the *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* that brings back the discussions of Arab settlement, but specifically at the fringes of Muslim political authority and beyond. Here Herat is singled out as a place with many Arabs (*tāziyan*).¹⁴³ Twenty thousand Arabs are said to live in the territory of the king of Gūzgānān, to whom they pay tribute. These are sheep and camel herders, said to be richer than all the other Arabs in Khurāsān.¹⁴⁴ In other words, these are Muslims who live beyond the political authority of Islam and pay tribute to a foreign king, apparently doing well economically from their movement beyond the lands of Muslim political authority.

Throughout our geographical sources, it appears that the image of the eastern frontier is shifting from a situation in which Arabs settle among Persians to a situation in which Arabs and Persians combine into a single population primarily noted for its religious affiliation, that of Islam, while Muslims encroach on the territory of non-

¹⁴⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam*, 77.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 98.

Muslims. Muslims are settling in non-Muslim lands and Muslims have taken control over regions with stronger connections to lands beyond the Islamic world than to the Islamic world itself.

5.6 Mosques as Symbols of Settlement and Conversion

One factor that Pourshariati has used to calculate the extent of the Arab settlement pattern in Khurāsān is the presence of mosques and the narratives of their construction in local histories.¹⁴⁵ However, using mosque construction for measuring the Arab population is a tricky business, because if we arrive at a number based entirely on the presence and size of mosques, we do not account for the fact that the conversion of local inhabitants began, if only to a limited extent, immediately after the conquests. Accordingly, when our geographical sources give detailed information on mosques, they help us to understand the spread of Islam and Muslim practices in Khurāsān and Transoxania, but perhaps not the spread of Arabs.

In these descriptions we can follow two important trajectories. First, we can follow the inclusion of mosques in descriptions of cities, as the geographical genre develops. Ibn Khurradādhbih, our earliest geographical writer, does not mention any mosques in Khurāsān and Transoxania. Neither does al-Ya'qūbī, except indirectly: in describing Balkh and its dependent regions, al-Ya'qūbī states that there are 47 *minbars* (pulpits) in its cities.¹⁴⁶ The presence of a *minbar* not only indicates a mosque, but it also indicates a congregational mosque and a Muslim political authority that is strong enough

¹⁴⁵ Pourshariati, "Local Histories of Khurāsān and the Pattern of Arab Settlement," 50-52.

¹⁴⁶ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 288.

to oversee the pronouncing of the *khuṭba*.¹⁴⁷ al-Ya'qūbī's description thus implies that not only does Balkh have a large enough Muslim population to support a congregational mosque, but that across the region the Muslim population is large enough to support 47 congregational mosques in which the *khuṭba* can be given. This, moreover, is a region in which al-Ya'qūbī only knows of twelve cities worth mentioning by name as dependents of Balkh.¹⁴⁸ Qudāma mentions a *minbar* in al-Shubūrqaṅ, a heavily-populated settlement in the desert outside Marw.¹⁴⁹ According to al-Iṣṭakhrī, Marw has two *minbars*, while among its dependent towns Kushmayhin, Hurmuzfarrah, Sinj, Jīranj, al-Dandānaqaṅ, al-Qarīnayn, Bāshān, Kharaq, and al-Sawsaqaṅ also possess *minbars*.¹⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥawqal says that Marw has a *minbar* attached to a hostel (*minbar maḍafa*).¹⁵¹ Sarakhs has a *minbar*, which al-Iṣṭakhrī mentions in his discussion of the city's role as a frontier and a meeting place of the *murābiṭūn*.¹⁵² The *Ḥudūd al-'ālam* lists M.ghkān, Khujādak, Zandana, Būmkath, Madyāmijkath, and Kharghānkath as villages with *minbars* in the area of Bukhārā.¹⁵³

As time goes by, the presence of congregational mosques in most cities become taken for granted. al-Muqaddasī seems to locate a congregational mosque in almost every city and village he describes in Khurāsān and Transoxania, quite unlike the sparse presence of mosques in earlier texts. In the rural districts of Nīshāpūr, consisting of six

¹⁴⁷ The *khuṭba* is a sermon given during Friday services, on the *'Īd al-fiṭr* and *'Īd al-aḍhā* festivals, and on other special occasions. There are different restrictions placed on the pronouncement of the *khuṭba* depending on sect or legal school.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 107.

¹⁵⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 149. Ibn Ḥawqal does not mention two *minbars* in Marw, but does list the same dependents of Marw with *minbars*. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 436-437.

¹⁵¹ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 436.

¹⁵² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 154.

¹⁵³ *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 106.

thousand villages, there are one hundred and twenty *minbars*.¹⁵⁴ al-Muqaddasī presents even the remotest of regions along the frontier as engaged in mosque construction during this period. Transoxania generally comes across as a region with numerous mosques and *minbars*.¹⁵⁵ Farghānā alone contains 40 mosques.¹⁵⁶ If we accept this widespread appearance of mosques by the late fourth/tenth century, then we cannot ascribe it to renewed, widespread settlement from outside. Instead, it can only be the result of the conversion of the local populations.

These dates fit nicely into Richard Bulliet's assessment of conversion in Iran, which reached its peak in the middle of the third/ninth century and reached a plateau where Islam had spread throughout the majority of the population by the beginning of the fourth/tenth century.¹⁵⁷ From anecdotal evidence, we can see that this was also a period of large-scale mosque construction throughout Iran. The Ṣaffārid 'Amr b. al-Layth is said to have built over 500 mosques throughout Iran during his reign (r. 265-287/879-900).¹⁵⁸ While few if any of these were built in Khurāsān, where 'Amr's control was limited by rebellions, and none of them were built in Transoxania, where his power never extended, we can still see that the late third/ninth century was a period of widespread mosque construction throughout Iran, and that this process must have taken place in Khurāsān and Transoxania at roughly the same time.

The widespread nature of mosque construction during this period is such that by al-Iṣṭakhrī's time it was just as important to mention when a city or village had no

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 300.

¹⁵⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 261.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 262.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). See Chapter Three for a detailed look at the period of conversion in Iran.

¹⁵⁸ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar, (Tehran, 1314/1935), 268.

mosque as it was to mention when it did. Khūst, for example, is said to not have a mosque, but there is a *minbar* available nearby in Khūr.¹⁵⁹ al-Marzubān has no mosque.¹⁶⁰ al-Muqaddasī makes special note of the lack of mosques in the villages around Baykand due to their adherence to the Ḥanafī *madhhab* which requires appropriate authorities to lead a mosque, which they happen lack. al-Muqaddasī adds that as a result of these juridical preferences, Baykand had to work hard to earn its own mosque.¹⁶¹ By Ibn Ḥawqal’s time, specific features of mosques are discussed, implying that as mosque construction spreads, certain aspects of mosque architecture may have become more or less formalized. In al-Fārayāb, the congregational mosque lacks a minaret but the nearby city of al-Yahūdiyya has two.¹⁶²

Second, we can look at descriptions of the conditions in which particular mosques were constructed, and from there we can reconstruct a timeline of Muslim presence in the region. Sometimes the time and place of the construction of a mosque can be calculated from the parts of a city in which it is located. For example, the congregational mosque of Nīshāpūr is located in a suburb known as *al-mu’askar* or “the military encampment.”¹⁶³ This name implies that at some point it was the location where an army encamped on the outskirts of the city; then, as the army stayed on, the encampment grew into a neighborhood. That fact that this is the location of the congregational mosque indicates that the encampment originally belonged to a Muslim army, perhaps consisting of Arabs who settled in Nīshāpūr following the conquest of the city, dating of which would be difficult since we understand that Arab settlement in Nīshāpūr came rather late. Earlier in

¹⁵⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 154; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 446.

¹⁶⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 279.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁶² Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 442.

¹⁶³ al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 145; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 431.

this chapter a number of mosques which similarly appear to be a part of older garrisons were mentioned, these mosques were considered parts of garrisons because they had been built within fortifications, often on the outskirts of cities or villages.

Examining the location of a mosque within the greater context of a city might tell us more about the impact of Muslim settlement and conversion in a city. We may be able to see from clues about the location of the mosque whether or not the mosque was established within a small community or garrison, or whether the coming of Islam to a particular location had a wide-spread impact on the urban fabric. Key to looking for this kind of information from the location of mosques is searching for places where the mosque is part of a larger architectural complex which fits the form of Islamic cities in the central Islamic lands of Iraq and Syria, particularly those which were founded as Muslim cities such as the *amṣār* of Iraq. What we understand to be the traditional formulation of an Islamic city includes a central complex containing the mosque in proximity to the marketplace, the governor's palace, and, perhaps, the prison or a bath house.¹⁶⁴ This type of complex represents a planned renovation to a city which tied the mosque to the centers of political (governor's palace and prison), economic (market), and social (bath house) life.

Descriptions of Marw provide us with a genealogy of mosque construction in a city which we know was home to the earliest Arab and Muslim settlers in Khurāsān.

According to al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, Marw had three congregational mosques. The

¹⁶⁴ For recent approaches to the topic, see Eugen Wirth, *Die orientalische Stadt im islamischen Vorderasien und Nordafrika*, (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern Verlag, 2000); Donald Whitcomb, "An Urban Structure for the Early Islamic City: An Archaeological Hypothesis," in *Cities in the Pre-Modern Islamic World: The Urban Impact of Religion, State and Society*, eds. Amira K. Bennison and Alison L. Gascoigne, (London: Routledge, 2007), 15-26; and Salma K. Jayyusi, Renata Holod, Attilio Petruccioli, and André Raymond, eds. *The City in the Islamic World*, 2 vols, Handbuch der Orientalistik. Section 1 The Near and Middle East, 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

first of these was built inside the *madīna* in the early days of the Islamic presence in the city (*fī awwal al-Islām*). The second, known as *al-masjid al-'atīq* or the “Old Mosque,” was built when the Muslim presence had grown (*lammā kithara al-Islām*), along one of the gates of the *madīna* near the markets, while the majority of the people left the earlier mosque for the newer one. Finally, Abū Muslim built a third congregational mosque in the suburbs, which by that point had become the real hub of the city, along the Mājān Canal together with a market and governor’s palace.¹⁶⁵ Here we see that over time Marw began to look more and more like what we would consider a “typical” Islamic city. The first congregational mosque, built in the inner city, was clearly connected to the early Arab garrison whom the people of Marw were required to quarter after the conquest of 31/651-652. It is quite possible that *al-masjid al-'atīq* was connected to the settlements of Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān in 51/671 or, more generally, to a growth in the Muslim community through conversion sometime prior to the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution. Abū Muslim’s congregational mosque was part of a larger urban project which created a new center of religious, political, and economic life.

We also have evidence that these were not the only mosques in Marw. Our geographical sources tend to mention only the central congregational mosque (*masjid al-jamā'a*) of a city, but as Pourshariati has pointed out in her discussion of mosque construction in local histories, early Arab settlement tended to mean that individual mosques were built for particular tribal groups, but these would not have been congregational mosques.¹⁶⁶ Since Marw was the site of the greatest early Arab settlement, and the site of many tribal conflicts among these early settlements, we must assume that a

¹⁶⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-ard*, 434.

¹⁶⁶ Pourshariati, “Local Histories of Khurāsān and Patterns of Arab Settlement,” 51.

similar pattern took place there. These mosques did not warrant the attention of our sources and probably, if they still existed in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, they had assumed the role of small neighborhood mosques in the time our geographical sources are describing. In these contexts, where multiple mosques were scattered across a city, it was required that a *muṣallā* be identified, typically in a public square, for the communal celebration of the two major festivals of *'Īd al-fiṭr* and *'Īd al-adhā*.¹⁶⁷ al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal describe such a *muṣallā* in Marw, in the neighborhood of *Ra's al-maydān* in the quarter of Abū al-Jahm.¹⁶⁸ Beyond the construction of a series of congregational mosques, we can assume that there were numerous tribal or neighborhood mosques in the center of the largest Arab settlements, and that larger spaces were dedicated to communal religious celebration.

Nīshāpūr provides an interesting example for this exercise because, as mentioned above, its congregational mosque was established outside of the city in an area known as the military camp. al-Iṣṭakhrī tells us, however, that the markets of the city run alongside the mosque.¹⁶⁹ This means that besides the neighborhood where we assume the early Muslims established a military encampment being the center for Muslim religious life, it also eventually drew the center of urban economic life out of the *madīna* or inner city and brought it into geographic proximity with the mosque in the suburbs. Knowing the location of a particular edifice or complex of edifices does not necessarily tell us about the order in which they were constructed or when any of them were constructed. It is the rare case when we are given dateable information about construction of particular buildings. In the case of Nīshāpūr, we have this information for the *dār al-umāra*, said to

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 435.

¹⁶⁹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 146.

have been built by the Ṣaffārid ‘Amr b. al-Layth, which would place its construction sometime between 280/893 and 287/900.¹⁷⁰ This palace was located next to the prison on the *maydān al-Ḥusayn* which was on the opposite end of the markets from the congregational mosque. Even though the *dār al-umāra* was built two centuries after the assumed foundation of *al-mu’skar* and, potentially, the congregational mosque, we still see a drive over this period to create a connection between the governor’s palace, the markets, and the mosque.

In other cities where we do not have as much detail, we can still decipher something of the origins of congregational mosques from their location. The mosque of Qayn is located in the *quhandiz* along with the *dār al-imāra*.¹⁷¹ The establishment of centers of authority within the *quhandiz* of a conquered city happened early after the conquest of the city by the Muslims. By placing the mosque in the *quhandiz*, the founders essentially separated it from the community at large, from which we may infer that this mosque had an earlier life as a garrison mosque. Meanwhile, other cities have their mosques located alongside rather than within the *quhandiz*.¹⁷² In some of them, the mosque is located in an appropriate architectural program, connected to the markets and *dār al-imāra*, but within the city itself. Herat’s congregational mosque lies in the center of the *madīna*, surrounded by the markets and attached to the prison.¹⁷³ Balkh’s

¹⁷⁰ Ibid; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 431. ‘Amr b. al-Layth had become the ruler of the Ṣaffārid domains in 265/879, but he did not have firm control over Khurāsān until 280/893 due to the revolts of Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khujistānī and Rāfi’ b. Harthama. See Robert J. Haug, “‘Amr b. al-Layth,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, third edition*. It is interesting to note that this would mean that the governor’s palace was not built by the dynasty which made Nīshāpūr their capital, the Ṭāhirids, but rather by the dynasty which removed the Ṭāhirids from power in Khurāsā, the Ṣaffārids.

¹⁷¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 154; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 446.

¹⁷² As in Shiljī, Binkath, and Tūnkath. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 275-277.

¹⁷³ al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 149, 150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 438.

congregational mosque is similarly in the center of the city, surrounded by markets.¹⁷⁴ al-Muqaddasī provides us with a great amount of detail about the location of specific mosques: their location in the *madīna*¹⁷⁵ or suburbs,¹⁷⁶ in a particular quarter,¹⁷⁷ near the markets¹⁷⁸ or far from them.¹⁷⁹ Without having firm dates or conditions for the construction of any of these individual mosques, we may still note that the majority of mosques for which whose location we have information conform to the practices of a planned mosque in a city with a planned Muslim character.

While we see the construction of mosques as a transformative experience for the fabric of a city or village, it is only on rare occasions that we see a history of a single building which became a mosque. The mosque of Mīrkī, for example, is said to have originally been a church.¹⁸⁰ Such refurbishments of pre-existing houses of worship are not out of the question, but our sources lead us to believe that these were the exception instead of the norm.

Following the construction of mosques as a sign of the spread of Arab settlement and later the spread of Islam along the eastern frontier gives us certain patterns. Mosques were constructed following the early conquests in areas where we presume Arab settlement to be the greatest, Marw most notably, and where we see signs of small garrisons of Arab fighters developing, primarily in fortresses. Larger congregational

¹⁷⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 155.

¹⁷⁵ Akhsīkath (271), Bunjikath (277), Kish, even though the *madīna* is in ruins (282), Numūjkath (280), Sawrān (274), Uṭlukh (275), Ūzkand (272), Zarmīthan (282)

¹⁷⁶ Firabr (291), Nasaf (283)

¹⁷⁷ Ranjad in the shoemakers' quarter (271), Tishān in the cotton dealers' quarter (271)

¹⁷⁸ Bahlū (275), Bālāj (274), Balkh (302 n.d), Bārāb (273), Barkhān (275), Barūkh (274), Baykand (282), Binākath (277), Bishabishān (272), Bīz (290), Dārzanjī (283), Jikil (275), Jiqarband (289), Kāth (287), Khayralām (272), Marsmanda (278), Nasaf (283), Nūzwār (289), Qaryat Barātakīn (288), Qubā (272), Rishtān (272), Rūzawand (289), al-Ṣaghāniyān (283), Samarqand (279), Shāwaghar (274), Shikit (271), Ṭarāz (274), Ūsh (272), Ushṭīqān (272), Ūzkand (272), Wasīj (273), Zamakhshar (289), Zamm (291)

¹⁷⁹ Jamshalāghū (273), Marghīnān (272)

¹⁸⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

mosques were then built as these communities expanded. It was not until the third/ninth century, when we presume conversion to have been at its peak, that mosques were constructed in many smaller cities and villages. By the late fourth/tenth century, the presence of a mosque in any community in Khurāsān or Transoxania appears to be the norm. While al-Muqaddasī mentions many mosques throughout the region, their position must have become more solidified by the writing of the *Hudūd al- 'ālam* in which much less attention is placed on the locations of mosques. The construction of mosques changed the urban fabric of the cities and villages where they appeared. Their proximity to sites of government authority such as the governor's palace and, as is most often the case, centers of economic life such as markets show that these mosques quickly became important parts of the social life of these cities at a time when Islam was equally becoming an important part of the identity of the eastern frontier.

5.7 *Fulānābād* and *Fulānjird*: Ethnicity and Toponyms

Recently, Richard Bulliet has argued that Iranian villages with names following the pattern of *fulānābād* can be traced back to landed gentry, who Bulliet identifies as the original owners of the village. These gentry would have founded new agricultural centers, usually through the production of *qanāts* or underground canals. This process also included the hiring of a large number of engineers and laborers for the construction of the *qanāts*, after which cultivators began to exploit the land.¹⁸¹ Bulliet further argues that the appearance of predominantly Arabic names in the *fulānābād* pattern implies that these were largely Muslim constructions, involving either Arabs or Persian converts. Bulliet

¹⁸¹ Richard W. Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 17-27.

later carries this argument into his thesis on the connections between the rise of Islam and the rise of cotton production in Iran.¹⁸²

If we examine the place names in our geographical sources, located along the eastern frontier and following the *fulānābād* pattern, we find that a number of these toponyms show a connection to founders with Arabic names, but that a number of them also have Persian names or do not include any personal name at all.

Table 5.1: *Fulānābād* Place Names¹⁸³

Asadābādh¹⁸⁴

Bāb Aḥwaṣābādh¹⁸⁵

Bāb Fayrūzābādh¹⁸⁶

Baḥīrābādh¹⁸⁷

Darb Dar Thugharabādh¹⁸⁸

Darb Kahlabādh¹⁸⁹

Darb Kilābādh¹⁹⁰

Ḥusaynābādh¹⁹¹

¹⁸² Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁸³ Gates and roads on the pattern of *Bāb Fulānābād* or *Darb Fulānābādh* have been included in this list with the assumption that these gates or roads lead to an agricultural estate with a *Fulānābad* name. These estates may no longer be functioning as such at the time our geographical writers include them in their texts and may have been eaten up by urban sprawl so that they now only indicate a neighborhood which was formerly an agricultural estate.

¹⁸⁴ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 158; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 347.

¹⁸⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 146; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 432.

¹⁸⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 438.

¹⁸⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 347.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 276.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 277.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 280.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 351.

Kanjābādh¹⁹²

Khurāsānābādh¹⁹³

Kūghnābādh¹⁹⁴

Mahdī Abādh¹⁹⁵

Mārābādh¹⁹⁶

Naṣrābādh¹⁹⁷

Sanābādh¹⁹⁸

Yahya Abādh¹⁹⁹

Bulliet also examines villages which follow the pattern of *fulanjird*, noting that the *fulān* in these toponyms tends to be a Persian name or word. He then states that *fulanjird* toponyms tend to imply “the rural estate or manor of one of the gentry.”²⁰⁰

Table 5.2: *Fulānjird* Place Names²⁰¹

Banūjird²⁰²

¹⁹² Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 348.

¹⁹³ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 149-150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 437.

¹⁹⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 152; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 440; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298.

¹⁹⁵ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 347.

¹⁹⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 149, 151, 160; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 439; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298, 349.

¹⁹⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 271.

¹⁹⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 434.

¹⁹⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 351.

²⁰⁰ Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*, 30.

²⁰¹ Names on the pattern of *Fulānkard* have also been included because their meaning of the name is essentially the same as *Fulānjird*.

²⁰² Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 97.

Dastjird/al-Dastjirda²⁰³

Farhākird²⁰⁴

Farkard²⁰⁵

Gharkard²⁰⁶

Ghuzkard²⁰⁷

Jarkard²⁰⁸

Jarūjird²⁰⁹

Karabkard²¹⁰

Kharkard²¹¹

Kunūkard²¹²

Mālāykard²¹³

Sayājird²¹⁴

Wāshjird²¹⁵

²⁰³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 107; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 268, 284, 347.

²⁰⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 351.

²⁰⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 151, 160; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 427, 440; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298; under the name Fargird, *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 92.

²⁰⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 27; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 100; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 342.

²⁰⁷ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 265.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 264.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 348.

²¹⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 150; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 439.

²¹¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 151, 160; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 427, 440; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298.

²¹² al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

²¹³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 351.

²¹⁴ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 33; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 108; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 156; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 448.

²¹⁵ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 108; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 162.

The lists of *fulānābād* and *fulānjird* toponyms that we find in our geographical sources, along with other place names, can provide us with some insight into the patterns of Arab and Muslim settlement in Khurāsān, while reinforcing our previous conclusions. For instance, in the itineraries of Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma, if we follow the route from Marw to Balkh and then from Balkh to al-Rāsht, we form an image of Arab settlement focused on Marw. The stops along these itineraries are as follows (distances between locations have been omitted):

Marw – Fāz – Mahdī Abādh – Yahya Abādh – al-Qarīnayn – Asadābādh - Ḥawzān - Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays – Marw al-Rūdh – Araskan – al-Asrāb - Kanjābādh – al-Ṭālaqān - Kansahāb – Arghayn - Qaṣr Khūṭ - al-Fārayāb – al-Qā' - al-Shubūrqān – *al-sadra min Balkh* – Dastjird²¹⁶ – al-Ghūr – Balkh – Sayājird - Jayhūn River – al-Tirmidh - Ṣarminjān – Dārazanjī – Barnjī – al-Ṣaghāniyān – Būndhā – Hamwārān – Ābān Kaswān – Shūmān – Wāshjird – al-Rāsht²¹⁷

Here we can see a pattern forming. From Marw to Qaṣr Khūṭ, there are a number of stops with toponyms which imply Arab or Muslim settlement. First there are a number of place names using the *fulānābād* pattern: Mahdī Abādh, Yahyā Abādh, Asadābādh, and Kanjābādh. If we follow Bulliet's reasoning, then we can decide that these villages were founded by Muslims, but we still do not know when they were established. Of these sites, only Asadābāth appears in Yāqūt's geographical dictionary. Here Yāqūt identifies the founder of the village as Asad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī, said to have founded the village in 106/724-725²¹⁸ when his brother, the well-known Umayyad governor Khālid b. 'Abd

²¹⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih spells this toponym as “Dastkird,” but this must either be a variation on “Dastjird” or a scribal error, a conclusion which is supported by Qudāma's use of the name al-Dastjirda for the same place. Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 107.

²¹⁷ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 32-34; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 105-109.

²¹⁸ The text itself says 160/776-777, but it also says that this was during the reign of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105-125/724-743), making this a clear typo.

Allāh al-Qasrī, sent him to Khurāsān.²¹⁹ Similarly, other toponyms may allow us to infer foundation by highly-placed individuals within the early Muslim administration of Khurāsān. It would be fair to assume, for example, that the Maḥdī of Maḥdī Abāth is the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Maḥdī (r. 158-169/775-785), sent by his father al-Manṣūr to govern Khuāsān from 141/758 to 151/768. Then we have the two *qaṣr* place names. We have seen in Chapter Three that Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays was named after the commander of the earliest Muslim conquests of Khurāsān al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, and that it received this name after al-Aḥnaf conquered it in 32/652-653.²²⁰ It is important to note that in all these cases of a personal name included in a toponym for which we can identify a namesake, these are people associated with Muslim rule in Khurāsān during the first centuries after the conquests.

We can identify the origins of one other *fulānābād* from the list above (Table 5.1), but this case involves an estate founded much later and, unlike the identifiable founders of estates near Marw, by a Persian. According to al-Muqaddasī, Naṣrābādh, located in Farghānā, was built by a king for his son who was named Naṣr.²²¹ Most likely, this king was the Sāmānid Aḥmad b. Asad, governor of Farghānā from 204/819 and Naṣr was his son, the first Sāmānid to rule all of Transoxania. Identifying Naṣr b. Aḥmad as the namesake of Naṣrābādh places its founding somewhere in the early third/ninth century and shows that the use of *fulānābād* toponyms had expanded by this period far beyond Marw among the converted Persian population. As Bulliet has suggested, it appears in

²¹⁹ Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, 1:176. The foundation of Asadābādh has been used by some modern scholars to argue that Arab settlers were able to purchase land and may have received land in lieu of pay following the conquest of Khurāsān. While this is certainly evidence of Arabs owning land around Marw, the idea that they received land in lieu of pay is questionable at best. See Elton Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule*, 21-22.

²²⁰ Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, 7:55; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 296-297.

²²¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 271.

this case that the *fulānābād* pattern traveled together with Islam. Khurāsānābādh, outside of Herat, may also be connected to a Persian convert, in this case the *dihqān* of Herat in the early second/eighth century, Khurāsān.²²² According to Ibn Ḥawqal, the *dār al-imāra* was located in Khurāsānābādh.²²³ Herat was conquered by treaty and the presence of the governor's palace in the estate of the *dihqān* may be a tradition predating the conquests.

Our geographical sources usually do not emphasize the agricultural nature of *fulānābād* locations, but in instances where they do, we can see a connection between these regions and intensive forms of agriculture. Regarding Mārābādh, outside Herat, al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal say that it has many gardens and much water and that much rice is exported from it.²²⁴ Since rice is both a labor- and resource-intensive product, the description of Mārābādh as a major rice exporter fits into Bulliet's argument that *fulānābād* locations require significant investment in order to bring in irrigation and establish fields. However, al-Muqaddasī does not note any particular abundance of water at Mārābādh.²²⁵ In other cases, these *fulānābāds* appear more like typical agricultural regions. Kūghnābādh, the seat of the *sulṭān* of Bādghīs, has gardens and water, and grows many small leafy plants (*mabākhas*).²²⁶

Locations with *fulānābād* names do not necessarily retain their agricultural character throughout their history, and new functions may be added to or even supplant their original agricultural function. This may be the case for Yahyā Ābādh, which Qudāma describes as a stopping point (*manzil*) in a valley with a caravanserai and an

²²² al-Ṭabarī appears to name the *dihqān* of Herat Khurāsān in a report about a Mihragān celebration in Balkh which was attended by the governor of Khurāsān Asad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī in the year 120/738. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 2:1638.

²²³ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 437.

²²⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 151; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 439.

²²⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 307.

²²⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 152.

office of the post (*khānāt wa sikka*).²²⁷ The majority of *fulānābād* locations appear to be concentrated around urban centers, particularly Marw.

We can also see *fulānābād* locations consumed by expanding cities. One place where we see this phenomenon most clearly is in the naming of city gates and roads. One of the gates of Nīshāpūr is named Bāb Aḥwaṣābādh, for example.²²⁸ It is not hard to imagine that an agricultural estate was established near Nīshāpūr and that, as the city expanded, this agricultural estate also grew until it became an urban neighborhood or suburb. Similarly, the southern gate of Herat is known as Bāb Fayrūzābādh, the most heavily-populated of the city's gates.²²⁹ Roads provide us with similar names, but these may be simply roads leading out from the city to a particular agricultural estate. One of the roads of Binkath is Darb Dār Thugharabādh (more on this interesting place name shortly).²³⁰ In Bunjikath, we find Darb Kahlabādh.²³¹ Darb Kilābādh is a road leading out of Numūjkath.²³² Even though our geographical sources are not primarily interested in these *fulānābād* locations, their presentation of these locations reinforces an image of landed estates clustering around urban spaces.

While most *fulānābād* locations are founded or owned by an individual whose name appears in the toponym, Dār Thugharabādh does not. Instead, this toponym translates roughly as “estate of the frontier.” Binkath is a region connected with the frontier, as the names of many of its roads imply: besides Darb Dār Thugharabād, we find named after fortifications such as Darb Ribāṭ Aḥmad, Darb Qaṣr al-Dihqān, and two

²²⁷ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 106.

²²⁸ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 146.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

²³⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 276.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 277.

²³² *Ibid.*, 280.

“iron roads,” Darb al-Ḥadīd.²³³ We may ask how the frontier can come to “own” an estate called Thugharabādh? Is this simply an estate close to the frontier, or is it an estate charged with supplying and funding fighters on the frontier? We will return shortly to the estates of Binkath.

Returning to our itinerary between Marw and al-Rāsht, as we approach Balkh, the pattern changes and we begin to see toponyms on the *fulānjird* pattern: Dastjird, Sayājird, Wāshjird. Unlike the *fulānābād* villages, here we cannot connect a single known individual with the foundation of the village. In at least one case, Dastjird, a place name is exceptionally common throughout the Iranian world. Yāqūt says that, according to al-Samʿānī, Dastjird is the name of numerous scattered places, including two near Marw, two near Ṭūs, one near Sarakhs known as Dastjird Luqmān, and one near Balkh known as Dastjird Jumūkiyān.²³⁴ There are also, according to Yāqūt, Dastjirds near Isfahan and Nihāwand in western Iran. The name itself, Dastjird, is not far from the basic meaning implied by Bulliet in his use of *fulānjird*, namely, something “possessed” or “owned” (*jird*). However, it is interesting to see so many sites that have forgotten or lost the name of their owner/founder and have instead replaced a proper name with the generic *dast*. The Dastjird mentioned by Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma is located closer to Balkh, possibly the Dastjird Jumūkiyān mentioned by Yāqūt. Another Dastjird is listed by al-Muqaddasī in the area of Kish near Bukhārā.²³⁵ Even though it is difficult to identify any of these *fulānjird* places with a single individual, they are still a sign that by the time the

²³³ Ibid., 276. The use of *ḥadīd* in a place name, as in the case of places like Bāb al-Ḥadīd, often implies a pass that is especially difficult to maneuver through or heavily defended.

²³⁴ Yāqūt, *Mujʿam al-buldān*, GET PAGE NUMBER

²³⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 268, 284.

itinerary reaches Balkh we have left an area of heavier Arab settlement and entered an area which has, to a greater extent, retained its Persian identity.

The connection between villages with *fulānjird* place names and private estates owned by Persians comes out more clearly in other instances. al-Ya'qūbī refers to Kunūkard²³⁶ outside Marw and the first stage on the route to Sarakhs, and shows that Arab settlement there did not completely displace the native Persian landowners. He describes Kunūkard as the estates (*diyā'*) of the family of 'Alī b. Hishām b. Farrakhusraw.²³⁷ Here al-Ya'qūbī makes the connection between *fulānjird* place names and private estates clear, even though the place name and the family name of the land owners do not appear to be connected. By providing the full family name of the owner of the estate going back to 'Alī's grandfather, al-Ya'qūbī also emphasizes the Persian origins of *fulānjird* locations.

The identification of Kunūkard as a Persian family estate near Marw brings up interesting questions due to the pattern of toponyms in the itinerary of Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma and its implication that Marw was a region of Arab settlement.²³⁸ If we look back at the narratives of the conquest of Marw, we see that on the one hand Arabs were settled in Marw (in the homes of Persians) as early as 31/651-652.²³⁹ This early date gives us a context for the foundation of *fulānābād* villages and estates during the first century of Muslim rule. On the other hand, the *ṣulḥ* made between the residents of Marw

²³⁶ al-Ya'qūbī spells the name of this location Kunūkard, but this appears to be an alternate spelling of Kunūjjird or, at least, a synonymous name. The meaning of "*kard*" is similar to "*jird*," a sown field.

²³⁷ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

²³⁸ It is important to note here that Ibn Khurradādhbih and Qudāma do list a "*fulānjird*" settlement as the last stage before Marw on the itinerary from Nīshāpūr, Banūjjird, meaning that Kunūkard is not alone in the immediate environs of Marw. Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 24; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 97.

²³⁹ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 396; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:193.

and the Muslim conquerors protected the Persians' status and property rights.²⁴⁰ The presence of *fulānjird* place names indicates continued ownership of family property throughout the period of the conquests. The conversion to Islam of the current property holder and his assuming an Arabic name may point to the desire of high-status Persians to integrate themselves within Muslim society following the conquests. However, this retention of a *fulānjird* place name indicates that the man did not give up his Persian identity entirely.

Much like *fulānābād* locations, descriptions of *fulānjird* locations rarely emphasize their agricultural character. Kharkard, a dependent town of Būshanj, is noted by al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal for its many gardens and its access to water.²⁴¹ Farkard, also a dependent of Būshanj, is noted not for its agriculture but for its livestock. al-Iṣṭakhrī says that it has running water and that its people are masters of livestock (*sawā'im*).²⁴² The *Hudūd al-'ālam* likewise notes that the inhabitants of Farkard own cattle.²⁴³ Wāshjird appears to be an example of a very successful agricultural estate which became a center of trade and commerce for the agricultural regions around it, perhaps losing its own agricultural base in the process. According to al-Iṣṭakhrī, Wāshjird is the place where goods from al-Ṣaghāniyān were gathered for export, including saffron (*al-za'farān*), sable, squirrel, and fox fur (*al-awbār min al-sammūr wa'l-sinjāb wa'l-tha'ālib*), and fine products made of iron, horn, and linen (*tarā'if min al-ḥadīd wa'l-khutū wa'l-bizāza*).²⁴⁴ Just as Yahyā Ābādh and the surviving *fulānābād* names are retained only in the names of gates and roads, Wāshjird may be an example of an estate which

²⁴⁰ al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 396.

²⁴¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 151; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 440.

²⁴² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 151; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 440.

²⁴³ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 92.

²⁴⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 162.

outgrew its initial purpose. In fact, in some of our sources Wāshjird is described as the capital of the region of al-Khuttal.²⁴⁵

Finally, if we look further into al-Ya'qūbī's description of Kanūkard, we see that it is one in a series of locations between Sarakhs and Marw, each of which, according to al-Ya'qūbī, is protected by a strong fortress.²⁴⁶ This part of al-Ya'qūbī's description brings up the idea that private estates were protected with fortifications. Wāshjird has been discussed in Chapter Three for its military significance; it was a city of the great frontier (*madīnat thaghr 'aẓīm*), the capital of al-Khuttal, and chief place within an area with 700 strongly built fortresses (*ḥiṣn ḥaṣīna*).²⁴⁷ We discussed Wāshjird as part of a phenomenon of regions on the extreme frontier which, we are told, became the site of hundreds of fortifications, whether they were called *ḥiṣn* or *ribāṭ*. We will return to this point in a moment.

While the private estates discussed here have were obviously rather large, the vast majority of the estates which covered the eastern frontier must have been too small for inclusion as named places in our geographical sources. Still, the patterns which we have seen in the small percentage of estates which were named in our geographical sources most likely applied to many of the smaller estates as well. The primary pattern that we have identified here is that the largest concentration of Arab or Muslim estates, those with a *fulānābād* name, clustered around the largest and oldest center of Arab settlement, Marw. As we travel further away from Marw, we see a greater number of *fulānjird* place names, indicating Persian origins. This pattern is important for understanding the make-up of the frontier itself and the extension of the Arabs and Islam to the edges of their own

²⁴⁵ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 291-292.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 279.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 291-292.

world. Second, we see that these estates had a variety of purposes and were associated with a variety of architectural structures. The most interesting of these structures turn out to be fortifications, and it is accordingly to the fortifications of the private estates to which we now turn.

5.8 Rural Estates and *Ribāṭs*

In Chapter Three, we introduced ongoing questions regarding the nature of the *ribāṭ* as a military architectural form. Following Albrecht Noth, Antoine Borrut, Christophe Picard, and Jacqueline Chabbi,²⁴⁸ we discussed the *ribāṭ* - commonly understood as a uniquely Muslim edifice – more as a function applied to a place than as a particular edifice in and of itself. Along the eastern frontier, despite the connection between *ribāṭs* and Islam, the largest number of *ribāṭs* are found away from the major centers of both Arab settlement in Khurāsān and the early spread of Islam.²⁴⁹ This indicates that the *ribāṭs* of the eastern frontier were not originally Muslim constructions, but rather predated the arrival of Islam. If we look closely at the locations of these *ribāṭs* and the terminology our geographical sources used for them over time, we see that they were fortified rural estates which assumed a Muslim identity as Islam spread among the *dihqāns*.

Ribāṭs in Khurāsān and Transoxania are noticeably absent from the earliest geographical sources, much like mosques. This is not the case for other regions. If we look south to Sīstān, for example, Ibn Khurradādhbih lists Ribāṭ Baʿīda on the road from

²⁴⁸ Albrecht Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf in Islam und Christentum*, (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid Verlag, 1966), 66-87; A. Borrut and C. Picard, “Rābata, ribāt, rābita: une institution a reconsidérer,” in P. Sénac and N. Prouteau (eds.), *Chrétiens et musulmans en Méditerranée médiévale (VIIIe-XIIIe s.): échanges et contacts*, p. 33-65 (Poitiers, 2003); and J. Chabbi, “Ribāṭ,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

²⁴⁹ That is not to say that there were none near the centers of early settlement. al-Muqaddasī alone lists five on a single route between Marw and the Oxus. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 348.

Kirmān to Sīstān.²⁵⁰ Qudāma includes Ribāṭ Kūmakh along the same itinerary.²⁵¹ It is not until the Balkhī School that we see *ribāṭs* appearing along the eastern frontier, but the majority of the *ribāṭs* found in our geographical sources do not appear until al-Muqaddasī, where they seem to be everywhere, again, much like mosques.²⁵² For example, Isbījāb, which rarely finds its way into earlier geographical texts, is said to contain two thousand seven hundred *ribāṭs* by al-Muqaddasī.²⁵³ This implies either that al-Muqaddasī had a greater interest in *ribāṭs* than his predecessors, or that *ribāṭs* did not appear in Khurāsān or Transoxania until a later date.

The *ribāṭs* which appear in al-Muqaddasī's text are overwhelmingly centered on Bukhārā. Associated with Bukhārā itself, there are *ribāṭs* among the villages inside the city's wall.²⁵⁴ The neighboring city of Baykand is said to have a thousand *ribāṭs*, some of them in ruins and some inhabited.²⁵⁵ The city is said to be home to many *murābiṭīn*, which is contrasted with its lack of ignorant people (*jāhilūn*).²⁵⁶ Ribāṭ al-Nūr, one of the few named *ribāṭs* in the immediate neighborhood of Bukhārā, is also the host of an annual fair.²⁵⁷ The majority of the named *ribāṭs* are found along roads leading from Bukhārā. On the road to Tirmidh there are Ribāṭ 'Atīq and Ribāṭ Khwārān.²⁵⁸ On the road to Kāth there are Ribāṭ Tāsh, Ribāṭ Ṭughān, Ribāṭ Jikarband, Ribāṭ Ḥasan, Ribāṭ Māsh, and Ribāṭ Sandah.²⁵⁹ Along the route from Bukhārā to Nakhshab, al-Muqaddasī says one

²⁵⁰ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa 'l-mamālik*, 49.

²⁵¹ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa šinā'at al-kitāba*, 90.

²⁵² Of Transoxania, he says it is a place with many *ribāṭs*. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma 'rifat al-aqālīm*, 261, n. e.

²⁵³ Ibid. 273.

²⁵⁴ *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 106.

²⁵⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma 'rifat al-aqālīm*, 282; *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 106.

²⁵⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma 'rifat al-aqālīm*, 281.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 334.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 343.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Nearly half of the stages on this route are *ribāṭs*.

encounters numerous *ribāṭs*.²⁶⁰ The picture we get from al-Muqaddasī is that Bukhārā is surrounded by a network of *ribāṭs*, much like the image we had of Marw surrounded by a network of fortifications in Chapter Three. Such a network of *ribāṭs* cannot have appeared suddenly, which leads us to ask what the neighborhood around Bukhārā looked like in our earlier sources.

Besides the walls of Bukhārā discussed in Chapter Three, the earliest references to the defenses of the city are found in al-Yaʿqūbī, who describes the region as well-defended in general.²⁶¹ Ibn al-Faqīh mentions the *quhandiz*.²⁶² al-Iṣṭakhrī gives a detailed description of what can be found inside the wall surrounding Bukhārā and its dependent villages, including fortresses (*quṣūr*).²⁶³ As he begins to detail what is found along the rivers within the wall, al-Iṣṭakhrī makes a connection between thousands of fortresses and thousands of estates and gardens.²⁶⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī makes this connection more generally for Transoxania as a whole. The owners of agricultural estates built fortresses or fortified palaces (*quṣūr*) on their estates.²⁶⁵ These fortresses and their associated agricultural estates are the closest any of our earlier texts come to al-Muqaddasī's description of *ribāṭs* within the walls of a city.

In the cases of Bukhārā and Baykand, we know the origins of many of these estates. A large number of them date from the time of Qutayba b. Muslim's conquest of Soghdia. In the year 88/706, Qutayba marched on Baykand, then a rich city dominated by

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 344.

²⁶¹ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 292.

²⁶² Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 325.

²⁶³ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 171.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 172-173.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 162.

merchants.²⁶⁶ After a long siege the city was conquered and a garrison was put in place while Qutayba and his army moved on. However, the people of Baykand revolted and killed Qutayba's governor. Qutayba returned, destroyed the city, and made off with prisoners and spoils including a number of exotic luxuries which have been detailed in accounts of the conquest of the city. Most of the men of Baykand, by which our sources must mean the upper class of merchants, were in China on a trading expedition when this occurred and when they returned to find their city destroyed, they ransomed their families and began to rebuild in the area around the city.²⁶⁷ We might assume that the fortresses and later *ribāts* that were built around Baykand are associated with this resettlement of the native population after the city had been destroyed. One interesting aspect of this resettlement is that if these fortifications were built by merchants who had resettled in the hinterlands of the city, are we seeing the merchants of Baykand recreating themselves after the destruction of their city as rural landholders or *dihqāns*.

We may find answers to this question in the aftermath of Qutayba's fourth and final conquest of Bukhārā, which was discussed in detail above. At this time, Qutayba confiscated half the houses in Bukhārā in order to create a permanent Arab garrison. The houses he confiscated belong to a wealthy group of merchants known as the Kashkathah.²⁶⁸ The dislocated population built 700 palaces outside the city, around which they built houses, gardens, and fields for their clients and servants in the style of the estates of the *dihqāns*.²⁶⁹ There is evidence that in the process of building these estates,

²⁶⁶ In most of the geographical sources of the Islamic era, Baykand is still referred to as the City of the Merchants. See Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 25; Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 325.

²⁶⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, 2:185-190; al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 52-54.

²⁶⁸ al-Nashakhī. *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*. 36-37.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

the Kashkathah merchants became, essentially, *dihqāns* themselves, managing large estates with many dependents under their authority. In 150/767, descendants of a *dihqān* named Kadra-i Khīna presented a deed to the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr for a certain quarter of the city that Qutayba had confiscated.²⁷⁰ If Kadra-i Khīna was the rightful owner of this confiscated quarter, then he may well have been one of the Kashkathah merchants; by settling outside the city and building an agricultural estate he had, in fact, become a *dihqān*, and his descendants were acknowledged as such.

The experience of Bukhārā shows that it was possible for merchants to build agricultural estates on the patten of *dihqāns*. Accordingly, a similar pattern may have occurred in nearby Baykand after its destruction. This shift in career paths among such a large and prominent segment of the population in both cities may have also have been a result of the conquests. The merchants of Baykand were said to have been on a trading expedition to China when Qutayba conquered their city. Earlier it was proposed that the assistance given to the Muslims by some factions of Soghdian merchants during the conquests was the result of competition between groups of merchants who traded with China and others who traded with Iran and India, or more broadly the lands south of Transoxania.²⁷¹ The Muslim conquest of Soghdia would have made trade to the south easier and trade with China, which prior to the conquests had strong ties to Transoxania, more difficult.²⁷² Besides losing their homes, it is possible that the merchants of Baykand and Bukhārā also lost their livelihood if their main trading partners were in China.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 64.

²⁷¹ de la Vaissière, *Soghdian Traders*, 273-276.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Besides the Arab conquests, the eighth century was also a time of contraction for the Tang Empire, especially following the An Lushan Rebellion of 755-763 during which the Tang Empire lost direct control over most of its western provinces, thus making trade with China doubly difficult for the Muslims.

The correspondence between areas with high numbers of *ribāʿts* and high numbers of fortified estates can also be demonstrated for the other major center of *ribāʿts* in the fourth/tenth century, al-Khuttal. al-Khuttal is a region located along the Oxus to the south and east of Bukhārā. In our earliest geographic sources, al-Khuttal is described as a region with many fortresses. al-Yaʿqūbī states that al-Khuttal with its capital in Wāshjird is a region of 700 fortresses, because it defends the frontier.²⁷⁴ He also emphasizes that al-Khuttal is in the midst of a region where political authority is divided among a number of local rulers and dynasties outside of the networks of authority across the caliphate. From Balkh to al-Khuttal, there are the territories of the Bānījūrids.²⁷⁵ When al-Yaʿqūbī reaches al-Khuttal itself, he describes it as the kingdom of Khumār Beg, the prince of Shiqinān and Badakhshān.²⁷⁶ al-Muqaddasī connects this region to three specific *ribāʿts*, Firabr²⁷⁷ and Ribāʿ Dhu al-Kifl and Ribāʿ Dhu al-Qarnayn, which lie across the river from each other.²⁷⁸ While al-Muqaddasī only names a single *ribāʿt*, the *ribāʿt* of Naṣr b. Aḥmad, he more generally mentions plural *ribāʿts* associated with the area.²⁷⁹ Additionally, two of the *ribāʿts* listed under Bukhārā were on the road to Tirmidh, in al-Khuttal, namely Ribāʿ ʿAtīq and Ribāʿ Khwārān.²⁸⁰ The number of *ribāʿts* found in al-Khuttal is not nearly as high as the number of fortresses described by al-Yaʿqūbī, but as in the case of the landed estates, we are looking at the largest and most important instances of a phenomenon that must have been much more widespread, even though it does not appear in our sources with such detail. If we follow the assumption that even

²⁷⁴ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 291-292.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 292.

²⁷⁷ This *ribāʿt* was built by Naṣr b. Aḥmad. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, 291.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 343.

though *ribāṭs* are not a specific form of architectural edifice, but rather a function of a place, and that the function *ribāṭs* served was associated with defense of the frontier, we have to consider that many more fortresses in al-Khuttal, a region specifically designated as a region concerned with defending the frontier, would have made a similar conversion from a fortification associated with an estate to a *ribāṭ* as the handful explicitly mentioned.

Another important center of *ribāṭ* construction according to al-Muqaddasī is the region of Isbījāb. This region, mentioned only briefly in earlier texts, makes up the furthest frontiers of Transoxania, north of Farghāna along the Jaxartes. In general, Isbījāb is said to have some 2,700 *ribāṭs*, but al-Muqaddasī also specifically mentions particular *ribāṭs* in both Isbījāb²⁸¹ and in other cities and villages within the region, including Yakānkath, Adhakhkath,²⁸² and Mīrkī.²⁸³ While no specific mosque is mentioned, Jamshalāghū is the place where the military retinues (*al-ḥasham*) repair.²⁸⁴ For most of the region, al-Muqaddasī emphasizes the presence of *ḥuṣūn* rather than *ribāṭs*, including *ḥuṣūn* which are inhabited by *dihqāns*, such as the fortress of Ḥarrān.²⁸⁵ Interestingly, Isbījāb is a region where al-Muqaddasī gives us much information about personal affiliations to *ribāṭs*. In Isbījāb itself, there is the *ribāṭ* of Qarātakīn (d. 317/929), the Sāmānid military commander of Turkish origins who later formed his own principality in Bust and Rukhkhaj.²⁸⁶ Yakānkath is home to the *ribāṭ* and grave of another notable of apparently Turkish origins, Kharākharāf.²⁸⁷ In Mīrkī there is the *ribāṭ* of the *amīr* ‘Amīd

²⁸¹ Ibid., 273.

²⁸² Ibid., 274.

²⁸³ Ibid., 275.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 273.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 275.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 273.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 274.

al-Dawla Fā'iq, the use of the title *'amīd* implies that he was a non-military governor under the Sāmānids.²⁸⁸ These *ribāṭs* attached to specific individuals appear not to be associated with *dihqāns*, *per se*, but rather with individuals attached to the Sāmānid state, but these are but a few of the many fortifications referred to as *ribāṭs* located in and around Isbījāb. Other evidence shows that the region around Isbījāb was going through a process of conversion at roughly this time. Ḥarrān is noted for its largely *kuffār* population, but its ruler, a *dihqān* who resides in the *quhandiz* (which itself is found in a fortress), is a Muslim.²⁸⁹ This is evidence that even though conversion had yet to spread widely throughout the population, the land-owning classes and the local rulers were beginning to engage more closely with the Islamic world.

The appearance of *ribāṭs* in our geographical sources at approximately the same time as mosques is a clue that both structures were becoming increasingly popular at the same time. As mentioned above in the context of mosque construction, this would have been the period in which conversion to Islam became increasingly widespread along the eastern frontier, and the character of its population increasingly Muslim. Khurāsān and, even more so, Transoxania were covered with small fortresses associated with agricultural estates in the pre-Islamic period. What appears to have happened is that as Islam spread throughout the region, the new Islamic practice-tradition of *ribāṭ* fortification²⁹⁰ was overlaid upon an existing tradition of private estate fortifications, giving this traditional practice of the *dihqāns* a level of Islamic identity and acceptance.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 275. On the title “*'amīd*,” see Claude Cahen, “*Amīd*,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

²⁸⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 275.

²⁹⁰ The dating for the first appearance of *ribāṭs* as fortifications is difficult but it had most certainly appeared before the appearance of *ribāṭs* along the eastern frontier, see Chapter Three.

A development such as this works nicely with an understanding of *ribāṭ* as the name of a function which can be placed on a pre-existing edifice.

The question we cannot answer from the information available is whether or not these fortresses actually went through any substantial changes as they became transformed into *ribāṭs*. In Chapter Three we highlighted a handful of *ribāṭs* for the presence of mosques and Islamic shrines on their grounds, as well as a few said to have been funded by *waqf*. In these cases, certain Muslim practices were clearly becoming associated with these fortresses, but this process may also have been connected to the general spread of Islamic practice throughout the region.

The history of the Arab conquests of Khurāsān and Transoxania was such that the majority of the local populations in the region were able to preserve their personal and familial status and property into the Islamic period. This limited the spread of Arab settlement to those areas which had taken on large scale garrisons during the period of conquest itself, most notably Marw and Bukhārā, but even there Arab settlement was primarily concentrated in the city and not in the countryside. Over time, Arabs were able to settle further away from the garrisons, as their presence shifted away from that of a garrison and became more normalized. At the same time, conversion to Islam by local populations gave an Islamic flavor to the eastern frontier region. This process can best be seen in the building of mosques and in the transformation of fortified agricultural estates into *ribāṭs*. Here, we see the eastern frontier behaving like frontiers the world over. The arrival of the Arabs and Islam brought a new cultural and political reality to the region which eventually came to dominate the pre-existing population. Political and economic interests were directed towards new centers and certain cultural practices were changed to

accommodate the new dominant authority. The next chapter will take up this issue of change on the frontier by examining the inclusion of the local Persian population into the politics and culture of the caliphate, culminating in the appearance of the local dynasties which arose out of the old networks of pre-Islamic *dihqāns* in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries.

Chapter 6

The Making of the Muslim Frontier

6.1 Introduction

al-Muqaddasī reports that he once asked a man from Khwārazm why the people of Khwārazm have such oddly-shaped heads. The man replied,

(Our ancestors) would raid (*yaghzūna*) the Turks, and they would have an easy time with them (*yāsarūnahum*). Some of them resembled the Turks¹ and they did not know that, perhaps, they would come to Islam and they would be sold into slavery. So they ordered that their women, when they gave birth, they were to fasten (*yarabaṭūn*) a sack of sand to the heads of the boys on both sides until it flattened the head. After this, they were no longer enslaved and any one of them who was captured was returned to his district.²

In many ways, this short passage, which stands out in al-Muqaddasī's text as a curious piece of information, encapsulates the frontier experience, broadly speaking. The people of Khwārazm, long before the arrival of Islam, had interactions with the Turks along their own frontier. This man from Khwārazm wants to emphasize to al-Muqaddasī that the relationship between the two was appropriately one of the Khwārazmīs attacking and

¹ al-Muqaddasī explained this resemblance earlier when he discussed the original settlement of Khwārazm. The *malik* of al-Mashriq had exiled four hundred men to Khwārazm, specifically the area around Kāth. He gave these exiles four hundred Turkish slave girls (*jāriya*), so the people of Khwārazm are a mix of Persians and Turks. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 3 ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 285.

² *Ibid.*, 285-286.

raiding the Turks, and that they were perfectly able to handle them. Then the Muslims arrived and thought that the Khwārazmīs were Turks themselves; accordingly, they used to enslave them as if they were Turks. The Khwārazmīs responded with a form of pre-modern plastic surgery, altering their appearance so that the Muslims could recognize the difference between them: the good guys who should not be enslaved, and the bad guys who could be enslaved.

The Khwārazmīs in this anecdote are described as engaging with two different frontiers at two different times. First, there is the frontier between the settled populations of Khwārazm and the Turks of the steppes outside the reach of the Oxus, its tributaries, and the networks of irrigation. This frontier appears to be old and well established; raiding across the frontier is described as an activity of the Khwārazmī's ancestors (*qudamā'unā*).³ Second, the Khwārazm-Turkish frontier is then met by the expanding Arab-Muslim frontier during the period of the conquests of Central Asia. As this change occurs, the Khwārazmīs found themselves caught between the Muslims and the Turks. In fact, the Muslims would confuse the Khwārazmīs with the Turks and treat them as Turks by enslaving them, until the Khwārazmīs took actions which separated themselves from the Turks in the eyes of the Muslims, quite literally so by changing their physical appearance. In this anecdote, we see the Arab-Muslim conquests disrupting and complicating a long-standing or matured frontier arrangement, forcing peoples from the frontier region to respond to the Muslim presence by choosing to associate themselves with the Muslim authorities and finding a way to openly display this choice.

The previous chapter focused on the effect that the arrival of the Arabs, in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries, had on Khurāsān and Transoxania. The settling

³ Ibid., 285.

of Arabs and the spread of Islam changed the physical landscape of the eastern frontier. People were displaced and new populations were inserted into certain cities and regions. The urban landscape was altered by the construction of mosques which resulted in a rearrangement of the patterns of urban life, moving the centers of political and economic life into positions of proximity with these mosques.

This chapter will shift the focus toward the way that the arrival of Islam changed the very nature of the eastern frontier. The eastern frontier, as it stood after the arrival of Islam, was geographically not that different from the Sāsānian frontier of Khurāsān and the broader Persianate frontier of Transoxania of earlier centuries, but the meaning of the frontier and the language that was used to describe the frontier and the interactions across the frontier between the settled communities and the Turks of the steppe were altered as the eastern frontier was converted and became a Muslim frontier.

6.2 Maturing Frontiers

Chapter Two addressed a number of approaches to the study of frontiers. This discussion culminated in a definition of frontiers as loosely-organized liminal zones of transition on the periphery of states, where territorial expansion or contraction is possible. As a state expands to a particular and, perhaps, temporary, limit, the newly incorporated territory begins a process of integration and assimilation into the cultural, political, and economic networks of the expanding state. We often see this “frontier process” as primarily affecting the frontier itself, but as Fredrick Jackson Turner and his followers showed, interaction with the frontier often affects the dominant culture of the center as well.⁴

⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Frontier in American History*, 1-38 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953).

Along the eastern frontier of the Islamic world and across the Iranian world more broadly, this process has been discussed by Richard Bulliet in his *Islam: A View from the Edge*.⁵ Here Bulliet has argued that it was not the practices which developed in the political and religious centers of the Islamic world - the Hijaz, Syria, and Iraq - during the first centuries following the rise of Islam which became the dominant expression of Sunni Muslim religious belief, but rather the practices and beliefs which developed over later centuries in Iran, on the edge of the Islamic world. In the aftermath of territorial expansion, a frontier zone or borderland is created in which the new, dominant culture mixes with local cultures and with the culture of those who live immediately beyond the frontier. This interaction changes the character of both the conquerors and the conquered.

In this context, Friedrich Ratzel argued that the border (*Grenzlinie*), as a division between distinctly different entities, running through a frontier zone created by such an expansion was an abstraction of a reality in which there exists a borderland (*Grenzraum*) with varying degrees of association with the dominant political and cultural centers on either side of the frontier.⁶ In Ratzel's model, it is the goal of the expanding power to integrate newly conquered territories along the frontier into the culture and identity of the center. In order for territorial expansion to be successful and long-lasting, those living along the frontier must eventually accept their association with a new political and cultural center. Michael Bonner has outlined such a process of integration of a frontier zone along the Arab-Byzantine frontier, where a specific region of settlement existed behind the militarized frontier, the *'awāšim*.⁷ As the frontiers of the Islamic world had

⁵ Richard Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁶ Friedrich Ratzel, *Politische Geographie*, (Berlin, 1895).

⁷ Michael Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier: Awasim, Thughur, and the Arab Geographers," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 (1994): 17-24.

expanded into Byzantine territory, the *'awāšim* became the zone in which the processes of a maturing frontier changed the character of northern Syria from that of a Byzantine territory to that of a Muslim territory.

This process by which a frontier region becomes increasingly integrated within the culture and identity of its related political center is considered a process of maturing. Conquest and expansion do not happen overnight, nor do conquered territories and their inhabitants necessarily welcome the transformations which come with such a conquest. Over years, decades, or, perhaps, even centuries, acceptance of the new political and cultural alignment which follow a period of conquest increases, while the frontier region becomes increasingly associated with the practices, traditions, and identities of its new center. As the frontier “matures,” it becomes more firmly associated with the political center; meanwhile the territorial changes which created the frontier in the first place acquire a sense of permanence. In the previous chapter, this process of maturing along the eastern frontier became a major theme. As Khurāsān and Transoxania were conquered by the Arabs and integrated into the Islamic world, the attachments of the people living in these regions slowly shifted away from the no longer extant Sāsānian Empire towards that of the Muslim Caliphate.⁸ This transformation was most noticeable on the ground in the spread of mosques and the re-identification of the rural fortresses of the *dihqāns* as *ribāṭs*. Through this process, we see Khurāsān and Transoxania maturing as a Muslim frontier.

On the other hand, the Arab conquest of the Sāsānian Empire during the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries brought the reach of the Muslim world to the

⁸ In parts of Transoxania, this process also disconnected the region from Ta'ng China as well - as was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to certain groups of Soghdian merchants.

limits of an already mature frontier, that of the Persianate world. By conquering the entirety of the Sāsānian Empire⁹ and the neighboring states of Transoxania, the Arabs inherited a mature and complex frontier between the settled societies of Khurāsān and the river valleys of Transoxania and the Turks of the Inner Asian steppes. In the centuries following the conquests, the history of this older incarnation of the frontier became a part of a spreading Persian cultural identity, notably in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, which addresses the conflict across the Oxus between Iranian Khurāsān and Tūrān, the land of the Turks in Transoxania. Just as people living along the eastern frontier converted to Islam in the centuries following the Arab conquests, reaching a majority of the population around the beginning of the fourth/tenth century,¹⁰ the very nature of the frontier itself was similarly transformed. This chapter will focus on the process by which the Persianate side of the frontier, the side of Iran, became transformed into a Muslim frontier and recast the negotiations occurring between the settled Persianate communities and the Turks in terms of Islam against non-Muslims rather than in terms of a conflict between Iran and Tūrān.

6.3 *Dihqāns* as Preservers of Persian Culture and the Creation of a Dual Society

In the previous chapter, an important issue under discussion was the ability of the *dihqāns* to preserve their lands and their positions as tax collectors and local authorities following the Arab conquests. As they continued in these positions, they were likewise able to maintain many aspects of the culture and society of Sāsānian Iran within the territories over which they continued to hold authority. This role of the *dihqāns* is most

⁹ The Oxus had been the traditional boundary of the Sāsānian Empire, though its influence could be seen into parts of Transoxania.

¹⁰ Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). See Chapter Three for a detailed look at the period of conversion in Iran.

often connected to their place as a collective source for the tales which eventually became the *Shāhnāma*. As Richard Bulliet wrote, “By the eleventh/fifth century [the *dihqāns*] were no longer at the peak of the social pyramid except in a sentimental way. Their last important act was the bequeathing to world literature of their epic poetry in the form of Firdausī’s *Shāhnāme*.”¹¹ Throughout a variety of early Islamic sources, the lifestyle of the *dihqāns* continues to be described as if it were still that of the landed gentry of the Sāsānian Empire. For example, al-Jāhīz describes the table manners of the *dihqāns* in favorable contrast with the crude table manners of scoundrels (*shuṭṭār*), in the same terms that he otherwise used for the Sāsānian court.¹² Here we see that al-Jāhīz used the *dihqāns* as an example of proper manners, recognizing that they lived according to different social rules from those of their neighbors.

These descriptions of *dihqāns* and their lifestyle also show signs of interaction between Muslims and the *dihqāns* in which the *dihqāns* treat Muslim rulers in a manner similar to their Sāsānian predecessors. al-Ṭabarī reports that in 120/738 the *dihqāns* of Khurāsān presented gifts to the governor Asad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qasrī on the occasion of the Mazdaean festival of Mihragān in Balkh. These gifts, which included gold and silver models of palaces (*qaṣrān*), pitchers (*abārīq*), and bowls (*ṣiḥāf*) and silk brocade from Marw, Qūhistān, and Heart, were presented to Asad al-Qasrī while he sat before a group of Khurāsānī by the governor of Heart, Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥanafī, and the

¹¹ Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nīshāpūr: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1972), 22.

¹² al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-bukhala’*, ed. G. Van Vloten (Leiden: Brill, 1900), 71. See R.B. Serjeant’s note on the terminology for Sāsānian dining habits in his translation. al-Jāhīz, *The Book of Misers*, trans. R.B. Serjeant, (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1997), 56, n. 263.

dihqān of Herat.¹³ Following the presentation, an unnamed *dihqān* gave a speech praising the pre-Islamic rulers of Iran, who ruled the world for four hundred years, and praised Asad for the noble traits he shared with them.¹⁴ Asad's presence in this narrative is interesting because of his assimilation into the landholding classes of Khurāsān during his tenure as governor. In 106/724-725, Asad founded a village outside Marw known as Asadābādh, which made him essentially an Arab *dihqān*, a petty landholder.¹⁵ Asad and his brother, and fellow governor, Khālīd al-Qasrī, were noted for their close connections to the *dihqāns* of Khurāsān and their use of them as tax collectors and officials.¹⁶ This connection to the *dihqāns* had contributed to questions of Khālīd al-Qasrī's commitment to Islam.¹⁷ Asad, furthermore, is not the only Muslim in this report celebrating a non-Muslim holiday. The key figure among the notables of Khurāsān who presents the gifts to Asad appears to be the governor of Herat, Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥanafī, whose name clearly marks him as a Muslim. Asad al-Qasrī and his connection with the *dihqāns* is an early example of the dual society which developed along the eastern frontier following the arrival of Islam, one in which Islamic and pre-Islamic Persian culture

¹³ The *dihqān* of Herat in this report appears to be named Khurāsān and is likely the owner of the Khurāsānābādh outside of Herat discussed in the previous chapter. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Series II, ed. M.J. De Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1885-1889), 2:1638.

¹⁴ Ibid. 2:1635-1638.

¹⁵ Ibn Khurrādādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 6. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 32; Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī, (Baghdad: Dār al-rashīd li-l-nashr, 1981), 106; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, ed. Muḥammad Jābir 'Abd al-'Āl al-Ḥīnī (Cairo: 1381/1961), 158; Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, (Beirut, 1957), 1:176.

¹⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, "Abd Allah Ibn al-Muqaffa' and the 'Abbasid Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994), 14; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, (Jerusalem, 1993), 6:202.

¹⁷ Arjomand, "Abd Allah Ibn al-Muqaffa' and the 'Abbasid Revolution," 14. These accusations are primarily connected with Khālīd's preference for Christians in Iraq. Khālīd's mother was a Christian and he built a church for her behind the mosque of Kufa. He was given the derogatory *nisba* of Ibn al-Naṣrāniyya. G.R. Hawting, "Khālīd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī," *Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition*.

mixed openly. Gifts were similarly presented by *dihqāns* to Hārūn al-Rashīd while he was traveling from Bayhaq before his death near Ṭūs, at the rural estate of Sanābādh.¹⁸

As an Arab-Muslim elite developed in the large garrisons of Marw and later in the garrisons of Transoxania, primarily Bukhārā and Samarqand, the cultural and religious practices of these Arabs spread among some Persians who converted and attached themselves to the political institutions of their new masters. At the same time, there was always an effort to protect and preserve the local pre-Islamic culture. As preservers of Sāsānian cultural practices and institutions, the *dihqāns* were also valuable advisors to the Arabs who used them to transition into positions of authority within the Persianate world. In the previous chapter, emphasis was placed on the role of the *dihqāns* as tax collectors under the early Arab governors.¹⁹ The reports of *dihqāns* as tax collectors tend to focus on the transitional aspects of their position: how they bridged the gap between the administrative practices of the Sāsānian Empire through the experience of the conquests into a period where taxation and administration along the eastern frontier were dominated by Muslim ideals and, eventually performed by Muslims. Here the *dihqāns* were responsible for the collection of taxes or tribute in the same territories they had administered for the Sāsānians. As Khurāsān and Transoxania became increasingly Muslim, the methods by which taxes were calculated and collected became increasingly based on Muslim notions of appropriate administrative practice.²⁰ The support provided by the *dihqāns* went beyond their positions as tax collectors, Arab governors used them

¹⁸ Ahmad Tafazzoli, "Dehqān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; Tafazzoli cites Ibn Funduq in *Dokumenty s gory Mug*, (Moscow, 1962), 2:47-48.

¹⁹ al-Ṭabarī mentions that the Arabs of Khurāsān would complain that the *dihqāns* held authority over them in matters of tax collection. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*, 2:1029.

²⁰ It is important here to remember the passages from al-Ṭabarī discussed in the previous chapter which highlighted the transition from the collection of tribute on 'ahd lands to the collection of formal taxes on *kharāj* lands. Ibid. 2:1507-1510.

as advisors in a more general sense. Bayhaqī reports that the Umayyad governor of Khurāsān Ziyād b. Abīhi employed three *dihqāns* as advisors, who told him stories of Sāsānian rulers which made Ziyād question the quality of Arab rule.²¹

The connection between Arabs and the *dihqāns* was not always so positive and we often see reports which imply that the title *dihqān* was used as an insult among the Arabs. al-Ṭabarī reports that the governor Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-Ḥārith was called *khudhayna* or the *dihqān*'s wife, on account of the colorful silk robes he and his companions wore and for his long hair.²² The fashion of the *dihqāns*, especially their preference for silk robes, was increasingly seen as un-Islamic and a sign that they were not integrating into the new culture of Khurāsān and Transoxania.²³ When the tax structures of Khurāsān and Transoxania were being changed from one which focused on the collection of tribute by *dihqāns* from *'ahd* lands into one which collected *kharāj* on all lands and *jizya* from non-Muslims, the *dihqāns* who had formerly collected taxes from Muslims in Bukhārā and Samarqand were brought to Marw and ʿUmayra b. Sʿad, who now held authority over them, publically tore their silk robes and tied their belts around their necks.²⁴ This act was clearly meant to insult the public display and abuse of their noble status by damaging the symbol of their status, their distinctive dress, at a time when their actions and authority were coming under question by the Muslims. It is in moments like this that we see a chafing between different elements of the mixed society of the eastern frontier during the early centuries of Muslim rule.

²¹ Bayhaqī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. A. Bahmanyār (Tehran, 1317/1938), 299.

²² al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*, 2:1417-1418.

²³ Richard W. Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran: A Moment in World History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 47-54.

²⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*, 2:1509-1510.

The process by which the eastern frontier developed into a Muslim frontier involved an extended period of interaction between the conquerors and the conquered, during which these two belonged to different cultural spheres. Portions of the local population connected themselves to their conquerors soon after the conquests, but the majority appear to have held onto their pre-Islamic Persian identity, or at least important aspects of it, for centuries following the conquests. This meant that we must think about Khurāsān and Transoxania during the first centuries of Muslim rule as a dual society, one Muslim, including both Arabs and Persian converts,²⁵ and one part Persian. Gradually, elements of these two societies mixed and we can eventually see a single society which is both Muslim and Persian simultaneously, but this process was long and uneven.

6.4 Cotton and Silk

We can confirm existence of such a dual culture throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries by examining the products which our geographical sources list as being exported from Khurāsān and Transoxania. Richard Bulliet has recently made an argument for increased production of cotton throughout Iran and Central Asia during the third/ninth century, connecting it to the spread of Islam in the east and Muslim preferences for cotton and prohibitions against the wearing of silk.²⁶ As a part of this argument, Bulliet has identified a cotton boom in Iran initiated by the migration of Arabs, especially from Yemen, who brought with them the techniques for growing of cotton.

²⁵ The degree to which an individual convert associated themselves with Arab Muslims or changed their own cultural practices to meet the culture of their new religion would vary with each individual. It is quite possible that some Persian converts should be associated more with Persian culture than with Muslim culture.

²⁶ Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*, see Chapter Two for a full discussion of the connection between Islam and cotton.

Bulliet has also argued that, as a part of this process, cities in the east became important producers of cotton cloth, perhaps to the detriment of silk production, with Nīshāpūr emerging as a major center for cotton production. The geographical sources do indeed emphasize the importance of Nīshāpūr as a producer of finished cotton robes.²⁷ However, Bulliet's arguments are based on the professional designations of religious scholars as demonstrated by their *nisbas* in the biographical dictionaries. Through their emphasis, Bulliet's data imply a shift during the third/ninth century away from the silk favored by Persians and prominent in Sāsānian fashions, towards the more austere cotton preferred by Muslims and, especially, Muslim religious scholars, which was only reversed later, in the fourth/tenth century, under the Sāmānids, when Persian styles returned.²⁸ What this focus on the biographies of Muslim religious scholars may not answer is whether or not the production and popularity of silk actually fell while the production of cotton rose. If cotton became more popular among a growing number of Muslims in the east, especially religious scholars, how far was the reach of such a change in the economy of the eastern frontier, and did the increased popularity of cotton necessarily mean that silk fell out of fashion entirely?

Our geographical sources seem to imply that silk production remained steady throughout this period and, in the case of Nīshāpūr, cotton and silk robes are mentioned in the same breath in texts written throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries.²⁹ In fact, you rarely see a reference to Nīshāpūr's cotton production without a matching

²⁷ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 7. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1892), 278; al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 146.

²⁸ Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*, 92.

²⁹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 278; al-Iṣṭakhrī., *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 146; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2, ed. J.H. Kramers, (Leiden: Brill, 1939), 433; *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, ed. Manūchīhr Sutūdhī (Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Danīshgāh-i Tehran, 1340/1962), 89.

reference to its silk production, implying that both were exported throughout the Islamic world. In these paired references, the quality of each is emphasized, as if they are naturally connected. al-Iṣṭakhrī, for example, says that the best quality (*anfas*) robes of cotton and silk are those which come from Nīshāpūr.³⁰ Often the clothing produced in Nīshāpūr is referred to in the generic, without reference to specific materials, as when al-Muqaddasī describes Nīshāpūr's light and radiant clothing (*li-bizzat nūr wā ishrāq*) with which the people of Iraq and Egypt adorn themselves.³¹

What Nīshāpūr exported was primarily finished cloth and garments. The growing of cotton had to take place somewhere outside the city. Our geographical sources provide us with the necessary evidence for cotton production in the rural regions around Nīshāpūr. For example, the *Hudūd al-'ālam* notes that Kurī produces the same kind of cotton Nīshāpūr is best known for, the rough *karbās*.³² So do Būzhagān, Khāymand, Sangān, Salūmidh, and Zūzan, all specifically mentioned as within the borders of Nīshāpūr.³³ The products which are emphasized by our geographical sources tend to concentrate on three categories: cloth, agricultural goods, and the products of mines. In comparison to the larger number of locations which produce agricultural goods, the production of cotton and silk garments appears to focus primarily on larger urban centers rather than the agricultural regions where raw cotton and silk were produced. From this, we can read a division of labor between rural and urban regions along the eastern frontier in which more rural agricultural estates produced raw materials which were then sent to

³⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 158.

³¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 315. Depending upon the reading of the term “*bizza*,” this may be clothing in general or specifically cotton clothing. For the use of “*bazzāz*” as “cotton merchant,” see Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*, 44.

³² *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 91.

³³ *Ibid.*

the larger urban centers to be processed and turned into final products, in this case cloth and robes. Cities like Nīshāpūr were “bellies” that consumed the products of surrounding regions, digested them into finished products, and then shipped these finished products to markets far and near. This creates a mutual dependency between the cities and the agricultural hinterlands where the cities rely on associated districts for raw materials and necessities such as foodstuffs, while the rural districts rely on the larger cities as markets for their goods. al-Muqaddasī clearly describes Nīshāpūr in these terms, as a “belly” with great reach. Beyond the movement of cotton, silk, and finished cloth and clothing, Nīshāpūr imports fruits from the agricultural regions.³⁴ From a broader perspective, Nīshāpūr also is the place where people come to trade, and thereby becomes the *entrepôt* for goods from all the regions of the east, namely Fārs, al-Sind, Kirmān, Khwārm, al-Rayy, and Jurjān.³⁵ Nīshāpūr’s reliance on its agricultural hinterland leaves it susceptible to problems in the rural regions and along the routes which connect them to the city. During al-Muqaddasī’s time, Nīshāpūr appears to be facing such problems as he describes the city as facing excessively high prices and shortages of food and firewood (*khālahā al-ghalā qalīla al-adāmāt wa-l-ḥaṭab*).³⁶ In such a model, it is the demand found at the urban centers, the centers of consumption, production, and trade, which comes to define the goods which have been produced in associated agricultural regions.

The theory of an expansion of cotton production inspired by the arrival of Arabs in Nīshāpūr may be difficult to support, if we consider the strong evidence that Nīshāpūr did not become a center of Arab settlement until late in the Umayyad period, and most likely remained secondary to Marw until the Ṭāhirids made it the capital of Khurāsān in

³⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 315.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid..

the early third/ninth century.³⁷ Bulliet's argument that cotton production increased in and around Nīshāpūr matches the data found in our geographic sources, but it is perhaps not an explosion of Arab settlement which is at its root. The *dihqāns* who acted as headmen over Nīshāpūr in the fourth/tenth century, the Mīkālī family, did not convert to Islam until the Ṭāhirid period.³⁸ They are noted, however, as being among the main cotton dealers³⁹ in the city with a network which extended to Ghazna and with a particular style of boots being named after them.⁴⁰ While there certainly were Muslims involved in the production and trade of cotton cloth in Nīshāpūr, the trade in cotton, and perhaps the production of cotton on the estates of the *dihqāns*, must have also extended to non-Muslims who were looking to increase trade with Baghdad and the central Islamic lands. As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the Arab conquests reconfigured trade patterns in Khurāsān and Transoxania, while the markets of Iraq became an increasingly important destination for goods from the east. This increased dependency on Iraqī markets would have encouraged local producers and merchants to focus on goods with appeal for a Muslim customer base.

Like Nīshāpūr, Marw is noted as a producer and exporter of both cotton and silk.⁴¹ Interestingly, while our sources want to promote Nīshāpūr's textiles as having the finest quality, Marw's textile industries seem to have a greater role in the production of

³⁷ See Parvaneh Pourshariati, "Local Histories of Khurāsān and Patterns of Arab Settlement," *Studia Iranica* 27 (1998), 41-81 and the previous chapter.

³⁸ Margaret Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nīshāpūr," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994), 46. For details on the Mīkālī family, see Bulliet, *Patricians of Nīshāpūr*, 67; C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran, 994-1040*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963), 185; C.E. Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karāmiyyah in Khurasan," *The Muslim World* 50 (1960), 9-10.

³⁹ Here reading "bazzāz" in a manner similar to Bulliet as specifically "cotton dealer." Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate, and Camels in Early Islamic Iran*, 44.

⁴⁰ Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, 185.

⁴¹ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 149.

luxury goods. Marw is described as the origin of Jurjān and Ṭabaristān’s silk industries, with the seed worms coming originally from Marw.⁴² Unlike the rough cotton Nīshāpūr is known for, Marw produces soft cotton (*al-quṭn al-layyin*) which is used for robes around the world.⁴³ No less a fashion setter than the Caliph al-Ma’mūn himself praised the softness of the cotton of Marw.⁴⁴ Marw produces outstanding robes, known as Khurāsānī robes, interestingly giving Marw the “name-brand” of robes of Khurāsān over Nīshāpūr.⁴⁵ The *Ḥudūd al-’ālam* emphasizes that Marw produces not just cotton but two different types of silk, *qazzīn* and *mulḥam*.⁴⁶ When our sources make a direct comparison between Marw and Nīshāpūr, Marw’s cotton and silk come in second, but Marw is acknowledged as surpassing Nīshāpūr in its production of linen.⁴⁷ Marw’s connections to the broader Islamic world as the original Arab garrison following the conquests and the seat of the governor’s of Khurāsān until the rise of the Ṭāhirids makes it a natural site for trade with the Islamic lands to the west. If the Arab conquests and the spread of Islam inspired a cotton boom, its earliest instances would have come from Marw as the center of both Arab and Muslim settlement in the first centuries of Muslim rule.

Other kinds of textiles also seem to originate in areas known for their cotton production, which further supports the idea that cotton was produced in addition to more traditional local goods as a specific export good. Qūhistān, a region regularly noted for its lack of easily accessible water, is said to produce items made of *karābīs* (rough cotton) as well as course wool (*musūh*) and carpets (*nakhākh*), none of them high-class goods (*laysa*

⁴² Ibid.; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, 436.

⁴³ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 149. Ibn Ḥawqal says Marw’s cotton is of the utmost softness and used for robes which are exported around the world. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-ard*, 436.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 5. ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1885), 320.

⁴⁵ al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

⁴⁶ *Ḥudūd al-’ālam*, 94.

⁴⁷ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 158.

bi-hā amti 'a mutarafī 'a).⁴⁸ Herat produces linen which is widely exported,⁴⁹ but also *karbās* cotton.⁵⁰ As our sources move away from the major production and trade centers of Marw and Nīshāpūr, they list a variety of textiles among the goods produced and exported from the eastern frontier. Tālaqān manufactures felt known as Tālaqānī felt.⁵¹ al-Jūrjān exports leather to the rest of Khurāsān.⁵² Most of the people of Dārzanjī are wool merchants (*ṣawwāfūn*) who make clothing (*aksiya*) from the wool.⁵³ As our sources move away from the centers of early Arab settlement and of widespread conversion, goods which dominated the economy of Khurāsān and Transoxania before the arrival of Islam continue to play a large role in local production.

This is not to say that areas with smaller numbers of Muslims did not also engage in cotton production at this time. al-Iṣṭakhrī emphasizes the quality and importance of cotton and other textiles to Transoxania over Khurāsān, saying that “as for clothing, in (Transoxania) robes of cotton are what is best from there, such that they are carried to the ends of the world, and for (the clothing of Transoxania) there are also furs (*al-firā'*), wool (*al-ṣūf*), and camel hair (*awbār*).”⁵⁴ On the one hand, as al-Iṣṭakhrī moves into Transoxania, he finds more evidence of animal-based materials such as, fur and wool, implying either increased access to herding along with farming and/or increased access to trade with the Turks of the steppe. On the other hand, as cotton grew in importance as an export good, the favorable conditions for cotton production along the river valleys of Transoxania, conditions which would allow Transoxania to remain a major cotton

⁴⁸ Ibid., 155. On the translation of *nukhākh*, see al-Hīmī's note, n. 3.

⁴⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 307.

⁵⁰ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 91.

⁵¹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 287.

⁵² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 153.

⁵³ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 283.

⁵⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 161.

producer into the twentieth century, would have led the *dihqāns* of Transoxania to shift their production to meet this growing demand. Isbījāb has a cotton market.⁵⁵ Even areas like Kāth, the capital of the Khwārazm Shāh and largely outside the direct rule of centralized Muslim authorities, produced *karbās* cotton.⁵⁶

The continued importance of both cotton and silk in the cities of the eastern frontier throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries indicates that while the eastern frontier was maturing as a Muslim frontier, its Persian identity remained strong. Groups of people who followed Muslim and Persian styles shared the same geographical space and interacted with each other intensively. Literary evidence, which illustrates the self-image of the ruling classes of the eastern frontier, shows that an effort was in place during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries to fuse these identities. The more successful of the local ruling dynasties of the eastern frontier were those who had most success in attaching themselves to both the Muslim and the Persian elements of the eastern frontier.

6.5 al-Ṭabarī, Bal'amī, Firdawsī, and Muslim-Persian Culture

When Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030) captured Rayy in 420/1029, he asked its Būyid ruler, Majd al-Dawla, “Have you not read the *Shāhnāmāh*, which is the history of the Persians, and the *History* of al-Ṭabarī, which is the history of the Muslims?” Majd al-Dawla replied that he had, and Maḥmūd chastised him: “Your conduct is not that of one who has.”⁵⁷ Maḥmūd was a man of the eastern frontier: a Turk who had served under the Sāmānids as a commander along with his father Sebūktigin who became the ruler of

⁵⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 272.

⁵⁶ *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 122.

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh*, ed. C. Torenberg (Beirut: 1386/1966), 9:371-372.

Khurāsān during the later years of Sāmānid rule, and then the founder of the Ghaznavid Dynasty. During his own reign, Maḥmūd unified Khurāsān and Ghazna under his rule and expanded Ghaznavid territory into Sind and northern Iran. Maḥmūd's question to Majd al-Dawla is likewise rooted in the eastern frontier. He wished to know if Majd al-Dawla was familiar with both the history of the Persians and the history of the Muslims and implied that knowledge of both was a necessary prerequisite for rule.

This connection between Persian and Muslim history had been developing for centuries and was a part of a general fusing of Persian with Muslim culture and identity. Perhaps the best-known piece of evidence for this is al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*. al-Ṭabarī was born in 224 or 225/839, the son of a *dihqān* from Āmul in Ṭabaristān. The income from his family's estates allowed him to study and travel. Still at a relatively young age al-Ṭabarī relocated to Baghdad, having studied in Ṭabaristān, Rayy, Kūfa, al-Baṣra, Egypt, and Syria. In his universal history, al-Ṭabarī attempts to bring together the two sides of his own identity, that of the son of an eastern landholder and that of a religious scholar living in the capital of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. al-Ṭabarī did this by collating the Islamic religious history of the prophets (*al-rusūl*) and the Persian secular history of kings (*al-mulūk*). While this portion of his history only accounts for the first part of his text, while the majority of his work deals with the Islamic world following the Prophet Muḥammad's revelation, these early sections of his text are significant for their attempt to legitimate pre-Islamic Persian history by connecting it to a monotheist prophetic history. As Fred Donner has noted, al-Ṭabarī attempts to create a master narrative of the Muslim community, in order to explain how that community

reached the condition in which it stood during al-Ṭabarī's own lifetime.⁵⁸ This combination indicates that, at least for al-Ṭabarī, the Islamic world was entwined within both these pasts. al-Ṭabarī's history was immediately popular and influential for future historical writing in the Islamic world, finding many imitators among later historians.⁵⁹ The fact that no complete manuscript of the text is extant today is most likely due to its length (the modern edition by M.J. de Goeje and others takes up sixteen volumes).⁶⁰

In 352/963, under the patronage of the Sāmānid *amīr* Manṣūr b. Nūḥ, Abū 'Alī Bal'amī produced an abridged Persian translation of al-Ṭabarī's history. Bal'amī's translation, known as the *Tārīkh-nāma-i Ṭabarī*, "was one of the most popular historical works of the Islamic world, with well over 160 manuscripts extant."⁶¹ At roughly the same time, Manṣūr b. Nūḥ also commissioned a similar translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*.⁶² In both cases, the translator's explicit intent was to make Islam, as both a religion and a cultural heritage, available to Persian speakers and thereby to legitimate Persian rulers, namely the Sāmānids, within a political environment which was increasingly connected with Islam. Both prefaces cite Qur'ān 14:4, "We have never sent a messenger except (that

⁵⁸ Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, (Princeton, 1998), 129.

⁵⁹ B. Radtke, "Towards a Typology of 'Abbasid Universal Chronicles," *Occasional Papers of the School of 'Abbasid Studies* 3 (1990), 14.

⁶⁰ al-Ṭabarī, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1879-1901).

⁶¹ A.C.S. Peacock, "Abū 'Alī Bal'amī's Translation of al-Ṭabarī's *History*," PhD. Diss. (Cambridge University, 2003), 3-4. Peacock notes that only al-Maqrīzī's *Khīṭaṭ* survives in larger numbers with one hundred and seventy extant manuscripts. See Ayman Fuad Sayyid, "Early Methods of Book Composition: al-Maqrīzī's Draft of the *Kitāb al-Khīṭaṭ*" in *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts: Proceedings of the Second Conference of al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 4-5 December 1993*, ed. Y. Dutton, (London, 1995), 95.

⁶² The date of this translation is unknown and the translation was not completed by a single author, but rather by a group of Transoxanian religious scholars. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh-nāmah-i Ṭabarī: gardānīdah-i mansūb bih Bal'amī*, (Tehran: Nashr-i Raw, 1366 [1987]), 1:6.

he spoke) in the language of his people,”⁶³ emphasizing the claim that the translations would make the religious and historical legacy of Islam available to a Persian population increasingly integrated into the Islamic world. Translations such as these expose moments when the Islamic world, previously dominated by Arabs and the Arabic language, began to meld together with the Persian world.

It has been argued that Manṣūr b. Nūḥ intended for these translations to help legitimate his rule in the face of growing rebellion from his governors and military commanders, together with the spread of heterodox Islamic movements throughout the East.⁶⁴ By using al-Ṭabarī’s works this way, Manṣūr b. Nūḥ tried to position himself as a ruler who represented the combined Persian-Muslim culture then developing along the eastern frontier. It has also long been argued that the appearance of these translations marked the beginning of a Persian literary renaissance, and even (in some extreme views) that the appearance of Persian literature under the Sāmānids was anti-Arab in its character and perhaps a form of linguistic or literary *shu’ūbiyya*.⁶⁵ Other scholars, however, have countered or, at least tempered these views. Jan Rypka has called the idea

⁶³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh-nāma-i Ṭabarī gardānīda-i mansūb bih Bal’amī*, 1:2; al-Ṭabarī, *Tarjumah-i tafsīr-i Ṭabarī*, (Tehran, [1960-1965]), 1:5.

⁶⁴ The problem of heterodoxy has often been emphasized over the issues of political legitimation. See Elton Daniel, “Manuscripts and Editions of Bal’amī’s *Tarjumah-i Tārīkh-i Ṭabarī*,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2 (1990); Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography: To the End of the Twelfth Century*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 23-37. Others have emphasized the political instability during the reign of Manṣūr b. Nūḥ, most notably Peacock, “Abū ‘Alī Bal’amī’s Translation of al-Ṭabarī’s *History*,” 17-24. For the political history of Manṣūr b. Nūḥ’s reign, see Luke Treadwell, “The Political History of the Sāmānid State,” PhD Diss. Oxford University (1991).

⁶⁵ For discussions of Persian nationalist sentiments and the idea of a linguistic *shu’ūbiyya*, see Lutz Richter-Bernburg, “Linguistic *Shu’ūbiyya* and the Early Neo-Persian Prose,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974); Gilbert Lazard, “The Rise of the New Persian Language,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 4. *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 606-632; Richard Frye, *Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 60-69, 94-110; S.M. Stern, “Ya’qub the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment,” in *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C.E. Bosworth, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 536-539; Ehsan Yarshater, “Iranian National History,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 3, Part 1, *The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods*, ed. E. Yarshater, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 411.

of a “rebirth” of Persian literature “a fallacy and merely a fictitious invention of later epochs.”⁶⁶ Julie Scott Meisami has argued that large portions of the population in Khurāsān and Transoxania, the *dihqāns* in particular, had little attachment to Arabic culture or society, and that it was within these communities that New Persian developed as both a *lingua franca* and as a literary language.⁶⁷ New Persian, written in Arabic script and incorporating many Arabic loan words, was not invented by writers and translators like Bal’amī, but rather grew during the centuries after the Arab conquests, when the political system in Khurāsān and Transoxania was dominated by Arabs and the Arabic-centered religion of Islam. The New Persian language itself, created from this mingling, is deployed first in projects which seek to connect these two cultures.

It is important to look at these developments in the context of the eastern frontier. The intention of these translation projects was not to separate Persian and Islamic identities, but rather to incorporate the two into a single whole. Much as al-Ṭabarī attempted to situate Persian history within Islamic history, while writing in Arabic, the translation projects under the patronage of Manṣūr b. Nūḥ showed that the combining of Persian and Islamic identities was not limited to Arabized Persians living in Iraq, but was also of interest to Persians living along the eastern frontier, where Persian rulers, such as the Sāmānids, have often been portrayed as more akin to their Sāsānian predecessors than their Muslim contemporaries.

Meanwhile, more specifically Persian genres were also being produced during the fourth/tenth century. Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma* and other works devoted to the pre-Islamic history of the Persian world are often seen as at odds with the Islamic character of other

⁶⁶ Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), 130.

⁶⁷ Julie Scott Meisami, “The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia,” *Poetics Today* 14 (1993), 249.

texts produced at the same time, and many scholars have understood them as representing an Iranian nationalism.⁶⁸ In response, Julie Scott Meisami has noted that despite its focus on pre-Islamic themes and its contrast to works of purely Islamic history written in Persian, such as Bayhaqī's *Tārīkh-i Ma'sūd-i*,⁶⁹ the *Shāhnāma* has a "clear Islamic tone," which is "seen especially in meditations on worldly transience and on divine omniscience as contrasted to human ignorance."⁷⁰ Texts like the *Shāhnāma* do not stand in opposition to Islamic culture or Arab culture, for which we might see Islam standing as a proxy in the early centuries of Muslim rule, even though they do promote a specifically Persian history. As C.E. Bosworth has argued,

On the intellectual plane, much of the Persian epic and the lore concerning the Persian emperors had, by the ninth and tenth centuries, been absorbed into the common fabric of Islamic civilization, especially when the Persian-inspired literary genre of *adab* and its principal exponents, the secretary class, had been accepted into the cosmopolitan society of the Abbasid Caliphate.⁷¹

As Persian culture became increasingly influenced by Islam, Islamic civilization also became increasingly tolerant towards Persian elements. There may have been an agenda behind the employment of pre-Islamic Persian history during the fourth/tenth century, but it was not necessarily in opposition to Islam. We will return to this matter shortly.

6.6 Muslim and Persian Genealogies and Legitimation on the Eastern Frontier

Ṭāhir has left us three marvels, which put everyone's wits into a whirl.

⁶⁸ See foot note 65 above.

⁶⁹ Meisami notes that while both texts focus on "the problem of the transfer of power, the criteria for legitimate rule, and relation between kingship and virtue," Firdawsī emphasizes political legitimacy through genealogical legitimacy while Bayhaqī emphasizes the divinely ordained nature of history. Meisami, "The Past in Service of the Present," 272.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁷¹ C.E. Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past," *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978), 16.

Three wretched ones, with a common father and mother, but with distinguishing features
to set each one apart.

One group says, “My people is Quraish”; but both the clients and those of pure blood
refute this.

Another group traces its genealogy to Khuzā’a, [although this is] a clientship old and well
known.

A third group inclines towards the house of Kisrā, but these are considered to be vile
foreigners.

We have been overwhelmed by the numbers of their genealogies; whereas, in fact, all are
equally spurious.⁷²

As the *dihqāns* preserved pre-Islamic Persian culture into the Islamic era, together with their own positions of authority, they were also interested in preserving personal, individual genealogical connections to the pre-Islamic past. This is most noticeable in the efforts taken by notable Persians of the early Islamic era to establish lineages connecting them to important figures of the pre-Islamic past. At the same time that pre-Islamic lineages were being deployed to legitimate authority, the most successful local rulers along the eastern frontier managed to combine a pre-Islamic lineage with an Islamic one, often in terms of clientage and meritorious service to Muslim rulers. In this way they showed they held their positions of authority through a combination of the two dominant groups of the frontier.

Much like the narratives of the conquests discussed in the previous chapter, these lineages were often connected to reaffirming particular positions of authority, especially in periods of conflict. A clear example of this is found in the following. In 346/957, Abū

⁷² Verses by Di‘bil b. ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī (d. 248/860), written at the death of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn. Di‘bil b. ‘Alī, *Di‘bil b. ‘Alī, the Life and Writings of an early ‘Abbāsīd Poet*, ed. and tr. L. Zolondek, (Lexington, 1961), 74-75, 118.

Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ṭūsī commissioned his vizier Abū Manṣūr Maʿmārī to compile a *Shāhnāma* in prose.⁷³ In the preface, Maʿmārī included a genealogy of his patron and of himself, both of which led back to the Kanārang (“Lord of the Eastern March”) under the Sāsānian Shāhanshāh Khusraw II.⁷⁴ Through this lineage, Abū Manṣūr Ṭūsī claims the rights to rule both Ṭūs, which had been given to the Kanārang by Khusraw II,⁷⁵ and Nīshāpūr, which Ibn ʿĀmir gave to the Kanārang when he and his son negotiated the surrender of the city’s *quhandiz*.⁷⁶ Through a single genealogy, Abū Manṣūr thus legitimated himself as both a Persian and a Muslim ruler.

An examination of the situation of Abū Manṣūr Ṭūsī at this time shows that such a lineage was meant to clarify contemporary political conflicts over the rightful governorship of Ṭūs. The preface concludes with a notice that control of Ṭūs had fallen out of the hands of the descendents of the Kanārang when the city was taken by the ʿAbbāsīd governor of Khurāsān Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭaba al-Ṭāʿī (r. 152-159/769-775), but that Abū Manṣūr then recaptured it.⁷⁷ Abū Manṣūr, noted at the beginning of his career as a *dihqān* of Ṭūs, had first retaken control of Ṭūs as the deputy of the Sāmānid governor of Khurāsān Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Muẓaffar Chaghānī sometime after 329/940. He was eventually put in charge of Nīshāpūr as well in 334/945 while Abū ʿAlī was on campaign. When the Sāmānid Amīr Nūḥ b. Naṣr (r. 331-343/943-954) replaced Abū ʿAlī as governor of Khurāsān with the Turkish military commander Abū Ishāq Sīmǰūrī in 335/946-947, Abū Manṣūr joined Abū ʿAlī in rebelling against the Sāmānids

⁷³ Only the preface has survived, which has been translated by Vladimir Minorsky. Vladimir Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the *Shāh-Nāma*,” in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della vida*, (Rome: Istituto per l’Oriente, 1956), 2:159-179.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 175-177.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

and fled to the Būyid court in Rayy, where he held a number of governorships for the Būyids, most importantly in Azerbaijan. In 339/950-951, Abū Manṣūr received a pardon from Nūḥ and returned to Ṭūs and was eventually made governor of Khurāsān only to be replaced by the Turkish commander, and founder of the Ghaznavids, Alptigīn in 349/961. Following this, Abū Manṣūr returned to the Būyids in Rayy, where he was poisoned by his physician who may have been bribed by the local ruler of Vushmagīr in 350/962.⁷⁸ The writing of the prose *Shāhnāma* with its genealogy of Abū Manṣūr came in the period between his return to Ṭūs in 339/950-951 and his eventual return to the Būyids in Rayy after being ousted by Alptigīn a decade later. This was a period in which his connection to the ancestral lands the prose *Shāhnāma* claimed for him was in flux. As several analysts of the preface to the prose *Shāhnāma* have noted, the effort of writing this work was directed at solidifying Abū Manṣūr's claims to Ṭūs, in the language of pre-Islamic Persianate culture.⁷⁹

The genealogies of Abū Manṣūr and his vizier go beyond the Kanārang and include a number of military commanders and heroes, down to a son of Jamshīd.⁸⁰ Genealogies such as these glorified the author or patron who was connected to important pre-Islamic figures, but these genealogies were often seen as blatant fabrications intended to increase the status of an individual or his family. Abū Manṣūr's near contemporary, al-Bīrūnī, used Abū Manṣūr as an example of the widespread practice “to invent laudatory stories, and to forge genealogies which go back to glorious ancestors.”⁸¹ Instead, it is

⁷⁸ For the career of Abū Manṣūr, see Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the *Shāh-Nāma*,” 164-166; Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, “Abū Manṣūr ‘Abd al-Razzāq,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 20. For the revolt of Abū ‘Alī, see Luke Treadwell, “The Political History of the Sāmānid State,” 190, 212-220.

⁷⁹ See Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the *Shāh-Nāma*,” Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 20-23.

⁸⁰ Minorsky, “The Older Preface to the *Shāh-Nāma*,” Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 21.

⁸¹ al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. C.E. Sachau, (London: W.H. Allen, 1879), 44-51.

often the service of an individual ancestor to Muslim rulers which truly define their descendents' claims to authority. While Ṭūs is clearly presented as Abū Maṣṣūr's hereditary right, and while it appears that despite his loss of authority over the region he continued to maintain his personal property rights, it is Ibn 'Āmir's reconfirmation of the Kanārang's right to Ṭūs and Nīshāpūr that carries the family's authority beyond the Sāsānian period and into the Muslim era.

Abū Maṣṣūr is but one example of this practice of creating genealogies which reinforce particular rights to rule. The independent eastern dynasties all attempted to connect themselves to a notable pre-Islamic lineage, but they only succeeded in gaining power by connecting themselves to notable figures of Islamic history. In the previous chapter, the importance of maintaining the family status of notable Persians was emphasized in the immediate aftermath of the conquests. *Dihqāns*, *marzbāns*, and others who held titles and authority under the Sāsānians or who ruled independent principalities on the fringes of Khurāsān and Transoxania used treaties of *ṣulḥ* to preserve their own and their families' status, often on a very local scale. This is the experience we see with Abū Maṣṣūr's ancestor, the Kanārang. As we go further away from the immediate aftermath of the conquests and we examine the claims of rulers who rose to positions of prominence over entire provinces, the connections made with pre-Islamic Persian notables become grander. The Ṭāhirids claimed descent from the epic hero of the *Shāhnāma*, Rostam b. Dāstan.⁸² As C.E. Bosworth mentions, the Ṭāhirids were highly Arabized and generous patrons of Arabic learning and literature, almost every member of

⁸² al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, ed. M.J. deGoeje, (Leiden: Brill, 1894), 347.

the dynasty was noted as being a competent poet and/or prose stylist in Arabic.⁸³ Even though the Ṭāhirids were so closely connected to Arab culture, a lineage to Persian heroes and kings was an important part of their legitimation, and their courtly life focused largely on the Persian social networks of Nīshāpūr, among whom such claims held greater importance.⁸⁴ Contemporaries may have seen the claims of the Ṭāhirids to descent from Rustam as fantastic,⁸⁵ but similar claims by the Sāmānids appear to have been universally accepted. The patriarch of the Sāmānid dynasty, Sāmān-Khudā was a *dihqān* from the area of Balkh and a descendent of Bahrām Chūbīn, a member of the Mihrān family⁸⁶ who led a revolt against the Shāhanshāh Hormizd IV in 589 and ruled Iran for a little more than a year as Bahrām VI before being ousted by Khusraw II. Sāmān-Khudā's genealogy was known by his contemporaries and the Sāmānid dynasty's claim to descent from Bahrām Chūbīn appears to be widely accepted by later writers.⁸⁷ In both of these cases, while a genealogy which connected the Ṭāhirids or the Sāmānids to the heroes and kings of pre-Islamic Iran helped solidify their positions of power over the regions they ruled, these were not necessarily the means by which they achieved their positions of power. Rather, they did this through connections to prominent Arab families following the conquests and, later, connections to the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs.

⁸³ See C.E. Bosworth, "The Tahirids and Arabic Culture," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 14 (1969), 45-79. On an example of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's prose talents, see C.E. Bosworth, "An Early Arabic Mirror for Princes: Ṭāhir Dhū l-Yamīnain's Epistle to his Son Abdallāh (206/821)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970), 25-41. Ṭāhir's epistle appears in al-Ṭabarī in the narrative of 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir's appointment to the governorship of al-Raqqā and Syria, al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, X:XXX.

⁸⁴ Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran," 17.

⁸⁵ Dī'bil b. 'Alī al-Khuzā'ī's poem quoted above is certainly evidence of such, but others defended these Ṭāhirid claims. 'Allān b. al-Ḥasan al-Warrāq praised 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir's noble heritage, writing, "['Abd Allāh is] a descendant of Rustam, in the zenith of nobility, adorned with a diadem and a crown." Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā ma'rifat al-adīb [Mu'jam al-udabā']*, ed. I. 'Abbas (Beirut, 1993), 5:68.

⁸⁶ One of the five great houses under the Arsacids who ruled Iran from 250BC to 226AD.

⁸⁷ Vasily Vladimirovich Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed., ed. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, (1968; repr., New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pub., 1992), 209; Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran," 21.

The Ṭāhirids first enter our historical sources with Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's grandfather, a Persian named Ruzayq. Ruzayq was a *mawlā* or client of Ṭalḥa b. 'Abd Allāh al-Khuzā'ī, the governor of Sīstān in 62-64/681-684. It is from this connection of clientship that the Ṭāhirids are sometimes noted as taking the *nisba* of al-Khuzā'ī for themselves, despite being of Persian ancestry.⁸⁸ This connection between the Ṭāhirids and the Khuzā'īs gave the descendents of Ruzayq their first positions of power in Islamic Khurāsān. Muṣ'ab b. Ruzayq served as the secretary of the 'Abbāsīd *dā'ī* Sulaymān b. Kathīr al-Khuzā'ī, which ingratiated him into the 'Abbāsīd fold, eventually leading to governorships over Būshang, which al-Ya'qūbī notes is the birthplace of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn,⁸⁹ and Herat. The fortunes of the Ṭāhirids spread as Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn attached himself to the court of al-Ma'mūn. In 194/810, Ṭāhir supported al-Ma'mūn, in the service of Harthama b. A'yān, against the rebel Rāfi' b. al-Layth. He later led al-Ma'mūn's armies against his brother al-Amīn, whom Ṭāhir captured and executed in Baghdad. It was in return for these services that Ṭāhir was first made governor of the western provinces, establishing his capital in al-Raḡqa, and the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* in Baghdad before being given the governorship of Khurāsān in 205/821. These positions, which became hereditary among Ṭāhir's family, were earned through service and clientage to the 'Abbāsīds that served to legitimate their rule.⁹⁰

Similarly, the earliest appearance of the Sāmānids in our historical sources has Sāmān-Khudā attaching himself to the Arab governor of Khurāsān Asad b. 'Abd Allāh

⁸⁸ C.E. Bosworth, "The Tahirids and Arabic Culture," 47-48. Bosworth notes that many early scholars were confused by the Ṭāhirids use of the al-Khuzā'ī *nisba* and believed they were in fact Persianized Arabs rather than Arabized Persians. See E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, (London and Cambridge, 1902-1924), 1:346 and B. Spuler, *Iran in früh-islamischer Zeit*, (Wiesbaden, 1952), 59.

⁸⁹ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 280.

⁹⁰ In some cases, they were also looked on with suspicion. Especially in the case of the execution of al-Amīn, which caused some to think that Ṭāhir had overstepped boundaries. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk*, X:XXX.

al-Qasrī, for whom he names his son Asad.⁹¹ We can imagine Sāmān-Khudā participating in the Mihragān festivities in honor of Asad al-Qasrī discussed earlier in this chapter. While little is known of the remainder of Sāmān-Khudā's career, or that of his son Asad, his four grandsons, Aḥmad, Ilyās, Nūḥ, and Yaḥyā b. Asad, establish the Sāmānid dynasty as the dominant power in Khurāsān and Transoxania. In 204/829, the governor of Khurāsān, Ghassān b. 'Abbād, appointed these four brothers to the governorships of Farghāna, Herat,⁹² Samarqand, and al-Shāsh respectively. In return, Ghassān demanded the Sāmānid brothers' support for al-Ma'mūn against the rebel Rāfi' b. al-Layth.⁹³ In their opposition to Rāfi', we see the first connection between the careers of both the Ṭāhirids and the Sāmānids. After Ghassān was replaced by Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn as governor of Khurāsān, the Sāmānids retained their administrative positions and, eventually became virtual rulers over Transoxania as vassals of the Ṭāhirids, until the Ṣaffārids brought an end to Ṭāhirid rule in Khurāsān, at which point the Sāmānids received official investitures for the governorship of Transoxania.

This coming together of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids in support of al-Ma'mūn against Rāfi' b. al-Layth is an important moment in the transition of the eastern frontier. Rāfi' was the grandson of the last Umayyad governor of Khurāsān Naṣr b. Sayyār. His revolt began in Samarqand in 190/806 in opposition to the 'Abbāsīd governor of Khurāsān, 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān, and centered on accusations that Ibn Māhān was exploiting the population of Transoxania financially. Rāfi' mobilized support from the local Persian population while gaining assistance from the Toghuz-Ghuz and Qarluq

⁹¹ Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 209.

⁹² In chapter four, on the basis of numismatic evidence and material from the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, Ilyās's governorship over Herat was put into question.

⁹³ R.N. Frye, "The Sāmānids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 136.

Turks. Hārūn al-Rashīd had traveled to Khurāsān to take command personally of the forces against Rāfi' when he died in 193/809. It was shortly after al-Rashīd's death that Rāfi' surrendered to al-Ma'mūn, then governor of the east.⁹⁴ In their support for the 'Abbāsids against Rāfi', the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids sided with the Caliphate against an uprising that appears to have been largely supported by their Persian compatriots. In return, al-Ma'mūn brought these Persian families into the 'Abbāsīd fold; eventually they would rise to the highest rank seen by Persians since the collapse of the Sāsānian Empire a century and a half earlier.

Maintaining genealogical connections between important families of the eastern frontier and their pre-Islamic ancestors was an important element in legitimating their authority, but it was not the means by which they gained that authority. The Persian families which rose to the highest rungs of the political and social ladder during the Islamic period were those who simultaneously fostered connections to the Islamic world. As Richard Bulliet argued regarding the Maḥmī family of Nīshāpūr - a family of *dihqāns* whose ancestors included a (most likely illegitimate) child of Sa'īd b. 'Uthmān b. 'Affān governor of Khurāsān for a brief time in 56/676, "the combination of dihqān status and caliphal descent had produced in the course of intervening generations an elevation of the family to the highest ranks of the patriciate."⁹⁵ As the eastern frontier matured and the dual cultures found in Khurāsān and Transoxania merged, connections to the old Persian nobility became, in practice, less important than connections to the new Muslim rulers, but these pre-Islamic genealogies still mattered when negotiating positions on the local level, among other Persians. If we look at the picture of the eastern frontier in our

⁹⁴ C.E. Bosworth, "Rāfi' b. al-Layth b. Naṣr b. Sayyār," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*.

⁹⁵ Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nīshāpūr*, 89.

medieval geographical sources, we see that it is those Persian families which fostered such a connection with important figures of the early Islamic community who are portrayed as the ones who build the frontier and who shaped the region physically.

6.7 The Builders of the Frontier

If we look for the ways in which our geographical sources represent the actual physical formation, the building in a literal sense, of the eastern frontier, we find that they follow a trend similar to what we saw in their representation of the spread of Islam. Our earlier sources focus on pre-Islamic precedents and it is only later, as Islam becomes a more important part of life on the eastern frontier that the actual shaping of Khurāsān and Transoxania is attributed to figures of the Islamic era. Most interesting in this development, however, is that the figures who do appear represent the transitions which are happening more broadly within the society of the region. These are a combination of notable Persians who have risen to prominence in the service of the ‘Abbāsids. The most noticeable exceptions are figures who act as facilitators of this transition, especially the caliph al-Ma’mūn.

In the earliest geographical texts, major construction projects are almost exclusively assigned to pre-Islamic rulers. Many of these reports, tying pre-Islamic figures to building projects, have a legendary feel to them. Ibn Khurradādhbih emphasizes the reach of the Sāsānians as builders, describing Khusraw I as the founder of Farghāna, which was then called Azharkhāna because people came there to settle from every city (*az har khāna*).⁹⁶ In fact, however, Sāsānian rule never extended into Transoxania, which means that Khusraw could not have founded any cities in Farghāna.

⁹⁶ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 30.

More believable is Ibn al-Faqīh's crediting the foundation of Marw al-Rūdh to Khusraw I.⁹⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh, with his broad interest in issues of *adab* and in various traditions connected to different places, begins to incorporate large numbers of reports about the foundation of important cities. He reports that Ardashīr settled Nabateans in Marw after he became impressed by their skill with camels.⁹⁸ Ibn al-Faqīh is especially interested in reports which connect Alexander the Great to building projects, identifying him as the founder of both Balkh⁹⁹ and Samarqand.¹⁰⁰

The one set of traditions which first appear in Ibn al-Faqīh and which then appear regularly in later geographic texts are those connected to the foundation of the *quhandiz* of Marw. As discussed in Chapter Three, Ibn al-Faqīh, al-Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Muqaddasī and the *Hudūd al-'ālam* all report that the *quhandiz* of Marw was built by the legendary king Tahūmarth.¹⁰¹ We also discussed the variant of this report found in the Balkhī School, crediting Alexander with the construction of Marw itself.¹⁰² In many ways, this identification of both Tahūmarth and Alexander as founders of the city which would become the earliest center of Muslim rule in Khurāsān mirrors the dual nature of the eastern frontier itself. By presenting both a Persian king and a king claimed for the Muslim heritage through his appearance in the Qur'ān, Marw gains significance as both a Persian and a Muslim site long before the arrival of the Arab conquests.

⁹⁷ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 319.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 320.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 325.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 319; al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 434; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298; *Hudūd al-'ālam*, 94. The reports of Ibn al-Faqīh and al-Muqaddasī center on praise for Tahūmarth's ability to build the *quhandiz* while only spending one thousand *dirhams*, by providing food and goods to his workers at the cost of their daily pay.

¹⁰² al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 434; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 298.

As our geographical sources begin to focus on Khurāsān and Transoxania during the Islamic era, their interest falls on Persian converts who were involved in important construction projects. They largely ignore projects which occurred as part of the Arab conquests: it is only in passing that individuals from before the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution are associated with construction projects, and more often than not this is only in situations where they have lent their name to a particular place, such as Qaṣr al-Aḥnaf b. Qays or Asadābādh. In this way the conquests are not presented as a physically transformative experience; instead, it is the rise of Persian converts to important positions of power that transforms the region.

One of the most notable groups of builders and shapers of the eastern frontier in our geographic sources, the Barmakid family, first appear as the custodians of a pre-Islamic Buddhist edifice. Their connection to the Nawbahār Buddhist shrine near Balkh is first noted by al-Ya‘qūbī.¹⁰³ Ibn al-Faqīh provides the most detailed description of Nawbahār and the Barmakids role as the custodians of the temple. He describes the Nawbahār and its role in pre-Islamic Khurāsān as a site of pilgrimage, attracting patronage from the kings of China and Kābul, and the Barmakids’ as the custodians of the temple. This leads directly into the story of the conversion of Barmak Abū Khālid ‘Abd Allāh b. Barmak to Islam by the Caliph ‘Uthmān.¹⁰⁴ This tale, as found in Ibn al-Faqīh, is likely apocryphal, involving a trip by Barmak to Mecca where he sees the truth of Islam and then returns to Balkh where people try to force him into apostasy. But in any case, this family’s conversion is crucial for their presentation as builders of the eastern frontier, connecting the region’s pre-Islamic and Islamic histories. It is interesting to note

¹⁰³ al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 288.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 322-324.

that before presenting the story of the Barmakids conversion, Ibn al-Faḳīh begins his chapter on Khurāsān with lavish praise for the family, saying that no Khurāsānī matches their greatness. They are described as the gateway to authority, with no one coming close to the *sulṭān* who is not already close to the Barmakids.¹⁰⁵ This representation of the Barmakids takes them from their pre-Islamic history as the custodians of a Buddhist shrine directly into their central role in the Muslim history of Khurāsān and Transoxania, as conquerors and builders along the eastern frontier. According to al-Yaʿqūbī, Ghūrawand was conquered during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd by al-Faḳl b. Yaḥya b. Khālid b. Barmak.¹⁰⁶ al-Yaʿqūbī later elaborates on the conquest of Ghūrawand, first in the context of the conversion of the *shīr* of al-Bāmiyān, who participates in these conquests,¹⁰⁷ and second in the context of al-Faḳl's leading a number of *dihqāns* on expeditions against the territory of the Kābul Shāh, culminating in the destruction of many idols.¹⁰⁸ In al-Yaʿqūbī's text, the Barmakid family begins as the keepers of a Buddhist temple near Balkh, and later become involved in the conversion of local people to Islam; finally, they lead an army of Persian nobles, including those in whose conversion they have personally been involved, against the Kābul Shāh in the name of the Caliphate. The Barmakid family is transformed from Buddhist authorities to Muslim authorities and, in the process, become major shapers of the region. Returning to Chapter One and the discussion of the building of the "Gate of Iron" at al-Rāsht, in most of the versions of the construction of this gate, it is al-Faḳl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakid who builds

¹⁰⁵ Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 317. These praises are of course nostalgically hyperbolic, seeing that the Barmakid family had been purged by Hārūn al-Rashīd and Jaʿfar, al-Faḳl, and their father Yaḥyā had all been killed or died in prison a century before Ibn al-Faḳīh had composed his book.

¹⁰⁶ al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 288-289.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

this barrier between the lands of the Islam and the Turks.¹⁰⁹ Not only is al-Faḍl the figure who expands the frontier into Ghūrawand and the territory of the Kābul Shāh, he physically marks the extent of the frontier.

Interestingly, these reports of the Barmakid family focus on the earlier texts, Ibn Khurradādhbih, al-Ya'qūbī, and Ibn al-Faqīh. In the Balkhī tradition of geographical writing, the Barmakids are less present. Here the Nawbahār is presented as an important landmark, not through direct descriptions of the temple but rather through its appearance in the names of gates and roads.¹¹⁰ By the time of the *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, the Nawbahār remains an important part of the landscape of Balkh, but the Barmakids are left out of its description. Instead, the Nawbahār is remembered as the buildings of the Sāsānians, who once resided in Balkh, and as a place filled with paintings and other wonderful works (*kārkird*).¹¹¹ Even in the descriptions of the “Gate of Iron” at al-Rāsht, after Ibn al-Faqīh the matter of its foundation is ignored by geographical writers. In our geographical sources, the role of the Barmakids as shapers of the frontier appears to be most important in the third/ninth century, at the point when Persian converts are coming into their own as governors and as founders of provincial dynasties. In these earlier texts, the Barmakids are offered as a template for the role that Persian converts can play in shaping the Islamic world. It is interesting to note, in this context, here the tragic story of the Barmakids’ downfall is never discussed.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 34; Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 324-325.

¹¹⁰ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 155; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣurat al-arḍ*, 447; al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 278, 280, 302 n.d.

¹¹¹ *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 99.

¹¹² That is not to say that the fall of the Barmakids was not an important story which circulated amongst the Persians of the eastern frontier. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* includes the betrayal of the Barmakids by Hārūn al-Rashīd amongst the many reasons Ya'qūb b. al-Layth refused to fully trust the 'Abbāsids. Similarly, the fall of Abū Muslim is never discussed, even though he is similarly promoted as a figure who shaped Khurāsān

In later texts of the Balkhī School, the Barmakids are replaced by Abū Muslim as an important builder. While al-Faḍl al-Barmakid is associated, as a builder, directly with the frontier itself, expanding it and building walls and gates, Abū Muslim transforms the center of Muslim Khurāsān in Marw. The role of Khurāsān in the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution is a part of the descriptions of the region, beginning with Ibn al-Faqīh who highlights its role as the home of the ‘Abbāsīd *da’wa* and the starting point of the revolution.¹¹³ al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal both make the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution a part of their descriptions of Marw, making special mention of the home of Abū al-Najm, where the first black robes of the ‘Abbāsīds were dyed.¹¹⁴ As described in the previous chapter, both al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal discuss how Abū Muslim reconfigured Marw following the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution, building a new congregational mosque along the Mājān Canal and then relocating the city’s markets and the governor’s palace into the same neighborhood.¹¹⁵ Instead of expanding or fortifying the frontier, Abū Muslim is a builder in these texts who changes the fabric of Khurāsān, altering urban patterns to fit those of an Islamic city focused on the congregational mosque.

The one figure who appears to build both in the urban center of Khurāsān and along the frontier is the Caliph al-Ma’mūn, whose construction projects include both urban renovations and the building of fortresses and gates. In al-Jurjānīyya, al-Ma’mūn built the fortress (*qaṣr*) Bāb al-Ḥujjāj, and his son ‘Alī built another fortress nearby.¹¹⁶

On the extreme frontiers of Islamic world, in Ghazna, al-Ma’mūn is said to have built the

and Transoxania through the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution and his later governorship. Ya’qūb b. al-Layth used Abū Muslim’s tale as another caution against the betrayals of the ‘Abbāsīds.

¹¹³ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 315.

¹¹⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī notes that the dome of Abū Najm, which was also painted black in honor of the ‘Abbāsīds, was still standing in his day. al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 148, 149; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 436.

¹¹⁵ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 147; Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 434.

¹¹⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 288.

Dar-i Tāziyān or “The Gate of the Arabs” through which caravans go out.¹¹⁷ It is al-Ma’mūn’s connections with Marw that often seem incredible. al-Ya’qūbī credits al-Ma’mūn as the first ruler to make Marw the capital of Khurāsān,¹¹⁸ whereas it was actually during al-Ma’mūn’s reign that Marw ceased being the capital of Khurāsān as the Ṭāhirids moved their capital to Nīshāpūr. al-Muqaddasī comes closer to this reality in showing al-Ma’mūn as a destroyer rather than a builder. al-Muqaddasī tells of a woman who told al-Ma’mūn to leave Marw and its villages because he had destroyed the city, and no one could reside in Marw without the consent of its people.¹¹⁹ al-Ma’mūn’s role as a builder along the eastern frontier is important in the context of his role as the caliph who oversaw the rise of the Ṭāhirids and the Sāmānids. It was during al-Ma’mūn’s reign, through his victory over al-Amīn, that these Persian dynasties expanded their authority. In these ways, al-Ma’mūn shaped Khurāsān and Transoxania.

The presentation of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids as builders along the eastern frontier in our geographical sources is interesting in that these dynasties, despite their being largely contemporary with our sources, are assigned less importance than the older builders just described. For the Ṭāhirids, focus is placed on the transformation of Nīshāpūr into the new capital of Khurāsān. al-Ya’qūbī connects ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir directly with the renovation and expansion of Nīshāpūr. He is noted as the governor who moved the capital from Marw to Nīshāpūr and as the builder of a splendid edifice known as al-Shādhīyākh and a minaret.¹²⁰ Despite his being the third Ṭāhirid governor of Khurāsān, ‘Abd Allāh is represented in multiple facets throughout our geographical

¹¹⁷ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 105.

¹¹⁸ al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 279.

¹¹⁹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 299.

¹²⁰ al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 278.

sources as the key figure of the Ṭāhirid dynasty, and not only as a builder. The listings of *kharāj* revenues in the Iraqī School texts all provide them for ‘Abd Allāh’s reign.¹²¹ Here ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir is also described as a generous benefactor, giving away a million *dinārs*, by which he is compared with ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak in generosity.¹²² In this, the Ṭāhirids are not presented so much as builders as reformers who altered the center of authority in Khurāsān and set the standard by which the lands of the region would be regulated and taxed.

These geographical writers also seem to downplay the contributions of the Sāmānids as builders. In our earliest sources this is not surprising, since the Sāmānid enterprise was then still in its infancy. In Ibn Khurradādhbih, the Sāmānids appear as village headmen. While providing the details of the *kharāj* for Khurāsān during the reign of ‘Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, Ibn Khurradādhbih states that al-Sughd is better known as the district of the Sāmānid Nūḥ b. Asad.¹²³ In later texts, their contributions are still observably few. When al-Muqaddasī describes Naṣrābādh in Farghāna, he says a king built it for his son, Naṣr, and named it for him.¹²⁴ In the previous chapter, we speculated that this king was the Sāmānid Aḥmad b. Asad, who had been governor of Farghāna from 204/819, and that the son was Naṣr b. Aḥmad, the first Sāmānid *amīr* to rule over all of Transoxania. We know from other references that this would have been close to Naṣr b. Aḥmad’s birthplace, which the *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam* tells us was Khatlām in Farghāna.¹²⁵ Even though al-Muqaddasī takes pains to praise the Sāmānids, here he does not take the

¹²¹ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 34-39; Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 328-329. In a more generalized sense, al-Ya’qūbī describes the Ṭāhirids as reformers of the system by which *kharāj* was calculated. al-Ya’qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 308.

¹²² Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 317.

¹²³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik*, 38.

¹²⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 271.

¹²⁵ *Ḥudūd al-‘ālam*, 114.

opportunity to praise them as builders, except indirectly. Only one building is directly associated with a Sāmānid *amīr*, a *ribāṭ* in Firabr built by Naṣr b. Aḥmad.¹²⁶ More than the Sāmānid *amīrs* themselves, their commanders and governors are noted as builders. In the region of Isbījāb, a number of *ribāṭs* are associated with figures known to be members of the Sāmānid state, such as the Turkish commanders Qarātakīn¹²⁷ and Kharākharāf,¹²⁸ or local governors, such as ‘Amīd al-Dawla Fā’iq.¹²⁹ The activity of Turkish commanders as builders of *ribāṭs* will be discussed shortly. These Sāmānid building projects, unlike the Ṭāhird ones, are closely associated with the frontier and consist largely of *ribāṭs*. Perhaps the image of the Sāmānids as conquerors on the frontier prevails over their image as builders. al-Muqaddasī makes special note of Ismā’īl b. Aḥmad’s conquest of Dih Nūjīkath, which caused damage to the region.¹³⁰

The people who are presented as the shapers of the built environment of the eastern frontier throughout our geographical sources are primarily either Persian converts or figures who facilitated the political advancement of Persians, al-Ma’mūn above all. These narratives appear, in a way, to use building as a metaphor for the larger social impact of these groups of Persian converts. The Barmakids represent the expansion of Muslim rule along the eastern frontier and the integration of old Persian networks into the Islamic world through their conquest and conversion of Persian local rulers and their construction of the “Gate of Iron” which defined the frontiers of the Islamic world. In a similar way, the Sāmānids and, perhaps more importantly, their Turkish commanders also

¹²⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 291.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 274. The identification of Kharākharāf is difficult, but from his Turkish name and his patronage of a *ribāṭ*, it is safe to assume he was one of the many Turkish military commanders in the service of the Sāmānids.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 274.

expand the frontier and fortify it with *ribāts*. On the other hand, Abū Muslim and the Ṭāhirids are associated with construction projects based in the capitals of Khurāsān. In this way they engage in a transformation of the state and perhaps of lands that occupy a more central place in the Islamic world than those of the Barmakids and the Sāmānids. Here it is most important to note that it is those Persians who converted to Islam and who entered into the service of the ‘Abbāsids who receive the most credit for shaping Khurāsān and Transoxania.

6.8 The Eastern Frontier as a Land of Islam and *Dār al-jihād*

As the eastern frontier went through a process of maturing into a Muslim frontier, even while maintaining many aspects of its pre-Islamic culture, Khurāsān and Transoxania became associated increasingly with notions of orthodox Sunni Islam and received praise from our geographical sources as a land of correct belief. In the earliest instances of such praise, found in Ibn al-Faqīh, it comes in two forms. Ibn al-Faqīh begins his praise for Khurāsān with an eye towards its military prowess, associated with the defense of Islam. Ibn al-Faqīh begins with a tradition from Sharīk b. ‘Abd Allāh, calling Khurāsān God’s quiver. “If he becomes angry with a people, he flings [arrows] from his quiver.”¹³¹ He then highlights Khurāsān’s role in the death of numerous Persian kings and in the overthrow of the Umayyads,¹³² before ending with a description of Khurāsān as the shield of Islam against the Turks.¹³³ In all these descriptions, Khurāsān and its people are praised as righteous warriors who correct abuses by rulers and protect the lands of Islam from the Turks, but it is important to note that the term *jihād* is never mentioned. On the

¹³¹ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-buldān*, 314.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 315.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 316.

other hand, Ibn al-Faqīh's praises are interspersed with references to the good judgment and intelligence of the people of Khurāsān, matching their military talents with their intellectual talents and religious practices.

As we move further into the texts of the Balkhī School, we see such praises applied directly to the Sāmānids, while the language used to describe the frontier focuses more specifically on the practice of *jihād* along the frontier. al-Iṣṭakhrī is the first to use praises similar to those that Ibn al-Faqīh heaped on Khurāsān, both in general and specifically for the Sāmānids, whom he praises for their justice and their support of proper religion.¹³⁴ Ibn al-Faqīh's respect for the Sāmānid *amīrs* is emphasized by his use of the blessing "*raḥimahu llāh*" after the names of all deceased *amīrs*, a practice that he does not follow with any other figures in his text.¹³⁵ Speaking in a more general way, al-Iṣṭakhrī portrays Transoxania as a land of *jihād*. He says that "there is not in Islam a region with a greater share in the *jihād* than them, because most of the borders of Transoxania are towards the *Dār al-Ḥarb*."¹³⁶ al-Iṣṭakhrī adds that the majority of the people of wealth (*ahl al-amwāl*) of Transoxania spend their money on establishing *ribāṭs* and improving the roads and stopping-places in the path of *jihād*.¹³⁷ By the time of the Balkhī School, the eastern frontier has been integrated into an Islamic worldview. It is no longer a region which is being incorporated into the Islamic world, but in many ways it is becoming paradigmatic of the Islamic world and a region respected for its proper practice of Islam. Similarly, the frontier itself has been recast in Islamic terms, as a *Dār al-jihād*.

¹³⁴ al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 164.

¹³⁵ For examples using the names of Naṣr b. Aḥmad, Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad, and Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl, see al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 163-164.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

These patterns continue in texts which follow al-Iṣṭakhrī. al-Muqaddasī begins his discussion of al-Mashriq, which he defines as Khurāsān, Transoxania, and Sīstān, by praising the region’s contributions to Islam. He describes it as the support of Islam (*rukṅ al-Islām*) and its fortress (*ḥiṣṅ*). In religion the people are correct and justice is enduring.¹³⁸ He makes similarly broad statements about the subregions of al-Mashriq. Of Transoxania, al-Muqaddasī states that its people are most correct in religion (*istaqāma fī al-dīn*).¹³⁹ al-Muqaddasī also emphasizes al-Mashriq’s role as the defense of Islam. It is “the barrier of the Turks, the shield against the Ghuzz, the terror of the Byzantines, and the glory of the Muslims.”¹⁴⁰ When it comes to al-Muqaddasī’s general description of Transoxania, *jihād* is a part of his language. The people of Transoxania are the most persistent in *jihād*.¹⁴¹ Transoxania is the *dār al-jihād* and the place of closing the frontier (*mawḍi’ sadād*).¹⁴² al-Muqaddasī also applies this description to particular localities in Transoxania. Isbījāb, in a region with 2,700 *ribāṭs*, is described as *dār al-jihād*.¹⁴³ Such engagement in religiously motivated warfare is placed in contrast to people ignorant of Islam. In Bukhārā, there are many *murābiṭūn* and few people ignorant of Islam (*jāhilūn*).¹⁴⁴ It is important to note that while these praises are often given for Greater Khurāsān, which includes Transoxania, it is Transoxania itself which is most often characterized as being the actual *dār al-jihād*.

The *Ḥudūd al-’ālam* also sees Transoxania as a region of *jihād*, or at least of religiously motivated fighting. Its people are warlike and active fighters for the faith

¹³⁸ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma’rifat al-aqālīm*, 260.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 261.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 260.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 261. This is followed immediately by a comment that the people of Transoxania are also the most peaceful of people in their hearts (*asilm ṣudūran*).

¹⁴² Ibid., 261, n. e.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 273.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 281.

(*ghāzī pīsha*), with a pure faith (*pāk dīn*).¹⁴⁵ Similar sentiments are expressed regarding individual cities such as Bukhārā,¹⁴⁶ al-Shāsh,¹⁴⁷ and Kāth.¹⁴⁸

The development of this language describing Transoxania as a land of Islam and *jihād* demonstrates a maturing of the eastern frontier, a point at which the eastern frontier has fully become a Muslim frontier and is therefore described in Islamic terminology. Our geographical sources have as their goal the systematized presentation of the Islamic world as a single body. Within that system, each region must have its role to play in support of the broader Islamic world. By the fourth/tenth century, the place of Transoxania and the eastern frontier as a whole had been defined in terms of the conduct of *jihād* for the betterment of the entire Islamic world. This language is not just the language of authors connected with the central lands of the Islamic world, but rather appears to have been adopted by the people of Khurāsān and Transoxania as well. In the following section, the connection made between the conduct of *jihād* and the collection of *kharāj* will be used as an example of how this idea of the *dār al-jihād* played into the rhetoric of the inhabitants of the frontier.

6.9 Use of Islamic Language: Taxation and the Frontier

In 355/966, a group of 20,000 *ghāzīs* from Khurāsān arrived at al-Rayy, then the capital of the Būyid ‘Amir Rukn al-Dawla, and demanded that Rukn al-Dawla’s vizier, Ibn al-‘Amīd, give them the *kharāj* of the city and its dependencies so that they might travel to

¹⁴⁵ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 105-106.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

the Arab-Byzantine frontier to fight against the Byzantines who had recently taken Aleppo, Maʿrāsh, al-Maṣṣīṣa, and Ṭarsūs.

They (the leaders of the *ghāzīs*) said: “We want the *kharāj* of this land, all of it. For it belongs to the treasury. You have heard of what the Byzantines have done to the Muslims, as they seized possession of your land; likewise the Armenians (have done such things against you). Meanwhile, since we are *ghāzīs* and mendicants and sons of the path, we are more deserving of (this) wealth than you are.” They demanded that an army go out with them. They were excessive in their demands.¹⁴⁹

When Ibn al-ʿAmīd refused, fearing that they were in fact agents of the Sāmānids looking to conquer the territory for their masters, the *ghāzīs* accused the Būyids of being infidels and stormed the city, pillaging the palace of Ibn al-ʿAmīd and almost killing both Rukn al-Dawla and his vizier. In the end, the Būyid *ʿamīr* was able to gather his troops and chase the invaders out of Rayy, dispersing this force of *ghāzīs*. There is no report of their having actually reached the *thughūr*, at least not in the numbers in which they had originally begun.

This short narrative is interesting on a number of levels. First, traveling from Khurāsān and Transoxania to fight along the Arab-Byzantine frontier was a popular activity throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. Many volunteered to fight against the Byzantines as a religious duty and this event illustrates that these large numbers of volunteers would gather on occasion to participate in this form of holy warfare in a somewhat organized fashion (there are many references, for example, to leaders of the *ghāzīs* throughout the narrative). The reasons why these *ghāzīs* would abandon Khurāsān and the *dār al-jihād* that was in their own region, across the Oxus, is

¹⁴⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī ʿl-taʾrīkh*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabi, 1417/1997), 7:262.

open to speculation.¹⁵⁰ More important in the context of the current chapter, a question arises here about a connection between *jihād* or frontier warfare in general and the collection of *kharāj*. In a broader sense, this question regards the relationship between volunteer fighters engaged in frontier warfare and the state. In this narrative, it seems clear that even though these *ghāzīs* were irregular volunteers unaffiliated with the local ruling power, they thought that the state had a duty to finance their mission even though it was not the state that had ordered their campaign. The story of the *ghāzīs* coming to Rayy also raises the question of whether or not *kharāj* was levied on frontier territories engaged in *jihād* at all and, if it was, how it was used for fighting along the frontier. Our geographical sources refer to areas that are free of the *kharāj*, most explicitly when describing regions directly on the eastern frontier. The wording and explanation of these descriptions often imply that exemption from the *kharāj* is associated with a wider notion that the *kharāj* is primarily intended for fighting the *jihād* along the frontier and that therefore, individuals engaged in frontier warfare should be exempt from paying *kharāj*.

One example of a region free from *kharāj* is Isbījāb. We have already mentioned Isbījāb's connection to *jihād* and the eastern frontier many times, but if we read al-Muqaddasī's report on the region in more detail, we see that he connects Isbījāb's frontier status to an exemption from *kharāj*.

[Isbījāb] is an important frontier and the *dār jihād*, with fortresses (*ḥiṣn*) over its suburbs.

In it there is a *quhandiz*, in ruins. They do not know of drought, nor *kharāj*, and among them there are many kinds of fruits of pleasant price/quality.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ It may be that many *ghāzīs* found the close connection between fighting and the practice of *ribāṭ* on the eastern frontier and the protection of the estates of the *dihqāns* troubling and therefore preferred to engage in *jihād* on the "purer" Arab-Byzantine frontier, which was much more closely tied to the caliphate.

¹⁵¹ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 273.

al-Muqaddasī makes a connection here between a frontier region engaged in *jihād* and exemption from *kharāj*, but he does not make the connection directly. Writing much later, in the seventh/thirteenth century, Yāqūt does make this direct connection in his entry on Isbījāb.

There is not in Khurāsān, nor in Transoxania, a land which does not have the *kharāj* levied upon it except for Isfījāb because it is a great frontier (*thaghran 'azīman*). It is relieved from the *kharāj* and this is because the people spend the *kharāj* in the cost of arms and aid for the stations in that land.¹⁵²

These two passages clearly imply that the people of Isbījāb do not need to pay the *kharāj* because, being a frontier territory, they already spend the money they earn from their land on fighting the *jihād*. These passages localize the practice and deal with the exclusion of one particular area from the *kharāj*; the broader region's exemption is tied to the notion that they are already performing the very activities that the land tax is supposed to support.

A few other areas give the same impression. According to Ibn Khurradādhbih, Kābul is able to pay part of its *kharāj* with Ghuzz Turks captured during frontier raids.¹⁵³ Further south, al-Ya'qūbī says that the *kharāj* of Sīstān is nearly ten million *dirhams*, divided among its army, its police (*shinhatihā*), and its frontier, implying that the money does not leave Sīstān and is instead immediately reinvested in local defense.¹⁵⁴ There is also evidence for the Arab-Byzantine frontier, where Qudāma tells us that the *kharāj* is spent on fortifications and general improvements to the frontier in preparation for the annual raids; however, the amount of money raised locally by the *kharāj* is only a third to

¹⁵² Yāqūt, *Muj'am al-buldān*, 1:179.

¹⁵³ Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, 37.

¹⁵⁴ al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, 286.

half of what is spent in fighting the Byzantines.¹⁵⁵ The picture we get from these sampling of regions where *kharāj* funds are linked to frontier warfare is that the ideas promoted by the *ghāzīs* at Rayy were in broad circulation at the time.

If we look back at the conditions specific to Isbījāb, we are reminded of our discussion in the previous chapter, in which Isbījāb was noted for its high concentration of *ribāṭs*, apparently connected with the private estates of *dihqāns* and of Sāmānid commanders and administrators. Isbījāb is said to have some 2,700 *ribāṭs*.¹⁵⁶ Along with these there were numerous fortresses (*huṣūn*) associated with personal estates. The argument was made that there is a direct connection between personal agricultural estates, primarily owned by *dihqāns*, and the building of *ribāṭs* and other fortifications connected with defending the frontier in general, and with *jihād* more specifically. These agricultural estates would have been the primary source of *kharāj* funds in and around Isbījāb, so the connection between the source of *kharāj* income and the expenditure of money in the name of frontier warfare and *jihād* in the region is fairly clear.

Returning to the argument that the *ribāṭs* found in regions like Isbījāb were primarily not originally constructed by Muslims as *ribāṭs*, but were rather the fortresses of *dihqāns* which became rededicated as *ribāṭs* following a period of widespread conversion in Khurāsān and Transoxania, can we then see a connection between the new identification of these rural estates as Islamic frontier fortifications with a new idea that such estates are free from *kharāj* because of their new role as sites of *jihād*? This appears to be a case of an Islamic language of frontiers being used by landholders to improve their status, by freeing them from taxation. If it was in fact the landed estates of *dihqāns*

¹⁵⁵ Qudāma, *Kitāb al-kharāj wa ṣinā'at al-kitāba*, 185ff.

¹⁵⁶ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 273.

which made up the bulk of the *ribāṭs* along the eastern frontier, did an understanding emerge of *jihād* and its relationship to the state that held particular appeal for these *dihqāns*? If so, this understanding would most likely have given increased rights and benefits to *dihqāns* involved in frontier warfare. It also may be that it was this understanding, and the language used to describe it, which spread to the *ghāzīs* of Khurāsān who appeared at the gates of Rayy demanding the local-*kharāj* for themselves.

In the end, that such a language developed in a context in which *dihqāns* were converting their estates into outposts for the conducting of *jihād* is a sign that by the fourth/tenth century the eastern frontier had matured as a Muslim frontier. It had taken on an Islamic identity and its purpose, as the frontier between the settled lands of Khurāsān and Transoxania and the steppe lands of the Turks, had become framed in the ideology of Islam. If such a development took place during the fourth/tenth century, under the rule of the Sāmānids, what does this tell us about the idea that the Sāmānid interest in Persian language and literature and the epics of pre-Islamic Iran was “nationalist” and part of a broader project of breaking away from the direct authority of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate?

6.10 The Turks, Persian Genealogies, and the New Eastern Frontier

At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed how the experience of the Arab conquests created a new frontier region within the confines of an older, more established frontier. From there, we explored the ways in which these two frontiers merged into a single eastern frontier, dominated by Islamic cultural, political and economic networks, identities, and ideologies. This process, as it has been detailed here, primarily took place on the Muslim side of the frontier through interactions between Arab conquerors, the

local Persian population and, over the course of centuries, their descendants. What has been left out of this discussion is the one constant dynamic along the frontier, the interaction between the settled populations of Khurāsān and the river valleys of Transoxania, whether pre-Islamic or Muslim, and the Turks of the steppe. The relationship across the frontier went through its own changes over the course of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, as the Turks became an increasingly important and influential part of Muslim society.

From the beginning of Arab expansion into Transoxania, Turks had been living within the lands of Islam and, over the course of time, groups of Turks became an important part of the Islamic world, much like the Persians. Our view of the integration of the Turks most often focuses on the use of Turkish *mamlūk* slave soldiers by the ʿAbbāsids and by the governors of Khurāsān and Transoxania. Beginning with the reign of the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 218-227/833-842), Turkish slaves formed the core of an imperial bodyguard in Iraq, but this practice seems to have been adopted from Turkish usage along the eastern frontier. During the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, some Turks who had entered the Islamic world as slave soldiers and commanders, while others entered through other means, in some cases simply from living in regions which were conquered by the Arabs, and in other cases from migration into the Islamic world. All, appear to have gone through a process of conversion and integration similar to that of the Persians.

Our geographical sources give us evidence for Turks living within the lands of Islam under a variety of conditions. The *Ḥudūd al-ʿālam* describes the Khallukh Turks

living in the steppes of Ṭukhāristān¹⁵⁷ and the Khalaj Turks living in Ghaznīn, Balkh, Ṭukhāristān, Bust, and Gūzgānān.¹⁵⁸ Shiljī, Ṭarāz, Takābkath, Farūnkath, Mirkī, Navīkath, and Afrūnkath are also home both to Muslims and to numerous Turks.¹⁵⁹ Khwārazm is home to a number of Ghuzz and other Turks, to the extent that, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the local, non-Turkish, population is said to have Turkish features.¹⁶⁰ Sometimes the Turks living within the lands of Islam are described as dangerous or problematic for other local populations. The Kunjīna Turks live in the mountains between Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān and are professional thieves and looters of caravans, conducting predatory expeditions at a distance of forty to fifty *farsakhs* from their district, even though they make a show of loyalty to the *amīrs* of Khuttalān and Chaghāniyān.¹⁶¹ Sometimes, these Turks may be living within Muslim lands under an agreement with the Muslims, such as the tracial Turks (*jā-yi Turkān-i āshī*) of Sutkand, many of whom have converted to Islam.¹⁶² Turkish converts inhabit a thousand felt tents on the grazing land around Isbījāb.¹⁶³ Even the Turks who have converted to Islam may not have integrated into local society to the extent that they no longer constitute a danger. Barūkat and Balāj are described as frontier posts against the Turkomen, indicating a need to defend against these people, but it is also said that the Turkomen have converted to Islam out of fear.¹⁶⁴ Along the eastern frontier, there are a variety of Turks living within the Islamic world under a number of different circumstances.

¹⁵⁷ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 99.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁶⁰ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm.*, 285-286.

¹⁶¹ *Hudūd al-‘ālam*, 120.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

¹⁶⁴ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, 274.

Those Turks who lived within the Muslim side of the eastern frontier and integrated into Muslim society did so in ways similar to the Persians who became increasingly associated with Muslim society. One important example of this trend is found in the region of Isbījāb. Here two Turkish commanders of the Sāmānids, Qarātakīn and Kharākharāf built *ribāṭs*, one in Isbījāb itself and the other in Yakānkath respectively.¹⁶⁵ More than merely military buildings, both of these *ribāṭs* include other facilities which demonstrate their founders' personal attachments to the *ribāṭs* and the Islamic identity that they represent. The graves of both Qarātakīn and Kharākharāf are found at their *ribāṭs*. In the case of Qarātakīn, his *ribāṭ* is financed through a nearby market which has been dedicated to it as a *waqf*.¹⁶⁶ This is one of the earliest examples in our geographical sources of a *waqf* employed along the eastern frontier, and it is interesting that such an early example of this practice should be associated with a Turk. Qarātakīn was an early adopter of Islamic practices among the Turks of the eastern frontier.

The integration of Turks into the Islamic society of the eastern frontier and their rise to positions of importance as governors and commanders appears to have created problems for those Persians who had recently gone through a similar process. We can see in evidence from the fourth/tenth century, as the process of cultural conversion was reached its peak among the Persians but was steadily increasing amongst the Turks, that as these two groups met and competed for positions of influence within Islamic society, conflict arose between them. For one of the clearest examples of this conflict, we will return to the prose *Shāhnāma* of Abū Manṣūr Ma'mārī and the career of his patron Abū

¹⁶⁵ al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, 273-274.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

Manṣūr Ṭūsī. In this case, it is important to think beyond the interactions between Arabs and Persians and the molding of Persian and Islamic culture in both the lineages rulers constructed for themselves and the texts they patronized to reinforce these lineages. Abū Manṣūr Ṭūsī's traumatic experiences, which forced him to leave the Sāmānids for the Būyids, were not conflicts between Arabs and the Islamicized Persians, but were instead the result of the integration of Turks into the ruling classes of Khurāsān. In the first case, Abū Manṣūr followed the governor of Khurāsān Abū 'Alī Chaghānī to Rayy in 335/946-947 when the Sāmānids ousted Abū 'Alī and replaced him with the Turkish commander Abū Ishāq Sīmjurī. In the second case, Abū Manṣūr was stripped of his position over Khurāsān by the Sāmānids in 349/961, to also be replaced by a Turkish commander, Alptigīn.¹⁶⁷ In the midst of this competition over governorships between Persian *dihqāns* and Turkish commanders, Abū Manṣūr's response included his patronage of a book which, on the one hand, glorified his own Persian ancestry and his ancestral connections to Ṭūs and Nīshāpūr and, on the other, emphasized the epic deeds of pre-Islamic Persians in their war against the Turks of Tūrān.

Considering that by the time New Persian literature was developing in the fourth/tenth century, Persian culture had already been largely integrated within Islamic culture and that the dual society of the eastern frontier had become unified with a mixture of Persian and Islamic elements, the notion that New Persian literature and the growing importance of pre-Islamic epics were a sign of anti-Arab and/or anti-Muslim Persian nationalism needs to be rethought. Focusing on the frontier dynamic in Khurāsān and Transoxania, we can see that the fourth/tenth century was a period of two transitions along the frontier. On the one hand, the eastern frontier matured as a Muslim frontier and

¹⁶⁷ Minorsky, "The Older Preface to the *Shāh-Nāma*," 164-166.

assumed a Muslim identity. On the other hand, the frontier dynamic was shifting as Turks began to cross the frontier and become important players in the Islamic world. It has often been noted that Firdawsī presented his *Shāhnāma* not to the Persian Sāmānids, but rather to the Turkish Ghaznavids. The irony of this situation is notable because the pre-Islamic epics which make up the *Shāhnāma* and much of the early New Persian literature as a whole emphasized the (supposedly ancient) conflict between Persians and Turks. The point was not to distinguish the Persians from the Muslims, but to elevate the role of the Persians over the newest arrivals in the Islamic world, the Turks.

6.11 Maturing Frontiers versus Dynamic Frontiers

This chapter has focused primarily on the process by which the eastern frontier matured from a region recently conquered by the Arabs and brought into the Islamic cultural sphere, into a fully engaged part of the Islamic world. In many ways, the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century represented an end point in this frontier process. This is the point at which the eastern frontier became a recognizably Muslim frontier. Such an understanding of the eastern frontier is faulty, however, because frontier processes do not really have neat conclusions: frontiers, as ongoing processes, are continually changing. During the same period that the eastern frontier became a Muslim frontier, its dynamics shifted once again. This shift focused on the older, pre-Islamic frontier dynamic, the balance between the Persians of Khurāsān and Transoxania, now intermingled with Arabs and integrated within a shared Muslim culture, and the Turks of the steppe. This dynamic shift saw the Turks entering the Muslim world in larger and larger numbers and increasingly gaining positions of power and influence within Muslim Khurāsān and Transoxania, often to the

detriment of Persian notables. As one process came to a conclusion, another began, and these two dynamics overlapped. Understanding this dynamic nature of frontiers, it is important to watch for both processes occurring as we try to understand the frontier.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

At the outset of this project, it was explained that while this was not directly a study of the “independent” provincial dynasties of the eastern frontier, it was one which hoped to situate those dynasties which ruled Khurāsān and Transoxania in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries within the context of the frontier zone they ruled. While the dynasties of the Ṭāhīrīds, Ṣaffārīds, and Sāmānīds (as well as some smaller dynasties such as the Bānījūrīds) have been referenced throughout the preceding six chapters, their histories have not been the focus. This project has instead told the story of the eastern frontier as a frontier region over the first centuries of Muslim rule, a period which culminated in the rise of the eastern dynasties. In this brief concluding chapter, I would like to first overview the major themes presented in the previous chapters and, then, explore some of the implications of this study on our understanding of these dynasties.

In Chapter One, previous scholarship on the eastern dynasties was briefly examined. It was said that this scholarship tended to focus on the eastern dynasties as peripheral to the history of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate and, in many cases, the result or response to the weakening of central imperial authority in the provinces. Looking at the eastern dynasties from the perspective of Baghdad during the decline of ‘Abbāsīd

authority provides us with a particular image of the eastern dynasties, one which emphasizes their perceived distance from the authority of the caliphate, both in a geographical sense and in a figurative sense. In other words, this approach sees the eastern dynasties taking advantage of a weakened caliphate to promote their own agendas in distant provinces, most importantly the creation of independent kingdoms.

If we instead look at the eastern dynasties as ruling the eastern frontier, rather than ruling distant provinces of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, does this image change? It has been argued throughout this project that the rise of the eastern dynasties was the end product of the frontier processes which integrated and acculturated the eastern frontier into the broader Islamic world, as described in Chapters Five and Six. The Tāhīrids, Ṣaffārids, and Sāmānids, each in their own way, negotiated the development of the frontier during the early centuries of Muslim rule and their relationship to the frontier was an important component of their reigns. By situating the eastern dynasties within these frontier processes, we have forefront their relationship to the frontier and to the regions they ruled rather than their relationship to Iraq.

The frontier approach taken by this project began in Chapter Two with a close examination of the way the eastern frontier was represented by medieval geographical writers, writing in Arabic and Persian. A definition of frontiers as loosely-organized liminal zones of transition on the periphery of states where territorial expansion or contraction is possible was proposed and applied to the eastern frontier of the Islamic world. This examination of representations of the eastern frontier also required us to differentiate the terms “border” and “frontier,” as well as their Arabic equivalents *ḥadd* and *thaghr*. In the context of the eastern frontier of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth

centuries, this differentiation led us to think of borders or *ḥudūd* as the limits of effective state power and frontiers or *thughūr* as points of entry or exit, points where someone else lives on the opposing side of the frontier. Chapter Three gave us a window into the physical layout of the eastern frontier by examining the built environment of defensive networks. By laying out the pattern of defensive infrastructure, made up of various fortifications and walled cities, we saw a network of cities sharing common defensive infrastructures with dependent villages and agricultural regions, most importantly large walls encircling the hinterlands of cities, connected to each other by roads dotted with fortified resting places. This network demonstrated the interconnected nature of the eastern frontier, which was reinforced by the shared responsibilities for staffing and provisioning these fortifications. In Chapter Four, we moved away from textual sources to focus on numismatics. The history of coin production in Khurāsān and Transoxania during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries also implied complex networks, this time economic and political, spreading out across the eastern frontier. Emphasis was placed on the names which appeared on coins, demonstrating the complex relationships between different minting and mining centers and the political authorities who ruled over various regions of Khurāsān and Transoxania and those who supervised the striking of coins, or, perhaps more importantly, the engraving of dies used to strike coins.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four focused on the “environment” of the frontier, presenting the eastern frontier as a geographic, perhaps geo-political, space. These chapters described Khurāsān and Transoxania as they appeared in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. In these descriptions, the most important theme to arise was that of networks which integrated the various regions and urban centers of the eastern frontier

into a whole. These networks connected agricultural regions to villages, villages to cities, cities to each other, and, finally, the eastern frontier to the centers of imperial power in Iraq. In order for these networks to work successfully, relationships had to exist between various levels of local authorities along all branches of these networks. Governors had to rely on the heads of cities, who, likewise, relied upon the heads of villages and the owners of rural estates and vice versa. The second half of this project took a more consciously historical approach, focusing on the people who populated these networks. Continuing with the frontier approach, Chapters Five and Six emphasized certain frontier “processes,” in the sense invoked by Frederick Jackson Turner, which impacted Khurāsān and Transoxania into the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries; namely the “processes” of settlement and acculturation following the Arab conquests of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries.

The Arab conquests and the settlement of Arabs, or lack thereof, in Khurāsān and Transoxania in the following centuries were the focus of Chapter Five. The experience of the conquests, especially the frequency of conquest by treaty or *ṣulḥ*, left pre-Islamic networks of local authorities in place following the conquests and, in exploring this aspect of the history of conquest and settlement, special attention was paid to the petty landholding *dihqāns* who were responsible for tax collection and levying troops in villages and rural regions during the late Sāsānian period. The conquest and settlement of Khurāsān and Transoxania, despite preserving many local networks, had a transformative effect on the eastern frontier; reconfiguring cities and villages through the construction of mosques and the agricultural hinterlands through the re-identification of fortifications attached to the estates of *dihqāns* as *ribāṭs*. Following the Arab conquests, Khurāsān and

Transoxania went through a period of integration and acculturation with the larger Islamic world. This process was the focus of Chapter Six. Here it was not the conversion of the people of Khurāsān and Transoxania which was most important, but rather the process by which the eastern frontier itself took on an Islamic identity as *Dār al-jihād* against the Turks. The transformation of the eastern frontier into a Muslim frontier did not occur evenly and we see moments of transition where the Persian and Islamic identity of the region coexisted, as in the equal emphasis placed on both cotton and silk production during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. These processes involved the integration of the local networks of Khurāsān and Transoxania with the networks of the larger Caliphate and the redefinition of terms of power and authority in an Islamic language.

While the political, social, and economic networks of the eastern frontier have appeared throughout as the major focus of this project, the question remains how these networks related to the frontier. Can we call these “frontier networks?” In many ways, the networks described in this project were not unique to the eastern frontier or to frontiers in general. Rather, it is the processes of integration and acculturation occurring after the Arab conquests which are unique to a frontier experience. The Arab conquests changed the political, economic, and cultural orientation of the eastern frontier. No longer part of the Persian Sāsānian Empire, Khurāsān and Transoxania found themselves a part of the Muslim Caliphate. Over the following centuries, the eastern frontier became increasingly integrated into the Caliphate and acculturated with the greater Islamic world. These processes involved a mixing of Persian and Islamic identities and practices, with both the conquered and the conquerors borrowing and influencing the lifestyles of each other.

These processes are unique to frontier environments and their impact on the networks of Khurāsān and Transoxania are the result of the region's position as a frontier.

One aspect of this transformation which is of great importance to this study is its impact on conflict between the settled populations of Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Turks of the Inner Asian steppe across the eastern frontier. Here it is important to look at the experience of the *dihqāns*, especially as we see them in the middle and late fourth/tenth century, the point at which the majority of the population of Khurāsān and Transoxania had converted to Islam. The *dihqāns*, since their earliest appearance in Sāsānian documents, were the owners of agricultural estates and the heads of villages. A feature of most of these estates was fortifications, called *husūn* in our earlier geographical sources, built to protect stockpiles and the farmers and villages under the care of a *dihqān* from raids by Turks. By the late fourth/tenth century, our later geographical sources appear to call these same fortifications *ribāṭs* and the conflict they are engaged in is cast as *jihād*, making the eastern frontier the *Dār al-jihād*. This change in terminology is symbolic of the transformation happening across the eastern frontier following the Arab conquests. A pre-Islamic practice, the fortifying of privately held rural estates, is recast in Islamic terms, these fortifications are *ribāṭs* engaged in *jihād*.

There are a number of potential explanations for this transformation of fortified rural estates into *ribāṭs*. The most basic explanation would be that the influence of Islam had spread so deep into the society of the eastern frontier that attempts were being made to bring local practices into alignment with Islamic principles. If we would rather view the *dihqāns* as shrewd entrepreneurs, we may see this transformation as an attempt by *dihqāns* to improve their condition by appeasing or appealing to certain groups, most

notably Muslim religious scholars and volunteer fighters or *muṭṭawwi'a*. By re-identifying their fortified estates as *ribāts* and the protection of their personal property as *jihād*, the *dihqāns* may have been able to draw on the support of these religious groups. Speculating further, it was noted in Chapter Three that one unique aspect of *ribāts* compared to other forms of fortifications was their endowment through *waqf*. This re-identification of fortifications as *ribāts* may have allowed *dihqāns* to dedicate their agricultural lands as *waqf* in support of the *ribāts*, thus preserving their family's rights to the property. In these cases, the *dihqāns* may have been taking advantage of Islamic practices to their own benefit. In all possible explanations, we see a pre-Islamic practice, the fortification of rural estates, being transformed by the spread of Islam in the region in a manner which ties it to an Islamic practice, in this case those of *ribāṭ* and *jihād*. This demonstrates how the networks of the eastern frontier were able to transform themselves in response to changes along the frontier.

Taking into consideration the image of the eastern frontier constructed in the previous chapters, let us now look at how the eastern dynasties fit into the networks of the eastern frontier. From the Arab conquests until the rise of the Ṭāhirids in 205/821, the political structure of Khurāsān and Transoxania featured a series of predominantly Arab governors overseeing the pre-Islamic network of Persian local authorities, most notably the *dihqāns*. With the rise of the Ṭāhirids, the governors of Khurāsān and Transoxania come from the local population. In the cases of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids, an important element of their rise was their membership in the networks of local authorities before the arrival of Islam in Khurāsān and Transoxania, and, it can be argued, that it was their

employment of these local networks which led to their successes.¹ While little is known about the Ṭāhirid family before they became clients of the Khuzā‘ī, we are certain of the Sāmānids’ background as *dihqāns* in the area of Balkh. We can see this employment of local networks in support of the eastern dynasties on the highest levels of governance in Khurāsān and Transoxania, most notably in the Ṭāhirids use of the Sāmānids as commanders and sub-governors in Transoxania.

The eastern dynasties also made use of the transformation of Khurāsān and Transoxania into a Muslim frontier and connections made with important Arab figures alongside their connections to pre-Islamic local networks. The ancestors of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids both entered into the service of important Arab governors in the early years following the Arab conquests. As they achieved positions of power themselves, the eastern dynasties promoted themselves in ways which emphasized their connections to the larger Islamic world. The Ṭāhirids are often noted as being highly Arabized in their identity and cultivated positions in Baghdad alongside their governorships in Khurāsān; the Ṣaffārids cast themselves as holy warriors and defenders of the Islamic world; and the Sāmānids are often viewed as staunch supporters of orthodox Sunni Islam during a period when the Islamic world was increasingly under the authority of Shi’ite rulers, namely the Fāṭimids and the Būyids. At the same time, the rise of both the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids can be linked directly to associations they made with the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma’mūn and his commanders, governors, and administrators while he acted as governor of Khurāsān and during the Civil War with his brother al-Amīn. The success of the eastern dynasties can be found in their ability to bridge this transformation, at one point appealing to local

¹ The distinctive origins of the Ṣaffārids among the urban craftsmen of Sīstān and, later, the region’s *‘ayyār* movements meant that they came from outside the pre-existing networks of authority. I would argue that this is the primary reason local opposition to their rule was so strong in Khurāsān.

networks while, at another, appealing to the broader Islamic world and the representatives of the Caliphate.

The eastern dynasties did not arrive overnight as the authority of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate waned. In the cases of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids, they had been using their local authority as *dihqāns* to cultivate their positions within the Caliphate for well over a century before they appeared as governors in Khurāsān and Transoxania. Neither was the idea of granting the right to bequeath governorships of outlying provinces within a single family a new innovation under the eastern dynasties. The Aghlabids had been given similar rights over Ifrīqiya twenty years before Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn had become governor of Khurāsān and had exercised these rights successfully nearly a decade before the rise of the Ṭāhirids. There is no doubt that 'Abbāsid power was in decline during the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, but is the rise of Persian dynasties made up of families with long ties to the Caliphate as governors on a similar pattern to that employed by the Caliphate earlier in other provinces really a result or response to this decline? I would argue that the rise of the eastern dynasties was rather an attempt to shore up support for the Caliphate as its power declined. As Hugh Kennedy has said, "Ṭāhirid rule was the most successful solution the 'Abbasids ever devised for integrating (Khurāsān) into the caliphate."² The Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids should be seen in the context of the frontier processes outlined in Chapters Five and Six as local Persian elites who had successfully integrated themselves into the networks of the Caliphate. By allowing the eastern dynasties to rule Khurāsān and Transoxania, the 'Abbāsids elevated a segment of the local networks of authority which had proven their loyalty to the Caliphate within the

² Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 2nd edition (Harlow, England: Pearson-Longman, 2004), 160.

imperial network, thereby creating governors who bridged local and imperial networks. The Ṣaffārids obviously do not fit into this model and, as mentioned above, their lack of status within the local political and economic networks of Khurāsān may be the reason they faced such harsh opposition in the region.

Does viewing the eastern dynasties as the integrators of local networks of authority with the imperial networks of the Caliphate give us a different view of these dynasties and their histories? In the case of the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids, I believe it does. They were not necessarily independence minded nationalist movements, but rather the end result of a long frontier process which integrated the populations of the eastern frontier into the networks of the Caliphate. Understanding the Ṭāhirids and Sāmānids as such, we can continue to refer to them as eastern dynasties, but many of the adjectives applied to them, most notably “independent,” need to be reconsidered.

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