THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

History and Memory:
Khārijism in Early Islamic Historiography

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Thesis Abstract

The Khārijites are usually regarded as the first faction to separate from the early Islamic community. They are viewed as rebels and heretics, constituting the first sect within early Islam. This thesis seeks to examine the narrative role and function of Khārijism in the historiographical tradition of the formative period of Islam. To that end, it looks at the major Islamic chronicles of the 3rd and 4th centuries AH/9th and 10th centuries CE and investigates their portrayal of Khārijite history. The analysis covers the period from the apparent emergence of the Khārijites at the Battle of Ṣiffīn in 37 AH/657 CE until the death of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān in 86 AH/705 CE. The thesis' methodological approach is based on the premise that the historiographical works under study need to be approached as literary artefacts, as texts rather than databanks that can be mined for hard facts in order to reconstruct early Islamic and thus Khārijite history 'as it really was'. This literary analysis of the source material on Khārijism leads to two major conclusions: first, there is hardly any narrative substance to the Khārijites as presented in the sources. Instead, the reports on Khārijite activities are mostly made up of structural components such as names and dates on the one hand, and *topoi* and *schemata* on the other. Consequently, no distinct and tangible identity, literary or otherwise, emerges from the material, pointing out the pitfalls of positivist approaches to Khārijite history and by extension early Islamic history in general. This phenomenon is directly connected to the second conclusion: the historiographical sources approach Khārijism not as an end in itself, but as a narrative tool with which to illustrate, discuss and criticize other actors and subject matters.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapters One and Two address those characteristics of and *topoi* in the representation of Khārijism that pervade the source material across the entire period investigated here. It emerges that the historiographers' major concern in the depiction of Khārijism is the discussion of the perils of the rebels' militant piety that threatens the unity and stability of the Islamic community. Chapters Three to Five look at the periods of ʿAlī's caliphate, Muʿāwiya's rule and the second *fitna* as well as the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik, respectively, and identify the specific narrative purposes of Khārijism in the portrayal of each period. Chapter Six offers a number of observations on the early historiographical tradition as derived from the analysis over the preceding five chapters, addressing issues such as whether it makes sense to distinguish between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī sources. The Conclusion summarizes the main findings of this thesis and provides some suggestions regarding future research on Khārijite history and thought as well as early Islamic history in general.

Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

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Note on Conventions

The Arabic transliteration follows the system employed by the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Some place names are transliterated, but those familiar in English are rendered in their anglicized form (such as Medina, Iraq, Basra or Kufa). Arabic and technical terms are italicized, again with the exception of terms that are familiar in English usage (e.g., caliph, Islam) and those that describe political or religious factions (Sunnī, ʿUthmānī). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own. Longer quotes from al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* usually follow the renderings given by the various translators of the SUNY series in Near Eastern Studies. They are provided in the format "Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 22". Throughout, both Islamic lunar *hijrī* (AH) and Common Era (CE) dating are ordinarily used when introducing events.

Abbreviations

BRISMES	*Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*
BRIIFS	*Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
DMES	*Digest of Middle East Studies*
EI^2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*
EI^3	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*
GAL	C. Brockelmann: *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden 1937-1949)
GAS	F. Sezgin: *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden 1967-)
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
ISL	*Der Islam*
JAL	*Journal of Arabic Literature*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQS	*Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
Lane	Edward W. Lane: *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London 1863)
MW	*Muslim World*
ONS	*Oriental Numismatic Society Newsletter*
RSO	*Revista degli Studia Orientali*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
StI	*Studia Iranica*
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The Sunnī Islamic tradition regards the emergence of the Khārijites (Ar. al-Khawārij) in the course of the first civil war (*fitna*; 35-40 AH/656-661 CE) as the first schism of early Islam. Early Islamic heresiography, historiography and *adab* abound with reports of the unparalleled violence and uncompromising piety of the Khawārij; it is this volatile combination that apparently led to the obliteration of most Khārijite groups before the end of the ninth century CE. Their particular brand of militantly pious opposition was encompassed in the Khārijite maxim *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh* ('judgment is God's alone'), which left a lasting impression on the readers and listeners of early Islamic history as it was remembered in the works of the early Islamic tradition. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, it continues to fascinate modern-day Muslims and Islamicists alike. The study of Khārijite history and thought, however, is fraught with fundamental difficulties: scholars have long recognized that the early Islamic heresiographers of the fourth-sixth centuries AH/tenth-twelfth centuries CE, who alongside the writers and compilers of *adab* provide the bulk of information on the Khārijites, had a more schematic than historical interest in the 'sects' they described, Khārijite or otherwise. The arbitrary creation of so-called sub-sects and the equally indiscriminate attribution of doctrines to one faction or another are only the most basic problems associated with the study of Islamic heresiography. [1] The early historiographical literature of the second-fourth centuries AH/eighth-tenth centuries CE, on the other hand, is to a large extent utterly confused concerning the sequence and exact dates of events or the identity of the actors involved in these events. Moreover, the historiographical sources are so riddled with literary *topoi* and narrative devices that since the 'sceptic turn' in the 1970s and 1980s concerning the reliability of the early Islamic

[1] See e.g. W. M. Watt: "The Study of the Development of the Islamic Sects", in P.W. Pestman (ed.): *Acta Orientalia Neerlandica: Proceedings of the Congress of the Dutch Oriental Society, held in Leiden on the Occasion of its 50th Anniversary 8th-9th May 1970*. Leiden 1971, 82-91; idem, "The Significance of the Sects in Islamic Theology", in *Actas do IV Congresso des Estudos Árabes e Islámicos*. Coimbra/Lissabon 1986, 169-176; idem, "The Great Community and the Sects", in G. E. von Grunebaum (ed.): *Theology and Law in Islam*. Wiesbaden 1971, 25-36; B. Lewis: "The Significance of Heresy in Islam", *SI* 1 (1953), 43-63; A. Knysh: "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment", *MW* 83 (1993), 48-67. On the Khārijites specifically, see K.-H. Pampus: "Historische Minderheitenforschung am Beispiel einer Neubetrachtung der frühen Ḫārigītenbewegung – Diskussion eines neuen Forschungsansatzes", in W. Voigt (ed.): *Vorträge. XIX. Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 28. September bis 4. Oktober 1975 in Freiburg im Breisgau*. Wiesbaden 1977, 572-578.

tradition, "the consensus about how to reconstruct this period – indeed, about the prospect that it *can* be reconstructed in any real detail – has broken down almost completely".[2]

As is the case for many events in early Islamic history, this has led to a sharp division within the scholarly discourse on the origins and development of Khārijism: whereas some Islamicists follow the assessment of Khārijite origins put forward by the classical Islamic sources[3], others reject the traditional story of Khārijism largely or wholly in favour of offering their own interpretations of the background, intentions and motives of the early Khārijites.[4] However, unlike studies of many other episodes in the history of early Islam, not one of the works on Khārijism has systematically attempted to approach the sources as *texts* so as to analyse their portrayal(s) of the Khārijites, despite the potential of such an approach to shed light both on the author-compilers' narrative strategies and the process that led to the formation of early Islamic historiography and heresiography in general. The works of Jeffrey T. Kenney[5] and Keith Lewinstein[6] are partial exceptions from the field of Islamic heresiography; concerning Islamic historiography, however, studies of Khārijism are still rooted in positivist attitudes to (re)constructing history.

In contradistinction to this tendency, this thesis will offer a literary analysis of the representation of Khārijite origins on the basis of a representative selection of historiographical works from the formative period of Islam, that is, works that were compiled during the second-fourth centuries AH/eighth-tenth centuries CE. For the purpose of this study, 'Khārijite origins' refers to the period from the Khārijites' alleged first appearance during the Battle of Ṣiffīn (37 AH/657 CE) until the death of the second Marwānid caliph ʿAbd al-Malik in 86 AH/705 CE. This time span is divided into three parts: the caliphate of ʿAlī from the events at Ṣiffīn until his assassination by a Khārijite in 40 AH/661 CE; the rule of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān from 41 AH/661 CE until his death in

[2] C. Robinson: *Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge 2003, 50.
[3] On which, see the historical overview below.
[4] For competing interpretations of Khārijite origins, see below.
[5] J. T. Kenney: *Muslim Rebels: Khārijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt.* Oxford etc. 2006.
[6] K. Lewinstein: *Studies in Islamic Heresiography: The Khawārij in Two* Firaq *Traditions*. PhD thesis, Princeton University 1989. See also the articles based on his dissertation: "Making and Unmaking a Sect: The Heresiographers and the Ṣufriyya", *SI* 76 (1992), 75-96; "The Azāriqa in Islamic Heresiography", *BSOAS* 54.2 (1991), 251-268; and "Notes on Eastern Ḥanafite Heresiography", *JAOS* 114.4 (1994), 583-598.

60 AH/680 CE; and finally the period including the second civil war (60-73 AH/680-692 CE) and the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik (73-86 AH/692-705 CE)[7].

Two main findings result from the analysis of the historiographical works: first, the examination of the reports on seventh-century CE Khārijite history reveals that there is hardly any narrative substance to the Khārijites as presented in the sources. By narrative substance, I mean the content of a report that is neither a mere structural component – a date, name, location, or the like – nor an example of a particular *topos* associated with Khārijism. Accordingly, no distinct and tangible identity, literary or otherwise, emerges from the material that purports to record the thoughts and deeds of these notorious rebels. This leads directly to the second major conclusion: the historiographical sources approach Khārijism not as an end in itself, but as a narrative tool with which to illustrate other matters. I do not argue that Khārijism was a wholesale invention of the early Islamic tradition; that would be a ludicrous contention indeed. I would, however, argue that it is next to impossible to tell who the early Khārijites were and what they hoped to achieve 'in actuality'. The historiographical record is too fragmentary, too contradictory and frequently too insubstantial to come to even a tentative conclusion regarding the Khārijites' 'real' intentions with any degree of certainty. These findings of the literary analysis emphasize the perils even of a critically positivist approach to Khārijite – and by extension early Islamic – history and demonstrate the benefits of a literary approach to the primary texts at our disposal.

Over the remainder of the Introduction, I will provide an historical overview of the period investigated in this thesis in order to frame the events of Khārijite history that will be discussed over the following chapters. This will be followed by a literature review which will address the range of scholarly views on Khārijite origins as a point of departure for my own approach to the subject. The subsequent section on my research approach will outline the basic premises underlying my understanding of (Islamic) historiography, briefly present the works selected as source material for this thesis, and elaborate on my reasons for

[7] The reign of ʿAbd al-Malik is often dated 685-705 CE, but for most of the period 685-692 CE, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr controlled (to varying degrees) the majority of the Muslim territories. It was only after Ibn al-Zubayr's defeat and death in 692 CE that ʿAbd al-Malik managed to unite the Muslim empire under his rule. For further details and references, see the historical overview below.

choosing a literary over a positivist take on the sources' material regarding the Khawārij. A brief discussion of the thesis structure will conclude the Introduction.

Historical Overview: Khārijite History from the Battle of Ṣiffīn to the Death of ʿAbd al-Malik

In what follows, I will provide a summary of the key dates and events of early Khārijite history based on its portrayal in the Islamic tradition and the secondary literature. This is not to say that I set much store by the historicity of this portrayal. However, the source material under consideration operates within this common framework of Khārijite history, and the events described will be referred to frequently over the course of this chapter. Moreover, our sources often only allude to historical events, knowledge of which among the contemporary audience was mostly presupposed but might not be quite as familiar to the modern reader. The analysis of the representation of Khārijism in the early Islamic historiographical tradition can also be fully appreciated only against the backdrop of an outline of the Khārijite past as remembered by the traditional sources. After all, the events in Khārijite history constitute the point of departure for the intellectual debates which are the focus of the literary analysis.

As will become obvious over the course of this study, the historiographical sources often differ concerning details such as the exact sequence of events, which Khārijite revolts are mentioned, and occasionally even the identity of the actors involved. Only with regard to a few major Khārijite figures can one observe some consistency compared to the confusion that seems to reign concerning dates, locations and other structural components. The historiographers also provide a more or less consistent picture of the major events of early Khārijite history, if not necessarily their interpretation.[8] Where such consensus exists, I will thus refer to the sources as the 'Islamic tradition'. Consensus alone should certainly not be understood as an indicator of historicity, but rather as a "phenomen[on] of

[8] On this phenomenon of early Islamic historiography in general, see S. Humphreys: "Qurʾānic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography", in F. M. Clover/R. S. Humphreys (eds.): *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*. Madison 1989, 271-290, 275.

discourse".[9] However, it does point to the formation of dominant narratives within Islamic historiography and thus illustrates the evolution of a communal memory of Khārijism. As this thesis examines the narrative function of Khārijism in the emergent historiographical tradition of early Islam, it will focus on such 'grand narratives' rather than a discussion of the variations in the structural components of each and every account. Of course, noticeable differences in the sources' presentation of Khārijism in general and Khārijite history in particular will be discussed over the course of the individual chapters.

According to the Islamic tradition, the Khārijite movement originated in the first civil war (*fitna*) of the early Muslim community, more precisely, in the conflict between the fourth 'rightly-guided' caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and Muʿāwiya, the Syrian governor and relative of ʿAlī's murdered predecessor ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r. 644-656 CE).[10] When ʿAlī succeeded ʿUthmān as caliph after the latter's assassination, Muʿāwiya refused to pay allegiance to him, and the two opponents finally met in battle at Ṣiffīn in *c.* 657 CE.[11] The Islamic tradition is almost unanimous in asserting that ʿAlī was about to win the confrontation when Muʿāwiya, under advice from the notorious ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, called for arbitration by ordering his troops to hoist leaves with verses from the Qurʾān (*maṣāḥif*, sg. *muṣḥaf*) onto their lances. The ensuing arbitration agreement (*taḥkīm*) concluded between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya is understood to have instigated the emergence of the Khārijites, who protested against the arbitration on religious grounds, stating that judgment was God's alone (*lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*).

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[9] L. Conrad: "The Conquest of Arwād. A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East", in: A. Cameron/L. I. Conrad (eds.): *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*. Vol. I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material*. Princeton 1992, 317-401, 395.

[10] The assassination of ʿUthmān and the ensuing events of the first civil war are well-covered by modern scholarship. See e.g. P. Crone: *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*. Edinburgh 2004, 17-32; H. Kennedy: *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. 2nd ed., Harlow 2004, 69-81; M. Hinds: "The Murder of the Caliph ʿUthmān", *IJMES* 3 (1972), 450-469; W. Madelung: *The Succession to Muḥammad. A Study of the Early Caliphate*. Cambridge etc. 1997, 78-310. For a critical assessment of the early Islamic historians' treatment of ʿUthmān's reign, see R. Stephen Humphreys: *Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry*. Rev. ed., Princeton 1991, 98-103.

[11] The representation of the events at Ṣiffīn is confusing and often contradictory. For a brief discussion of this issue, see EI^2, "Ṣiffīn" (M. Lecker). For a detailed study of the various Ṣiffīn narratives in early and medieval Islamic historiography, see E. L. Petersen: *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya in Early Arabic Tradition: Studies of the Genesis and Growth of Islamic Historical Writing Until the End of the Ninth Century*. Copenhagen 1964, 20-45 and *passim*; A. M. Hagler: The *Echoes of Fitna: Developing Historiographical Interpretations of the Battle of Siffin*. PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania 2001. *Publicly accessible Penn Dissertations. Paper 397*. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/397/, last accessed 15.09.2014.

The circumstances under which the caliph agreed to the arbitration are central to the later debates between ʿAlī and the Khārijites as depicted by the sources. Let us therefore take a closer look at how early Islamic historiography presents the decision process leading to ʿAlī's acceptance of the adjudication.

To start with, the sources stress that ʿAlī initially rejected Muʿāwiya's call for arbitration because he suspected treachery on the part of the Syrians.[12] They are unanimous in emphasizing that ʿAlī was forced to agree to the adjudication by his own supporters.[13] When Muʿāwiya offered a ceasefire agreement, certain elements in ʿAlī's own army urged him to accept the offer, assuming that the former intended to proclaim his surrender and acknowledge ʿAlī as *amīr al-muʾminīn* ('Commander of the Faithful').[14] These insubordinate subjects of the caliph are variously described as "the people", "the *qurrāʾ*" (sg. *qārī*)[15] or the "(future) Khawārij". However, the one person identified in all sources as the major culprit is al-Ashʿath b. Qays, chief of the tribe of Kinda in Kufa.[16] Al-Yaʿqūbī is the only historiographer who goes so far as to accuse him explicitly of working for Muʿāwiya[17], but the other sources do not present him in a positive light either. Al-Ashʿath and his followers among ʿAlī's troops reportedly blackmailed the caliph with their

[12] See Aḥmad b. Abī Yaʿqūb al-Yaʿqūbī: *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*. Vol. II. Beirut 1960, 188; Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī: *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Vol. II. Ed. W. Madelung, Berlin/Beirut 2003, 312, 324; Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī: *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*. Ed. M. Hārūn, Cairo 1945 or 1946, 560, 561; Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd al-Dīnawarī: *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*. Ed. I. Kratchkovsky, Leiden 1912, 221; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī: *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*. Ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., 3 parts in 16 vols. Leiden 1879-1901, I, 3330; Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Saʿd: *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*. Vol. III. Beirut 1958, 32; Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī: *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar*. Vol. I-II. 3rd ed., Beirut 1978, 390-391, 402; Aḥmad b. Aʿtham al-Kūfī: *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. Vol. III. Hyderabad 1968-1975, 306, 307, 319; idem, vol. IV, 96.

[13] See e.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 189; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 308, 312, 314; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 560-62; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3330-3331; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 390-391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 307, 312, 313, 314, 321; idem, IV, 1-4.

[14] This is the interpretation of Martin Hinds in "Kufan Political Alignments and Their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D.", in *IJMES* 2 (1971), 346-367.

[15] The precise meaning of the term *qurrāʾ* and the identity of the members of this group have been subject to debate in the secondary literature. Compare e.g. G. H. A. Juynboll: "The Qurrāʾ in Early Islamic History", *JESHO* 16 (1973), 113-129, with R. Sayyid: *Die Revolte des Ibn al-Aš*ʿ*at* [sic] *und die Koranleser: Ein Beitrag zur Religions- und Sozialgeschichte der frühen Umayyadenzeit*. Freiburg 1977. For a general overview, see M. Shah: "The Quest for the Origins of the qurraʾ in the Classical Islamic Tradition", *JQS* 7.2 (2005), 1-35.

[16] On al-Ashʿath, see EI^2, "al-Ashʿath, Abū Muḥammad Maʿdīkarib b. Ḳays b. Maʿdīkarib" (H. Reckendorf).

[17] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 188-189. For ʿAlī's assassin, Ibn Muljam, staying with al-Ashʿath in Kufa before killing ʿAlī, see ibid., 212, and also Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 36.

withdrawal from his camp should he insist on fighting the Syrians and not agree to the arbitration. They even threatened to "kill [ʿAlī] like we killed Ibn ʿAffān" if he did not give in to their request.[18]

The (future) Khawārij not only forced the caliph to agree to Muʿāwiya's proposition; when ʿAlī's arbiter needed to be chosen, they demanded Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī against ʿAlī's explicit protest,[19] arguing that Abū Mūsā was impartial and had not taken part in the conflict between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya[20]: "We only want a man who represents you and Muʿāwiya equally."[21] ʿAlī objected to this, arguing that Abū Mūsā "incited the people to abstain from aiding me (*khadhdhala al-nās ʿannī*)"[22], but to no avail; al-Ashʿath and the *qurrāʾ*/Khawārij insisted on him. Shortly afterwards, however, the same group of people called upon ʿAlī to resume the battle against Muʿāwiya, objecting to the idea of two mere humans deciding such serious matters not exclusively on the basis of the Qurʾān but also their own judgment, as had been stipulated in the arbitration document.[23] They even assaulted al-Ashʿath b. Qays when he informed them of the precise content of the arbitration document, crying out *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*.[24]

Those among ʿAlī's troops who demanded the resumption of armed conflict seem to have argued that ʿUthmān had been killed legitimately as in their opinion he was guilty of transgressing Qurʾānic directives. His caliphate had thus become illegitimate, threatening to lead the entire *umma* astray. Hence, his assassination had not only been a lawful act, but a

[18] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 561; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3330, 3331; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 312, 314. This statement will be discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.

[19] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 572-573; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 189; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3333; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2, 94.

[20] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293.

[21] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 572. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3333; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2, 3.

[22] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293. See also al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 189; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3333; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2.

[23] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 295, 296; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3339-3340; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 393; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 190; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588, 589, 594; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 32, 37.

[24] J. Wellhausen: *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*. Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Berlin 1901. English translation by R. Ostle and S. M. Walzer: *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*. Amsterdam/Oxford 1975, 2.

necessity.[25] Discussing the issue was therefore considered superfluous, unwarranted and even dangerous, as Muʿāwiya obviously did not intend to obey God's divine law.

ʿAlī decided not to resume hostilities; instead, he abided by his reluctant acceptance of the arbitration and settled on awaiting the decision of the arbiters. In response to this, those of ʿAlī's followers who had demanded the recommencement of battle left his camp after the army's return to Kufa to 'go out' (*kharaja*) to Ḥarūrāʾ, a near-by village, where they chose a leader and prepared for armed conflict with the caliph.[26]

Initially, ʿAlī was able to convince these 'Ḥārūrites' to return to his camp; however, a contingent of a few thousand soldiers left his ranks anew when he showed no signs of renouncing his agreement to the arbitration meeting despite their protests.[27] Shortly before their second departure from Kufa, the dissidents elected ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb al-Rāsibī as their leader, a man renowned for his bravery and piety. The early Islamic tradition emphasizes the connection between the opposition 'movement' of the Khārijites and piety: their doctrinal 'ancestors' and early leaders such as Ibn Wahb were reportedly known for their devotion to Islam.[28]

After months of attempting to convince the Khārijite rebels to return to him and a fruitless exchange of letters and messengers, ʿAlī attacked his former supporters at Nahrawān – today a town in east Iraq – in Ṣafar 38 AH/July 658 CE and defeated them utterly. Of the approximately 3,000 men under Ibn Wahb's command, only a few managed to escape.[29] ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb himself was killed[30], some 400 Khārijites were wounded and later pardoned by ʿAlī.[31] The battle of Nahrawān marked the end of larger-scale, organized Khārijite activities during the caliphate of ʿAlī. The early historiographical tradition records a number of small, isolated and short-lived uprisings by rebels accused of Khārijism. The only revolt on which more information is provided is that led by a certain

[25] W. M. Watt: *Islamic Political Thought - The Basic Concepts*. Edinburgh 1968, 54-55.
[26] M. G. Morony: *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*. Princeton 1984, 469.
[27] Morony, *Iraq*, 469. There is considerable confusion as to the precise dates and number of the arbitration meeting(s). For a discussion of this, see EI^2, "Taḥkīm" (M. Djebli).
[28] E.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 204, 215, 223; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 298, 317; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3330, 3332; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 560; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 312. See also the discussion in Chapter Two, section 2.1.
[29] W. M. Watt: *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Edinburgh 1973, 13.
[30] Watt, *Formative Period*, 13.
[31] EI^2, "al-Nahrawān" (M. Morony).

Abū Maryam al-Saʿdī in 38 AH/658-59 CE. All of these insurgencies were easily countered and their leaders put to death, either by ʿAlī himself or by one of his agents.[32] However, the Khārijites were his downfall: in 40 AH/661 CE, ʿAlī was killed by a Khārijite assassin named Ibn Muljam.

After ʿAlī's death, the Iraqis gave their allegiance to his oldest son, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī. It is unclear whether al-Ḥasan's rule was accepted anywhere outside Iraq, or even in all of Iraq, but the sources are agreed that in Kufa at least, he was recognized as caliph without opposition. [33] The exact length of al-Ḥasan's rule is uncertain, but in any case it did not exceed one year. Although the precise circumstances are not clear, the sources all agree that al-Ḥasan relinquished his position in 41 AH/661-662 CE to Muʿāwiya[34], whom the tradition describes as essentially having bought the caliphate by issuing guarantees of safe-conduct to al-Ḥasan and his most important companions, among them his younger brother al-Ḥusayn as well as ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās, while also granting al-Ḥasan a substantial amount of money from the state treasury.[35] The historians put forward various explanations for al-Ḥasan's submission to Muʿāwiya: the latter's superior military strength; al-Ḥasan's aversion to bloodshed and preference for a peaceful solution to the conflict between his family and Muʿāwiya; the realisation on al-Ḥasan's part that the divisions among his own followers made it impossible for him to rule effectively without running the risk of meeting the same unfortunate end as his father.[36] This diversity of opinion in the historiographical tradition testifies to the debates al-Ḥasan's decision appears to have encouraged– his

[32] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 424-429.
[33] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1, 2; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 214; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 228; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 148; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 426; idem, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-Ishrāf*. Ed. ʿA. al-Ṣāwī, Cairo 1938, 260; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 230; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 466, 467, 468.
[34] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 426; idem, *Tanbīh*, 260-261; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 230-232; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1, 5-7; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 234; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb,* II, 484. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 216, gives the year 40 AH as Muʿāwiya's accession date.
[35] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1-4, 5-6, 7; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 474, 489-490 (where Muʿāwiya sends al-Ḥasan a blank document to write down whatever demands he has in return for his abdication). Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 6, and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 490 (albeit a shorter version), finish their accounts with a short speech of al-Ḥasan that serves to at least partly vindicate his decision to surrender and establish his moral superiority over Muʿāwiya. While al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Masʿūdī both transmit this episode verbatim (apart from a few additions and re-wordings), they omit al-Ṭabarī's reports of al-Ḥasan accepting money and/or a guarantee of safe-conduct for himself and his supporters. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 215; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 430-431.
[36] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 233-234; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1, 3, 5; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 215; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 468.

renunciation of the caliphate was rather ill received, or at least this is the impression preserved by the later historians.[37] In any case, al-Ḥasan apparently settled in Medina with al-Ḥusayn and their cousin ʿAbdallāh b. Jaʿfar, where he remained until his death in 50 AH/669-670 CE.[38]

Having reached an agreement with ʿAlī's immediate family and established his rule over all of the Muslim territories, Muʿāwiya appointed al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir as governors of Kufa and Basra respectively.[39] During the preparations for his return to Syria, however, a group of about 500 Khārijites under the command of Farwa b. Nawfal al-Ashjāʿī gathered at al-Nukhayla to oppose Muʿāwiya.[40] At first, Muʿāwiya sent Syrian troops against the rebels, who had relocated to Kufa in the meantime. These troops failed, however, and Muʿāwiya is said to have resorted to another means of attacking the Khārijites that illustrates his political cunning: he told the Kufans that he would only grant them a guarantee of safe-conduct for their opposition against him during his conflict with ʿAlī if they agreed to take on the problem of the Khārijite rebels themselves. The Kufans obliged and mounted an attack against the Khārijites, who attempted to avoid the confrontation by arguing that they had a common enemy in Muʿāwiya, but to no avail – they were all killed by the Kufan troops.[41]

After solving the problem of this particular Khārijite revolt, Muʿāwiya finally returned home to Syria. From Damascus, he ruled the Muslim empire until his death in 60 AH/680 CE, firmly establishing the rule of the Umayyad clan as well as the predominance

[37] See particularly al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, 260, and Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 154, who state that al-Ḥasan was "the first caliph to remove himself" (*awwal khalīfa khalaʿa nafsahu*). See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 474-476; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 233-234; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1-2, 3, 9; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 216.

[38] His exact death date is controversial. See EI^2, "al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib" (L. Veccia Vaglieri).

[39] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 478-479, 490; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 232; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 10-11, 15.

[40] Al-Nukhayla was a town in Iraq, near al-Kufa and on the road to Syria. EI^2, "al-Nukhayla" (E. Honigmann). The exact timing of this revolt is not clear. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Vol. IV/1. Ed. I. ʿAbbās. Wiesbaden 1979, 163, states that it took place after al-Ḥasan had already left Kufa for Medina, in 41 AH/661-662 CE. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 10, places it in the same year, but claims that al-Ḥasan was still in Kufa. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 217, writes that it occurred in 40 AH/660-661 CE, but does not mention al-Ḥasan at all. Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 234, places a revolt against Muʿāwiya at al-Nukhayla in 41 AH/661-662 CE, but he puts a certain ʿAbdallāh b. Abī al-Ḥawsāʾ in charge of the rebels and does not mention either Farwa b. Nawfal or Khārijites at all. Ibn Abī al-Ḥawsāʾ, in turn, is mentioned by the other sources in connection with a different Khārijite revolt (see below).

[41] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 10; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 217; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 163-164.

of the Syrians over the Iraqis.[42] There are no reports of Khārijite revolts in Syria at all, and Muʿāwiya himself does not appear to have been personally involved in dealing with the Khārijite rebels in Iraq; thus, the remainder of this section will focus on the events and actors in Iraq and Iran, the main *loci* of Khārijite activities, during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya.

Al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba, a member of the tribe of Thaqīf from Ṭāʾif and a Companion, was appointed as governor of Kufa in 41 AH/661-662 CE, a position he retained until his death in 50 or 51 AH/670-671 CE.[43] He had to deal with a number of smaller Khārijite uprisings as well as probably the largest Khārijite revolt during Muʿāwiya's reign, the rebellion of al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllafa in 43 AH/663-664 CE. Al-Mughīra was not personally involved in dealing with any of these insurrections, but instead sent government troops out against the rebels; in each instance, his soldiers succeeded in quelling the revolts and killing, imprisoning or exiling the Khārijites.[44] This revolt can be summarized as follows:

Al-Mustawrid was one of the leaders of the Kufan Khārijites in the early reign of Muʿāwiya. In 42 AH/662-663 CE, the Khārijites in Kufa decided to rebel against the Umayyad governor and elected al-Mustawrid as their commander. However, before they were able to set their plan in motion, a large number of them were arrested and imprisoned by al-Mughīra. Al-Mustawrid was the only prominent Khārijite not to be taken prisoner and he decided to leave Kufa. He settled near al-Ḥīra, but returned to Kufa to seek refuge with a member of the ʿAbd al-Qays, to whom he was related by marriage. When al-Mustawrid's presence there endangered the life and property of his host, the Khārijite left the town once again and took his men towards al-Madāʾin, whose governor refused to let them pass.[45] The rebels relocated towards al-Madhār, a town in the territory of Basra, but ultimately turned back towards Kufa to avoid being caught in between the Kufan troops sent by al-Mughīra and the Basran troops dispatched by the Basran governor.[46] Along the way, there were

[42] On the history of the Umayyad dynasty, see G. Hawting: *The First Dynasty of Islam. The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*. London etc. 1986.
[43] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 87, and Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 247, put his death date in the year 50 AH. Al-Yaʿqūbī puts it as 51 AH.
[44] See e.g. al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 221-222; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 246; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 28-29.
[45] The governor of al-Madāʾin at this time was Simāk b. ʿUbayd.
[46] At the time of al-Mustawrid's revolt, Basra was governed by ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir.

several skirmishes with al-Mughīra's troops, but the final battle took place at Bahurasīr, a former Sasanian city west of the Tigris that formed the western part of al-Madāʾin. Al-Mustawrid and the leader of the Kufan troops, Maʿqil b. Qays, killed each other in a duel; the Kufans under the command of Maʿqil's successor then killed the remaining Khārijites.[47]

As governor of Basra, Muʿāwiya appointed ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir, who had already held this office under the third caliph, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān. However, Ibn ʿĀmir was removed from his position in 44 AH/664 CE and replaced with the famous Ziyād b. Abīhi, who was also appointed governor over Khurāsān, Sijistān, Baḥrayn and ʿUmān.[48] Ziyād, later known as Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān after Muʿāwiya acknowledged him as his half-brother, held the position of governor until his death in 53 or 54 AH/673-674 CE. Moreover, after al-Mughīra's death three years earlier, Ziyād had also been granted the governorship of Kufa, in principle uniting all of Iraq as well as parts of Iran, the Arabian Peninsula and Central Asia under his command.[49]

Ziyād is notorious in the historical tradition for his strict demands for obedience among his subjects and harsh treatment of rebels.[50] Unlike al-Mughīra and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir, he is also reported to have personally dealt with the Khārijite uprisings. While his predecessors' involvement appears to have been restricted to the dispatch of troops, Ziyād is said to have engaged in verbal confrontations with Khārijites, most notably with the Basran quietist Khārijite Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya, and he personally saw to the persecution and crucifixion of several Khārijite insurgents.[51]

Ziyād was succeeded in all of his offices by his son ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād, who seemingly surpassed his father in the cruel treatment of (suspected) Khārijite rebels. He is said to have offered a group of Khārijite rebels their freedom if one half of them killed the other half, which some of the prisoners agreed to, and he had no qualms about killing

[47] For all this, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20-64; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 221; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV, 169-170.
[48] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 73; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 241, who gives the year 45 AH.
[49] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 229; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 229; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 247. Ibn Khayyāṭ places Ziyād's death in the year 50 AH.
[50] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 73-76, 83, 91, 185; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 232.
[51] E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 76, 83-84; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 241, 246, 264; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 173.

women along with the men.[52] His torture and crucifixion of a female Khārijite, along with his continuous persecution of the Khārijites, reportedly led to the famous uprising of Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya[53], either in the last year of Muʿāwiya's reign or the first year of Yazīd's caliphate.[54]

Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān died in 60 AH/680 CE and was succeeded by his son Yazīd, allegiance to whom he had (tentatively) secured against considerable resistance several years before his death. Notwithstanding that, upon Muʿāwiya's demise, opposition to Yazīd I was wide-spread and growing, eventually causing the second civil war of the Islamic *umma* within the space of 25 years. Eminent figures of the Muslim community openly opposed Yazīd's accession to the caliphate, among them al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the Prophet's grandson, but successful resistance was achieved only by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr, the grandson of the first rightly-guided caliph Abū Bakr.

Already in *c.* 61 AH/680-681 CE, Ibn al-Zubayr managed to acquire a large following made up of various different elements united by their opposition to Yazīd I and the Umayyads. Ibn al-Zubayr was based in the Ḥijāz, with Mecca and Medina his primary bases of operation. In 63 AH/682-683 CE, Yazīd sent a large Syrian army against Ibn al-Zubayr that took Medina and then marched onto Mecca, where open hostilities broke out after all attempts at negotiations had failed. The threat posed by the Umayyads to Ibn al-Zubayr, but most importantly to Mecca and the Kaʿba, apparently led many Muslims from all walks of life to flock to the city in order to protect the Sanctuary of God. Among them were also several Khārijites, such as the future chiefs of the Azāriqa and the Najdīya factions of the Khawārij, Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq and Najda b. ʿĀmir respectively[55], as well as al-Mukhtār b. ʿUbayd[56], who would revolt in Kufa in the name of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīya only a few years later and be defeated and killed by Zubayrid forces. While the Syrian forces were engaged in attacking the Kaʿba, news of the sudden death of Yazīd in 64

[52] E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 186-188. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 176, 177, already ascribes this practice to ʿUbaydallāh's father Ziyād.
[53] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 181-182. On Abū Bilāl's revolt, see Chapter Four.
[54] The exact date is unclear. See the remarks in Chapter Four, note 564.
[55] Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 248; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 425-426, 513-515, 529; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 394-395, and IV/2, 372-373, 455.
[56] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 529.

AH/683 CE reached Mecca and saved Ibn al-Zubayr from dire straits.[57] However, this also led to a split between him and the Khārijites, who disagreed with his opinion on ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and thus decided to separate from him once it had become clear that Mecca was no longer under threat.[58]

The death of Yazīd led to a succession crisis in Umayyad Syria, although some of the seeds of discord had already been sown when his father had secured the *bayʿa* for him, and his own short reign appears to have caused considerable discontent, at least as depicted by al-Yaʿqūbī:

> In the first year, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī and the People of the House of God's Messenger were killed, in the second, the *ḥaram* of God's Messenger was attacked and the sanctity of al-Madīna was violated, and in the third, blood was shed in the *ḥaram* of God and the Kaʿba was burned.[59]

Yazīd's son succeeded him, but died after only a few weeks. Yazīd had left no other sons who were of age, and other factions both within the Umayyad family and among the Syrian tribes vied for the office of the caliphate, plunging Syria into civil war.[60] Both Ibn al-Zubayr and the Khārijites used the Umayyads' internal strife to strengthen their own positions: after Yazīd had died, "the mass of people turned to Ibn al-Zubayr."[61] With the exception of Syria, Ibn al-Zubayr successfully managed to bring all of the Islamic core territories under his control: Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Egypt and Palestine were more or less securely governed by Zubayrid governors throughout the remainder of the decade. It is thus not accurate to describe Ibn al-Zubayr as an "anti-caliph"[62] – for many years, Ibn al-Zubayr was the effective ruler of most of the Muslim empire, relegating his Umayyad opponents in Syria to the rank of (increasingly successful) rebels.[63] This also meant that the Khārijites' main foe in the period of the second civil war was Ibn al-Zubayr – Zubayrid forces fought the Najdīya and were also responsible for the death of Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq. The man who

[57] Kennedy, *Prophet*, 90.
[58] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 395, and IV/2, 373.
[59] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 252.
[60] Kennedy, *Prophet*, 90-91.
[61] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 255.
[62] EI^2, "ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr" (H. A. R. Gibb).
[63] C. Robinson: *ʿAbd al-Malik*. Oxford 2007, 31-48.

eventually caused the downfall of the Azāriqa as a whole, al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, was first appointed as commander in charge of pursuing these Khārijites by Ibn al-Zubayr.[64]

The years from *c.* 683-685 saw the formation of the four main factions of the Khārijites as we encounter them in the sources: the Najdīya, the Azāriqa, the Ṣufrīya and the Ibāḍīya.[65] All of them reportedly originated in Basra, and it is from there that many of them left for Mecca to support Ibn al-Zubayr against Yazīd's army. Upon their separation from Ibn al-Zubayr, many Khārijites returned to Basra, which was torn by civil strife following the death of Yazīd. Various tribal factions were in open conflict with one another, wresting control of the city from its resident governor, ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād, who fled to Syria in 683/684 CE[66] and was subsequently killed by al-Mukhtār's forces in 686 CE, when ʿUbaydallāh attempted to return to Iraq and regain control of the province for ʿAbd al-Malik.[67] In this chaotic environment, the Basran Khārijites managed to free those of their brethren who had been imprisoned by ʿUbaydallāh[68]; they grew into a formidable force that inspired terror in their non-Khārijite neighbours. The two militant Khārijite groups, the Azāriqa under Nāfiʿ and the Najdīya led by Nadja, left Basra soon afterward, however. The Azāriqa was at first active mostly in Iraq, where they are said to have indiscriminately murdered anyone who disagreed with them, including fellow Khārijites, until the death of their chief in *c.* 685 in battle against Zubayrid forces. The surviving Khārijites withdrew to Iran, to Fārs, Kirmān and Sijistān, their primary areas of activity until the destruction of the group in the late 70s AH/690s CE.[69]

The Najdīya, on the other hand, successfully gained control over large territory for a time. They controlled parts of Yemen, Bahrain and Ḥaḍramawt; their relative moderation in comparison with the Azāriqa, frequently remarked upon by the primary sources, might be due to their military and political success and the ensuing need for pragmatism in the

[64] See the references in Chapter Five, in the section on al-Muhallab.
[65] Crone, *Political Thought*, 55, argues, however, that the Ṣufrīya and the Ibāḍīya only appeared with the third *fitna* in the later 740s CE.
[66] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 461, 516-518, 581; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 396-427, and IV/2, 106, 401.
[67] Kennedy, *Prophet*, 94.
[68] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 459, 513, 517-518; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, VI/1, 401, 413, and VI/2, 401, 417.
[69] See especially the lengthy, if confusing, accounts in Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 1-47 (in the Zubayrid era), 298-322 (during ʿAbd al-Malik's reign), and VII, 1, 17-83; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 517-520, 580-591, 753-765, 821-828, 855-880, 1003-1019. See also EI^2, "Azāriḳa" (R. Rubinacci).

conducting of everyday affairs.[70] As with all Khārijite groups, the Najdīya is still reported to have suffered from internal conflict: in 72 AH/692 CE, Najda was deposed and killed by a rival who afterwards broke from the main body of the Najdīya and established his own Khārijite faction.[71] Only a year later, the remainders of the Najdīya were destroyed by forces of the Iraqi governor, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf.[72] It is possible, however, that parts of the group survived into the ninth century CE.[73]

Returning to the mid-680s CE, a member of the Umayyad family emerged victorious from the civil war in Syria in 64 AH/684 CE: Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. With him, power was transferred from the Sufyānid branch of the family to the Marwānid line that would remain in power until the Umayyads were overthrown by the ʿAbbāsids in 132 AH/750 CE. Marwān died only a year later, but this time there was no succession crisis.[74] His son ʿAbd al-Malik, whose importance for the development of the Islamic state can hardly be overestimated, acceded to the caliphate without noteworthy opposition from the Syrian factions. He consolidated his power through a combination of shrewd politics and brute military force, culminating in the defeat and death of Ibn al-Zubayr in 73 AH/692 CE. While the death of an eminent Companion such as Ibn al-Zubayr and the preceding siege of Mecca, which led to the destruction of the Kaʿba, certainly left a bitter aftertaste among the audience of the early Islamic literary and oral tradition[75], ʿAbd al-Malik nevertheless managed to unite all of the Muslim lands under his rule and initiate a series of reforms that had a lasting effect on the Islamic Empire.

Having secured his control over the territories previously governed by Ibn al-Zubayr, ʿAbd al-Malik turned to the problem of fighting the Khārijite rebels, who had so far proved to be rather resilient.[76] Probably the most important figure in the battle against

[70] W. Schwartz: *Ǧihād unter Muslimen*. Wiesbaden 1980, 71.
[71] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Vol. IV/2. Eds. ʿA. ʿA. al-Dūrī and I. ʿUqla. Beirut 2001, 453, 462-463; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 829; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 263-264; EI^2, "Nadjadāt" (R. Rubinacci).
[72] Watt, *Formative Period*, 23.
[73] P. Crone: "A Statement by the Najdiyya Khārijites on the Dispensability of the Imamate", *SI* 88 (1998), 55-76, here 56.
[74] Kennedy, *Prophet*, 91-93.
[75] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 386-387, where Ibn al-Zubayr's mother Asmāʾ condemns al-Ḥajjāj in the strongest terms.
[76] Bacharach even argued that the Khārijites posed such a challenge to ʿAbd al-Malik that his coinage reforms of 72-78 AH/692-698 CE should primarily be understood as an attempt to counter their claims to the caliphate.

the various Khārijite groups wreaking havoc in Iraq and Iran in the 690s CE was al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. Al-Ḥajjāj had led the Umayyad troops in battle against Ibn al-Zubayr in 692 CE and had afterwards shown himself very adept at quelling the last remnants of revolt in the Ḥijāz. He was notorious for meting out harsh discipline and punishment, a quality that apparently endeared him to ʿAbd al-Malik, who appointed al-Ḥajjāj as governor of ever-rebellious Iraq in 694 CE.[77] In this capacity, al-Ḥajjāj was responsible for taking care of the Khārijite problem. ʿAbd al-Malik had confirmed al-Muhallab as commander of the troops responsible for pursuing the Azāriqa, who, now led by Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa, were active in Iran.[78] While al-Ḥajjāj seems to have been unconvinced initially that al-Muhallab was the right choice of commander, the sources indicate that he came to revise this opinion.[79]

A Khārijite threat much more immediate to Iraq and al-Ḥajjāj were the revolts of the Jazīran tribesmen Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ and Shabīb b. Yazīd from 76 AH/695 CE onwards. If there was any direct connection between the two, and if so, how exactly they were related, is unclear.[80] In any case, Shabīb's rebellion belongs to the most famous Khārijite uprisings of the seventh century CE. Al-Ṭabarī transmits by far the longest account of Shabīb, but his material is also confusing and contradictory in places.[81] The outline of Ṣāliḥ and Shabīb's revolts is broadly the same in the sources that discuss it, although none of their versions are as detailed as al-Ṭabarī's report. It can be summarized as follows.

J. L. Bacharach: "Signs of Sovereignty: The *Shahāda*, Qurʾanic Verses, and the Coinage of ʿAbd al-Malik", *Muqarnas* 27 (2010), 1-30, 9-14.

[77] EI^2, "al-Ḥadjdjādj b. Yūsuf" (A. Dietrich).

[78] Coin finds from the period 691-695 CE confirm Qaṭarī's presence in Iran and that he claimed the title of *amīr al-muʾminīn* for himself. See W. Madelung: *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*. Albany/New York 1988, 56-57. See also A. Gaiser: "What Do We Learn about the Early Khārijites and the Ibāḍiyya from Their Coins?", *JAOS* 130.2 (2010), 167-187. Nevertheless, apart from the *lā ḥukma* slogan, there does not appear to be anything distinctly Khārijite about these coins, and the slogan in itself is not problematic for Muslims. Moreover, it was also used on Zanj coinage (A. Gaiser: "Source-Critical Methodologies in Recent Scholarship on the Khārijites", *History Compass* 7/5 (2009), 1376-1390, 1382). Qaṭarī is explicitly identified as a Khārijite by the *literary* sources only, an issue commonly overlooked. Gaiser's remarks in "What Do We Learn" in particular read too much into the rather flimsy evidence.

[79] On al-Muhallab's role in the conflict with the Azāriqa and his initial difficulties with al-Ḥajjāj, see Chapter Five, section 5.1.

[80] C. Robinson: *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge 2000, 117-119, and the references cited there.

[81] See Chapter Five, introduction. It is difficult to tell whether this characteristic of his Shabīb story was due to al-Ṭabarī himself or a result of the transmission process of his *Taʾrīkh*.

Ṣāliḥ was known as an ascetic, a pious and humble Muslim whose disgust with the actions of the Umayyads and their agents led him to revolt. However, he was killed by al-Ḥajjāj's troops soon after his *khurūj* in the Jazīra. According to some sources, Shabīb took over command immediately and managed to lead the remaining Khārijites to safety. Over the next two or so years, he defeated a large number of armies sent against him by al-Ḥajjāj, despite being greatly outnumbered each and every time, and he managed to enter Kufa directly under al-Ḥajjāj's nose. His reputation appears contradictory: while Shabīb is said to have engaged in indiscriminate killing, there are also reports of his unwavering piety, reluctance to kill Companions, and superior military skills; one report indicates that the Christians of Mosul held him in much higher regard than the Umayyads. He is shown to have mainly roamed the territories of Iraq and the Jazīra, never staying long in one place, apparently uninterested in ruling any of the cities or regions he invaded. Eventually, he chose to engage al-Ḥajjāj and his troops in combat directly; it is during this battle outside Kufa that he suffered a severe defeat, losing both his brother and his wife – who had accompanied him during his rebellion – to his enemies' swords. While he escaped with his surviving men, he died not long after leaving Kufa. Famously, he did not fall in battle but drowned while trying to escape al-Ḥajjāj's troops.[82]

The Shabīb story in al-Ṭabarī also has strong legendary overtones and contains miraculous material, particularly with regard to Shabīb's birth.[83] The statements uttered by Shabīb's mother are reminiscent of the visions ascribed to the Prophet's mother in the *sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq/Ibn Hishām.[84] Nevertheless, that Shabīb was an important figure is confirmed by the fact that he appears in non-Islamic sources, even if these works do not provide much information at all and differ in the details they give.[85]

Shabīb's defeat marks the end of large-scale Khārijite uprisings during the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik. Khārijites continued to be persecuted by al-Ḥajjāj in Iraq and elsewhere,

[82] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 880-978. See also Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 272-274; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 274-275; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 139-140; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 84-92.
[83] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 976-978.
[84] Compare e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 976, with Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām: *Al-Sīra al-Nabawīya li-Ibn Hishām*. Ed. ʿU. ʿA. Tadmuri. Vol. I, Beirut 1987, 180-181.
[85] Robinson: *Empire*, 117; A. Palmer et al. (eds., trans.): *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*. Liverpool 1993, 79, 205.

including those who did not necessarily express their opposition to the Umayyads in violent deeds. A famous example of the persecution of this particular kind of Khārijite is al-Ḥajjāj's pursuit of the well-known Khārijite poet and scholar ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, who reportedly endured much hardship on his prolonged flight from the Umayyad authorities until his death in 84 AH/703 CE.[86] Nevertheless, thereafter larger Khārijite revolts were comparatively rare and did not pose a threat to the caliphs and their governors until the last few years of Umayyad rule.

Khārijites in the Islamic Tradition and Western Scholarship

Having provided an overview of Khārijite history during the period under study, let us now turn to scholarly interpretations of the formation of Khārijism. Over the past 120 years or so, Islamicists have developed a breadth of opinions and interpretations concerning the question of Khārijite origins and their 'true' motives. It is noteworthy that despite this interest in the rise of Khārijism, to my knowledge only five monographs have ever been published on the topic of Khārijite history and thought in Western scholarship. Of these, two are over a hundred years old[87], while another two are dedicated to the study of Khārijism in its perception by the modern media and in relation to modern-day militant Islamist movements.[88] The remaining work is useful for its survey of sources and occasional translations, but it is descriptive rather than analytical and based uncritically on the Islamic tradition.[89] I have found a further eight studies, most of which are either dedicated to Khārijite poetry and oratory or the treatment of Khārijism in Islamic heresiography. All of these are M.A. or PhD dissertations that with one exception remain

[86] On ʿImrān, see EI^2, "ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān, al-Sadūsī al-Khāridjī" (J. Fück); R. Rubinacci: "Political Poetry", in J. Ashtiany et al. (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Vol. II: ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*. Cambridge 1990, 185-201, 188; F. Sezgin: *GAS. Bd. II: Poesie bis circa 430 H.* Leiden 1967, 352-353. See also the introduction to ʿAbbās' collection of Khārijite poems as well as his notes on the poems attributed to ʿImrān. I. ʿAbbās (ed.): *Diwān Shiʿr al-Khawārij*. Beirut 1974.

[87] R. E. Brünnow: *Die Charidschiten unter den Ersten Omayyaden*. Leiden 1884, and Wellhausen, *Oppositionsparteien*.

[88] H. S. Timani: *Modern Intellectual Readings of the Khārijites.* New York 2007, and Kenney, *Rebels*.

[89] E. A. Salem: *Political Theory and Institutions of the Khawārij*. Baltimore 1956.

unpublished.[90] The articles and book chapters that have been published on the Khārijites mostly follow the same tendency of addressing either Khārijite poetry[91] or particular religious/heresiographical concerns[92], with only a few focusing on other matters such as Khārijite coinage.[93]

The study of Ibāḍism is a whole other issue, of course.[94] Due to the survival and considerable success in Oman and North Africa not only of the group itself, but also of

[90] J. T. Kenney: "The Emergence of the Khawārij: Religion and the Social Order in Early Islam", M. A. thesis, *JUSŪR (UCLA Journal of Middle Eastern Studies)* 5 (1989), 1-29; idem, *Heterodoxy and Culture: The Legacy of the Khawārij in Islamic History*. PhD thesis, University of California (Santa Barbara) 1991; A. C. Higgins: *The Qurʾānic Exchange of the Self in the Poetry of Shurāt (Khārijī) Political Identity 37-132 A.H./657-750 A.D.* PhD thesis, University of Chicago 2001. A revised version of Higgins' dissertation under the title *Secession and Identity in Early Islam: Redefining the Khārijites and Their Challenge to the Umayyads* has been forthcoming from I. B. Tauris for almost three years. The latest publication date was 18 December 2014, but after Higgins' sudden death on 18 September 2014 the work might remain unpublished; G. H. Bathish: *Discourse Strategies: The Persuasive Power of Early Khārijī Poetry*. PhD thesis, University of Washington 1988; Lewinstein, *Studies*; N. Spannaus: *The Azāriqa and Violence among the Khawārij*. A. M. thesis, Harvard University 2007; ʿA. M. al-Ṣāliḥī: *The Society, Beliefs and Political Theory of the Khārijites as Revealed in Their Poetry of the Umayyad Era*. PhD thesis, University of London (SOAS) 1975; M. Zarrou: *Les thèmes réligieux et les réminiscences coraniques chez les poètes de l'ancien islam et les poètes Khārijites*. PhD thesis, University of Paris 1992/93.

[91] F. Donner: "Piety and Eschatology in Early Khārijite Poetry", in M. al-Saʿafin (ed.): *Fī Mihrāb al-Maʿrifa. Festschrift for Ihsan ʿAbbas*. Beirut 1997, 13-19 [English Section]; T. Khalidi: "The Poetry of the Khawārij: Violence and Salvation", in T. Scheffler (ed.): *Religion between Violence and Reconciliation*. Beirut/Würzburg 2002, 109-122; W. al-Qāḍī: "The Limitations of Qurʾānic Usage in Early Arabic Poetry: The Example of a Khārijite Poem", in W. Heinrichs/G. Schoeler (eds.): *Festschrift Ewald Wagner zum 65. Geburtstag. Band II: Studien zur Arabischen Dichtung*. Beirut/Stuttgart 1994, 162-181; F. Gabrieli: "La Poesia Ḫārigita nel Secolo degli Omayyadi", *RSO* 20 (1943), 331-372; A. C. Higgins: "Faces of Exchangers, Facets of Exchange in Early *Shurāt* (Khārijī) Poetry", *BRIIFS* 7.1 (2005), 7-38.

[92] In addition to Lewinstein's works cited at note 6, see e.g. W. M. Watt: "Was Wāṣil a Khārijite?", in M. W. Watt (ed.): *Early Islam. Collected Articles*. Edinburgh 1990, 129-134; idem, "The Significance of Khārijism under the ʿAbbāsids", in Watt, *Early Islam*, 135-139; idem, "Khārijite Thought in the Umayyad Period", *ISL* 36.3 (1961), 215-231; Crone, "Statement ".

[93] E.g. Gaiser, "What Do We Learn"; the chapter on Khārijites in Madelung's *Religious Trends*, 54-76; S. Sears: "Umayyad Partisan or Khārijite Rebel? The Issue of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. MDWL (?), *StI* 31.1 (2002), 71-78; C. Foss: "The Khārijites and Their Coinage", *ONS* 171 (2002), 24-34; idem, "A New and Unusual Khārijite Dirham", *ONS* 182 (2005), 11-13; W. Warden: "A Very Rare Khārijite Propaganda Silver Drahm", *ONS* 92-93 (1984), 4.

[94] Scholarship on Ibāḍism continues to grow. See e.g. A. Ennami: *Studies in Ibāḍism*. N. p. 1972; W. Schwartz/S. b. Yaʿqūb (eds.): *Kitāb Ibn Sallām: Eine ibāḍitisch-maghribinische Geschichte des Islams aus dem 3/9. Jahrhundert*. Wiesbaden 1986; E. Savage: "Survival through Alliance: The Establishment of the Ibadiyya", *BRISMES* 17.1 (1990), 5-15; V. Hofmann: *The Essentials of Ibāḍī Islam.* Syracuse 2012; J. C. Wilkinson: "The Early Development of the Ibāḍī Movement in Basra", in G. H. A. Juynboll (ed.): *Studies in the First Century of Islamic Society*. Carbondale 1982, 125-144; idem, *Ibadism. Origins and Early Development in Oman*. Oxford etc. 2010; P. Crone/F. Zimmermann (eds., trans.): *The Epistle of Sālim b. Dhakwān*. New York 2001; E. Francesca: "The Formation and Early Development of the Ibāḍī Madhhab", *JSAI* 28 (2003), 260-277; A. Gaiser: *Muslims, Scholars, Soldiers: The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibāḍī Imāmate Traditions*. Oxford etc. 2010. A comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary works on Ibāḍism compiled by M. Custers is available from *Oxford Bibliographies*:

considerable archives of Ibāḍī literature that are slowly being opened to Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, there is now an increasing interest in the past and present of the Ibāḍī communities. The existence of hitherto unstudied works of Ibāḍī scholarship also promises new insights into the history and development of Islam in general and thus constitutes an enticing incentive for Islamicists to engage with Ibāḍism in its historical and contemporary form. There is nothing comparable for the study of Khārijite history; the only Khārijite 'sources' that have come down to us are poems and speeches attributed to them in the works of Muslim scholars unsympathetic to their cause, which also explains the preoccupation with Khārijite poetry. This in turn provides at least a partial explanation for the perseverance of positivist approaches to Khārijism: in order to study Khārijite poetry, one necessarily needs to be convinced or at least assume that the poems in question actually are of Khārijite provenance. Often, this leads to an inconsistent treatment of the source material; in an article on Khārijite poetry for instance, Donner laments the late, fragmentary and biased source base for early Islamic history, but argues in the following paragraph that Khārijite poetry "may have been subjected at least to a different kind of editing than those accounts transmitted within the "orthodox" or "Sunni" community" because of "the *fact* that the poetry of the early Khārijites was (initially, at least) circulated and preserved especially among the Khārijites themselves".[95] How he knows this for a "fact" remains a mystery, but this approach is not unusual. Islamicists and Muslim scholars happily continue to revisit the same narratives of Khārijism and to use the same material to then arrive at sometimes radically different interpretations of the Khārijite phenomenon.

The reason for this disparity of opinion is at least partly that there is no consensus on precisely why the Khārijites protested against the arbitration, and what was meant by 'judgment is God's alone'.[96] In consequence, this question has been debated by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in great detail. Many studies of Khārijism by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars tend to follow the established Islamic tradition, which views Khārijism as an expression of religious zealotry that turned into rebellion against the

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http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0112.xml, last accessed on 17 September 2014.

[95] Donner, "Piety", 13 [my italics].

[96] Crone, *Political Thought*, 54.

rightful ruler, excessive violence and heresy. Van Ess, for example, argues that the Khārijites

> considered themselves the only true Muslims… [Their] schism resulted from the claim to exclusive sanctity. Hence, the Khārijites abhorred intermarriage with non-Khārijite Muslims. They also battled their coreligionists everywhere they could. They believed they were dealing not with Muslims of lesser quality but quite simply with unbelievers… As a result, not only were they convinced that all other Muslims would go to hell, but they even felt justified in conducting a jihad against them.[97]

Along the same line, Watt simply declared one particular Khārijite faction "a body of rebels and terrorists"[98], and Foss recently suggested that "[b]y this time [689/699 CE], terrorism had made the Khārijites deeply unpopular with mainstream Islam."[99]

However, some scholars have taken a more nuanced approach to the question of Khārijite origins. Donner in his *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, for instance, acknowledges the tendentious nature of the Islamic tradition which has done much to establish the heretical nature of Khārijism:

> The tendency to view the Khawārij as a "sect" and to emphasize doctrinal issues that eventually led them to be considered "unorthodox" has sometimes obscured the fact that their motivation – which was to establish communities of truly pure Believers – appears to be an exact continuation of the original mission of Muhammad.[100]

This statement not only acknowledges the difficulties in basing our understanding of early Khārijism on Islamic heresiography, it is also significant in that it demonstrates a desire common to many scholars of early Islamic history: to uncover the Khārijites' 'true' intentions, to discover 'what really happened' to cause their violent break with the majority of the Muslim community. In what follows, I will provide an overview of some of the

[97] J. van Ess: *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*. Trans. J. M. Todd. Cambridge 2006, 30-31.
[98] Watt, *Formative Period*, 21.
[99] C. Foss: "Islam's First Terrorists", *History Today*, December 2007, 12-17, 15. As implied by the title, the article lacks a critical analysis of its subject matter and instead gives a purely descriptive account of Khārijite history based on the Islamic tradition.
[100] F. Donner: *Narratives of Islamic Origins – The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*. Princeton 1998, 102.

conclusions Islamicists have drawn in their quest for the origins of Khārijism so as to position my own approach to the question more clearly.

The first academic study of Khārijism was the doctoral thesis of Rudolf Ernst Brünnow, a scholar of Semitic philology, which was published in 1884 under the title *Die Charidschiten unter den ersten Omayyaden*. He argued that the parties who emerged from the first *fitna*, the "orthodox faction", the Shīʿa and the Khawārij, were at that point political in origin. Religious developments only took place at a later stage.[101] The Khārijites, according to Brünnow, were former Bedouins who were "by nature" opposed to the rule of townspeople[102], although he also located them among those veterans of the conquest of Iran who settled in Basra and Kufa.[103] Nevertheless, they clung to their Bedouin roots and chose to elect one of their own as caliph after ʿAlī had lost their respect when he agreed to the arbitration of the two judges.[104] Brünnow concluded that while the *qurrāʾ* were an important faction among the first Khārijites, the most significant group consisted of those conquest veterans. They showed no particular loyalty to ʿAlī already before the Syrians called for arbitration and hence had no qualms about leaving his camp.[105] For all that, Brünnow also argued that their protest at Ṣiffīn was based on religious reasons: judgment should not be given to mere mortals but left to God.[106] This seems to go against his earlier statements about the political nature of the early factions, but unfortunately he did not comment on this apparent contradiction and thus leaves the reader unclear about his final assessment of Khārijite origins.

In 1901, Julius Wellhausen published his *Die religiös-politischen Oppositionsparteien im alten Islam*, in which he arrived at a slightly different conclusion regarding the nature of Khārijism. According to him, the Khārijites originated in the *qurrāʾ*, whom he understood to be reciters of the Qurʾān and hence particularly pious scholars. Wellhausen concluded that their protest at Ṣiffīn was therefore exclusively based on religious reservations. Like Brünnow, he detected a political dimension to their actions, but

[101] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 1-2, 7.
[102] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 9.
[103] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 8.
[104] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 9-10.
[105] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 15-16.
[106] Brünnow, *Charidschiten*, 14.

this dimension was dominated by religious objections, which finally led to a break with the community:

> In diesem Widerspruch zwischen Din und Gamâa, zwischen der Pflicht, Gott und das Recht über Alles zu stellen, und der Pflicht, bei der Gemeinschaft zu bleiben und dem Imâm zu gehorchen, treten die Chavârig entschlossen auf die Seite des Din.[107]

For many years, these two studies remained the only detailed scholarly engagements with the Khārijites. Seven decades after the publication of Wellhausen's *Oppositionsparteien*, M. A. Shaban published his 'new interpretation' of Islamic History in 1971[108], in the course of which he portrayed the Khawārij in a radically different light. Throughout his work, Shaban advocated considering the rational, logical interests of the Arab Muslims. In line with this concern, he identified the predecessors of the Khawārij as those tribesmen who had been loyal to the Islamic polity during the *ridda* wars and thus occupied a privileged socio-economic position under ʿUmar as governors of the fertile *sawād* lands of the former Sasanian Empire. With the accession of ʿUthmān, they lost this position, and, dissatisfied, joined the groups of malcontents that eventually murdered the third caliph. These (proto-) Khawārij first supported ʿAlī because they hoped he would reinstate their former privileges, but after his agreement to the arbitration they separated from him.[109] The motives behind the Khārijite protest before, at and after Ṣiffīn are hence presented as purely socio-economic.

In this interpretation of Khārijism, Shaban raised two issues that had not been seriously considered before: first, that the origin of the Khārijites did not necessarily have to be connected with the battle and arbitration agreement of Ṣiffīn, and second, that Khārijite motives were not inevitably religious in nature. These assumptions were later also taken up by a number of other scholars who will be discussed below.

Independently from Shaban, Martin Hinds published an article on "Kufan Political Alignments and Their Background in the Mid-Seventh Century A.D." in the same year. In

[107] Wellhausen, *Oppositionsparteien*, 14.
[108] M. A. Shaban: *Islamic History: A.D. 600-750 (A.H. 132) – A New Interpretation*. Cambridge 1971.
[109] Shaban, *Islamic History*, 66-68, 76.

this piece, he also argued that the predecessors of the Khārijites were early converts to Islam who lost their privileged position during the caliphate of ʿUthmān. Unlike Shaban, however, Hinds argued that this privileged position was based on *sharaf* ('honour, dignity, eminence'), which in the Islamic system was earned through early conversion (*sābiqa*; 'priority, preference') and participation in the *ridda* and *futūḥ* expeditions rather than membership in a famous tribe. This last aspect was particularly important to the Khārijites-to-be, who mainly belonged to tribal splinter groups and whose social standing hence depended on *sābiqa*.[110] They opposed ʿUthmān's reforms and later the arbitration at Ṣiffīn not because of religious zealotry, but because they associated the undivided authority of the Qurʾān with ʿUmar's rule, under whom they had been favoured and whose example they expected ʿAlī to follow. In other words, political and economic grievances were expressed in the language of religion without necessitating a purely religious motive for discontent. When ʿAlī failed to meet the expectations of these tribal elements, they separated from him.

W. Montgomery Watt offered yet another explanation of Khārijism in his 1973 work *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought.* Like Brünnow, he opined that the Khawārij had originated in the nomadic milieu and attempted to recreate the tribal structures of ancient Arabian Bedouin society on an Islamic basis. Watt pointed out that the Khārijite leaders were former nomads and that the Khārijite way of life resembled that of nomadic tribes: the groups were small in number, outsiders were regarded as enemies, and basic equality prevailed among the men of these groups. He interpreted the accounts of continuing Khārijite revolts after ʿAlī's death as confirmation that the Khawārij were opposed to the system of rule and government established by the Islamic 'state' in general, which to him corroborated his thesis of nomadic origins. However, unlike the pre-Islamic Arabian Bedouins, Khārijite communities were based on Islamic precepts – only the most pious man was elected as leader – and their insistence that the entire Islamic empire be based on the same precepts was in Watt's opinion an important Khārijite contribution to Islamic doctrine.[111]

[110] Hinds, "Kufan Political Alignments", 359-360.
[111] Watt, *Formative Period*, 20; idem, "Khārijite Thought", 217.

A somewhat different approach to the question of Khārijite origins was presented by Gerald Hawting in his 1978 article "The Significance of the Slogan "Lā ḥukma illā li-llāh" and the References to the "Ḥudūd" in the Traditions about the Fitna and the Murder of ʿUthmān".[112] Hawting suggested that a better understanding of terms and slogans such as *lā ḥukma* could be achieved through drawing parallels between the events of the first civil war and similar conflicts in Jewish communities. He pointed out that certain Jewish groups contemporary to the early Islamic community accused others of allowing human beings to partake in God's divine legislation through the use of Oral Law (i.e., the human interpretation of divine provisions and the use of legislative sources other than the Scripture). For them, the use of Oral Law equalled idolatry. Hawting concluded that the first *fitna* was essentially a clash over the authority of the Scripture (here, the Qurʾān) in relation to Oral Law (here, the appointment of arbiters and their use of the *sunna*).[113] Thus, the Khārijite slogan could have been influenced by a parallel conflict in the Jewish communities.[114] Hawting argued that "there are grounds, then, for thinking that the *lā ḥukma* slogan is a summary of the scripturalist position and a protest against the Oral Law rather than a reaction to the arbitration agreement made at Ṣiffīn."[115]

In his 1997 article on "Piety and Eschatology in Early Khārijite Poetry"[116], Fred Donner also argued for a religious motivation of the Khārijite rebels, although he limited his analysis to poetry attributed to Khārijite rebels before the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik, the beginning of which he dated to 65 AH/685 CE.[117] Based on his understanding of the particular concerns of these early Khārijite poems, he concluded that the rebels were extremely pious believers who expressed their religious devotion "in an activist, indeed militant, way" and in this followed the Qurʾānic understanding of godliness.[118] This led him to suggest "that the early Khārijites may represent the real "true Believers" of the early

[112] G.R. Hawting: "The Significance of the Slogan "Lā ḥukma illā li-llāh" and the References to the "Ḥudūd" in the Traditions about the Fitna and the Murder of ʿUthmān", *BSOAS* 41 (1978), 453-463.
[113] Hawting, "Significance", 453.
[114] Hawting, "Significance", 460.
[115] Hawting, "Significance", 461. On Khārijites as scripturalists, see also M. Cook: "ʿAnan and Islam: The Origins of Karaite Scripturalism", *JSAI* 9 (1987), 161-182, especially 172.
[116] Donner, "Piety".
[117] Donner, "Piety", 13.
[118] Donner, "Piety", 14.

community, that is, the truest guardians of the values enshrined in the Qurʾān."[119] According to Donner, Khārijite piety was rooted in the imminent expectation of the eschaton; this *Naherwartung* caused their reckless and violent behaviour, courting death in order to escape God's wrath at the End Time.[120] While he acknowledged that Khārijite poetry does not actually mention the end of time specifically, he posited that the Khawārij may have considered contemporary events such as the *ridda* wars and the early conquests as evidence that the End Time was already upon them.[121] Consequently, "it was urgently important for them to make whatever sacrifices were required in the furtherance of the goal of spreading the hegemony of the righteous community of Believers."[122] Political, economic or social concerns were thus of no consequence to the Khārijites, whose sight was firmly set on the Hereafter.[123]

Finally, Chase Robinson came to yet another conclusion about the nature of Khārijism in his *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest*[124], which was published in 2000. Referring to Hobsbawn's ideas regarding rebels and bandits, Robinson identified the Khārijites of the Jazīra as tribesmen opposed to the rule of the Islamic 'state'[125], and Khārijism as "the Islamic form of that politicised and revolutionary edge of social action towards which banditry, given the appropriate conditions, can move."[126] In this, his

[119] Donner, "Piety", 16.
[120] Donner, "Piety", 17.
[121] Donner, "Piety", 18.
[122] Donner, "Piety", 19.
[123] Donner's ideas about the significance of eschatology for the early Khawārij are taken up and adapted by Paul L. Heck in his "Eschatological Scripturalism and the End of Community: The Case of Early Kharijism" (*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 7 (2005), 137-152), where he combines these ideas with Hawting's arguments laid out in "Significance". However, Heck's assessment of early Khārijism remains unclear and often contradictory. His statement that "Khārijite eschatology, twinned to their own shame at being in the world and on its margins,… offered a framework wherein such shame could be transformed into both hatred and despair of this world as foreign to the reign of God" (150; see also 137, 139, 148, 149-150, 152) appears to be his central point, but is not explained further in any detail. He also seems to offer several different explanations for who the early Khārijites were (137: "a band of marauders"; p. 139a: in the context of the succession crisis after Muḥammad's death, "the first Khārijites insisted that the community was bound together by scripture, the Qurʾan being its effective and exclusive leader (*imām*)"; 139b: "proto-Khārijite tendencies" led to the murder of ʿUthmān, who had been accused of "having introduced innovations into the divinely sanctioned system of distributing the proceeds of conquest"; 141: "a coalescence of tribal elements and an intensely qurʾano-centric piety attributable in large part to the *qurrā'*"); however, he leaves the reader wondering about his final evaluation of the Khārijites' identity and intentions.
[124] Robinson, *Empire*.
[125] Robinson, *Empire*, 110.
[126] Robinson, *Empire*, 113.

argument resembles that of Watt, although Robinson discussed tribesmen in general who do not necessarily have to be Bedouins. Unlike Watt, however, he claimed that it is no longer possible to locate the origins of the Khārijite movement in the events of the first civil war – Robinson argued that the existence of an early monolithic unity from which the Khawārij broke off is as unlikely as an early date (*c.* 683 CE) for the division of Khārijites into subgroups.[127] He claimed that the Khārijite rebels in the Jazīra had a political programme (although he did not actually define their programme nor his understanding of 'programme' in this context)[128], and thus could only be explained in the politicised Marwānid period. According to him, there is no certain evidence of earlier Khārijites, but he did not clarify whether he referred just to the Jazīra or the Muslim territories in general. For the Jazīra at least, Robinson argued that no Khārijites should be expected prior to the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik, as there were no state structures in the Jazīra to rebel against.[129]

Research Interests and Sources

This overview of the many different approaches to the origins of Khārijism illustrates that there is no simple and certainly no single satisfactory answer to this issue; the "rise of Kharijism" is certainly not "clear in the main."[130] What is most important here, however, is that despite the differences in approach, use of sources and ultimate conclusions, all of the above explanations have three things in common: they all work reasonably well within their own frame of reference – that is, they all sound plausible to a greater or lesser extent[131]; they are all based on some form of source or tradition criticism; and, most importantly, they all attempt to provide a more plausible story of how Khārijism emerged.

The significance of this last point cannot be overemphasized. The bulk of studies on

[127] Robinson, *Empire*, 111.
[128] Robinson, *Empire*, 110. See also p. 113 ("These were warrior saints who did have a programme"; Arabic sources apparently speak of a local tradition of Khārijism, "at the core of which was a programme of pious activism."). He does not explain either what exactly he understands 'Khārijism' to be beyond a mode of expressing opposition, where its origins lay, or how, where and why the accounts locating the Khārijite origins at Ṣiffīn came into being.
[129] Robinson, *Empire*, 110.
[130] Heck, "Eschatological Scripturalism", 139.
[131] Commenting on the merits and short-comings of the individual interpretations is both beyond the scope of this chapter and beside the point, as will be shown below.

Islamic history and historiography still largely remains faithful to the Islamic tradition, in part certainly because dismissing it would have some rather irksome consequences for the writing of Islamic history. This is particularly true for comprehensive surveys of Islamic history.[132] But dismissal is not the only alternative; it is no real alternative at all. On the other hand, acknowledging the literary nature of (Islamic) historiography does not diminish its usefulness as a source. It is true that historical events do not have intrinsic meanings in the way literary texts do; it is the historian who endows them with a particular meaning by casting them in one literary form or another.[133] While this is "essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation", "to call it that in no way detracts from the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge."[134] On the contrary: "If we view history as a literary composition, as a textual construction rather than a reconstruction, we are not limiting history but emancipating it."[135] What we have to dispense with is the idea that historiography can provide scientific knowledge as attained by the study of the natural sciences.[136] Still, many Islamicists remain sceptical of this idea. Consequently, the majority of works critical of the Islamic tradition have tended to avoid wholesale dismissal of the positivist approach in favour of re-examining the classical Islamic sources to arrive at a more convincing explanation of 'what really happened'.[137] Ultimately, then, both

[132] F. Donner: "Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History", in C. Robinson (ed.): *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. I: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*. Cambridge 2010, 623-647, 629, 633. See also P. Crone: *Slaves on Horses. The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*. Cambridge 1980, 13, 14-15; T. El-Hibri: *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*. Cambridge 1999, 12. However, even scholars approaching Islamic history from a sceptical or literary-critical point of view cannot escape positivist statements. See e.g. P. Cobb: "Review of Tayeb El-Hibri's *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*", *JAOS* 121.1 (2001), 109-110, 110.

[133] C. Robinson: "History and Heilsgeschichte in Early Islam: Some Observations on Prophetic History and Biography", conference paper (2012), available at http://chaserobinson.net/files/2014/03/HeilgeschichteMarch2014.pdf, last accessed 02.12.2014. See also Watt's distinction between a person's external acts and the internal motives ascribed to them in *Muḥammad at Mecca*. Oxford 1953, xiv.

[134] H. White: *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore etc. 1978, 85.

[135] A. Munslow: "Authority and Reality in the Representation of the Past", *Rethinking History* 1 (1997), 75-87, 85.

[136] White, *Tropics*, 23.

[137] See e.g. J. E. Montgomery (ed.): *ʿAbbasid Studies. Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*. Leuven etc. 2004, 1-22, 6. This, of course, was also a major objective of the early Muslim historians, which contributes to the difficulties in recognizing rhetorical and literary devices. See R. Hoyland: "History, Fiction and Authorship in the First Centuries of Islam", in J. Bray (ed.): *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*. New York etc. 2006, 16-46, 17-18, 21-22.

approaches, the faithful and the critical, "share a common ground in their attempt to differentiate between fact and fiction."[138]

The idea that "texts designed as "history" cannot be treated simply as databanks, but are legitimate candidates for linguistic inquiries and literary analyses" is indeed rather novel in the discipline of Islamic Studies[139], even though the treatment of Islamic historiographical works as *texts* rather than "mere mines for fact" had already been advocated by Marshall Hodgson[140] and (to a lesser extent) Franz Rosenthal.[141] Furthermore, since the linguistic turn[142] in the early 20th century and increasingly since the 1970s, the disciplines of History, Philosophy of Language and Literary Studies have produced an ever-growing mass of scholarship on the relationship between history, fiction and literature[143], but the findings of these studies have not had as significant an effect on the

[138] B. Shoshan: *Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*. Leiden/Boston 2004, xxv. See also Hoyland, "History", 18, 19. This can be observed even in the works of scholars who are sceptical of the Islamic tradition. See e.g. S. Leder/H. Kilpatrick: "Classical Arabic Prose Literature: A Researchers' Sketch Map", *JAL* 23.1 (1992), 2-26, 14, 16; K. Lang: "Review of Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*", *JNES* 62.2 (2003), 111-112, 112; A. Rippin: "Review of *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsid Apologetics* by Jacob Lassner", *BSOAS* 51.3 (1988), 552-553, 553, where Rippin criticizes rather forcefully Lassner's approach to ʿAbbāsid historiography: "Behind all the words it is hard to avoid the sense of seeing a traditional historian being a bit more cautious than in the 'good old days' when positivism was rampant. The change, at least in this instance, would seem to be more cosmetic than paradigmatic."

[139] Shoshan, *Poetics*, xxiv. See also Robinson, "Heilsgeschichte", 1; J. S. Meisami: "Masʿūdī on Love and the Fall of the Barmakids", *JRAS* 2 (1989), 252-277; eadem, "Masʿūdī and the Reign of al-Amīn: Narrative and Meaning in Medieval Muslim Historiography", in P. Kennedy (ed.): *On Fiction and* Adab *in Medieval Arabic Literature*. Wiesbaden 2005, 149-176, 149-150.

[140] M. Hodgson: "Two Pre-Modern Muslim Historians: Pitfalls and Opportunities in Presenting them to Moderns", in: J. Nef (ed.): *Towards World Community*. The Hague 1968, 53-68, especially 57, 62-63. The quote is on 65.

[141] F. Rosenthal: *A History of Muslim Historiography*. 2nd rev. ed., Leiden 1968, 67, 70.

[142] On the linguistic turn, see e.g. E. A. Clark: *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*. Cambridge etc. 2004; M. Böhm et al. (eds.): *Nach dem "linguistic turn": Sprachwissenschaft im Wandel*. Duisburg 2011; B. Lindorfer: "Der Diskurs der Geschichte und der Ort des Realen: Roland Barthes' Beitrag zum Linguistic Turn der Geschichtsschreibung", in J. Trabant (ed.): *Sprache der Geschichte*. Munich 2005, 87-105; G. Spiegel (ed.): *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*. New York 2005.

[143] A seminal work is the study by Hayden White: *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore etc. 1987. See also the collection of White's essays in *Tropics*. Other important works are e.g. G. Spiegel: *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*. Baltimore 1997; E. Tyler/R. Balzaretti (eds.): *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*. Turnhout 2006; Y. Hen/M. Innes (eds.): *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge 2000; P. J. Geary et al. (eds.): *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory, Historiography*. Cambridge/Washington 2002; P. J. Geary: *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium*. Princeton 1994; R. McKitterick: *The Carolingians and the Written Word*. Cambridge 1989.

field of Islamic Studies as one would have hoped.[144] To date, only a minority of Islamicists have followed Hodgson's suggestions or utilized the insights of historians of medieval Europe, for example[145], despite the obvious advantages of such an approach – the issue of factual authenticity, for example, can largely be avoided, and by reading the medieval historiographies as literary products, we are more likely to get a sense of the author-compilers' conceptualizations of their works.[146] This reluctance is by no means restricted to Islamicists: medievalists and historians in general often reject the linguistic turn

> because in treating documents as texts rather than sources, it suggests the instability and opacity of all and any knowledge of the past, while at the same time (perhaps more important?) attacking the very foundations on which medievalists had constructed their professional legitimacy, involved as it had always been with mastery of highly technical (rather opaque) fields such as palaeography, diplomatics, codicology, and so on, not to mention all those "dead" languages.[147]

Of course, accepting the implications of the linguistic turn in the context of early Islamic history is not to say that the entire Islamic tradition of the formative periods should be disregarded as mere invention. The idea that the Muslim scholars of the seventh-early ninth century CE, from the Iberian Peninsula to the Indian Subcontinent, secretly all agreed on replacing the 'true' history of their community with a wholly imaginary story is preposterous indeed: "serious historians do not hold conspiracy theories about the rise of

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[144] Hoyland, "History", 19.

[145] A literary approach to Islamic historiography is advanced among others in the following works: M. R. Waldman: *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative. A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography*. Columbus 1980; Shoshan, *Poetics*; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting*; idem, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs*. New York 2010; S. Leder: "Features of the Novel in Early Historiography: The Downfall of Xālid al-Qasrī", *Oriens* 32 (1990), 72-96; idem, "The Literary Use of the *Khabar*: A Basic Form of Historical Writing", in: A. Cameron/L. I. Conrad (eds.): *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*. Vol. I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material*. Princeton 1992, 277-315; A. Noth/L. I. Conrad: *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition – A Source-Critical Study*. 2nd edition, Princeton 1994; J. S. Meisami: *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*. Edinburgh 1999; F. Malti-Douglas: "Texts and Tortures: The Reign of al-Muʿtaḍid and the Construction of Historical Meaning", *Arabica* 46 (1999), 313-336; D. Beaumont: "Hard-Boiled: Narrative Discourse in Early Muslim Traditions", *SI* 83 (1996), 5-31; K. Franz: *Kompilation in arabischen Chroniken. Die Überlieferung vom Aufstand der Zanǧ zwischen Geschichtlichkeit und Intertextualität vom 9. bis ins 15. Jahrhundert*, Berlin etc. 2004; K. Hirschler: *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors*, London etc. 2006. See also the articles in J. Bray (ed.): *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam. Muslim Horizons*. London etc., 2006.

[146] See Meisami, "Masʿūdī", 270.

[147] Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 73-74. For this issue among Islamicists, see Cobb, "Review", 109.

Islam."[148] Nevertheless, the literary dimension in the study of Islamic historical writing is still frequently neglected, much to the detriment of our understanding of the sources. After all, what is now broadly accepted for medieval European history, that historiography was not primarily intended to record facts but to convey truth and meaning[149], most definitely also applies to medieval Islamic historiography.[150] (It goes without saying that the modern historian is no "neutral reader"[151] but just as influenced by his/her own *Weltanschauung*, upbringing or education than his/her medieval counterpart, and that such influences are readily observable in the former's own works.[152])

With regard to Khārijism, two works do however constitute a (partial) exception from the tendency among scholars to unearth the 'true' origins of the Khārijites: Thomas Sizgorich's book on *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity*[153] and Tayeb El-Hibri's study *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History*.[154]

Sizgorich studies the connections between Khārijite piety and militance in the Islamic tradition as narrative tropes without explicitly seeking to reconstruct the emergence of Khārijism or the 'real' intentions of its proponents. However, his approach to the portrayal of Khārijites does not appear wholly consistent: at times, he seems to read the traditional accounts of Khārijism as narratives intended to convey and contrast certain ideas and ideals[155], while elsewhere in the same book, he appears to be inclined to accept some of

[148] Robinson, *Historiography*, 53.
[149] On this, see Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 5, 43, 83, 84, 85, 89-90.
[150] See e.g. Hodgson, "Pre-Modern", 62, 63; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting*, 13; B. Radtke: "Towards a Typology of ʿAbbāsid Universal Chronicles", *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbāsid Studies* 3 (1990), 1-14; A. Peacock: *Medieval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy*. London etc. 2007, 1.
[151] As argued by El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting*, 53.
[152] In Hodgson's words: "Careful studies have shown the degree to which even leading Islamicists have been determined, in their approach to the products of Islamicate culture, by their several Western allegiances, religious or cultural." Hodgson, "Pre-Modern", 64. See also his discussion on 65-67, and Robinson, "Heilsgeschichte", 1-2; Hoyland, "History", 18.
[153] T. Sizgorich: *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*. Philadelphia 2009.
[154] See above, note 145.
[155] See e.g. p. 17: "In the figure of the Khārijite, then, was embodied a seductive danger that resided in the consequences of the Muslim *umma*'s formative narratives and so in the imaginative basis for identity formation within that community"; p. 195: "It is necessary, then, that one proceed with a good deal of caution in approaching the… sources for Khārijī history. What these sources can tell us… is what … early Islamic authors thought of the Khawārij, how they imagined them and what they believed motivated them."

these reports as historical fact.[156] This oscillation between a historicizing and a literary take on Khārijism thus leaves the reader slightly puzzled as to the author's understanding of Khārijites: were they in actual fact violent pietists in the late antique tradition of saints and martyrs analysed in the first chapters of Sizgorich's book, or were they *remembered* as such by the early Islamic tradition so as to illustrate and subsequently condemn "the potential for discord, disunity, and bloodshed that resided in the volatile mix of revelation, ascetic rigor, and an evolving mythology of righteous raiding"?[157]

Tayeb El-Hibri on the other hand clearly rejects the historicity of the accounts of the entire early Islamic tradition: "the story preserved in the early Islamic narratives was neither real in its details nor intended to be factual."[158] He argues for "an alternative reading of [early Islamic] history as a largely parabolic cycle of literary narrative."[159] His book does not focus on Khārijites specifically and hence does not undertake a close analysis of their representation in the Islamic tradition, but the author makes some intriguing observations on the narrative function of Khārijism in the accounts pertaining to ʿAlī's confrontations with the rebels. His conclusions will thus be referred to in Chapter Three.

In addressing issues of textual representation, the present thesis departs from the works mentioned in the literature review of the preceding section: unlike any other study of Khārijite origins, it has no aspirations as to the provision of yet another interpretation of what Khārijism was, or where and why it began. Of interest here is not the plausibility of one particular interpretation or the differentiation between 'factual' and 'fictional' accounts of Khārijism; as I will show below, such an endeavour would be haphazard at best. This study will therefore approach Khārijite history from a literary analysis perspective and focus on the *narrative role and functions* of Khārijites in the main historiographical works

[156] See e.g. p. 197: Khārijites were "men who had chosen rebellion and murder as the only way to preserve the one true community of God upon the earth"; p. 216: "The bonds of Islamic identity were no protection in these encounters [between Khārijites and non-Khārijites] as the Khawārij pounced upon their victims and hacked away with their swords"; p. 277: Ibn Ḥanbal and most of his contemporaries "vehemently rejected the behavior of the Khawārij, even as he closely adhered to what we know of their vision of the very early Islamic past and their notions of pious praxis."
[157] Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief*, 167.
[158] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, 237.
[159] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, ix.

of the Islamic tradition without attempting to offer an alternative explanation of their emergence.

This approach has two primary benefits: it allows us to circumvent the problems posed by the pursuit of factual history, and it enables us to look at the historiographical tradition as a whole rather than focusing on those individual compilers and works that appear to provide a more plausible picture of the history of Khārijism. This way, it will be possible to arrive at a more profound and more fully developed understanding of what Khārijites came to signify, how they were remembered and how (if at all) this memory of Khārijism was contested among the compilers and their sources. Moreover, juxtaposing the different accounts of Khārijism in works of the historiographical tradition might also shed some light on the debates and arguments found therein regarding early Islamic history more generally as well as on the process in which this past was negotiated and reformulated.

The thesis is based on a representative selection of the major chronicles from the formative period of Islamic historiography (second-fourth century AH/eighth-tenth century CE). The main sources, all of them of Iraqi provenance[160], are Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī (now commonly dated as fl. *c*. 200 AH/815 CE)[161], *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*; Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 241 AH/854 CE), *Taʾrīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ*; al-Balādhurī (d. 279 AH/893 CE), *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*; Abū Ḥanīfa al-Dīnawarī (d. 281 AH/894 CE), *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*; al-Yaʿqūbī (d. *c.* 283 AH/905 CE), *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*; al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH/923 CE), *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*; al-Masʿūdī (d. 345 AH/956 CE), *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar*. For Chapter Three, I also included *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* ascribed to Naṣr b. Muzāḥim al-Minqarī (d. 827 CE), as his monograph on the battle and arbitration of Ṣiffīn is of importance for my analysis of Khārijism during the caliphate of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

[160] The predominance of Iraqi material can perhaps be explained with the region's significance for the development of religious scholarship. See Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 2-3. On the scarcity of early Islamic historical works from Syria, see G. Rotter: "Abū Zurʿa ad-Dimašqī (st. 281/894) und das Problem der frühen arabischen Geschichtsschreibung in Syrien", *WO* 6 (1971), 80-104; N. Khalek: *Damascus After the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam*. Oxford 2011, chapter 2 and 142-143; and F. Donner: "The Problem of Early Arabic Historiography in Syria", in M. A. Bakhit (ed.): *Proceedings of the 2nd Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām – Early Islamic Period*. Vol. I, Amman 1987, 1-27.

[161] This date appears to be rather early, but in the absence of firm data I follow the date given in the entry on Ibn Aʿtham in the EI^2 (M. A. Shaban). In Chapter Six, I will discuss the issue of dating Ibn Aʿtham's life and work in more detail.

The historiographical works are occasionally supplemented by literature generally classified as biography such as Ibn Saʿd's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*. I also opted to include al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* as a major source for this study even if it is not necessarily a work of historiography in the sense of al-Ṭabarī's or al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*. I believe this is a valid choice as the *Ansāb* is a combination of biography and historiography, indeed a curious mixture of *ṭabaqāt*, *nasab* and *taʾrīkh*, with the latter frequently overshadowing the former in the narrating of *akhbār* that have little to do with the biographee in question but are important in the context of another event discussed within that particular biographical section.[162] Because of al-Balādhurī's interest in edifying and entertaining stories and his position as a boon companion to two ʿAbbāsid caliphs, his work has also been identified as an example of *adab*.[163] Indeed, his portrayal of Khārijite history appears to overlap considerably with works of *adab* such as al-Mubarrad's *al-Kāmil fī-l-Lugha wa-l-Adab*, which contains a number of Khārijite episodes preserved by al-Balādhurī but no other historiographer considered here.[164] Nevertheless, while there are "distinctive functions of biographical as opposed to historical discourse"[165], there is a great deal of overlap between the two forms of literature, so much so that it is often difficult to draw a line between biographical and 'properly' historical writing.[166] Of course, this applies to the early Islamic tradition in general: genres were not sharply delineated and often shared narrative conventions as well as material. This is particularly true concerning historiography and *adab*.[167]

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[162] EI^2, "al-Balādhurī" (C. H. Becker/F. Rosenthal).

[163] See I. Hasson: "Ansāb al-ašrāf d'al-Balāḏurī est-il un livre de *Taʾrīḫ* ou d'*adab*?", *Israel Oriental Studies* 19 (1999), 479-493. On *adab* as a literary genre and intellectual concept, see S. A. Bonebakker: "*Adab* and the Concept of *Belles-Lettres*", in Ashtiany et al (eds.), *Belles-Lettres*, 16-30.

[164] Compare e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 389-390 with O. Rescher (trans.): *Die Kharidschitenkapitel aus dem Kāmil (nach der Ausgabe William Wright's) – ein Specimen der älteren arabischen Adab-Literatur*. Stuttgart 1922, 102-104, and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 392-393 with Rescher, *Kharidschitenkapitel*, 105-106.

[165] M. Cooperson: *Classical Arabic Biography. The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn*. Cambridge etc. 2000, 22.

[166] On the similarities, differences and interconnectedness of history and biography, see Cooperson, *Biography*, 18-23, 192.

[167] S. Leder: "The Use of Composite Form in the Making of the Islamic Historical Tradition", in Kennedy (ed.), *Fiction and* Adab, 125-148, 126-127. On the difficulties of defining genre, see Robinson, *Historiography*, 56-57, who lists both prosopography and biography among the genres of historiography (55-79 and *passim*). Ibn al-Nadīm includes al-Balādhurī in the section on *akhbārīs* and genealogists. B. Dodge

The formative period of Islamic historiography witnessed the compilation, collection and reworking of the available earlier narratives. It is at this time that the first annalistic works and universal histories were composed, combining and recombining the narrative material.[168] After the fourth-fifth century AH/tenth-eleventh century CE, the consensus regarding the early history of the *umma* "ceased to be actively worked out and reworked" because "a suitable position was already present in existing works", and because the 'classical' issues of succession, *fitna* and legitimate rule ceased to be of immediate importance to the *umma*.[169] While later works do engage in the reformulation and renegotiation of these fundamental themes to some extent[170], post-fourth century AH/tenth century CE works treating the early period of Islam are mainly based on the works of the classical period. In some cases they preserve what appears to be early material, Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq* being a case in point[171], but they will not be included in my discussion as I am primarily interested in the representation of Khārijism in the emerging historiographical tradition of the third and fourth centuries AH/ninth and tenth centuries CE. For this reason, as well as due to space constraints, works of other genres such as *tafsīr*, *adab* or legal writings cannot be systematically included in the discussion either.

Literary Approaches to Khārijite History

In order to understand the difficulties created by factual history and to argue for a literary approach to early Islamic history in general and Khārijite history in particular, the following section will look at a number of studies whose research on the literary forms and

(ed., trans.): *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*. Vol. I, New York 1970, 247.

[168] Donner, *Narratives*, 280-281.

[169] Donner, *Narratives*, 291.

[170] See e.g. H. Keaney: "The First Islamic Revolt in Mamlūk Collective Memory: Ibn Bakr's (d. 1340) Portrayal of the Third Caliph ʿUthmān", in S. Günther (ed.): *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal. Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*. Leiden etc. 2005, 375-402, 398-400. See now also her *Medieval Islamic Historiography. Remembering Rebellion*. New York etc. 2013, especially chapters 3-5.

[171] See the collected articles in J. Lindsay (ed.): *Ibn ʿAsākir and Early Islamic History*. Princeton 2001, in particular Lindsay's own contribution, "Ibn ʿAsakir, His Taʾrīkh madinat Dimashq and its Usefulness for Early Islamic History", 1-23.

functions of early Islamic historiographical material has profound implications for the study of both fields. The results of these studies had a fundamental influence on the methodological approach of this thesis and will thus be discussed at some length in what follows.

In the preceding section, I alluded to the fact that most studies of early Islamic history and historiography still focus on factual history: they attempt to reconstruct 'what actually happened' by re-interpreting the data provided by the Islamic tradition without questioning its basic framework.[172] Scholarship on Khārijite history is no exception to this, as the above overview of opinions regarding the 'true' nature of Khārijism has illustrated. This approach, however, is not sustainable; a close analysis of the accounts that deal with Khārijite origins reveals that they are concerned not with Khārijism itself, but with a variety of other actors and topics. This will become apparent not only in the analysis of the content of the literary forms present in these accounts – the subject matter of letters, speeches and sermons – but also of the structural components of the reports in question. These structural components consist of the details on Khārijite leaders, dates, names, sequence of events or places that were variously used as pieces of evidence for one or the other theory by those scholars who attempted to reconstruct the history of Khārijism. Taking a closer look at this data, however, shows that it does not provide much information on the Khārijites either. Rather, it appears to belong to various different *topoi* and *schemata*, concepts which were introduced to the field of early Islamic history and literature in the mid-1960s. This renders the use of this data for the purpose of (re)constructing Khārijite history highly problematic.

In his 1965 PhD dissertation on *Topoi und Schemata im Ḥadīṯ*[173], Eckart Stetter analysed the formal structure and thematic content of Traditions preserved in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* and came to the following conclusion: "Eine auch nur oberflächliche Lektüre des Ḥadīṯ… [führt] zur Feststellung nicht allein inhaltlicher Klischees, sondern auch formaler Gesetzmäßigkeiten."[174] These clichés of content he called *topoi*; the formal organization of that content, which he showed follow well-established and oft-repeated patterns, he called

[172] On this, see also G. Hawting: *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*. Cambridge 1999, 9.
[173] E. Stetter: *Topoi und Schemata im Ḥadīṯ*. Tübingen 1965.
[174] Stetter, *Topoi*, 35.

schemata. His work was based on studies of antique and medieval European as well as Biblical and Jewish literature, such as Curtius' *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, which introduced the term *topos* to the study of medieval literature[175], or Bultmann's *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*. As these works appeared to focus mostly on *schemata*, Stetter's dissertation also dedicated much more space to the investigation of these than to the analysis of the *topoi* of *ḥadīth* literature.[176]

The section on *topoi* is concerned with the situational introduction at the beginning of the *matn* of a *ḥadīth*, where the scene is set for the particular statement or action that the Tradition is meant to convey. Stetter focused mostly on aspects related to the Prophet's facial expressions, gestures and bodily positions, identifying a host of oft-repeated descriptions such as Muḥammad resting his head on someone's thighs[177], laughing loudly[178], or sitting in a mosque or *majlis*[179]. Other *topoi* include the negative reputation of Bedouins[180] and the frequent repetition of phrases meant to enhance the impression of a transmitter's reliability[181]. This feature of the *ḥadīth* literature, Stetter argued, can be explained by the very act of collecting and editing the Traditions:

> Typisierte Situationen, floskelhafte Wendungen, bestimmte Motive und stereotype Formeln und Ausdrücke weisen auf einen Schatz traditioneller Elemente hin, auf den die Redaktoren für ihre vielfältigen Zwecke zurückgreifen konnten.[182]

In short: far from describing 'historical' events, the *ḥadīth* literature is characterized by a limited number of themes that were inserted into the individual Traditions at the collectors' discretion.

Stetter's investigation of the *schemata* that abound in *ḥadīth* literature is much more extensive. This is at least in part due to the comprehensive stylization of this type of literature, and it is not restricted to the words and deeds of the Prophet himself: "Mehr oder

[175] Stetter, *Topoi*, 1.
[176] The section on *topoi* covers pp. 4-34, the section on *schemata* pp. 35-122.
[177] Stetter, *Topoi*, 11, 16-17.
[178] Stetter, *Topoi*, 27.
[179] Stetter, *Topoi*, 5-7.
[180] Stetter, *Topoi*, 28-30.
[181] Stetter, *Topoi*, 31-33.
[182] Stetter, *Topoi*, 34.

weniger alles Reden und Tun, das sich in Traditionsberichten niedergeschlagen hat, vollzieht sich in stilisierter Form."[183] Much more so than the section on *topoi*, the examination of *schemata* is based on studies of ancient Hebrew and Biblical literature, indicating an explicit influence of the Jewish and Christian tradition on the formation of Islamic thought and literature. In line with these studies, Stetter identified a variety of formal structures in the organization of *ḥadīth* content, dealing mostly with basic literary elements such as rhetorical questions, prayers and admonitions. His analysis of the formal structures draws attention to the use of *Zahlensprüche*[184], parallelism in form and content[185], sequential ordering of words and formulas[186], and particularly the triplication of narrative content[187]. In addition to these scriptural features of *ḥadīth* literature, Stetter also pointed out a number of aural elements, such as the use of rhyme and assonance.[188] These aural elements contributed to his conclusion that the oral tradition persisted for quite some time after the emergence of Islam.[189]

Stetter's dissertation was the first systematic literary analysis of the Islamic tradition that pointed out the presence of *topoi* and *schemata* in our sources. His main conclusions are of unquestionable importance to my own approach to the sources, but of much greater significance to the present thesis was the work of Albrecht Noth. In 1968, he published an article on the depiction of the conquest of Iṣfahān in a report transmitted by a number of sources from Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-Kharāj* to al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*.[190] After thorough investigation, Noth concluded that this report consisted almost entirely of distinct narrative motifs (*Erzählmotive*) that were by no means particular to the conquest of Iṣfahān but recurred in several other *futūḥ* traditions, most prominently on the conquest of Nihāwand. This latter account, he argued, in fact represented the origin of the Iṣfahān tradition that

[183] Stetter, *Topoi*, 35.
[184] Stetter, *Topoi*, 71-79. On numbers in Islamic historiography, see also L. Conrad: "Seven and the Tasbīʿ: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History", *JESHO* 31, 42-73.
[185] Stetter, *Topoi*, e.g. 48-49, 51-59.
[186] Stetter, *Topoi*, 40-51 and *passim*.
[187] Stetter, *Topoi*, 36-43, 53-54 and *passim*.
[188] Stetter, *Topoi*, 41-43.
[189] Stetter, *Topoi*, 50.
[190] A. Noth: "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie", *ZDMG* 118 (1968), 274-296.

owes its existence entirely to the Nihāwand tradition.[191] The substitution of Iṣfahān for Nihāwand occurred because of the indifference of the report's narrative motifs: they lacked a specific relation to a particular conquest and could thus be recycled for use in other conquest narratives.[192] In short:

> man [komponierte] Traditionen…, indem man eine Reihe von mehr oder weniger selbstständigen Erzählmotiven, die zum eisernen Bestand der *futūḥ*-Überlieferung gehörten, zu einem größeren Ganzen zusammensetzte.[193]

Neither the Iṣfahān nor the Nihāwand tradition should therefore be used for a historical reconstruction of how the conquest of either city was accomplished.[194]

In the conclusion of this article, Noth stated that he was working on a larger study of the historiographical tradition to investigate the occurrence of *topoi* beyond the case study of the conquest of Iṣfahān/Nihāwand. He submitted this study as his *Habilitationsschrift* under the title *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung* in two volumes, only the first of which was ever published, in 1973.[195] An English translation of the revised and updated first volume (on *Themen und Formen*) of this groundbreaking work was published in 1994 in collaboration with Lawrence Conrad. The English translation, entitled *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*[196], has become one of the standard works in the field of Arabic and Islamic historiography, despite some criticism such as its almost exclusive focus on *futūḥ* material.[197]

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[191] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 276-277, 283. Noth reached the same conclusion regarding the occurrence of *topoi* in the early historiographical tradition in his "Der Charakter der ersten grossen Sammlungen von Nachrichten zur frühen Kalifenzeit", *ISL* 47 (1971), 168-199, 188.
[192] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 278-279.
[193] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 294.
[194] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 294.
[195] A. Noth: *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*. Bonn 1973.
[196] A. Noth/L. Conrad: *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*. Princeton 1994.
[197] See e.g. C. Robinson: "The Study of Islamic Historiography: A Progress Report", *JRAS* 7.2 (1997), 199-227, and the reviews by T. El-Hibri, *JAOS* 18.1 (1998), 114-118, and R. Hoyland, *BSOAS* 60.1 (1997), 130-131.

Like Stetter, Noth drew attention to the issue of *topoi* and *schemata*, which feature abundantly in early Islamic historiography.[198] However, Noth's work encompassed a much larger range of source material, paid significantly more attention to *topoi*, and went into much greater detail than Stetter's analysis had done. Noth's study was also more systematic than Stetter's, who mostly refrained from providing definitions of key terminology or discussing his methodological approach – Stetter's introduction covers two and a half pages, and his conclusion is only two pages long. Beyond the investigation of *topoi* and *schemata* in Islamic historiography, Noth's work offered important findings for the study of this particular genre in general, such as his refutation of the theory of historical "schools" first developed by Wellhausen[199] or his recognition of the impact of Islamic law on the formation of the historical tradition[200]. For the purpose of this thesis, I will nevertheless focus mostly on his discussion of *topoi* and *schemata*.

In *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, a *topos* is defined as "a narrative motif which has as its primary function the specification of *content*, and aims to elaborate matters of fact."[201] Such *topoi* may be grounded in fact but turn into literary devices when they become transferable. Noth distinguished between this form of narrative technique and another type of literary tool, the *schema*, which he defined as "a narrative motif that is first and foremost concerned with matters of *form*, with connecting, relating, and organizing matters of content."[202] Unlike a *topos*, a *schema*'s grounding in fact is "purely coincidental" – in fact, it emerges precisely in situations whose "genuine interpretative connections and relations are not known. Its raison d'etre is to fill such voids, and since the point of departure is lack of knowledge, this process is a completely arbitrary one."[203]

In keeping with Noth's findings, it can be observed that the accounts of Khārijite history in the historiographical sources display an array of *topoi* and *schemata*. In the

[198] See e.g. also L. Conrad: "Abraha and Muhammad: Some Observations a propos of Chronology and Literary *Topoi* in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition", *BSOAS* 50.2 (1987), 225-240, and Donner, *Narratives*, 266-271.
[199] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 4-17, which expands on Noth, "Charakter". Against Wellhausen's concept of historical schools, compare also the remarks in Crone, *Slaves*, 10, 13, and E. Landau-Tasseron: "Sayf b. ʿUmar in Medieval and Modern Scholarship", *ISL* 67 (1990), 1-26.
[200] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 22-23.
[201] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 109.
[202] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 109-110.
[203] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 110.

following section, I will briefly discuss one of the most prominent literary forms in the source material on Khārijism that functions as a *schema* – the issue of *awāʾil*[204] – as well as a *topos* that is particularly pertinent to the portrayal of Khārijite history: the use of personal names in the order of battle.[205] I will then analyse the bearing of such literary devices on the question of Khārijite beginnings and thus on the methodological approach of this thesis.

Awāʾil

The early Islamic historiographers displayed a marked interest in *awāʾil* ('firsts') – the question of who was the first to perform a certain act, use a certain phrase, establish a certain custom, compose poetry in a certain metre, and so on.[206] This fascination with 'firsts' can also be observed in the reports of the alleged emergence of the first Khārijites at Ṣiffīn. These specifically Khārijite *awāʾil* include the subject of who was the first to say *lā ḥukma*, whose sword was the first to be drawn on account of the Khārijite protest against the *taḥkīm*, and who was the first to 'go out'.

There are two main versions of the narrative regarding the first rebel to utter the Khārijite slogan *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh* and to draw his sword in reaction to the Ṣiffīn arbitration agreement. The less popular variant identifies two otherwise unknown brothers of the ʿAnaza tribe, Maʿdān and Jaʿd, as the first to protest in this way against the document that stipulated the conditions of the arbitration and was read out to ʿAlī's followers by al-Ashʿath b. Qays. The two (proto-) Khārijites then charge against the Syrians and fight until they are killed.[207] It is not explicitly stated that their swords were the first to be drawn, but these are the first hostilities on account of the *taḥkīm* described in the relevant sources and can hence be taken as crediting them with coining the phrase as well as being the first to use the sword to uphold their principles.

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[204] On *awāʾil* as a literary form, see Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 104-108.
[205] On "Topoi Connected with Personal Names" and their relevance for the description of battles and wars, see Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 109-129, and Noth, "Charakter", 191-193.
[206] See EI^3, "Awāʾil" (M. Bernards), and the references cited there.
[207] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210 (al-Dīnawarī's Ṣiffīn section from the first call to arbitration to the Khārijites' withdrawal from ʿAlī reproduces the material preserved in *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*).

The second, more prevalent version ascribes the origin of this phrase to ʿUrwa b. Udayya al-Tamīmī, the brother of Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya, who played an important part in the narratives of Khārijism just before the second civil war and will therefore be discussed in some detail in Chapter Four. The precise sequence of events is a little muddled: widespread Khārijite protest is mentioned *after* the decision of the arbiters and the proclamation of the judgment: "The people became divided, and the Khawārij proclaimed: 'The two judges have become unbelievers, *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*!'"[208] However, al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Masʿūdī all preserve several accounts which place ʿUrwa's protest *before* the arbitration meeting, in the same situation as the first version of the two brothers: the arbitration document has been composed and al-Ashʿath is on his way through ʿAlī's camp to read it out to the caliph's followers. When he walks past a group of Banū Tamīm, ʿUrwa says to him: "Do you appoint men as judges over the religion of God?… There is no judgment but God's!"[209] The report concludes with the remark: "And he [i.e., ʿUrwa] was the first to say *lā ḥukma*."[210]

ʿUrwa as a representative of the Banū Tamīm and of their protest against the arbitration document also features prominently in the sources that do not credit him with coining the *lā ḥukma* phrase. Both Ibn Muzāḥim and al-Dīnawarī's work include accounts according to which he was most vehemently opposed to the arbitration document, and his objections are portrayed rather more articulately and extensively than those of the two brothers of ʿAnaza.[211] In fact, he is the only protagonist explicitly named as opposing the arbitration by the majority of the historical works examined here; with the exception of Ibn Khayyāṭ, who does not mention the *lā ḥukma* slogan at all, and Ibn Aʿtham, who transmits a unique report that ascribes the first protest against the arbitration to a man of Banū

[208] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 190.
[209] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 295, 296; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3339-3340; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 393; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 190.
[210] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 295. See also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 393, and Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba: *Kitāb al-Maʿārif*. 2nd ed. Ed. T. 'Ukāsha. Cairo 1969, 410. Al-Balādhurī also preserves a line on the same page according to which "they said" (*qālū*) that the first to say *lā ḥukma* was a certain Yazīd b. ʿĀsim al-Muḥāribī.
[211] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210.

Yashkur from among ʿAlī's men. Ibn Aʿtham names him as the first to dissociate from both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, fighting against both leaders' forces until he was killed.[212]

Other names are mentioned as well, but they differ from source to source, and objections in the form of the Khārijite slogan are often attributed to an undefined group of people ('they', 'the people', 'the Tamīmīs').[213] The majority of the sources furthermore continue the accounts of ʿUrwa's protest with the story of how following his verbal attack on al-Ashʿath, he drew his sword and attacked him, striking his mount. Al-Ashʿath fled back to his people. The Tamīmī leaders thereupon went to him and apologized on behalf of ʿUrwa.[214] Al-Balādhurī's report concludes: "ʿUrwa's sword was the first that was drawn on account of the arbitration."[215]

Given ʿUrwa's prominence in the narratives on the origin of the famous Khārijite slogan, it is somewhat surprising to notice that beyond this, he is not mentioned in the reports of Khārijism during the reign of ʿAlī at all. We do not encounter him at Ḥarūrāʾ, at Nahrawān, or as leader of his own group of insurgents, nor is he listed among those Khārijite rebels who repent and return to ʿAlī at some point during their confrontations with him. ʿUrwa's role in the emergence of the Khārijites appears to consist in the representation of the rather violent initial opposition to the arbitration document. While he does reappear at a later stage, during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān, it is his brother Abū Bilāl who occupies a more significant position within the early Islamic tradition.

Most of the sources are primarily concerned with the question of who was the first to proclaim *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*. Al-Balādhurī, however, preserves an account according to which the first to 'go out' was Shurayḥ b. Awfā.[216] It states that Shurayḥ went out at the time of the morning prayer, reciting Q 4:75: 'O Lord, take us away from this town whose people are oppressors.' His people attempted to hold him back, but he threatened to attack

[212] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, 17-19.
[213] E.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3339-3340; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 190, 191; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 395; Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588, 589; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 32; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 89; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 301, 311.
[214] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 295, 296; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3338-3339; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 393, omits the apology.
[215] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 296.
[216] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 322.

them.[217] This report is not embedded in the Ṣiffīn narratives; instead, it is placed after a description of the battle at Nahrawān, in the course of which Shurayḥ was killed. The circumstances of Shurayḥ's *khurūj* are not quite clear in al-Balādhurī's work – it does not appear to take place at Ṣiffīn, but a later date and different place would be unusual as the sources commonly place the break between ʿAlī and the Khārijites at Ṣiffīn, either before or after the arbitration meeting.

Al-Ṭabarī preserves a different account, which might place al-Balādhurī's, according to which Shurayḥ cited (albeit different) verses from the Qurʾān when the Khārijites left Kufa for Nahrawān.[218] In the context of al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf,* it is also probable that the primary concern of this account is not the provision of yet another 'first' – rather, it is embedded in what appears to be a series of related reports concerning the relationship between those who went out as Khārijites and their families and tribes.[219]

Topoi *in the Source Material*

The description of violent conflict between the Khārijites and their opponents permeates the accounts of Khārijite history in the sources under study. This is particularly the case for the last period investigated here, the era of the second *fitna* and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik. However, the first and perhaps most famous battle between the Khārijites and their most prominent enemy, ʿAlī, was the Battle of Nahrawān, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. In his *Early Arabic Historical Tradition,* Noth identified six distinct but related *topoi* connected to the use of personal names in a battle context: order of battle; persons who kill or capture well-known enemies; victory messages sent to the caliph (and in our case, the governor); arranging the succession of command; appointing deputies; and reinforcements.[220] These motifs that are connected with names might have originated in lists that seem to have survived from the earliest period and among other things specify

[217] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 322. For the depiction of Khārijite piety, see Chapter Two.
[218] See note 297.
[219] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 322-324.
[220] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition,* 109-129.

participants in battles and campaigns.[221] These lists could have contributed to or even come into being because of the early historians' "onomatomania", the "obsession for providing names"[222] or in Crone's words, "*horror anonymitatis*"[223]. Without exception, all of these *topoi* related to names can be observed in the accounts of Khārijism and will thus be referred to over the course of this thesis where relevant. In what follows, I will illustrate their occurrence in the source material on Khārijism using the example of the 'order of battle' *topos*.

The Order of Battle

The source material on the *ridda*, *futūḥ* and various *fitan* contains a wealth of information on the make-up of the relevant armies, both on the Muslim side and with regard to their opponents. This information belongs to the "basic stock" of military narratives and is "characteristic of all the early historical compilations."[224] This *topos* usually takes one of two major forms, either naming the leader of a particular unit of the army ("the leader of [formation or unit] (*wa-ʿalā*...) was [name]") or reporting the appointment of a certain commander by a superior ("[high-ranking person] gave command of [formation or unit] to [name] (*wa-kāna ʿalā; jaʿala ʿalā*)").[225] The array of army units is wide ranging, from the left and right flank (*maysara* and *maymana*, respectively) to the infantry (*rajjāla*, *rajl*), the cavalry (*khayl*, *mujarrada*) and the vanguard (*muqaddima*, *muqaddama*), among others.[226] The reports of who was in charge of which unit of the army are often contradictory, and there are "no valid criteria" for choosing one version over another.[227] In fact, the very ubiquity of this *topos* indicates that the information it purports to transmit can hardly be used for a reliable historical reconstruction of events.

[221] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 97-98, 100-101, 114, 122. On the importance of lists, possibly some of the earliest fragments of the historiographical tradition that might have survived into the 8th and 9th century CE, see also Robinson, *Historiography*, 23, 47, 67-68; Leder, "Literary Use", 309-310; Crone, *Slaves*, 16-17.
[222] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 126.
[223] Crone, *Slaves*, 16.
[224] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 111.
[225] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 111.
[226] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 111-112.
[227] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 113.

The *topos* of the order of battle frequently recurs in the stories of the Khārijites' violent clashes with their opponents as preserved by the early historiographical tradition. Here, too, we are confronted with often contradictory information: Ibn Khayyāṭ, al-Dīnawarī, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī, for instance, transmit different reports regarding the identity of the various Khārijite subcommanders at Nahrawān.[228] The way in which this *topos* is presented in accounts of Khārijite history is no different from reports of other battles narrated within the context of the Arab conquests or the *ridda*, as the following examples show:

> They [the Khārijites] put in command over their right flank Yazīd b. Ḥuṣayn and over their left flank Shurayḥ b. Abī Awfā al-ʿAbsī, who belonged to their ascetics; they appointed over the infantry Ḥurqūṣ b. Zuhayr, and ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb was in command over the cavalry (*fa-jaʿala ʿalā maymanatihim Yazīd b. Ḥuṣayn wa-ʿalā maysaratihim Shurayḥ b. Abī Awfā al-ʿAbsī wa-kāna min nussākihim wa-ʿalā al-rajjāla Ḥurqūṣ b. Zuhayr wa-ʿalā al-khayl ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb*).[229]

> Ibn al-Azraq put in command over his right flank ʿUbayda b. Hilāl al-Yashkurī and over his left flank al-Zubayr b. al-Māḥūz al-Tamīmī (*wa-jaʿala Ibn al-Azraq ʿalā maymanatihi ʿUbayda b. Hilāl al-Yashkurī wa-ʿalā maysaratihi al-Zubayr b. al-Māḥūz al-Tamīmī*).[230]

In addition to these detailed statements, there are also a number of reports that mention the Khārijite commanders or their counterparts among the troops sent out to fight the rebels gathering and readying their armies for battle (*ʿaskara; ʿabbā*).[231] It appears that this has evolved into a stock *topos*; arranging one's army is one of the ingredients of proper battle as described in the historiographical works. Of course, this seems only reasonable, which is why it is even more important to be aware of the standardization this particular theme has undergone. What at first reads like a sober and plausible description of a specific battle is little more than an accumulation of motifs that have no special relationship with the

[228] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3380; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 224; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 223; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 331.
[229] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 223.
[230] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 581.
[231] See e.g. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 121; VI, 310, 311, and VII, 23, 24, 26-27. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 904, 958, 966; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 330.

individual circumstances of the report whatsoever. The disagreements regarding the identity of the Khārijite commanders at Nahrawān emphasizes this phenomenon: the *topos* itself is stable, but because it is hardly more than an occasion for the "arbitrary filling in of blank formulae"[232], the information it claims to transmit needs to be regarded with extreme caution.

Why a Literary Approach to Khārijite History?

This representative discussion of *awāʾil* and the referencing of personal names in a battle context suggests that both the structural components and the story content of the reports that narrate Khārijite history – names, dates, chronology, events – that are used by scholars to advance their theories of Khārijite origins may frequently belong to a set of *topoi* and *schemata* characteristic of early Islamic historiography in general. Moreover, it has illustrated the confusion regarding these components among the individual historiographers. This confusion is of course not restricted to the issues discussed in the preceding sections. The sources do not agree on matters like at whose house Ibn Wahb was elected as leader, and there is not even a consensus concerning who was or was not a Khārijite. This becomes particularly evident in the figure of the Kufan Tamīmī leader Shabath b. Ribʿī, who appears to have been a particularly contested personality. We variously encounter him as one of ʿAlī's supporters and commanders at Nahrawān[233], as a Khārijite at Ḥarūrāʾ who eventually returns to ʿAlī but is not mentioned at Nahrawān[234], or as a Khārijite whose fate is not disclosed.[235]

That we cannot set much store by the historicity of events involving Khārijites and preserved in the narratives of the early historiographers is also confirmed by reports placing otherwise identical episodes at a different point in time or at a different locality. For instance, in one of the debates between ʿAlī's envoys and the Khārijites, the former

[232] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 120.
[233] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3380; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 320, 330; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 223.
[234] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3349, 3387; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 216; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 300.
[235] See e.g. al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 191-193, who mentions Shabath as one of the Khārijite leaders but does not say whether he returned to ʿAlī before Nahrawān or not; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 301.

admonish the latter not to "hasten the *fitna* this year fearing the next."[236] Al-Ṭabarī's account places this particular phrase in the context of the first withdrawal of the Khawārij, at Ḥarūrāʾ, when ʿAlī's (nameless) agents argue with them so as to persuade them to return to Kufa. Al-Balādhurī, however, places this argument in the context of similar debates between Ibn ʿAbbās and Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Ṣūḥān on ʿAlī's side and the Khārijites at Nahrawān. Such "wandering passages" seem to be the result of the transmission process the texts underwent, and they indicate the "surprising freedom" the transmitters showed in editing their sources.[237]

On what grounds, then, should we decide which accounts convey 'historical' information and which ones are 'fictional'? In the absence of criteria on the basis of which it would be possible to securely distinguish fact from fiction (assuming it is possible to do so) and determine the correct names, dates, events, or chronology, favouring any one particular narrative merely because it sounds more plausible seems haphazard.[238] Here, I also depart from Noth, who argued that the identification of *topoi* could serve as a means of distinguishing 'authentic' from 'inauthentic' reports.[239] While it is possible to discern certain *topoi* in the reports, there is no reliable way of determining whether a particular motif does reflect 'real' events. The absence of *topoi*, on the other hand, does not necessarily mean that a report can be accepted as 'true', or 'authentic'. The interchangeability of phrases and their contexts mentioned in the preceding paragraph also emphasizes an interesting tendency of the accounts on Khārijite origins: when we turn from the structural 'frame' of these reports to their 'contents' (Khārijite speeches, debates, deeds and maxims), we find that they are much less confused: there might not be a consensus regarding the person in whose house the Khārijites met to elect their leader, or which rebel held a speech on that occasion, but the subject matter of the speeches given and the issues discussed are largely uncontested and significantly more stable than the external circumstances.

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[236] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3388; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 313.
[237] E. Landau-Tasseron: "New Data on an Old Manuscript: An Andalusian Version of the Works Entitled *Futūḥ al-Shām*", *Al-Qantara* 21.2 (2000), 361-380, 371.
[238] See also El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting*, 12; J. N. Mattock: "History and Fiction", in *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies* 1 (1986), 80-97, 95.
[239] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 296. See also the remarks in Humphreys, "Qurʾānic Myth", 272.

This characteristic of early Islamic historiography on Khārijites asserts that the importance of these accounts lies in the *representation of Khārijism as a set of ideas* with which to illustrate and contrast other matters. It also confirms Noth's conclusions about the transmission process among early Islamic historians:

> [Es] folgt für die Geschichtsauffassung einiger muslimischer Überlieferer, die sich mit der Frühzeit beschäftigten, dass es ihnen weniger um korrekte Berichterstattung ging als um die Zeichnung ansprechender und einprägsamer Bilder.[240]

Even though a similarly generalising tendency has been recognized in the case of Khārijite thought as portrayed by Islamic heresiography[241], studies of Khārijite origins based on historiographical material, which is often considered more 'sober' than the obviously biased literature on sects[242], have so far mostly failed to note this. As already stated, a thorough examination of the narratives of Khārijite history in fact reveal several themes that are of particular importance to the historiographers, and none of them is concerned with discussing Khārijism as an end in itself. Over the course of this thesis, I will identify and discuss these themes as they emerge in each of the three time periods examined here. The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter One will argue for the conspicuous absence of a palpable Khārijite identity in the historiographical works under study by looking primarily at two case studies: the use of Khārijite language by non-Khārijite Muslims, many of them directly opposed to the rebels, and the replication of events and narrative content associated with the Khārijites. I will show that Khārijism is not only defined by a series of stock phrases that are reiterated constantly, but that even these stock phrases are not unique to the rebels at all. Furthermore, the replication of certain events, demonstrated by the example of the appointment of Khārijite leaders, illustrates the distinct literary character of the historical reports in question.

Chapters Two to Five are concerned with the second major conclusion arising from the literary analysis, namely, that Khārijism is a narrative tool employed for very specific

[240] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 294.
[241] Kenney, *Rebels*, 46.
[242] See the remarks on p. 6 and the references at note 1.

literary purposes. Chapter Two discusses those themes and *topoi* in the historiographical depiction of Khārijism that recur over the entire time period under study, i.e., from Ṣiffīn until ʿAbd al-Malik's death. These themes include the motifs of Khārijite piety, their longing for *jihād* and the ensuing excessive violence that was one of their trademarks. The continuous presence of these particular themes indicates their importance not only for the characterization of Khārijism but also for the development of Islamic doctrine, which came to condemn the kind of militant piety exhibited by the Khārijites as they were remembered by the early Islamic tradition.

Chapter Three engages specifically with the themes that emerge from the accounts of Khārijite history during the first period investigated in this thesis, the caliphate of ʿAlī. I will argue that these accounts are primarily concerned with providing an apologia for ʿAlī by providing several different justifications for his conduct at Ṣiffīn, or more precisely, his agreement to the arbitration requested by his opponent Muʿāwiya. The overwhelming interest in this affair shown by the sources indicates its centrality for the formation of the later consensus on the events of early Islamic history, particularly concerning the status of ʿAlī as a close member of the Prophet's family and with regard to the development of the ʿAlid/Shīʿī position over the course of the first three centuries of Islam. Over the course of this chapter, I will show how the historiographers manage to vindicate ʿAlī by addressing the various accusations voiced against him and subsequently refuting each allegation with one line of argument or other. Connected to this is the second main theme evident in the relevant reports for this period, namely, the relationship between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās, who in his capacity as an eminent Companion, as a scholar of the Qurʾān and Arabic, and of course as one of the ʿAbbāsids' ancestors occupied a prominent position in the narratives of early Islam. The sources accordingly emphasize the close and cordial relationship between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās while on the whole still confirming ʿAlī's superiority.

Chapter Four looks at the narratives of Khārijism during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. It departs from the structure of the previous chapters by focusing not on overarching themes directly, but instead on two specific historiographers' treatment of Khārijite history in this period, namely al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. This is because there appears to be a sudden and marked decrease in the amount of Khārijite material transmitted by the early

historiographers, only two of whom preserve enough narrative material – sermons, speeches, poems, letters, and the like – to allow for a meaningful analysis. Furthermore, for ʿAlī's reign and again for the final period of the second civil war and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate, there seems to be a rough consensus regarding the events of early Khārijite history and their assessment among the historiographers. No such agreement can be detected regarding Khārijite activities during Muʿāwiya's rule: while both author-compilers analysed in this chapter engage with the topic of Khārijite piety, one uses it to discredit militant godliness and distinguish between activist and quietist Khārijism, while the other addresses the Khārijites' religious devotion as a foil for Umayyad injustice and immorality. In the absence of predominant themes common to all or most sources, dividing the chapter according to historiographer rather than theme thus seems to be the best option for presenting the material.

Chapter Five examines the material on the Khārijites pertaining to the second civil war and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik. It returns to the established structure by identifying five main themes, four of which permeate the majority of the sources under study: (i) the reputation of al-Muhallab and his family as formidable warriors and saviours of the *umma* from the menace of the most violent Khārijite faction, the Azāriqa; (ii) the volatility of Khārijism as a foil for the importance of communal togetherness; (iii) criticism of the Umayyads' agents, especially the Iraqi governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf; (iv) Ibn al-Zubayr's interactions with the Khārijites. A fifth theme is peculiar to only al-Ṭabarī, who seems to have employed accounts of the Khārijites' armed resistance in order to fashion a military manual of some sort that offers advice on how to wage war and win battles.

The sixth chapter will offer some more general observations on the historiographical tradition's treatment of early Khārijite history. It will look at a number of pertinent issues, such as whether we can actually speak of an early Islamic historiographical 'tradition' on Khārijism at all; whether there is a difference between so-called 'proto-Sunnī' and 'proto-Shīʿī' works in their portrayal of Khārijism; and whether it makes sense to distinguish between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī sources during the formative period of Islamic literature. Finally, Chapter Six will look at Ibn Aʿtham, whose work is rather

distinct from the remaining sources examined for this study, and offer some suggestions for further research on both himself and his *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.

The Conclusion will briefly revisit the premises and findings of this thesis as well as the difficulties inherent in any study of early Islamic history, literature and doctrine. It will close with some remarks on potential future avenues of research that it is hoped will serve to close at least some of the blatant gaps in the study of Khārijite history and thought.

Chapter One: The Imperceptible Identity of Khārijism

The first major conclusion drawn from a thorough analysis of the historical reports that transmit Khārijite history is that these accounts are characterized by a distinct lack of narrative substance that makes it next to impossible to discern a tangible Khārijite identity. Again, substance here refers to content minus structural components and *topoi*. As shown in the Introduction, the structural components of the reports – dates, locations, sequences of events – do not constitute a reliable basis on which to build a reconstruction of Khārijite history due to the many contradictions they display. In addition, most of the historical works' material on the Khārijites barely contains enough structural components to cover up the flimsiness of its content. If we seek to gain an understanding of Khārijism, it follows that we need to turn to the specific content of the reports, i.e., the speeches, sermons, poems, and the like. However, while these narrative devices at first glance appear to provide often rather detailed information on who the Khārijites 'really' were, a closer look reveals that their content cannot be used to discern the rebels' 'true' nature, either. Whether it is the repetitiveness of certain statements, the evident replication of certain events and situations, or the mobility of particular phrases from one context to another, it becomes obvious rather swiftly that we are confronted not with the portrayal of Khārijism as a distinct phenomenon, but rather with a series of stock phrases and events that attempt to imbue the reports with verisimilitude, that is, to create an illusion of actuality.[243] The very same function is served by incorporating names, dates and numbers to "add texture to narrative".[244] As observed by Noth[245], these stock phrases, or *Erzählmotive*, lack any relation to a specific context and can thus be re-employed when necessary. We can observe this phenomenon in the accounts for the entire time span investigated in this thesis, regardless of the relative volume of information transmitted for each period. Over the course of this chapter, I will demonstrate this by looking at two cases in point: i) the use of Khārijite language by non-Khārijites; and ii) the replication of events and narrative content.

[243] See C. Cubitt: "Memory and Narrative in the Cult of the Early Anglo-Saxon Saints", in Hen/Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past*, 29-66, 47; Spiegel, *Past as Text*, xiii; White, *Tropics*, 98, 99, 122.
[244] Robinson, "Heilsgeschichte", 22.
[245] Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 278-279.

1.1 The Use of 'Khārijite Language' Among Non-Khārijites

A close investigation of some of the statements attributed to various opponents of the Khawārij reveals a striking resemblance to Khārijite statements and sentiments. This use of 'Khārijite language' by other protagonists, most notably, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr and al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, is a prime example of the lack of a specific Khārijite identity in the early Islamic historical tradition. While Chapter Two will briefly compare general Khārijite notions of ascetic and militant piety as expressed in both prose and verse with the *zuhd* genre in Islamic poetry as well as early *jihād* literature[246], the employment of specifically 'Khārijite language' by non-Khārijite Muslims is unexpected, illustrating the absence of a distinct Khārijite self and thus warranting a more detailed investigation.

Consider for example the following report preserved in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* involving al-Muhallab and a decidedly Khārijite-sounding letter he reportedly wrote to Muṣʿab's governor of Basra after once again defeating the Azāriqa in battle. According to the account as transmitted by Abū Mikhnaf (d. 774 CE)[247], al-Muhallab begins his report by telling the governor that "God… had vanquished the transgressors, sent down His punishment upon them, slaughtered them in every way and drove them away completely". The letter continues with a description of the battle and finally turns to the subject of al-Muhallab's men, those who had heeded his summoning to fight the threat posed by the Khārijites: "A number of groups *willing to sell themselves in their desire for the favor of God*, men of religion, fortitude and patience in the face of hardship, uprightness and fidelity, rejoined me."[248]

This description of al-Muhallab's soldiers as those "willing to sell themselves" draws a direct semantic line from the rebels to their worst enemy. The report is probably the most prominent example of this phenomenon. Other than the *lā ḥukma* slogan, nothing is commonly understood to be more inherently Khārijite than the idea of selling oneself by giving up one's life for the sake of God, which is echoed in the epithet *al-shurāt*, one of the

[246] See Chapter Two, section 2.2.
[247] On Abū Mikhnaf, see U. Sezgin: *Abū Miḫnaf: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie der umaiyadischen Zeit*. Leiden 1971.
[248] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 589; G. Hawting (trans.): *The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. XX: The Collapse of Sufyānid Authority and the Coming of the Marwānids*. Albany 1989, 172-173 [my emphasis].

Khārijites' most common names. It is not altogether surprising to find this notion used by non-Khārijites – it is a Qurʾānic concept[249] and thus universally employable by all Muslims.[250] Nevertheless, it appears to be a rare occurrence indeed to observe its application to non-Khārijites in the sources' reports of Khārijism; despite its infrequent use, however, it serves to deepen the impression of the absence of a distinct Khārijite essence in the historical reports.

Another striking example, also transmitted by al-Ṭabarī but on the authority of ʿUmar b. Shabba (d. *c*877 CE), can be found in a sermon of Ibn al-Zubayr. When his brother Muṣʿab was killed, Ibn al-Zubayr mourned him "like he mourned his father and ʿUthmān", cursing the Iraqis for selling him out to ʿAbd al-Malik. His eulogy on Muṣʿab is remarkable for its use of belligerently pious language:

> If he [Muṣʿab] has been slain, we, by God, do not die in our beds like the sons of Abū al-ʿĀṣ, none of whom died in war either in pre-Islamic times or in Islam. We die a sudden death by spears or under the shadow of swords. The present world is but a loan from the Supreme King, whose authority does not pass away, and whose dominion does not perish. If it turns its face toward me, I do not take it like a man whose head is turned and who exults immoderately; if it turns its back, I do not weep over it like an abject man confounded by fear.[251]

The combination of disdain for the present world and the longing for death in battle represents Khārijite sentiment *par excellence*. Moreover, it echoes a poem ascribed to the Khārijite quietist ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān that he allegedly composed upon the death of Abū Bilāl, another famous Khārijite.[252] ʿImrān as a representative of Khārijism in general seems equally worried about dying a peaceful death, which is slightly odd in his case as there are no reports at all of his participation in open rebellion. Rather, he seems to have had a

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[249] The concept of selling oneself for the sake of God finds expression among others in Q 9:46, 9:83, and particularly 9:111. See A. Marsham: *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy. Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire*. Edinburgh 2009, 44-49, 56, 101.

[250] On Umayyad and Khārijite poetry sharing the same "nexus of ideas" of selling oneself to God, see Marsham, *Rituals*, 102. See also I. A. al-Jomaih: *The Use of the Qurʾān in Political Argument: A Study of Early Islamic Parties (35-86 A.H./656-705)*. PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles 1988, 364-365.

[251] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 818-819; M. Fishbein (trans.): *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Volume XXI: The Victory of the Marwānids*. New York 1990, 194-195.

[252] On Abū Bilāl, see Chapter Four.

reputation for learning and poetic penmanship.[253] Be that as it may, though, the idiomatic similarities between Ibn al-Zubayr's sermon and ʿImrān's poem are remarkable. Compare the former to verses 3-5 of the latter, which read:

> I guard against dying in my bed / and strive for death under the spearheads;
> If I knew that my death / was like the death of Abū Bilāl, I would not worry;
> Whoever cares for this world / by God, the Lord of the Kaʿba, I am averse to it.[254]

In the context of al-Ṭabarī's source at least, there is hardly any difference between the words of a Khārijite rebel and that of a revered Companion who for all intents and purposes had caliphal authority over most of the Muslims' territories for more than decade. We will return to the topic of Ibn al-Zubayr's relationship with the Khawārij at a later point; what is of significance here is the attribution of supposedly Khārijite terms and attitudes to Muslims of another persuasion, and not just any Muslims either: both al-Muhallab and Ibn al-Zubayr are significant figures in early Islamic history and thought. In both cases, the resemblance between Khārijite and non-Khārijite parlance is also more specific than the general overlap of ideas observable in the case of *zuhd* poetry and *jihād* literature discussed in the following chapter.

There are several other examples of Khārijite sentiments being expressed by non-Khārijite protagonists. Ibn Khayyāṭ remarks briefly on a Baḥraynī rebel who was killed by troops dispatched by the Basran governor al-Ḥakam b. Ayyūb in 75 AH/694-695 CE. As far as I can tell, this rebel was not a Khārijite, but he apparently used 'Khārijite' language to express himself:

> Remember Dāwūd! He sold himself / and gave of himself generously, seeking Paradise through noble deeds.[255]

In the same vein, Ibn Aʿtham's material on al-Muhallab's conflict with the Azāriqa contains an account according to which one of al-Muhallab's men encouraged his fellow soldiers to make a covenant with him to fight the enemy until death (*yubāyīʿunī ʿalā al-*

[253] On ʿImrān, see the references quoted at note 86.
[254] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 388.
[255] Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 270.

mawt).[256] Not only does this reflect Khārijite attitudes to war, but the verb used is synonymous with *sharā*/*ishtarā* from which, as mentioned above, the term *al-shurāt* was derived.[257] Moreover, pre- or mid-battle pledges of this kind and phrased in this language were commonplace in the late antique and early Islamic Near East[258], further dismantling the idea of a distinctly Khārijite identity in the historiographical sources.

A more general echo of Khārijite notions of ascetic piety can also be observed with regard to ʿAbd al-Malik in the context of his feast on the occasion of Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr's death. Several times during the meal or the ensuing tour of the palace in Kufa, he comments on the ephemeral nature of the present world:

> All that is new… turns toward decline, and some day every man will become a has-been.
>
> Work with deliberation for you are [only] mortal, and toil [only] for yourself, O man. What was, now that it is gone, seems as if it had never existed; and what is appears as if it had already passed away.[259]

This report directly follows Ibn al-Zubayr's sermon, cited above. Like the latter, the account of ʿAbd al-Malik's piety is quoted by al-Ṭabarī on the authority of ʿUmar b. Shabba. As both *akhbār* deal with the death of Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr, it makes sense to place them in consecutive order, but it is striking that both of them also address the topic of piety, or more specifically, of disregard for the material world. That they both do so in what is commonly understood to be 'Khārijite' language is unexpected. It certainly implies that many of the more generally pious concepts and sentiments ascribed to the Khawārij were shared by non-Khārijites according to the sources' depiction. This is in itself not surprising, as piety was a popular motif that permeated medieval Islamic historiography in general.[260] However, it does indicate that we are confronted above all with interchangeable literary motifs whose presence in the texts says more about the *idea and memory* of Khārijism than

[256] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 66.
[257] On the relationship between the *bayʿa* and the concept of selling oneself, see Marsham, *Rituals*, 44-49, 100-102 (on Khārijites specifically), and the poem ascribed to a late Umayyad Khārijite rebel, quoted in Higgins, "Faces", 29.
[258] Marsham, *Rituals*, 67-68.
[259] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 820-821. I largely follow the translation of Fishbein, *Victory*, 195-196.
[260] See also Chapter Two, section 2.2.

its specific identity in any given historical time frame. What is more, there is such little narrative substance to the reports that it proves extremely difficult to discern a distinct *literary* identity of the Khawārij beyond the apparently ubiquitous statements of disdain for the present world, not to mention a 'historical' one.

Finally, the source material provides a telling example of the mobility of Khārijite phrases referred to above. In this particular instance, a certain statement is moved from a Khārijite context to a Zubayrid context. Both al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī transmit a series of accounts dealing with a confrontation between the quietist Khārijite ʿUrwa b. Udayya and the Iraqi governor ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. Over the course of this confrontation, ʿUbaydallāh sentences ʿUrwa to death and proceeds to have his extremities cut off. Just before ʿUrwa dies, Ibn Ziyād asks for his thoughts on the whole affair and ʿUrwa responds: "I think that you ruined this world for me and that you ruined the Hereafter for yourself."[261]

Now, al-Balādhurī discusses Ibn al-Zubayr and his conflict with al-Ḥajjāj and ʿAbd al-Malik at great length. Towards the end of that section, he transmits a series of reports that pit Ibn al-Zubayr's mother, the revered Asmāʾ bt. Abī Bakr, against al-Ḥajjāj. Her open contempt towards al-Ḥajjāj will be discussed in greater detail below, but one particular statement stands out. After Ibn al-Zubayr has been killed, al-Ḥajjāj and Asmāʾ exchange letters and finally personal visits during one of which she condemns the Iraqi governor's actions against her son and concludes that "you ruined this world for him, but you ruined the Hereafter for yourself!"[262]

While the historical contexts given for the use of this phrase are very different, there is one constant, namely, its use to condemn a particular Iraqi governor, first Ibn Ziyad and then al-Ḥajjāj. Clearly, then, we are dealing with an expression that has very little to do with the Khawārij specifically – certainly no one would accuse Asmāʾ of holding Khārijite ideals – but belongs to a set of pious clauses that can be employed whenever and wherever required. This is further reinforced by the fact that al-Balādhurī was very aware of this phrase being attributed to ʿUrwa as he himself transmitted two versions of this particular

[261] For a detailed discussion of this episode, see Chapter Four, section 4.1.1 ('The Basran Quietists').
[262] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 386.

story of ʿUrwa's execution in his *Ansāb*.[263] Apparently, he and/or his sources had no qualms about recycling certain parts of a report, indicating that the content was not so much fixed by the historical context ascribed to it, but rather by a specific purpose or occasion like the censure of government representatives.

1.2 Replication and Repetition

The second example illustrating the impalpability of a Khārijite identity in the historical reports is the replication of particular events and narrative content. For instance, the appointment of Khārijite leaders appears to follow a particular pattern both on the technical and the ideological level and can thus be considered a sub-*topos* of the superordinate *topos* of Khārijite piety.[264] This motif seems to comprise several features, most of which are present in many reports of Khārijite elections, although not necessarily in the same order[265]: the Khārijites gather to appoint a leader; leadership is offered to a prominent member of the group; the prospective leader declines and suggests other candidates; the candidates in turn defer to the former as being more worthy of the post; the first Khārijite to be nominated finally accepts, but emphasizes that he does not seek temporal power but merely strives to achieve favour with God; the newly chosen leader gives a speech or sermon during which he underlines the Khārijites' pious intentions and his desire for *jihād*, quoting any number of Qurʾānic verses. Compare the following two examples:

ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb al-Rāsibī is remembered as the first Khārijite *imām*, leading the rebel troops against ʿAlī at Nahrawān. He was offered the position of commander by his fellow Khārijites in 38 AH/658 CE, accepting his companions' request only after two other Khārijites had refused. Upon his accession as chief of the Khawārij, Ibn Wahb gives a speech in which he emphasizes that, "I do not accept it [i.e., leadership] desiring worldly gains or eluding death, but I accept it hoping for [God's] great reward therein."[266] He goes on to say:

[263] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 386-387, 387-388.
[264] See Chapter Two.
[265] See also Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāwand", 282.
[266] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 215-216. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 318, 320-321; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3365.

> God accepted our covenant on the condition to command right and forbid wrong, to speak the truth and pursue *jihād* for His cause, for 'Verily, those who stray from God's path will suffer great punishment' [Q 38:26]. And God said: 'Those who do not judge by what God has sent down, they are the transgressors' [Q 5:47]…[267]

The story of the election of al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllafa al-Taymī in 42 AH/662-663 CE in Kufa as leader of the largest Khārijite revolt during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya closely resembles the election of Ibn Wahb. According to al-Ṭabarī's reports, in the year 42 AH, the Khārijites of Kufa assembled at the house of one of their authorities, Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān al-Sulamī, to decide whom to put in charge of an impending Khārijite rebellion.[268] Apart from Ḥayyān, who is said to have been wounded at Nahrawān and then forgiven by ʿAlī[269], two other Khārijites were considered for leadership, al-Mustawrid and Muʿādh b. Juwayn. Muʿādh had also been wounded at Nahrawān and was later pardoned by ʿAlī; his uncle Zayd b. Ḥusayn had been killed at Nahrawān on the Khārijite side as one of their commanders in battle.[270]

As in the case of the election of Ibn Wahb, the three prospective leaders are eager to declare their contempt for the temporal world and their desire for glory for the sake of God. Al-Mustawrid emphasizes that he is not interested in attaining power in this world:

> Appoint whomever you like over you… I do not mind which one of you governs me. We do not seek the glory of this world and there is no way to remain in it. We only desire immortality in the realm of everlasting life.[271]

Ḥayyān also humbly insists that he is not motivated by the lust for power: "I have no need to rule and I am satisfied with every one of my brothers."[272] While Muʿādh points out that not everyone is "virtuous enough for that command"[273], he does not put himself forward either but suggests al-Mustawrid or Ḥayyān instead, who in turn offer to render allegiance

[267] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 216. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3363-3365; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 300, 320.
[268] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20.
[269] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 17.
[270] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20.
[271] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20.
[272] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 21.
[273] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 21.

to him as one who is "perfect in your religion and your opinions".[274] Finally, because they appear to have the same impeccable religious virtues, al-Mustawrid as the oldest is acknowledged as leader, but not without initial protest on his part, of course.[275] The parallels to Ibn Wahb's election are clear, from the candidates' initial refusal of leadership to there being three potential nominees to the declaration that the chosen commander has no interest in the present world despite his assumption of temporal power.

There are several other examples of this particular sub-*topos* in the source material, even if the episodes are often described in much less detail and hence lack one or more of the identified components.[276] This schematized account of the election of leaders highlights that we are dealing with narrative devices rather than a genuine description of 'what happened'. Consequently, the early historiographical material cannot be easily used for writing positivist history but lends itself much more readily to a literary analysis. In fact, the replication of both events and narrative content conceals rather than reveals any meaningful information about the Khārijites. The standardization of certain situations and sentiments makes it extremely difficult to uncover a sense of a uniquely Khārijite identity in the historical material as it turns the individual components of a report into building blocks that are assigned to specific sets of narrative situations. Clearly, the individual circumstances of an alleged revolt were not important; what mattered was the depiction of Khārijism as a particular movement with certain characteristics which were expressed through standardized accounts and episodes of which the election of a leader was only one case in point. This only confirms the inference derived from the discussion of *topoi* in the Introduction: the sources were primarily interested in the portrayal of Khārijism as a set of ideas, not a historical phenomenon.

This is particularly obvious when we look at the content of Khārijite speeches, sermons, letters and poems, the majority of which are replicated in content to such an extent that there hardly even remains a trace of a palpable literary identity belonging to the rebels. A perfect example of this harmonization of Khārijite concerns is the sermon

[274] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 21.
[275] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 21.
[276] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 441, 446; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 184, 517, 985.

delivered by the Jazīran rebel of 695 CE, Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ, as transmitted by al-Ṭabarī, which will serve as our template and most of which I therefore quote here despite its length:

> ‘Praise be to God, who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light. Yet those who have disbelieved ascribe rivals to their Lord.’ [Q 6:1] O God! We ascribe no rivals to You, we serve none but You, and none but You do we worship… We testify that Muḥammad is Your servant, whom You chose, and Your messenger, whom You selected and approved to convey Your messages and Your counsel for Your servants. We testify that he conveyed the message and counseled the community, summoned to the truth and acted equitably, supported religion and strove against the polytheists, until God took him. I commend to you the fear of God, austerity in this world, desire for the afterlife, frequent recollection of death, avoidance of the sinners, and love for the believers… Love for the believers is recommended because it is in this way that one obtains God’s grace and mercy and His Paradise – may God cause us and you to be among the sincere and patient! Indeed, it is a blessing from God on the believers that He sent to them a messenger from among themselves, who taught them the Book and the wisdom, purified and sanctified them, and led them aright in their religion; he was kind and merciful to the believers until God took him away, God’s blessings be upon him! Then, after him, authority was taken by the God-fearing Veracious One [*al-Ṣiddīq*; epithet of Abū Bakr], with the approval of the Muslims. He followed the right guidance of the messenger and continued in his way [*sunna*] until he joined God, God’s mercy be upon him. He designated ʿUmar as his successor, and God entrusted him with the authority over this flock. ʿUmar acted in accordance with the Book of God and kept to the way [*aḥyā sunna*] of the messenger of God. He begrudged his flock none of their rights and feared the reproach of no one before God, until he joined Him, God’s mercy be upon him. After him, the Muslims were ruled by ʿUthmān. He expropriated the spoils, failed to enforce the Qurʾānic punishments, rendered unjust judgments, and treated the believer with contempt and the evildoer with esteem. The Muslims went to him and killed him, and God, His messenger and the upright among the believers were quit of him. After him, the people were governed by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. He did not hesitate to give men authority to judge in the affairs of God; he vacillated with regard to the people of error, and appeased and blandished them. We are quit of ʿAlī and his supporters. Prepare, then – God’s mercy upon you – to strive against these fractious parties and unjust leaders of error, and to go out from the abode of transience to the abode of eternity and join our believing, convinced brethren, who sold the present world for the afterworld and expended their wealth in quest of God’s good pleasure in the final reckoning. Be not anxious about being killed for God’s sake, for being killed is easier than dying naturally. Natural death comes upon you unexpectedly, separating you from your fathers, sons, wives, and this world; if your anxiety and aversion to this is too strong, then, indeed, sell your souls to God obediently, and your wealth, and you will enter Paradise in security and embrace the black-eyed

> houris. May God make you and us among the grateful and mindful "who are guided by the truth and by it act justly" [Q 7:159].[277]

Khārijite speeches and sermons repeat these same motifs over and over again, regardless of the individual circumstances of a revolt. Time and place have no meaning – what matters is the representation of Khārijism as the carrier of certain ideas. We have no sure way of knowing whether these ideas were ever expressed as doctrine by the Khārijites as they are envisioned by the Islamic tradition; in any case, this issue has little bearing on the approach taken in this thesis. What becomes clear, however, is that the ideas associated with Khārijite rebels are turned into a standard formula that is applied to the Khārijite phenomenon as a whole. Speech after speech and sermon after sermon follow the same well-established pattern: praise of God, Muḥammad and the first two *rāshidūn* caliphs – one half of the "mission topos" identified in early Islamic epistles by Michael Cook[278] – is followed by a severe castigation of ʿUthmān and ʿAlī, finishing with a condemnation of the state of the *umma* under Umayyad (and later ʿAbbāsid) leadership and an exhortation to do battle against the tyrants in power. This structure is rounded out with a display of Khārijite pious sentiment and a discussion of the merits of *jihād* against an unjust ruler, death being the desired end of such endeavours as a general rule. The length and detail of Khārijite speeches and sermons may vary, but the structure is the same; inevitably, Khārijite leaders are made to express their grievances and accusations in the same terms[279]:

> Then the Muslims appointed ʿUthmān as caliph, but he created reserved areas, favored kinship, appointed youths to positions of authority, abolished the lash and laid aside the whip, destroyed the Book, shed the blood of the Muslim… Not content with that, he seized the spoils [*fayʾ*] which God had given to them and

[277] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 882-884; E. Rowson (trans.): *The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. XXII: The Marwānid Restoration*. New York 1989, 33-35.

[278] M. Cook: *Early Muslim Dogma. A Source-Critical Study*. Cambridge etc. 1981, 7. On the related 'caliph theme' in Khārijite discourse see S. Dähne: "Zu den ḫutab des Abū Ḥamza aš-Šārī in der klassischen arabischen Literatur", in W. Beltz/S. Günther (eds.): *Erlesenes: Sonderheft… anläßlich des 19. Kongresses der Union Européenne d'Arabisants et Islamisants*. Halle 1998, 30-45, 32-35. For the use of the 'mission topos' by the Khārijites' opponents, see e.g. ʿAlī's reaction to the murder of a Companion by a group of Khawārij in Ibn ʿAtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 99-100.

[279] In addition to the following quotes, see e.g. also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 395, and III-IV, 138; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 122-123, 126, and VII, 92, 93-94; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 329-330, 900; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 202, 216, 217, 279; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 312, 313, 320-321, 329, 330, and IV/1, 178; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 32, 37. See also the references in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.

> shared it out among the godless ones of Quraysh and the shameless ones of the Arabs[280];
>
> You [ʿAlī] have fallen short in the affair of God and you appointed judges over His Book and you have broken with the community [*al-jamāʿa*][281];
>
> What we advocate is the Book of God and the *sunnah* of Muḥammad, God bless him. What we object to for our people is the expropriation of the spoils, the failure to enforce the Qurʾānic punishments, and the autocratic nature of the regime[282];
>
> Verily, the people of our *daʿwa* have given human beings authority over the affair of God and did not judge by the Book of God and neither the *sunna* of the Prophet of God. They committed *kufr* through this and turned away from the right way, and have dissolved the league between us. 'God does not love the treacherous [Q 4:107]'[283];
>
> We take revenge on behalf of our folk for tyranny in judgment, failure to enforce prescriptions, and the monopolization of the *fayʾ*. I summon you to the Book of God, Almighty and Great, and the example [*sunnah*] of His Prophet, and the rule [*wilāyah*] of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. I also call upon you to disavow ʿUthmān and ʿAlī for their innovation in religion… and their abandonment of the judgment of the Book.[284]

This unchanging nature of Khārijite sentiments, or more accurately, accusations against their opponents, is a clear indicator of the narrative role and function of Khārijism in the works considered here. This is further confirmed when we look at examples of Khārijite speeches and the like from a later period outwith the main scope of this thesis. The famous sermon of Abū Ḥamza, a Khārijite active at the very end of the Umayyad era, closely resembles the aforementioned examples of Khārijite speech. While the exact details both of the sermon and the exact circumstances of Abū Ḥamza's preaching are contested[285], his speech puts him firmly within the framework of Khārijite views and beliefs, as the following passage demonstrates:

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[280] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516 (the future Azraqī ʿUbayda b. Hilāl); Hawting, *Collapse*, 99-100.
[281] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 300 ("the" Khārijites on their return from Ṣiffīn).
[282] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 984 (Suwayd, one of Shabīb's companions); Rowson, *Restoration*, 132.
[283] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 217 (Ibn Wahb and Shurayḥ b. Abī Awfā in a letter to Basran Khārijites).
[284] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40-41 (al-Mustawrid in a letter to the governor of al-Madāʾin); M. Morony (trans.): *The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. XVIII: Between Civil Wars: The Caliphate of Muʿāwiyah*. Albany 1987, 46.
[285] P. Crone/M. Hinds: *God's Caliph. Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*. Cambridge etc. 2003, 129.

> Then ʿUthmān took charge. For six years he proceeded in a way which fell short of the mode of conduct of his two companions [Abū Bakr and ʿUmar – H-L. H.]. Then he [acted in a manner which] annulled what he had done earlier, and passed on his way. Then ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib took charge. He acted in a proper manner until he established arbitration concerning the book of God and had doubts about His religion. [Thereafter] he did not achieve any goal in respect of what was right, nor did he erect any beacon for that.[286]

1.3 Conclusion

The wealth of structural components transmitted as part of the accounts of Khārijism, the dates, locations, names of protagonists and sequence of events of particular episodes involving Khārijites, often disguises the scarcity of narrative substance contained in these accounts. However, an analysis of the existing narrative content reveals that all the speeches, sermons, poems and letters attributed to the Khawārij do not tell us much either, neither about the rebels' 'true' historical nor about their literary identity in the early historiographical works. This is due to a variety of contributing factors, among them the two aspects examined over the course of this chapter: the use of allegedly Khārijite language by non-Khārijite actors, and the replication and repetition of events and Khārijite statements. The discussion of statements expressed in the idiom of Khārijite resistance but attributed to protagonists unrelated to Khārijism pointed out the lack of uniqueness that marks the reports of Khārijite activities. At the same time, the replication of certain events, here the election of Khārijite leaders, emphasizes the distinctly literary function of Khārijites in the reports examined here. Taken together, these two features demonstrate the ahistorical nature of the Khārijite material contained in the early historiographical works. We can also infer from this that the historians' major concern was not the depiction of Khārijite history 'as it was', but rather the portrayal of Khārijism as a set of specific ideas. Again, whether they constituted 'real' Khārijite doctrine is extremely difficult to tell and does not interest us here. For the purposes of this thesis, it is important that there clearly existed a consensus on how Khārijites were to be understood and delineated in the historiographical tradition. It needs to be pointed out at this stage, however, that this

[286] Translation by Crone/Hinds, *Caliph*, 130.

ascription of distinct beliefs and opinions to the Khārijites does not lead to the creation of a well-developed literary identity for the rebels. Regardless of the (alleged) historical circumstances of each revolt and each insurgent, Khārijite thought remains essentially unchanged; thus a mid-eighth-century CE Khārijite rebel sounds almost identical to his companions from nearly a century earlier. Hardly any development in thought or even just mode of expression can be detected – in other words, Khārijite identity is static. Accordingly, there is really only one identifier of Khārijism that remains constant over and beyond the time period covered in this study: the issue of Khārijite piety and their opposition to the Umayyad (and later ʿAbbāsid) authorities on the basis of their specific understanding of what it means to be a devout believer. This complex of related ideas is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter Two: Recurring Themes and *Topoi* in the Portrayal of Khārijism

The main purpose of the presentation of Khārijism in the early historiographical tradition is to illustrate, criticize and ultimately discredit excessive piety as a cause for bloodshed and strife within the *umma*. This is evident in almost all of the accounts that address the overzealous godliness of the Khārijites across all three time periods considered for this thesis. This specific concern is expressed through three interconnected and recurrent themes that permeate the *akhbār* narrating the history of Khārijism: i) Khārijite piety and its ramifications; ii) the longing for *jihād* and martyrdom; and, following from the first two motifs, iii) the Khārijites' reputation as indiscriminate killers and transgressors of the very same Islamic norms they claim to defend. The first two themes evolved into Khārijite-specific *topoi* denoting a particular brand of dissidence and – in the *firaq* literature at least – heresy. The third cannot be called a *topos* as such, but it inevitably arises out of the consequences of Khārijite piety and their yearning for martyrdom. In what follows, I will first briefly illustrate the connection between immoderate piety and Khārijism as drawn by the sources, continue by pointing out the association of Khārijite godliness and violence, and then conclude with a discussion of the means by which the early historiographers carried out their criticism of Khārijite piety.

2.1 The Piety of the Khawārij

The Islamic tradition presents Khārijites as extremely pious men (and occasionally women) from the outset. This first becomes apparent in the accounts that draw a direct connection between the later Khārijites and the *qurrāʾ*, reciters or perhaps some form of scholars of the Qurʾān. When depicting the events after the Syrians' call for arbitration, for example, al-Dīnawarī states:

> Misʿar b. Fadakī and Ibn al-Kawwāʾ and their group of the *qurrāʾ who later became Khawārij* were those who urged the people to respond to the judgment of the *muṣḥaf*.[287]

[287] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 204 [my italics].

A familial relationship between both groups and the 'pious descent' of the reciters' 'offspring' is thus established and reiterated several times.[288]

The famous rallying cry of *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh* is perhaps the most clearly pronounced expression of Khārijite godliness. The sources abound with reports regarding the Khārijites' commitment to uphold the word and judgment of God and defend His rights against anyone who would violate the divine provisions. The Khawārij are the first to point out that they made a mistake when they agreed to, indeed insisted on, the arbitration; consequently, they repent towards God and expect this from anyone who seeks to enlist their support:

> *Lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*, judgment is for God, O ʿAlī, not for you. We do not agree to men judging over the religion of God… We erred when we accepted the two arbitrators, and we returned and repented. So return, O ʿAlī, as we returned, and repent towards God as we repented. If not, we will dissociate from you.[289]

The piety of the Khārijites is further exemplified by their physical appearance, which bears the signs of their devotion: their faces are black and display marks on their foreheads from their prostrations during prayer[290]; their leader at Nahrawān, ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb al-Rāsibī, is even described as having callosities on his face, knees and hands from his fervent prostrations in prayer. He is therefore called *dhū al-thafināt*, 'he with the callosities'.[291] These marks are the physical expression of the Khārijites' absolute submission to God and His religion:

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[288] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 560; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 298; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3330, 3333; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 312.

[289] Ibn Muzāhim, *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, 589. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 308, 312, 319, 325-326, 328, 330; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 220, 222; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3360-3361, 3369, 3378.

[290] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, 560; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 446; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3332; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 315. In the translation of this part of al-Ṭabarī's *History*, Hawting remarks that L. Caetani in his *Annali dell'Islam* (Milan 1905-1926) understood the reference to their black faces to refer to their cowardice. Hawting himself does not offer an explanation of this passage. See G. Hawting (trans.): *The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. XVII: The First Civil War*. Albany 1996, 81 n. 327. With reference to the line in *Waq'at Ṣiffīn*, I consider this to be an allusion to their piety, which caused their faces to have black marks due to their constant prostrations in prayer.

[291] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 317, 318, 319.

> We are the sons of Islam and God is One / and the most righteous among God's servants (*awlā ʿabād allāh bi-l-ḥaqq*) is he who gives thanks [to God].[292]

In line with this portrayal of godly Khārijism, the sources' records of the rebels' sayings and speeches are full of Qurʾānic and other pious references. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the religious character of their utterances: al-Balādhurī preserves an account according to which the Khārijites met in the house of ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb before they swore allegiance to him. He summons them to "commanding right and forbidding wrong"[293] and exhorts them to follow him away from "this town whose people are oppressors [Q 4:75]" and condone the arbitration, this "abominable innovation".[294] Then he and Ḥurqūṣ b. Zuhayr along with their companions discuss "the vice of the world (*dhamm al-dunyā*), the need to renounce it (*al-daʿāʾ ilā rafḍihā*), the striving in search of the truth/right (*al-jidd fī ṭalab al-ḥaqq*) and the disapproval of innovation and injustice (*inkār al-bidaʿ wa-l-ẓulm*)."[295]

When al-Mustawrid learns that the governor of al-Madāʾin refuses to acknowledge him, he is not surprised but quotes Q 2:6-7 ('It matters not to unbelievers whether you warn them or not. They will not believe. God has sealed their hearts and their hearing and a veil conceals their sight. An awful punishment will be theirs').[296] The day Shurayḥ b. Awfā al-ʿAbsī 'goes out' to join the Khārijites on the way to Nahrawān, he recites Q 4:75. The connection between militancy and piety, which will be discussed below, is particularly apparent in both this and the preceding verse: '[4:74] Let those fight in the cause of God who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of God and is killed or victorious, We will grant him a great reward. [4:75] And why do you not fight in the cause of God and for the weak men, women and children who say: 'Our Lord, take us out of this town whose people are oppressors.' Similarly, when Zayd b. Ḥuṣayn rebels, he recites Q 28:20-21, which is part of the story of Moses and his flight after killing an

[292] This is the last line of a poem ascribed to the quietist Khārijite ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān. Reportedly, he composed this poem after he had finally succeeded in escaping al-Ḥajjāj's clutches and settled with a group of Azdī tribesmen in ʿUmān. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 105.
[293] The seminal work on this core concept of Islamic doctrine is M. Cook: *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge etc. 2000.
[294] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 320-321.
[295] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 321.
[296] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 43.

adversary: '[28:20] Leave [the town]! I am a sincere advisor to you [Moses]! [28:21] So he [Moses] left, fearful and in anticipation. He said 'My Lord, save me from the oppressors'. The report goes on to state that upon crossing the Euphrates, Zayd recited Q 28:22: 'And when he [Moses] turned towards Midian, he said 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me on the right path".[297]

We have seen that the sources in question depict the Khārijites as God-fearing, pious believers. The inclusion of quotations from the Qurʾān or other forms of religious argument is of course not unusual in Islamic historiography or the Islamic literary tradition in general. Most of the protagonists are credited with citing Qurʾānic verses or referring to the *sunna* (however defined) to substantiate their claims and emphasize their piety. However, in the case of the Khawārij, it is rather difficult to find an account of their utterances and deeds without any such reference. Moreover, as we shall presently see, they are portrayed not just as ordinary pious Muslims, but as Muslims whose devotion to God is their most prominent attribute, so much so that they transgress the boundaries of moderation and acceptable behaviour.

2.2 The Union of Piety and Violence in Khārijite Thought and Deed

Closely connected with the pious disdain for this world is the *topos* of the Khārijite desire for *jihād*. The sources portray the Khārijites' understanding of piety as an absolute commitment to fighting for the sake of God, which is another way to illustrate the godliness of the rebels. The conviction that death in the path of God is preferable to life in this fleeting world is by no means exclusive to the Khārijites, either, of course. Nevertheless, it does pervade the accounts of their activities to such an extent that the later tradition identified the longing for *jihād* as the main characteristic of the Khawārij. The following examples exemplify the ubiquity of this particular *topos* and illustrate the blend of piety and *jihād* among the Khawārij while also demonstrating the stylization of Khārijite identity in

[297] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 322. See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3365-3366, for Shurayḥ b. Awfā citing these verses [Q 28:21-23] when the Khawārij leave Kufa for Nahrawān.

and by the sources: just as shown in the first chapter, there is no real substance behind the reports, no sense of a tangible Khārijite self beyond the literary construct.

The connection between Khārijite piety and their commitment to *jihād* is expressed in a multitude of reports, sermons, exhortations, poetry and the like. Their prowess in battle is notorious: there are dozens of references to Khārijite groups fighting off government troops many times their number.[298] The Khārijites' disregard for their own safety and the single-minded fervour with which they throw themselves into combat are certainly the stuff of legends, as evidenced by the following three examples:

> Tell the transgressors (*al-muḥillīn*) Ṣāliḥ[299] is upon you / and in war Ṣāliḥ is a battering ram (*kabsh nāṭiḥ*)[300];
> and in clandestine slaughter Ṣāliḥ is a snarling lion (*layth kāliḥ*)…[301]

> People die in the morning and in the evening, and I cannot be sure that fate will not cut me off before I can strive against the evildoers – what a cheat that would be, and what benefit lost![302]

> [Ibn al-Azraq] died without compromising his faith / and when he was mentioned people feared him like lightning strike;
> Death – without question – is a set matter / to whom it does not come in the morning, it will come to later (*yuṭraq;* l. "knock").[303]

Indeed, not only do the Khārijites not care about their physical integrity, they purposefully seek out death in battle as a way of securing their place in Paradise. Over and over again, this is presented by the sources as one of the Khārijites' defining characteristics as the following examples will show.

In al-Ṭabarī's account of the rebellion of Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ in 76 AH/695-696 CE[304], he describes the Khārijite as a "humble and pious man" who "taught the Qurʾān and *tafsīr*

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[298] E.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 407; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 279; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 251; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 126; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 887-889; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 85-86.
[299] Ṣāliḥ b. Mukhrāq, an Azraqī Khārijite during the second *fitna*.
[300] '*Kabsh*' can also mean 'chief, army leader, hero'; '*nāṭiḥ*' also means 'distress, calamity'. In any case, the poet quite clearly wants to convey his stubborn perseverance and fearless valour.
[301] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 54.
[302] Shabīb in a letter to Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ explaining why he wants to join the latter's revolt. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 884-885; Rowson, *Restoration*, 36.
[303] A Khārijite poet on the death of Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq in battle against al-Muhallab. Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 284.
[304] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 881-891.

and delivered sermons."[305] Al-Ṭabarī then goes on to transmit at great length one of Ṣāliḥ's sermons, a piece of rhetoric that clearly demonstrates the Khārijite emphasis on piety and *jihād* and points out the connection between the two concepts in the Khārijite mindset:

> Prepare, then – God's mercy upon you – to strive against these fractious parties and unjust leaders of error[306], and to go out from the abode of transience to the abode of eternity and join our believing, convinced brethren, who sold the present world for the afterworld and expended their wealth in quest of God's good pleasure in the final reckoning. Be not anxious about being killed for God's sake, for being killed is easier than dying naturally. Natural death comes upon you unexpectedly, separating you from your fathers, sons, wives, and this world; if your anxiety and aversion to this is too strong, then, indeed, sell your souls to God obediently, and your wealth, and you will enter Paradise in security and embrace the black-eyed houris. May God make you and us among the grateful and mindful 'who are guided by the truth and by it act justly' [Q 7:159].[307]

Another example that shows the dangerous combination of piety and commitment to *jihād* among the Khawārij is the speech, transmitted by Ibn Aʿtham, given by the Azraqite leader ʿAbd Rabbih before one of the many battles fought against al-Muhallab. Addressing his men as *muhājirūn* and thereby establishing the Khārijites as true successors of the earliest and most faithful followers of the Prophet, ʿAbd Rabbih exhorts them to fight al-Muhallab despite the fact that they are in the minority: "Even if they [al-Muhallab's troops] overpower you in life, they will not be superior to you in death (*fa-in ghalabūkum ʿalā al-ḥayāt fa-lā yaghlubūkum ʿalā al-mawt*)." He admonishes them to ensure "that the spear's only destination are the chests [of the enemy] and the sword's targets the [enemies'] faces" and tells them to "turn your souls to God in this world" anticipating the Hereafter while remaining hopeful and not to "despair of victory, for you are 'the small group (*fiʾa qalīla*) that defeated the large group (*fiʾa kathīra*) by the will of God, and God is with those who persevere (*al-ṣābirīn*)' [Q 2:249]."[308]

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[305] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 881-882.

[306] In the depiction of the Islamic tradition, this is one of the Khārijites' favourite accusation against their opponents. See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 416, for a report on Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq's justification of revolt against "those who kill the *sunna* and those who give life to *bidʿa*".

[307] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 883-884; Rowson, *Restoration*, 35. The speech was quoted almost in its entirety in Chapter One, section 1.2.

[308] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 67. The reference to the "small group" and the "large group" is a standard phrase in religious rhetoric. While the Khārijites utilize this stock image (see e.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 279), it is by

While imprisoned by al-Mughīra in Kufa, Muʿādh b. Juwayn composes a poem to his fellow Khārijites, whom the townspeople plan to expel from the city. In this poem, Muʿādh bemoans the fact that he is forced to remain inactive and cannot join his comrades in battle against the Kufans:

> If only I were with you opposing your enemy / for I am given first the cup of fate to drink…;
> It is hard for me that you are wronged and decrease / and I become sorrowful as a prisoner in chains;
> If I were with you while they headed for you / then I would stir up dust between the two factions;
> For many a group have I broken up, and many an attack / have I experienced and many an opponent have I left dead on the ground.[309]

Just before the decisive battle between al-Mustawrid's rebels and al-Mughīra's troops in the course of which Maʿqil b. Qays and al-Mustawrid kill each other, al-Mustawrid calls upon his men to stand firm against the enemy: "By God, besides whom there is no God save He, Paradise belongs to whomever is killed with the genuine intention of *jihād* against those oppressors and their expression of enmity."[310]

When Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān is finally released from prison at an unspecified date after the death of al-Mughīra, he gathers his remaining Khārijite companions and summons them to rebel against the governor of Kufa at that time, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbdallāh. He seeks to enlist their support by emphasizing the importance of active resistance in securing Paradise:

> God, almighty and great, decreed the *jihād* for us. Whoever among you desires God and His reward, let him follow the way of his companions and his brothers. God will grant him the reward of this world and the better reward of the other world…[311]

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no means specific to them. See e.g. R. Paret: "Die legendäre Futūḥ-Literatur, ein arabisches Volksepos?", in *La poesia epica e la sua formazione*. Rome 1970, 735-749, 742. For the general use of Qurʾānic allusions in debates, see al-Jomaih, *Use of the Qurʾān*; for the argument that early Islamic historiography operates within a Qurʾānic framework in general, see Humphreys, "Qurʾānic Myth".

[309] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 36; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 41-42.

[310] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 64.

[311] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 181-182; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 193.

The rebels argue about where best to stage their revolt, but Ḥayyān does not think it makes much of a difference. Rather, he is convinced that

> when God knows that you exert yourselves in *jihād* against His enemy and yours, you will have His reward and escape from sin. (…) By God, there are not enough of you to expect victory in the world against the aggressive oppressors thereby. Rebel beside this city of yours [i.e., Kufa] and fight according to the command of God against whoever violates obedience to Him. Don't wait, and don't bide your time. Thus, you will hurry to Paradise and get yourself out of the discord thereby.[312]

The examples cited represent the general scheme of reports about Khārijite *jihād*, in which the rebels rationalise their violent actions by pointing out the obligation to fight against unjust, tyrannical rule. They are convinced of the wretchedness of their enemies, whom they frequently refer to as unbelievers, and thus feel justified, even obliged, to carry out what they understand to be God's will. Moreover, in the mindset of the activist Khārijites as portrayed by the sources, *jihād* appears to be the only certain way to secure God's reward in the Hereafter. This feature of Khārijite thought pervades the accounts of Khārijite activities across the entire time period examined here. As a matter of fact, there is not much variation at all in the *jihād*-related statements made by Khārijite rebels, and there is no palpable development of Khārijite thought in this regard. The Khārijite calls to *jihād* are thus interchangeable, practically meaningless stock phrases that can be employed regardless of specific contexts. The same applies to the pious nullities already discussed above. Once again, then, it is extremely difficult to discern a tangible Khārijite identity behind these empty phrases, let alone any precise understanding of the events themselves.[313]

This impression is further emphasized by the fact that the sentiments of piety and longing for *jihād* expressed in Khārijite prose and poetry are by no means unique to the rebels. The (ill-defined) genre of ascetic poetry, the *zuhdīyāt*, has a long history in Islamic literature and can perhaps even be traced back to pre-Islamic times.[314] It seems that by the

[312] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 183-184; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 193-195. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 182.
[313] See also my discussion in Chapter One.
[314] A. Hamori: "Ascetic Poetry (Zuhdiyyāt)", in Ashtiany et al. (eds.), *Belles-Lettres*, 265-274, 265.

early ninth century CE, "the poetry of *zuhd* was recognized as a distinct literary activity"[315], resulting in the establishment of poetic conventions around the same time. "On the whole, *zuhdīyāt* tend to be extremely conventional in theme and simple in language", and this did not change much as time went on. [316] The appearance of repetitiveness in the Khārijites' alleged statements of pious devotion and rejection of the world therefore probably owes something to this particular feature of the genre as well. Of course, this only highlights the lack of a distinct Khārijite identity in the historiographical narratives further.

The *zuhdīyāt* are rooted predominantly in the Qurʾān[317] and related to homiletics and advice literature, with which they share a number of literary themes.[318] The most important of these is the motif of renunciation, which gives the genre its name and is a "major feature of early Islamic piety".[319] There are similarities with the Christian tradition of renunciation, and it is very likely that early forms of Muslim *zuhd* were based on or at least related to Christian forms of asceticism.[320] Books of renunciant sayings thus abound in Islamic literature, among the most famous being the works attributed to Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181 AH/797 CE) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH/855 CE).[321] Other motifs include the contemplation of the vanity of human endeavours, the need for repentance, the frailty of human life and the rejection of the material world.[322] These motifs permeate several genres of the Islamic literary tradition: many works of *adab*, for example, contain *kuttāb al-zuhd*, such as al-Jāḥiẓ's *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn* or Ibn Qutayba's *al-ʿUyūn wa-l-Akhbār*.[323] The same is true for *ṣūfī* literature[324], and in a *ḥadīth* the Prophet is asked about the characteristics of the true renunciant, to which he replies, "He who is ever mindful of decay

[315] Hamori, "Ascetic", 268.
[316] Hamori, "Ascetic", 269.
[317] Hamori, "Ascetic", 267.
[318] Hamori, "Ascetic", 267-268.
[319] C. Melchert: "Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's Book of Renunciation", *ISL* 85 (2011), 345-359, 345.
[320] D. Cook: *Martyrdom in Islam*. Cambridge etc. 2007, 63. See also O. Livne-Kafri: "Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism", *JSAI* 20 (1996), 105-129; Sizgorich, *Violence*, 13, 150, 170; Donner, *Narratives*, 70.
[321] Melchert, "Aḥmad", 349.
[322] Hamori, "Ascetic", 265; Melchert, "Aḥmad", 358.
[323] Melchert, "Aḥmad", 357.
[324] Melchert, "Aḥmad", 357.

in the tomb, who prizes the enduring above the transitory, and who numbers himself among the dead."[325]

This is 'Khārijite' language *par excellence*, or rather, Khārijites are not shown to differ much in their pious outlook from many of their contemporaries.[326] What set them apart was their interpretation of the consequences that should follow from this outlook; the actions resulting from their religious beliefs are the focus of the historiographers' condemnation of the Khawārij, as we shall see in due course. Many of their sentiments, however, are echoed in ascetic poetry and sayings:

> You rejoice in what passes away and delight in wishes, as a dreamer is fooled by the pleasures he dreams.[327]
>
> Many a man goes to bed and gets up in the morning thinking himself safe when his shroud has already been woven.[328]
>
> Every living man is mortal, the son of a mortal. Every last one is descended from a long line of purebred mortals.[329]

ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān's absolute rejection of kinship ties other than those offered by Islam, cited at the beginning of the preceding section, finds perfect correspondence in the verses composed by Ibn Abī Ḥāzim:

> Be humble towards God, not your fellow men. Be content with giving up worldly hope – that is where nobility lies /
> Learn to do without kin and connections – he is wealthy who can do without others.[330]

[325] Hamori, "Ascetic", 266.
[326] On *zuhd* as "an entire way of conduct… destined for the Islamic community as a whole", see L. Kinberg: "What is Meant by Zuhd", *SI* 61 (1985), 27-44. The quote is on p. 29.
[327] Attributed to ʿUmar II., quoted in Hamori, "Ascetic", 272.
[328] Anonymous, cited in Hamori, "Ascetic", 272.
[329] Abū Nuwās, cited in Hamori, "Ascetic", 270. See also the examples quoted from Ibn al-Mubārak's *Kitāb al-Zuhd* in F. E. Salem: *ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak between* Ḥadīth, Jihād, *and* Zuhd: *An Expression of Early Sunni Identity in the Formative Period*. PhD dissertation, University of Chicago 2013, 209-211, and the remarks in Kinberg, "Zuhd", 36-41.
[330] Cited in Hamori, "Ascetic", 271.

It is not just the Khārijites' profound devotion to God that is shared by many of their apparent contemporaries and later Muslims alike. The connection between piety and *jihād* is most pronounced in warrior-ascetics like Ibn al-Mubārak, whose commitment to both sentiments is also demonstrated by the composition of a *Kitāb al-Jihād* and a *Kitāb al-Zuhd* attributed to him. His well-known statement that "the sword wipes [away] sins"[331] but not hypocrisy is reminiscent of the Khārijites' repeated calls for repentance for the perceived transgressions against God committed by them and their non-Khārijite contemporaries, transgressions that served both as the cause and the justification of the violence enacted by the Khawārij.[332] Ibn al-Mubārak and his companions also seem to have believed that the soul needed to be purged from all worldly temptations, which would be achieved by "going out" from the Muslim community to avoid the desires that so easily encroach upon one's soul.[333] A pious motivation for the use of violence can also be observed in the practice of frontier combat, which did not necessarily serve a direct political aim but nevertheless attracted large numbers of volunteers (among them Ibn al-Mubārak), particularly in the eighth and ninth centuries CE:

> Death as a proof of piety was the fruit of an extremely idiomatic appropriation of revelation and its reproduction as military exploit… Pious action, according to the logic of the frontier, went hand-in-hand with martyrdom, since it was only by a readiness to offer one's life for the Islamic cause that one could be certain of the purity of one's Islamic intention and thereby the redemptive worth of one's acts.[334]

Similarly, early Ṣūfism emphasized the importance of pious combat: "[t]he early ascetics were also fighters and participated gladly in the *jihād* against the infidel Byzantines and Turks."[335] Probably the most famous of these ascetics was the proto-*ṣūfī* martyr Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 778 CE), who apparently despised worldly affairs and embraced poverty. He

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[331] Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, quoted in Cook, *Martyrdom*, 36.
[332] See Chapter Three, section 3.1.1, *passim*.
[333] Sizgorich, *Violence*, 210.
[334] P. L. Heck: "Jihād Revisited", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32.1 (2004), 95-128, 100-101. See also Salem, *ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak*, 131-185, especially 136-143; Sizgorich, *Violence*, 208; M. Bonner: *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War. Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*. New Haven 1996, especially chapter four and appendix.
[335] Cook, *Martyrdom*, 64.

reportedly died in battle against a Byzantine army.[336] These early Muslim forms of militant piety were probably heavily influenced by, or at least ran parallel to, similar practices among Christian communities in Syria, whose traditions "frequently figure Christian ascetics as zealous and violent warriors"[337]; however, such stories of pious warriors were shared by all communities of the late antique and early Islamic Near East.[338]

Neither the pronounced piety displayed by the Khārijites nor their association of this piety with *jihād* was peculiar to the phenomenon of Khārijism or Islam, then. The problem of learning anything about the 'historical' Khārijites from the historiographical reports has been illustrated in the Introduction. It seems that we cannot learn very much about the literary identity of the Khawārij either because of the evident lack of narrative substance in these reports. However, this insubstantial depiction of Khārijism does serve a distinct purpose: it associates the rebels with certain characteristics and ideas that are immediately recognizable to the audience. While many of the ideas in question might not be uncommon or religiously problematic as such, it is the Khārijites' specific interpretation of them that leads to acts irreconcilable with accepted norms of Islamic behaviour: fighting against infidels is laudable, but not if it is based on a flawed definition of 'infidel' and thus directed against one's own community. Thus, all of the author-compilers transmit several reports that denounce the Khārijite rebels for their excessive use of force and the 'excommunication' (*takfīr*) of non-Khārijite Muslims. The very fact that the Khārijites' commitment to *jihād* follows from their understanding of piety is in itself already a condemnation of the Khārijite way, of course. However, the sources criticize the godliness of the Khawārij in a variety of ways that will be discussed in the following section.

[336] Cook, *Martyrdom*, 64-65.
[337] Sizgorich, *Violence*, 109.
[338] Sizgorich, *Violence*, 150.

2.3 "A Word of Truth With an Evil Intention!" – Khārijism in the Estimation of the Early Historians

Having established a reputation for piety and longing for *jihād* as the Khārijites' primary characteristics, the sources demonstrate their negative opinion of the rebels by calling into question not only their motives, but also the sincerity of their beliefs. The source material for the entire period analysed for this thesis abounds with severe criticism of the various Khārijite groups and their endeavours. This condemnation of Khārijism is based on a range of tools, among them the Qurʾān, the *ḥadīth*, and the juxtaposition of Khārijite word and deed. Much of the censure is specifically directed against those Khārijite habits and actions that violate religious as well as common social codes of conduct: Khārijites are excessive in their use of violence even against women, children and praying Muslims[339]; in their mindless desire to attain God's favour, they infringe His laws and thus leave the community of 'true' Muslims themselves. Moreover, at least some of their followers are insincere and join the revolts for material gain rather than out of religious conviction[340]; they are hypocrites who violate their own ideals through their rigidity in religious matters.[341] Indeed, it is the condemnation of Khārijism as a transgression of Islamic norms and precepts[342] that is most pervasive in the early historiographical tradition and will thus be discussed in greater detail over the remainder of this chapter.

A good starting point for an investigation of criticism against piety is the Khārijite maxim 'no judgment save God's'. In itself, this dictum is not offensive or even heretical, and al-Ṭabarī preserves a report according to which ʿAlī, upon being confronted with this formula by Khārijite critics, responds by confirming that indeed *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*.[343] However, its interpretation by the Khawārij is presented as a distortion of its truth. Several

[339] The sources provide many examples of Khārijites murdering people right, left and centre. On Khārijites killing women and people praying in the mosque, see e.g. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 87; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3373-3374, and II, 755-756, 918; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 328, and IV/2, 434; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 274. See also Sizgorich, *Violence*, 206.
[340] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3352-3353, and II, 941.
[341] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 462, where the Najdite Khārijites seek to elect a new leader after deposing Najda b. ʿĀmir. Instead of appointing Thābit al-Tammār, a *mawlā*, they decide on Abū Fudayk because "only an Arab could rule them", unconcerned with the fact that everyone agreed that Thābit was the most excellent in religion among them and hence technically the only possible choice from a Khārijite point of view. For another accusation of hypocrisy, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 42.
[342] See also Sizgorich, *Violence*, 195.
[343] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3361-3362.

accounts state that when ʿAlī heard Khārijites proclaiming their slogan, he said: "A word of truth with an evil intention (*kalimatu ḥaqqin yurādu bihā bāṭilun*)"[344], thereby discrediting their claims to defending God's rights and their accusations of unbelief against non-Khārijites. Furthermore, he accuses them of purposefully using their maxim to conceal their true intentions:

> This is so [i.e., judgment does only belong to God], but they [actually] mean 'no rule', and no necessity for the people to have a ruler, whether righteous or unrighteous, under whose [i.e., the latter's] command the believer toils and the unbeliever profits (*innahu kadhālika wa-lakinnahum yaqūlūna: innahu lā imrata, wa-lā budda li-l-nās min amīrin barrin aw fājirin yaʿmalu fī imratihī al-muʾmin wa-yastamtiʿu al-kāfir*).[345]

In these reports, the outward godliness exhibited by the Khawārij is exposed as dishonest and a transgression of social norms.

This insincerity of the Khārijites' pious claims is also illustrated in the work of Ibn Aʿtham, who preserves a heated argument between al-Ashtar, one of ʿAlī's most fervent supporters, and the *qurrāʾ* at Ṣiffīn, when al-Ashtar is told about the arbitration agreement. In the course of this debate, al-Ashtar passes a damning judgment on the *qurrāʾ*:

> O people of the black foreheads! We used to think that your prayers mean abstinence from this world and a desire for the Hereafter; by God, you are only running towards this world. May you meet an evil end and perish like the oppressors perished (*fa-qubḥan lakum wa-buʿdan kamā baʿida al-qawm al-ẓālimūn*).[346]

Predominant among the allegations levelled against the Khawārij, however, is the accusation that they violate the precepts of Islam. A large number of reports call the Khārijites "transgressors", "enemies of God", "unbelievers", "the dogs of hell", "heretics",

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[344] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 311. See also e.g. al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 191; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3361, 3362.
[345] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 336. See also ibid., 311, where the reference to the "righteous or unrighteous" ruler is missing, which renders the passage a little confusing as ʿAlī appears to confirm the negative image of rulers.
[346] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 315. The association of the appellation "people of the black foreheads" with praying in this account also supports the interpretation of "black faces" as referring to piety rather than cowardice, as argued at note 290.

and the like.[347] Ibn Aʿtham in particular is rather fond of calling the Khārijites all manners of names associated with the root *k-l-b*, thereby likening them to dogs and wild beasts.[348] Of course, such name-calling is nothing unusual and certainly not limited to conflicts involving Khārijites, although they, too, are quite happy to insult their opponents with the same epithets as evidenced by the following short but rather amusing exchange between the Azraqite leader ʿUbayda b. Hilāl and one of al-Muhallab's soldiers.

Having failed to take al-Muhallab's men by surprise, the Azāriqa retreat from their enemies' camp. One of al-Muhallab's soldiers calls out after them: "O People of Hell! Verily, hurry towards it quickly, for it is your place of rest and your abode!" The Khārijites reply that hell is in fact prepared for unbelievers and that al-Muhallab's man is one of them. The soldier in question responds, "I would manumit every slave I own if you entered Paradise while there remained between Safawān and the furthest land of Khurāsān any Magian, who marries his mother, daughter and sister, who would not enter it also!" ʿUbayda answers: "Shut up, O wicked one! You are merely a slave of the truculent tyrant and a helper (*wazīr*) of the iniquitous unbeliever." His opponent replies: "O wicked one, you are the enemy of the god-fearing believer and the helper of the accursed Devil."[349] The Khārijite appears to have no reply to that, so al-Muhallab's men congratulate their companion on having bested the Khārijite in their verbal duel.[350]

Name-calling aside, the sources preserve several accounts of Khārijites deliberately and unscrupulously violating the sacred ordinances of Islam. Both Ibn Aʿtham and al-Dīnawarī transmit an event that apparently took place during the drawn-out confrontation between al-Muhallab and the Azāriqa. According to the accounts, al-Muhallab has just returned to Sābūr after yet another victory against the Khārijites and is in the process of celebrating *yawm al-naḥr* ('Day of Sacrifice', the third day of the *ḥajj*) with his men and the town's inhabitants when he is informed that the Khārijites are approaching. He is

[347] E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 589, 762, 897, 902, 933; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 29, 30; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 395, 401, 409, 438; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 281, 285, 287.
[348] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 29, 310, and VII, 27, 32, 44 (the term here (VII, 44) is *al-sibāʿ al-ḍārīya*, 'rabid beasts' rather than 'dogs', but *ḍār* is often used with reference to dogs. See Lane, entry for "*ḍ-r-w* and *ḍ-r-yā*").
[349] See also a report in Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 64, where al-Muhallab likens five specific Khārijite leaders to "five companions of the devil".
[350] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 585-586; Hawting, *Collapse*, 169-170.

outraged at this blatant breach of the inviolability of the feast day, "a noble day with God the Exalted, on which He does not allow the shedding of blood", and quotes Q 2:194 ('the holy month for the holy month and retribution for all violations [in it], and whoever assaults you, assault him in the manner in which he assaulted you').[351] In these accounts, the Khārijites are shown to be transgressors of God's commandments, countering their claims to uphold the ordinances of Islam. Their transgression also justifies the violence against them. Consequently, at least from a narrative point of view, they get what they deserve when they are utterly defeated by al-Muhallab.[352]

Other accusations target the innovations brought about by the Khārijites, specifically Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq, which is interesting because this is usually an allegation voiced by the Khawārij themselves and directed against their opponents. Here, however, Nāfiʿ is charged with inventing the *miḥna* of non-Khārijites, meaning the alleged habit of some Khārijite groups to interrogate everyone they came across and executing those who did not agree with them, although they usually spared *dhimmīs*. Remarkably, he is first and foremost reproached for this by fellow Khārijites who state that this was not common practice "among their forebears of the *ahl al-nahrawān* and the *ahl al-qibla*". A number of them thus split from him.[353] This account and others like it primarily serve to illustrate the volatility of Khārijism, a point which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, but the condemnation of Nāfiʿ as a creator of *bidʿa*, transmitted only in the *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, is striking.

At this point, we should therefore draw attention to another aspect of this story: intra-Khārijite accusations. As previously stated, the issue of the various Khārijite divisions and disagreements will be examined in Chapter Five, but it is worth mentioning here that one Khārijite group's criticism of another's actions and beliefs is a rhetorical device that betrays decidedly heresiographical concerns. It is possible that the reports in question reflect real doctrinal debates, at least to the extent that the ideas attributed to the various

[351] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 29. For a slightly shorter version, see al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 285.
[352] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 30; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 286.
[353] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 400-401. Note that the reference to the "*ahl al-qibla*" implies the acceptability of the customs and norms of non-Khārijites. Unless the term is used exclusively to denote the *umma* under Abū Bakr and ʿUmar (the only two caliphs accepted by the Khawārij), this indicates that quietist, or at least non-Azraqite, Khārijites were thought to have a much more moderate approach to non-Khārijite Muslims.

Khārijite groups constituted fertile soil for model debates among scholars; most important for our current purpose, however, is the fact that the sources pit quietist Khārijites against their militant counterparts. As we will see in Chapter Four, al-Ṭabarī employs this technique in his treatment of the Basran quietists during Muʿāwiya's caliphate, but he is not the only scholar who depicts internal strife among the Khawārij: al-Balādhurī and Ibn Aʿtham both provide accounts according to which certain Khārijites specifically accused others of excessive violence. For instance, both Najda b. ʿĀmir and the alleged founder of the Ṣufrīya apparently held that *istiʿrāḍ* and the killing of children were unlawful and an unacceptable innovation.[354] In another report, Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa is accused of being too violent and warned that he will lose his followers if he does not change his ways.[355]

The most explicit example of a Khārijite using religious sentiment to admonish another for his immoderate use of force, however, is once again found in al-Ṭabarī. On the authority of Abū Mikhnaf, he relates a disagreement between Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ, the pious rebel *par excellence*, and Shabīb b. Yazīd regarding the treatment of non-Khārijites. While Shabīb is in favour of *istiʿrāḍ*, Ṣāliḥ strongly disagrees and warns his companions against intemperance:

> Fear God, you servants of God, and be not overhasty to fight any one of the people, unless they be hostile people who intend you harm. You are rebelling only out of wrath for God, because His ordinances have been flouted, the earth filled with disobedience, blood spilled unjustly, and property taken wrongfully. Do not reproach people for deeds and then do them yourselves; for you are yourselves responsible for all that you do.[356]

Despite Ṣāliḥ's obvious misdeed in revolting against the government, he is still an embodiment of righteous piety. He is shown to follow proper procedure in stating that the rebels must not slaughter people at random but summon them to the faith first. Only those who disagree should be fought. Likewise, he apparently allowed the taking of spoils, but argued that the rebels would be rewarded by God if they left them behind.[357] His readiness

[354] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 403-404.
[355] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 57.
[356] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 886-887; Rowson, *Restoration*, 37-38.
[357] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 886.

to fight fellow Muslims is to be condemned, but as he appears to consider them polytheists, his approach is technically correct and reflects both the Qurʾān and later Islamic law. Shabīb's opinion, on the other hand, is clearly reprehensible, and the whole exchange foreshadows the massacres committed by his men.[358]

The Use of the Qurʾān in the Condemnation of Khārijism

The use of the Qurʾān in attacking Khārijite beliefs and actions represents another way in which the rebels are censured on religious grounds and their erroneous understanding of what it means to be a Muslim denounced. It is a common technique that once again is not exclusive to conflicts involving Khārijites – many of the specific verses cited constitute such generally expedient and thus common ammunition that they are used by everyone against everybody else.[359] The Khawārij certainly make frequent use of Scripture in order to argue their point. This is particularly the case where internal divisions force the Khārijites to justify their difference of opinion on the basis of the Qurʾān.[360] Still, the condemnation of Khārijism on the basis of the Qurʾān is an important part of the sources' representation of the rebels, and it is in this context that some of the most damning statements regarding the Khawārij are made. It is important to note here that the cited Qurʾānic verses "are no mere ornament or illustration." Rather, they "provide the logic and vocabulary" through which a particular report is perceived and interpreted.[361] The function of these verses is hardly ever aesthetic, but serves to draw parallels between a Qurʾānic event or statement and a contemporary situation. This "context equivalence"[362] between the Qurʾānic quotation and the particular situation to which it is applied is different from the

[358] E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 895, 899, 918, 955-956; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 272; al-Yaʿqūbī, II, *Taʾrīkh*, 274; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 87.
[359] See al-Jomaih, *Use of the Qurʾān*.
[360] See e.g. the debates between Nāfiʿ and Najda regarding *istiʿrāḍ* and the status of the *quʿūd*. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 402-404.
[361] Humphreys, "Qurʾānic Myth", 276, with reference to ʿUthmān's letter to Ibn ʿAbbās while the caliph was besieged by rebels in his own house.
[362] S. Dähne: "Context Equivalence: A Hitherto Insufficiently Studied Use of the Quran in Political Speeches from the Early Period of Islam", in Günther (ed.), *Ideas*, 1-17.

techniques of *iqtibās* (quoting from the Qurʾān) and *talmīḥ* (alluding to the Qurʾān).[363] It evokes an emotional response on the part of the audience and can sometimes serve to 'sacralize' a speech or sermon.[364] The use of Qurʾānic citations is not restricted to the Khārijites' opponents, as we have seen.[365] *Iqtibās*, *talmīḥ* and context equivalence are common features of classical Arabic literature regardless of the particular religious or political affiliations of the speaker or preacher in question. However, they serve specific functions, here the invocation of divine authority against the Khārijites' misdeeds. Let us look at the following examples.[366]

The first case in point is taken from al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, more specifically his depiction of the conflict between al-Muhallab and the Azāriqa, at that point under the leadership of a certain ʿAbd Rabbih. On the second day of battle, the Khārijite leader exhorts his men to persevere in battle. In response, al-Muhallab quotes Q 2:193: 'And fight them until there is no more *fitna* and the religion is God's.' As usual, al-Muhallab proves triumphant, while only a few of the weakest Khārijites survive, presumably by avoiding the thick of battle.[367] After his victory, he exclaims: "Praise be to God who returned us to security and freed us from the burden of war (*wa-kafānā maʾūnat al-ḥarb*) and repelled the affair of this enemy."[368] Thus, the Khārijites' defeat is shown to be God's will, an end to the *fitna* as demanded in the verse cited by al-Muhallab before the battle, whose outcome has also been aptly foretold in this manner. The envoy al-Muhallab sends to al-Ḥajjāj to inform him of their victory goes even further and likens the Khārijites to a notorious group of Qurʾānic evildoers:

> We have stopped the disease of the Azāriqa for ever / and they disappeared as one like the people of Thamūd…[369]

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[363] On which, see G. Hawting: "Two Citations of the Qurʾān in "Historical" Sources for Early Islam", in G. Hawting/A.-K. A. Shareef (eds.): *Approaches to the Qurʾān*. London etc. 1993, 260-268.
[364] Dähne, "Context", 13.
[365] See section 2.1 above.
[366] See also the discussion in Chapter Three.
[367] On the depiction of al-Muhallab in the historiographical tradition, see Chapter Five.
[368] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 288.
[369] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 288. A variant of this poem in Ibn Aʿtham mentions both ʿĀd and Thamūd together, as is more common. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 74. On Thamūd and their divine punishment for disobeying the prophet Ṣāliḥ, see Chapter Six, note 842.

The reports of the conflict between al-Mustawrid and the governor of al-Madāʾin, Simāk b. ʿUbayd, constitute the second example of the use of the Qurʾān as a tool of intellectual warfare against the rebels. Simāk prevents the Khārijites from crossing the Tigris and forces them to relocate to Bahurasīr, whereupon al-Mustawrid orders his nephew ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUqba to write a letter to the governor. In this letter, al-Mustawrid calls himself "servant of God" and "*amīr al-muʾminīn*"[370], accuses the authorities of tyranny and failure to impose the *ḥudūd* and criticises their monopolization of the *fayʾ*[371]. He summons Simāk to the Qurʾān, the *sunna* of Muḥammad and the rule of the first two caliphs, whereas he should disavow ʿUthmān and ʿAlī "for their innovation in religion [*iḥdāth fī-l-dīn*] and their abandonment of the judgment of the Qurʾān."[372] If Simāk refuses, then battle against him will be lawful.

This highly stylized letter reflects the tenor and formulae typical of early Islamic rebels as they are portrayed in the Islamic tradition, in particular the rather vague call to the Qurʾān and the "*sunna*" (variously defined).[373] The repetitiveness of these stock motifs, which appear in 'Khārijite' letters and speeches from the first confrontation with ʿAlī[374] to the later ʿAbbāsid Khārijites such as Ḥamza al-Sistānī[375], further emphasizes the impression of the reports' insubstantiality already addressed in the previous chapter.

When the letter is delivered to Simāk by ʿAbdallāh, the governor, unsurprisingly, is not amused. He tells ʿAbdallāh in no uncertain terms that

> al-Mustawrid would not be my choice for caliph because of what I have seen of his hypocrisy and baseness in drawing his sword against the Muslims. Al-Mustawrid presents me with the denunciation of ʿAlī and ʿUthmān and calls me to acknowledge his rule. By God, what a wretched shaykh I would be then.[376]

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[370] This seems to be the earliest attestation of the Khārijite use of this title. Compare with P. Crone: "The Khārijites and the Caliphal Title", in G. Hawting et al. (eds.): *Studies in Islamic and Middle Eastern Texts and Traditions in Memory of Norman Calder*. Oxford etc. 2000, 85-91, 88, who had argued that the Azāriqa were the first to call their leaders *amīr al-muʾminīn*.

[371] On the *fayʾ* and the common accusation of its misappropriation by the government, see EI^3, "Fayʾ" (A. Marsham).

[372] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40-41.

[373] K. Abou el Fadl: *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*. Cambridge etc. 2001, 129; Crone/Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 58-96.

[374] See the references in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.

[375] Crone/Hinds, *God's Caliph*, 89.

[376] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 42; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 48.

Simāk nevertheless offers to ask al-Mughīra to grant amnesty to the Khārijites if they "return to the community". ʿAbdallāh refuses this and emphasizes the rebels' commitment to *jihād* as their means of securing God's favour. Outraged, Simāk denounces the Khārijites in the most damning terms:

> They abandoned right guidance by what they did. They began to recite the Qurʾān to him [i.e., ʿAbdallāh], they pretended to humble themselves and to weep. Thus he thought that they had something of the truth. 'Verily, they are just like cattle, nay, they have strayed further from the way' [Q 25:44]. By God! I never saw people who were in more manifest error nor a more obvious calamity than those whom you see![377]

However, the most damning denunciation of Khārijism in the material at hand is found in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* in the context of Shabīb's revolt. One of the commanders who have been sent to fight the Khārijite, ʿAttāb b. Warqāʾ, gives a speech to his soldiers before the battle with Shabīb in which he tears down the Khārijites' rationalization for their violent acts:

> O people of Islam! Those who have the best lot in Paradise are the martyrs. God praises none of His creatures more than the steadfast; hear how He says, 'Be ye steadfast; God is with the steadfast.' [Q 8:46] He whose deeds God praises, how great is his status! But God despises no one more than those who commit outrages. See how this enemy of yours slaughters the Muslims with his sword, and they insist that they thereby win God's favor. *They are the most wicked people on earth, the dogs of the people of Hell!*[378]

Ultimately, the very connection between the Khārijites and the *qurrāʾ*, identified in the historical works as the most fervent of Muslims, already represents a fundamental tool of criticism against excessive piety. It has already been mentioned that the sources blame the *qurrāʾ* for forcing ʿAlī to accept the arbitration. Overly fervent and hence misguided piety led the reciters to ignore ʿAlī's words of caution against Muʿāwiya's ruse and rush to "the judgment of the Book", only to later discover that the arbitration in fact disregarded the Qurʾān and that ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ had outwitted the arbiter of their choice. The link between

[377] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 42.
[378] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 950-951; Rowson, *Restoration*, 101-102 [my emphasis].

violence and misguided piety can therefore be shown to have existed from the start; that a group like the Khawārij could arise from the *qurrāʾ* is in itself a symbol of the danger of piety.

Excessive Piety in the Ḥadīth

Khārijite piety and their overzealousness are also the subject matter of a number of Prophetic *aḥādīth* that serve as vehicles of criticism. In some reports of the murder of a Companion's son[379] by a group of Khārijites (see below), two famous Traditions are variously embedded which at least implicitly refer to the Khārijites. Both Traditions are quoted on the authority of the Prophet through the victim's father, and both of them address the subject of *fitna*. The first version has the murder victim, ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb, volunteer a *ḥadīth* during his encounter with the Khārijites:

> My father told me on the authority of the Prophet (ṣ): 'There will be a *fitna* during which a man's heart dies [in the sense of his ability to distinguish between right and wrong being confounded?]. He will be a believer in the morning and have become an unbeliever by the evening, and he will be a believer in the evening and have become an unbeliever in the morning.'[380]

The second version portrays the Khārijites as specifically asking ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb for a *ḥadīth* his father had related to him from the Prophet. Ibn Khabbāb states:

> I heard him [his father] say: The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'There will be a *fitna* during which the one sitting down is better than the one standing up, and the one who walks better than the one who runs. And if you live to see it [the *fitna*], be ʿAbdallāh the slain and not ʿAbdallāh the slayer.'[381]

[379] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 404, is the only source that does not present the victim, Ibn Khabbāb, as the son of a Companion but as ʿAlī's governor of al-Madā'in.
[380] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 326. See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3374-3375, for a variant of this story.
[381] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 328. See also Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 98; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3373-3374. Al-Ṭabarī preserves a slightly different version according to which the Khārijites quote this *ḥadīth* to Ibn Khabbāb and then ask him whether he had heard it from his father on the authority of the Prophet.

Both Traditions urge the believers not to get involved in *fitna* and to beware of rash decisions, as it will not be possible to distinguish right from wrong. The Khawārij are not explicitly named in either of these *aḥādīth*, but both are clearly taken to refer to the Khārijite habit of participating in the *fitna* to the full and "running" to judge non-Khārijites whom they accuse of unbelief, insisting on their right to kill them. Moreover, they are shown to violate the Prophetic exhortation to "be the slain, not the slayers". The error of their ways has therefore been proven beyond doubt.

Al-Balādhurī preserves two accounts, placed among the reports on the Battle of Nahrawān, in the course of which ʿAlī also relates a well-known *ḥadīth* on the authority of the Prophet concerning the Khārijites.[382] The two versions differ slightly from each other. The *ḥadīth* in the first report is longer and provides information on how to deal with the Khawārij:

> The Prophet (ṣ) said: '[There will be] a people who recite the Qurʾān, [but] it does not pass beyond their collar-bones, they pass through religion like the arrow passes through the game (*yamruqūna min al-dīn kamā yamruqu al-sahm min al-ramīyya*). God's blessing and a good final state shall be for him who kills them and is killed by them (*ṭūbā li-man qatalahum wa-qatalūhu*).'[383]

The second report transmits a shorter variant of this *ḥadīth*. ʿAlī is credited with relating a Tradition from the Prophet who foresaw the emergence of a people who "speak the truth, [but] it does not pass beyond their throats, they go out from truth like a shot arrow."[384]

This *ḥadīth* reiterates ʿAlī's criticism of the Khawārij as misguided and insincere in their pious professions. Moreover, with reference to the highest authority – the Prophet himself – it allows ʿAlī both to essentially claim that they forfeit their status as Muslims – pass through religion – due to their overzealous religiosity and to justify killing them,

[382] They are never explicitly named. However, both variants of the *ḥadīth* include the description of a man who belongs to the people that this Tradition refers to. Hence, those sources which preserve a form of this *ḥadīth* emphasize that he was indeed among the dead at Nahrawān, confirming the validity of the Prophetic Tradition and ʿAlī's conduct towards them. See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 334, 335; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3383, 3384, 3388, 3389; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 97, 130, albeit without the description of the man's physical appearance.

[383] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 334. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3388; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 128. Ibn Aʿtham also preserves references to the Khawārij as those who "pass through guidance" [*al-hudā*, IV, 105] or "pass through the religion of Islam" [IV, 106].

[384] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 335.

which provides another argument in favour of the massacre at Nahrawān. The reference to "God's blessing and a good final state" being promised to him who kills them *and is killed by them* legitimizes ʿAlī's conduct towards the Khawārij and foreshadows his death at the hand of a Khārijite, casting him in the role of a martyr who has been guaranteed the Hereafter.

The combination of all three *aḥādīth* presents a picture of Khārijism that sheds a negative light on piety in its extreme forms in general.[385] Excessiveness in religious matters leads to imprudent decisions, which in turn results in the transgression of divine boundaries. Ironically, zealotry thus entails the risk of engendering impiety.

In al-Balādhurī's work, the accounts containing the *ḥadīth* quoted by ʿAlī are followed by his judgment of the Khārijite maxim as a rejection of all forms of rule and government, quoted above in full. These episodes conclude the author-compiler's treatment of the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khawārij – although he refers to a number of insignificant Khārijite rebellions after Nahrawān and devotes several pages to ʿAlī's assassination, he no longer deals with the Khārijites as a group for the remainder of ʿAlī's caliphate. ʿAlī's condemnation of their intentions and deeds is therefore the last impression of Khārijism that the reader is left with for this period, which in itself is an expression of criticism on the part of al-Balādhurī.

The Murder of Non-Khārijite Muslims

Another means of criticizing excessive piety is provided by the juxtaposition of Khārijite utterances and Khārijite conduct. As we have seen, the Khawārij are overall presented as God-fearing believers who seek to follow the provisions of the Qurʾān to the letter. They assert their obedience to God and their commitment to "commanding right and forbidding wrong". Nonetheless, their actions contradict their claims to righteousness. This can best be illustrated with reference to the story of the murder of ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb alluded to

[385] Versions of the cited *aḥādīth* also abound in the *ḥadīth* collections. See e.g. ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Shayba: *Al-Kitāb al-Muṣannaf fī l-Aḥādīth wa-l-Āthār*. Vol. 8. Ed. S. al-Laḥḥām. Beirut 1989, 729-743, nos. 2, 3, 38-40, 48; Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī. Al-Mujallad 4: al-Aḥādīth 5640-7563*. Ed. Ṣ. J. al-ʿAttār. Beirut 2003, 298-299, nos. 6930-6934.

above. All of the relevant sources mention the killing of Ibn Khabbāb by the Khārijites[386], which indicates the importance of this incident for the depiction of early Khārijism. It will therefore be discussed in detail in what follows.

The two most elaborate reports already alluded to above are preserved by al-Balādhurī. The first story involving Ibn Khabbāb and the Khawārij is set in the hometown of ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb. Upon entering the village, the Khārijites encounter ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb, who is frightened of them, an adumbration of his unfortunate end. They already know who he is, and they also appear to know that his father was a Companion as they ask him whether his father transmitted *aḥādīth* from the Prophet to him. He affirms this and then relates to them the *ḥadīth* about the *fitna* during which the one sitting down is better than the one standing up, quoted above. The Khawārij inquire whether he really heard this Tradition from his father, and when he answers in the affirmative, they seize and kill him. They also rip open the womb of his heavily pregnant *umm walad*.[387]

The main point of this account is of course the embedded *ḥadīth*, which is understood by both the Khārijites in the story and the reader to pertain to the rebels. As this Tradition has already been commented on, it will suffice to say that it also represents a condemnation of their conduct by the Prophet himself. Unsurprisingly, the Khārijites do not take kindly to this and kill Ibn Khabbāb, thereby exemplifying the "running slayers" of the Prophetic *ḥadīth*. Moreover, their killing of Ibn Khabbāb's *umm walad* is a gross violation of social norms as reflected in the later tradition.

The second story is extant in two slightly different versions. The longer variant states that a group of Basran Khārijites led by Misʿar b. Fadakī comes across ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb and his pregnant *umm walad*. They ask him about his identity, and when he reveals to them that he is the son of a Companion, they initially refrain from attacking him. Then, however, they ask him about his opinion of ʿAlī, to which he responds that ʿAlī is "the *amīr al-muʾminīn* and the *imām* of the Muslims". Ibn Khabbāb goes on to relate the

[386] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 325, 326-327, 328; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3373-3374, 3374-3375; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 220; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 191; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 225; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 404, 405; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 98, 107, 119. This episode is also transmitted by Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 32, and Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*, 317.

[387] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 328. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3373-3374.

ḥadīth on the *fitna* during which a man's status as a believer can change over night. The Khawārij are outraged and respond: "By God, we will kill you in a fashion that no one ever endured." They seize both him and his *umm walad* and take them with them. On the way, the Khārijites pass by a palm tree from which some dates have fallen to the ground. One of the rebels picks them up and puts them in his mouth, but he is immediately rebuked for having taken them unlawfully without payment, so he spits them out. A while later, the same Khārijite begins to play with his sword, and when a swine happens to walk past the group, he kills it. He is again at once reprimanded by his fellow Khārijites for killing the swine, so he looks for its owner in order to compensate him. Having observed this, Ibn Khabbāb concludes: "If you are [truly] sincere in what I see and hear, then I am surely safe from your wickedness." However, the Khawārij thrust him onto the dead swine by the side of a river and slaughter him. After that, they rip open the belly of his *umm walad*, upon which she asks them: "Do you not fear God?" Then they kill her and three previously unmentioned women accompanying her.[388]

The shorter version does not mention Ibn Khabbāb's wife, the other women or the *ḥadīth*. His response upon witnessing the Khārijites' strict abidance by the law also differs somewhat from the longer variant: Ibn Khabbāb concludes that surely they would not kill someone more inviolable (*aʿẓam ḥurmatan*) than the swine. Alas, his captors disagree, and he is killed, albeit this time without involving the swine's carcass.[389]

This story, in particular its longer version, is set up in a way that again reveals the Khārijites' seemingly pious conduct as thoroughly misconceived. Like Ibn Khabbāb, the reader is presented with their punctilious adherence to the letter of the law, which even prevents them from eating dates that have fallen from a tree because it is not their property. Like Ibn Khabbāb, the reader is led to believe that this display of piety will prevent them from immoral actions in general and from killing Muslims in particular. However, their

[388] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 326-327. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3374-3375. Al-Ṭabarī's version is longer and emphasizes Ibn Khabbāb's fear at encountering the Khārijites. Initially, they assure him that he does not need to be frightened. Ibn Khabbāb refers to this assurance later on, stating "you gave me security when you said 'There is no need to be frightened.'" The Khawārij nevertheless kill him and his pregnant *umm walad*, confirming their disregard for any social or moral code apart from their own fastidious but/therefore misguided understanding of the divine law.
[389] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 325.

overzealousness clouds their reasoning, prevents them from perceiving their errors and hence leads them to overshoot their stated aim of living a godly life. The excessiveness they exhibit concerning matters of piety is hence mirrored by their extreme violence: not only do they kill Ibn Khabbāb, a Companion's son, in the longer version of the account they do so in a truly reprehensible manner – thrown onto a dead swine. The Khawārij thereby utterly transgress the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, which is also emphasized by their killing of women, one of them pregnant.

The depiction of Khārijite piety in all the sources under consideration leaves the reader with only one possible conclusion: in their endeavours to adhere to the letter of the Qurʾān, they utterly violate it. Their claims to righteousness are false, their interpretation of faith is perverted. One can therefore only follow ʿAlī's succinct summary of the nature of Khārijism: "From unbelief they fled, yet therein they dwelt (*min al-kufr harabū wa-fīhi waqaʿū*)."[390]

2.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the reputation of the Khawārij in early historiographical writing on the period from the battle of Ṣiffīn until the end of ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate is decidedly negative. The accounts cited above are of an obviously literary nature, but they highlight the essence of Khārijism as developed by the author-compilers and their sources all the better. The evaluation and consequent condemnation of Khārijism is based mostly on the rebels' (mis)understanding of Islam and transgression of religious precepts, which causes the sort of violent behaviour that defies all social, moral or religious codes of conduct incumbent upon every member of the *umma* and of society in general. The idea of Khārijism represented across all of the sources is that of a mentality of devoted but mindless godliness that casts the majority of the *umma* in the roles of religious deviants who can and should be fought at every stage in order to safeguard the purity of *dīn allāh*. The conclusions drawn from this portrayal are rather self-evident: Khārijites take their understanding of piety too far. The actions resulting from this lead to bloodshed and strife within the Muslim

[390] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 128.

community, which goes against the Islamic (tradition's) idea of social cohesion and communal togetherness; consequently, the Khawārij are in violation of the very norms and principles they purport to preserve. The early Muslim scholars' intended audience could not but agree with the following assessment: "I have disavowed the religion of the *Muḥakkimūn*; in respect to religion, that is the worst religion among us."[391]

Beyond that, however, the Khārijites are stand-ins for proponents of militant piety in general. The reports of Khārijite violence were certainly a convenient tool: they constituted a vehicle for the early scholars of Islam to discuss various approaches to *zuhd* and dismiss those forms of piety that threatened the safety of the Muslim community. This primary concern of the reports that deal with Khārijite zealotry also explains the comparative monotony and homogeneity of the episodes in question – while the stories differ from one another to some extent, the statements and behaviour attributed to the Khārijites are more or less the same. The reason for this is the rebels' narrative role as negative archetypes that serve one goal in particular: to condemn the violence and bloodshed that follows from intemperate piety.[392] The typecasting and resulting reduction of Khārijism to a set of standardized characteristics highlight one of the functions of history both in the medieval Islamic and European worlds: its use for edification, moral and political discussion. This led to "a willingness to reduce the complexity of human experience into stereotypes that could be utilized easily to make a point."[393] It is this approach to history and historiography that is at least partly responsible for the formation of the Khārijite *topoi* addressed in this and the preceding chapter.

The Khārijites' apparent tendency to engage in *takfīr* and declare non-Khārijite Muslims unbelievers whose lives and property can lawfully be taken is one of the consequences of militant piety that the early Muslim scholars sought to discredit. The issue of communal togetherness and a correspondent aversion to factionalism seem to have been major concerns of the scholarly community in the period that saw the textualization of the sources under study. Van Ess argues that it was the memory of the Khārijites' incessant use

[391] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 647; Fishbein, *Victory*, 8.
[392] See also Sizgorich, *Violence*, 206, 214, 215.
[393] Spiegel, *Past as Text*, 89-90. For the Islamic tradition, see Hoyland, "Fiction", 32; Mattock, "History", 96.

of *takfīr* that restrained the *odium theologicum* among early Muslim intellectuals[394], but I wonder whether it might not have been the other way round: faced with heated theological debates that sometimes led to violence against people and property, for example in Baghdad between Ḥanbalites and proponents of a rational interpretation of Islam, and the increasing fragmentation of the Islamic empire, narratives of the dire consequences of the Khārijites' narrow definition of the *umma* served as cautionary tales intended to keep together an increasingly diverse Muslim community. The eventual crystallization of Sunnism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE could perhaps be considered the culmination of this process.

[394] Van Ess, *Flowering*, 30, 32.

Chapter Three: Narratives of Khārijite Origins

In Chapters One and Two, I looked at the features of literary Khārijism common to the rebels across the entire period examined here. By contrast, this chapter will focus on a specific period of Khārijite history and examine the Khārijites' narrative function in the accounts on the caliphate of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib from the arbitration at Ṣiffīn until his assassination by a Khārijite in 40 AH/661 CE. It will become clear rather quickly that once again these accounts tell us hardly anything about Khārijites; instead, they focus on other actors and matters pertinent to the period under study, most prominently ʿAlī. Reports on Khārijite activities most often serve to emphasize, illustrate, criticize or vindicate these actors and matters rather than provide an account of Khārijism as an end in itself. In what follows, these primary concerns will therefore feature more prominently than the morsels of information on the Khārijites to avoid presenting a distorted image of the authors' concerns.

The analysis of the reports of ʿAlī's confrontations with the Khawārij reveals three main concerns. First, the greatest amount of space is dedicated to matters regarding ʿAlī himself. The sources discuss at great length the various allegations levelled against ʿAlī by the Khārijites and the refutation of these accusations either by ʿAlī himself or by Ibn ʿAbbās on ʿAlī's behalf. This recurrent theme, or rather group of themes, appears to have been by far the most controversial and therefore most important concern of the historiographical works considered in this chapter, as the debates regarding the conduct and status of ʿAlī had far-reaching consequences for the development of Islamic law and doctrine as well as the formation of Shīʿism in opposition to (as well as alongside) Sunnī Islam.

Second, the relationship between ʿAlī and his cousin Ibn ʿAbbās is a subject of discussion in the source material, albeit less pronounced than the first theme. The ties between the fourth caliph and his cousin are important in terms of the relations between ʿAbbāsids and ʿAlids in the ʿAbbāsid period, in the course of which the historiographical works used in this chapter were compiled. It will become apparent that the historiographers put emphasis on the close and trusting relationship between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās, in particular in the depictions of the debates between ʿAlī/his agents and Khārijite rebels. There is no noticeable difference between the various historians in the portrayal of this

relationship; the tensions between ʿAlids and ʿAbbāsids in the period in which the historiographical works were compiled do not seem to have prompted the 'proto-Shīʿī' sources among them to depict Ibn ʿAbbās in a negative fashion. In fact, the clearest indication of ʿAlī's superiority to Ibn ʿAbbās is found not in the works of Ibn Aʿtham or al-Yaʿqūbī, but in al-Ṭabarī, who, despite contemporary accusations to the contrary, is not commonly known for his strong Shīʿī sympathies.

Third, the sources portray Khārijite conduct towards non-Khārijite Muslims and non-Muslims with a view to addressing issues of excessive piety and militancy. The historiographical works in question not only criticize the Khārijite understanding of piety, but also pass judgment on the pitfalls of piety in its extreme forms in general. This topic, which permeates the representation of Khārijite history over the entire period examined for this thesis, was the subject of the preceding chapter and will thus not be discussed in further detail.

The following literary analysis will address the first two main themes outlined above in the specified order. I will deal most extensively with the first theme, the discussion and justification of ʿAlī's conduct at Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān, and towards Muʿāwiya and the Syrians. As already mentioned, this topic appears to have been of utmost importance to Muslims of the first three centuries AH, warranting an intensive engagement with the issue in order to appropriately reflect early Muslim concerns. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the most important findings and a few remarks on the *desiderata* of future scholarship on the subject.

3.1 Analysis

3.1.1 Apologia for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib

The main purpose of the reports that depict the disputes between ʿAlī and the Khawārij is to vindicate ʿAlī's acceptance of the arbitration, which in hindsight was considered to have caused his downfall. This is done by means of three different lines of argument. First, it is argued that ʿAlī initially refused to accept the call for arbitration because he saw through Muʿāwiya's ploy, and that he was only coerced into agreeing to the *taḥkīm* by his own

followers who threatened to leave his camp if he continued to reject it. Second, and slightly at odds with the preceding argumentation, the legitimacy of arbitration in general is asserted on the basis of Qurʾānic evidence and Prophetic precedence. Third, the point is made that the caliph could not go back on his word and resume the battle against his enemies after he agreed to settle the conflict by arbitration. Furthermore, the Khārijite demand that he repent towards God for his sinful agreement to the arbitration is countered with reference to ʿAlī's excellence in religion. In short, in all of his debates with Khārijites, ʿAlī is portrayed as a victim both of his own followers as well as his Syrian opponents and subsequently excused from all allegations levelled against him.

Accusing the Caliph

In order to understand the justifications of ʿAlī's conduct provided by the sources under consideration here, let us first briefly examine the allegations these justifications were supposed to counter.

In all of the core works examined for this chapter[395], the main argument used by the Khārijites against ʿAlī is the accusation that he appointed the arbiters and thereby "gave men authority over the religion of God" (*ḥakkama al-rijāl fī dīn allāh*).[396] This issue is portrayed as giving rise to the 'movement' of the Khārijites, who encapsulated their protest in the famous slogan *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*. It is by far the most frequently cited reason for their opposition to ʿAlī, but also to later Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid opponents.[397] Accordingly, justifications for ʿAlī's agreement to the appointment of arbiters "over the religion of God" predominate in the various speeches given by the caliph himself and his supporters, mostly in response to the Khawārij but also when addressing his often hesitant followers in Kufa and elsewhere.

[395] Except Ibn Khayyāṭ's *Taʾrīkh*.
[396] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3341, 3351, 3361; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 300, 311, 312, 318, 329, 434; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210, 217, 220, 222; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588, 589, 594. See also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 393, 395; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 32, 37; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 89, 93, 125, 126.
[397] See Chapter One, section 1.2, and Chapters Four and Five.

The second accusation levelled against ʿAlī by the Khārijites is his agreement to the erasure of his title, *amīr al-muʾminīn*, from the arbitration document written at Ṣiffīn. When composing said document, some of Muʿāwiya's followers protest against ʿAlī using the epithet 'Commander of the Believers', maintaining that if they accepted his claim to leadership, they would not fight him. Despite warnings by some of ʿAlī's supporters that if he dropped his title now he would never be able to assume it again, the caliph agrees to erase it from the arbitration agreement under pressure from Muʿāwiya and the Syrians.[398] This particular charge can only be understood in conjunction with another accusation against ʿAlī expressed elsewhere, namely that he gave in to the arbitration and, by extension, agreed to have his title erased because he doubted himself and his case, which the Khārijites understand as doubting God and His provisions.[399] This in turn is tantamount to unbelief (*kufr*).

The two accusations portrayed above constitute the main arguments used by the Khawārij in their confrontations with ʿAlī. There are three further allegations levelled against the caliph by his Khārijite opponents that are only preserved by individual historiographers. To begin with, Ibn Aʿtham and al-Balādhurī preserve an account of the rebels charging ʿAlī with omitting to take prisoners or booty after the Battle of the Camel, thereby depriving his Khārijite-to-be supporters of their rightful share of the spoils.[400] Furthermore, two accusations against ʿAlī that are not preserved by any of the other sources under consideration for this chapter are found in al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*. The first accuses the caliph of failing to "strike us [the nascent Khārijites] with the sword until we return to God (*fa-lam yaḍribnā bi-sayfihi ḥatta nafīʾa ilā allāh*)"[401] when the future Khawārij first agreed to the arbitration at Ṣiffīn. The second is specifically Shīʿī in nature and certainly represents a later stage in the development of Shīʿī doctrine: according to al-Yaʿqūbī, the Khārijites

[398] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3334-3335; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 206-207; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 8-9, 14, 123-124.
[399] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 297, 311, 312; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 124, 125.
[400] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 318; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 122.
[401] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192. The expression "until we return to God" is a slightly rephrased quote from Q 49:9, which refers to conflict among the believers: "If two parties of the believers fight [each other], make peace between them. If one of them wrongs the other, fight those who do wrong until they return to the ordinance of God (*ḥatta tafīʾa ilā amr allāh*)".

argued that ʿAlī had asserted that he was the *waṣī* (‘legatee, inheritor’) of the Prophet, and that he forfeited his *waṣīya* when he agreed to the arbitration.[402]

The lines of argument illustrated above comprise the allegations levelled against ʿAlī by the Khārijites. These arguments cover a wide spectrum of religious and socio-political issues. In the following sections, I will focus on the counterarguments put forward by ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās.

Excusing the Caliph

The sources differ concerning the time and place of the first extended dispute between the Khārijites and Ibn ʿAbbās/ʿAlī. It occurred, variously, when ʿAlī and his troops returned from Ṣiffīn, when the Khārijites had gone to Ḥarūrāʾ, when they had gone to Nahrawān, or at some point between going to Ḥarūrāʾ and going to Nahrawān. In any case, there are three different categories of argument employed by Ibn ʿAbbās/ʿAlī to legitimize ʿAlī’s acceptance of the arbitration: religious, pragmatic, and moral justifications.

Religious Justifications

The first category is specifically religious and based on (i) a number of verses of the Qurʾān according to which God enjoined the believers to appoint judges from among themselves to settle a certain issue, and (ii) on Prophetic precedence. In response to the first Khārijite accusation of granting authority over God’s affairs to mere human beings, three verses are cited: 4:35 (‘And if you fear dissension between them, appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people’)[403], 5:95 (‘judging in this two just men from among

[402] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192. For the term *waṣī* in Shīʿī theology, see EI^2, “Waṣī (a., pls. awṣiyā, wāsiyyūn)” (E. Kohlberg).
[403] This verse refers to dissension between husband and wife and how to solve it.

you')[404] and 3:23 ('Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture called to the Book of God, that it may judge between them?').[405]

Al-Balādhurī and Ibn Aʿtham both preserve accounts in which a combination of these verses is cited. Al-Balādhurī presents three reports that address this line of argumentation, two of which display shared features. The third report paints quite a different picture and will be considered in more detail later. In the two that concern us here, Ibn ʿAbbās refers to Q 4:35 and 5:95 in order to justify ʿAlī's agreement to the arbitration.[406] He invokes the verses in question to prove the legitimacy of settling a conflict through arbitration and holds that if God allowed men to judge over comparatively petty issues like dissension between a man and his wife or the unlawful killing of wild game, then a serious matter like this, which seeks to avoid the shedding of Muslim blood, surely constitutes an even more legitimate subject to arbitration, thereby exculpating ʿAlī.[407]

In Ibn Aʿtham's account, Ibn ʿAbbās cites the same two verses at the end of a long discussion with an otherwise unknown Khārijite at Ḥarūrāʾ.[408] The subject matter of this debate, or rather monologue on Ibn ʿAbbās' part, will be discussed below. Suffice it to say at this point that the Khawārij are not wholly convinced by Ibn ʿAbbās' argumentation but challenge him by asking whether he considered ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ a just man. This in turn is countered by Ibn ʿAbbās by pointing out that ʿAmr was not appointed by ʿAlī but by Muʿāwiya. Here, a merging of the different levels of justifications employed to defend ʿAlī's actions becomes apparent, which is unusual and will be discussed in the course of the following subsection on pragmatic justifications.

Ibn Aʿtham's *Futūḥ* also contains a rather long passage describing a debate between ʿAlī and the Khārijites at Nahrawān.[409] Unlike in the preceding account or the reports

[404] The context here is the prohibition to kill wild game during the pilgrimage and the appropriate compensation for its violation.
[405] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 307, 312, 318; Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192.
[406] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 307, 318. The first transmitted from Abū Mikhnaf and ʿAwāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 764 or 770 CE) through ʿAbbās b. Hishām, the second from al-Shaʿbī (d. 721-728 CE) through Yaḥya b. Ādam (d. 818 CE) and ʿAbdallāh b. Ṣāliḥ.
[407] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 318.
[408] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 94.
[409] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 122-125.

preserved by al-Balādhurī, ʿAlī does not refer to Qurʾānic verses in order to justify his acceptance of the arbitration. Instead, he adduces the example of the Prophet who had also appointed an arbiter to judge in a certain matter.[410] ʿAlī's conduct is hereby made legitimate, rendering the Khārijite protest null and void.

In response to the second Khārijite accusation against ʿAlī, which is the erasure of his title from the Ṣiffīn arbitration document, the caliph is vindicated with reference to Prophetic precedence. Depending on the source, either Ibn ʿAbbās or ʿAlī counter this particular accusation with respect to the day of al-Ḥudaybīya[411]: when the Muslims and the Meccans drew up the treaty of al-Ḥudaybīya, Muḥammad's title 'Messenger of God' was dropped from the document.[412] In al-Balādhurī's account, Ibn ʿAbbās reminds the Khārijites of this incident:

> The unbelievers (*al-mushrikūn*) said to the Messenger of God (ṣ) on the day of al-Ḥudaybīya: 'If we knew that you are the Messenger of God we would not fight you.' The Messenger of God (ṣ) said: 'Erase [the title 'Messenger of God'], O ʿAlī, and write Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh.' And the Messenger of God is more excellent than ʿAlī.[413]

Ibn Aʿtham refers to this incident at two different places in his work: in his description of the composition of the arbitration agreement and later on during ʿAlī's discussions with the Khārijites at Nahrawān.[414] His rendering of this episode is the longest and most complex of all the sources under consideration and, probably owing to his pro-ʿAlid stance, emphasizes most strongly the close connection between ʿAlī and the Prophet as well as the wickedness of their opponents (Abū Sufyān at al-Ḥudaybīya, his son Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ at Ṣiffīn). In recounting the Ḥudaybīya episode during the process of writing the arbitration document, ʿAlī draws a direct line from the Prophet to himself, implying that the believers

[410] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 125.
[411] On al-Ḥudaybīya, see A. Görke: "Die frühislamische Geschichtsüberlieferung zu Hudaibiya", *ISL* 74 (1997), 193-237.
[412] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 319; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 123-124. See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3334-3335; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 8-9; and al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 207, for an account of ʿAlī remembering the Day of al-Ḥudaybīya while erasing his title of *amīr al-muʾminīn* from the Ṣiffīn arbitration document.
[413] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 319.
[414] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 8-10, 14 (first episode) and 123-124 (second episode).

– ʿAlī and his supporters – still confront the same opponents, unbelievers who are enemies of God, the Prophet and the Prophet's family.[415] By comparing Muʿāwiya and his supporters to the Meccan unbelievers of Muḥammad's time, Ibn Aʿtham stresses the righteousness of ʿAlī and the unlawfulness of his opponents' deeds. He also has ʿAlī inform those present that Muḥammad foresaw that ʿAlī would have to face "a day like this [al-Ḥudaybīya]".[416] Thus, he essentially acquits ʿAlī of any responsibility for his conduct, as the Prophet had predicted it – it was fate, unalterable. Additionally, if the Prophet himself had had to give in to the Meccans' demands to omit the title 'Messenger of God', what could ʿAlī possibly have done to prevent history from repeating itself?

In both al-Balādhurī's and Ibn Aʿtham's works, Ibn ʿAbbās' and/or ʿAlī's rationalization of the caliph's agreement to erase his title persuades many of ʿAlī's opponents, who leave the Khārijite camp and return to ʿAlī.[417] By adducing examples from the life of the Prophet – indeed a perfect replay of the situation in which ʿAlī found himself when composing the arbitration agreement – Ibn ʿAbbās and ʿAlī himself are able to prove the legitimacy of ʿAlī's conduct: far from introducing an innovation or infringing God's divine provisions, he can be shown to follow Prophetic precedence, which provides a "good example" (*aswa ḥasana*)[418] and sanctions his actions. Ibn Aʿtham in particular emphasizes the legitimacy of ʿAlī's actions through reference to Prophetic example. Thus, in his description of ʿAlī's debate with the Khārijites at Nahrawān, the caliph relies exclusively on Muḥammad's *sunna* to illustrate the lawfulness of his conduct, not once on the Qurʾān.[419]

Both al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Aʿtham go even further and relate the hostility towards the Prophet and ʿAlī to hostility against the prophets before Muḥammad.[420] Muḥammad and by association ʿAlī are thus portrayed as links in a long chain of righteous and God-fearing men who were wronged by their opponents. Resistance to ʿAlī is therefore based either on misjudgement or on wickedness; accordingly, those who were only misguided return to him,

[415] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 8-9, 10.
[416] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 9.
[417] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 319; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 125.
[418] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192.
[419] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 122-125.
[420] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 9.

and to the (religious, political, social) safety of the community, whereas the obdurate insist on their error and are consequently obliterated in battle.

Al-Yaʿqūbī is the only author who does not mention Ibn ʿAbbās in the confrontation with the Khārijites at all but ascribes all arguments to ʿAlī himself.[421] He also preserves two Khārijite charges against ʿAlī that are not found in any of the other sources under consideration. The first of these accusations is that he should have used force to compel the Khārijites to relinquish their acceptance of the arbitration; the second is the specifically Shīʿī concern that ʿAlī lost his status as *waṣī* when he accepted the adjudication.[422]

The caliph counters the first of these allegations with reference to the Qurʾān: citing 2:195 ('and do not be cast into destruction by your own hands'), he argues that the Khārijites were many, whereas he and his house were only a few.[423] He thus had no option but to give in to their demands.

Now, the specifically Shīʿī allegation of having lost his status as *waṣī* when he accepted the arbitration is in turn countered by ʿAlī with a seminal Shīʿī line of argument. On the basis of Q 3:97 – 'And incumbent upon mankind unto God is the pilgrimage to the House, for whoever can find his way to it' – ʿAlī identifies himself as this 'House', and whoever fails to perform the pilgrimage to it (i.e., to ʿAlī himself) despite his ability to do so is an unbeliever. The Khārijites are therefore guilty of *kufr* because of their abandonment of ʿAlī.[424] This question of ʿAlī's status as *waṣī* of the Prophet and the potential loss of this position due to his acceptance of the arbitration betrays a distinctly Shīʿī character[425] and constitutes a problem that cannot have been a contemporary concern of the Khārijites. It is much more likely to have evolved in the course of (proto-) Shīʿī approaches to the arbitration and its implications for the status of ʿAlī. In the framework of this chapter,

[421] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 192.
[422] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 192.
[423] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 192.
[424] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, 192-193.
[425] Sharon has shown that the idea of *ahl al-bayt* as the Prophet's family, variously extended to include one clan or another, was prominent under both the Umayyads and the ʿAbbāsids as well, and that it appears rooted in pre-Islamic Arabian conceptions of rulership. In the context of al-Yaʿqūbī's depiction of ʿAlī's specific defense against the Khārijites' accusations, however, I would argue for a proto-Shīʿī flavour in the caliph's argument. For Sharon's discussion of the term *ahl al-bayt*, see M. Sharon: "The Umayyads as *Ahl al-Bayt*", *JSAI* 14 (1991), 115-152, especially 135-143. See also the author's "*Ahl al-Bayt* – People of the House", *JSAI* 8 (1986), 169-184, and "The Development of the Debate around the Legitimacy of Authority in Early Islam", *JSAI* 5 (1984), 121-142.

however, it provides another piece of evidence for the thesis that the accounts of early Khārijism mainly focus on other actors as opposed to the rebels themselves.

Pragmatic Justifications

The second category of argument counters the Khārijite accusations against ʿAlī on the basis of pragmatic reasoning. With the exception of Ibn Aʿtham's *Futūḥ*, it is invoked exclusively by ʿAlī himself, never by Ibn ʿAbbās. When confronted with Khārijite protest against the arbitration, ʿAlī counters their accusations with three main arguments. First, he maintains that he had to accept the adjudication because his own followers, among them the future Khārijites, forced him to agree. By pointing to the future Khārijites' threat of killing ʿAlī like they killed ʿUthmān, the historiographers accomplish two things: they illustrate ʿAlī's blamelessness regarding the agreement to the arbitration and shift responsibility for the murder of ʿUthmān away from ʿAlī. He is shown to be at the mercy of the same wayward elements as his predecessor rather than being portrayed as their commander. In this way, it also becomes apparent why he was unable (as opposed to unwilling) to punish ʿUthmān's killers as Muʿāwiya and others had demanded.

Second, ʿAlī reiterates several times that he warned the rebels of the treachery behind the call for arbitration.[426] In one of his discussions with the Khawārij at Ḥarūrāʾ, ʿAlī says to their *imām* ʿAbdallāh b. al-Kawwāʾ: "Woe unto you, O Ibn al-Kawwāʾ! Did I not tell you that day when the *maṣāḥif* were raised how the Syrians intend to deceive you with them?" [427] Moreover, ʿAlī in turn rebukes his critics for changing their minds concerning the *taḥkīm*: "You have let yourselves be enticed into the abandonment of this arbitration process that you yourselves initiated and asked for, while I abhorred it…"[428]

Finally, regarding the Khārijites' objections against the conduct and decision of the arbitrators, ʿAlī maintains that he is not to blame for their transgression. He reminds his

[426] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 312, 314, 324; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221-222; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3377-3378; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 390-391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 307, 312-313, 314, 319, and IV, 96. It is also implied in al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192, when ʿAlī points out the larger number of those of his followers who agreed to the arbitration in contrast to himself and the "people of my house" (*ahl baytī*).
[427] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 96.
[428] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3378-3379; Hawting, *Civil War*, 129.

opponents that he ordered the arbiters to judge by "what is in the Book of God" and to only "uphold what the Qurʾān has brought into being and prohibit what the Qurʾān put an end to"[429], and it is not his fault that they are "in disagreement with the Book of God and followed their evil inclinations without guidance from God."[430]

This last point is discussed in more detail in a unique account preserved by al-Dīnawarī which tells us about a debate between ʿAlī and ʿAbdallāh b. al-Kawwāʾ at Nahrawān. In the course of this debate, ʿAlī overcomes his opponent by rational argument. When the Khārijite accuses the caliph of having chosen an unbeliever (*kāfir*) as arbiter, ʿAlī asks his opponent at what point Abū Mūsā became an unbeliever – when ʿAlī sent him to the arbitration, or when he made his ruling? Ibn al-Kawwāʾ confirms that Abū Mūsā became an unbeliever when he issued his judgment. ʿAlī then asks:

> Do you not think that I was a Muslim when I sent him out, and that he became an unbeliever, according to what you say [yourself], after I sent him off? If the Prophet of God (ṣ) sent out one of the Muslims to some of the unbelievers in order to summon them to God, but he instead summoned them to something different, would you think that the Prophet of God is to be blamed for this?

When Ibn al-Kawwāʾ expectedly replies in the negative, ʿAlī concludes: "And I am not responsible for Abū Mūsā going astray."[431]

This account is also noteworthy in that the Khārijite *imām* does not seem to object to the arbitration itself but only to the choice of arbiter and ʿAlī's conduct after the decision had been announced. Contrary to this, most sources – including al-Dīnawarī himself a few pages earlier[432] – claim that the Khārijite protest first occurred when the arbitration document stipulating the conditions of the adjudication had been drawn up and was read out to ʿAlī's followers. A small number of reports similarly indicating a different chronology are scattered throughout the sources. Although it appears to be an insignificant matter at first, the question of when the protest occurred has important consequences for the

[429] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 313; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, III, 317, and IV, 96; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 392
[430] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 219.
[431] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 223.
[432] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210.

interpretation of why it occurred and thus for the nature of the rebels' motives. Protest against the arbiters being allowed to make their decision on the basis of sources other than the Qurʾān betrays a markedly religious character, whereas a criticism of ʿAlī's choice of arbiter after the fact implies rather more pragmatic reasons for the Khārijites' objections.

The only example of Ibn ʿAbbās engaging in a disputation of a similar kind rather than employing Qurʾānic verses or Prophetic *sunna* is found in Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* in the context of the Khārijites' first withdrawal to Ḥarūrāʾ.[433] ʿAlī sends Ibn ʿAbbās to the rebels so as to enquire about their concerns and intentions. Ibn ʿAbbās listens quietly to what their representative has to say[434] and then proceeds to asks the Khārijite a number of questions designed to convince him of the truth of Ibn ʿAbbās' argument. This debate is a striking example of argumentation whose length and detail is unique to Ibn Aʿtham in the delineation of the conflict between ʿAlī and Khārijites. The distinct form of this disputation is certainly based on the conventions of *kalām*, and there is a decidedly *adabī* flavour to it that seems to permeate all of Ibn Aʿtham's work. This characteristic of the *Futūḥ* will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Returning to the episode in question, Ibn ʿAbbās begins by asking his opponent whom the *dār al-islām* belongs to and who created it. The Khārijite responds that it belongs to God and that He created it through His prophets and the believers. Ibn ʿAbbās confirms that he has spoken truly and then inquires whether Muḥammad had ordered the affairs of the *umma*, taught the right beliefs, and generally acted like the prophets before him when he established the *dār al-islām*. The Khārijite affirms that indeed Muḥammad had done this, whereupon Ibn ʿAbbās asks whether Muḥammad had died or not. Again, the rebel confirms that he had died. Ibn ʿAbbās then queries whether the Prophet had left the *dār al-islām* in perfect condition when he died, which the Khārijite confirms. The next question addresses the issue of Muḥammad's successors: was there anyone after him who looked after the realm of Islam? The rebel's answer is that indeed the Companions, the *ahl al-bayt* (however defined), the *waṣī* and the Successors were those after Muḥammad who took care of the *umma*. Finally, Ibn ʿAbbās asks whether the *dār al-islām* is still in the complete

[433] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 90-95.
[434] Ibn Aʿtham's account of this disputation does not include this part.

condition that the Prophet left it in, which the Khārijite denies. When asked whether the Prophet's successors or his *umma* were responsible for this, the rebel names the *umma*.

At this point, the direction of Ibn ʿAbbās' questions becomes clear. He enquires whether the Khārijite belongs to the Successors or the *umma*, and when the rebel says he belongs to the *umma*, Ibn ʿAbbās says: "Tell me now, how do you hope to escape the fire as long as you belong to a nation that destroyed the realm of God and the realm of His Prophet…?"[435] The Khārijite exclaims in surprise and tells Ibn ʿAbbās that he has opened his eyes. He asks the caliph's messenger what he can do to escape hell. Ibn ʿAbbās responds that he should strive to rebuild what the *umma* had destroyed. To achieve this, he first has to learn who destroyed the *dār al-islām* and declare himself their enemy. Then he should declare his friends those who want it to thrive. The Khārijite responds that he does not know anyone who could maintain the *umma* except ʿAlī, if he had not appointed Abū Mūsā.

Ibn ʿAbbās now points to examples of arbitration in the Qurʾān, thereby reverting to the model of argumentation usually ascribed to him. He refers to the verses already quoted above, 4:35 ('appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people') and 5:95 ('judging in this two just men from among you'). However, the Khawārij challenge his choice of verses, particularly the latter one, on the basis that ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ cannot be called just as he had fought the Prophet and brought affliction upon the *umma* after Muḥammad's death. Ibn ʿAbbās points out that ʿAmr was Muʿāwiya's arbiter, not ʿAlī's, and that ʿAlī had wanted to send Ibn ʿAbbās, which the Khawārij had refused to consent to. Instead, they had insisted on Abū Mūsā, whom ʿAmr subsequently deceived. He concludes: "So fear your Lord and return to your former obedience to the *amīr al-muʾminīn*…"[436]

None of the other sources preserves an account even remotely similar in content. It serves to illustrate several points: ʿAlī's trust in Ibn ʿAbbās; Ibn ʿAbbās' rhetorical brilliance; the rebels' responsibility for the outcome of the arbitration meeting; their involvement in the "destruction" of the *umma*, and following from that, their flawed argumentation – it is them that should be blamed for the whole arbitration affair, not ʿAlī.

[435] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 93.
[436] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 94.

What becomes apparent once again is that the narratives of Khārijite origins are not concerned with the rebels themselves. Ibn Aʿtham's account does not discuss the Khārijites' arguments at all, but devotes five pages to Ibn ʿAbbās' reasoning. The representative of the Khawārij is reduced to single-sentence replies to his opponent's questions, eventually embracing Ibn ʿAbbās' viewpoint without further ado. In fact, the literary substance of Ibn ʿAbbās' so-called Khārijite opponent is so feeble he might as well not be present at all; neither Ibn ʿAbbās nor the reader would notice. There is nothing in this account that would clearly identify the man as a Khārijite or associate him with any particular Khārijite ideas beyond the few standard lines on opposition to ʿAlī. The rebels serve as mere mouthpieces, designed to voice potential accusations against ʿAlī so that the author-compilers can refute them as well as shift responsibility for the arbitration away from ʿAlī. Thus, we only rarely come across a report that has the Khārijites challenge the justifications of ʿAlī's conduct and also allows them to have the final word.[437]

Before continuing with the third category of argument, let us briefly address the tension between the first two categories (religious and pragmatic justifications). As stated above, the sources appear to distinguish clearly between justifications presented by Ibn ʿAbbās and those put forward by ʿAlī himself. With the single exception discussed in the preceding paragraphs, Ibn ʿAbbās exclusively argues on the basis of the Qurʾānic verses referred to above (4:35, 5:95) and other religious and moral considerations. ʿAlī, on the other hand, predominantly disputes with his opponents on the basis of pragmatic arguments – he was forced to accept the arbitration, and the arbiters did not obey his command to judge by the Qurʾān.

These two lines of argumentation do not necessarily contradict each other, but they do represent distinct levels of the debate. Maintaining that ʿAlī was forced to accept the arbitration is quite different from emphasizing the religious legitimacy of the adjudication. Accordingly, these two arguments are almost never encountered in the same justificatory passage. There are two exceptions: al-Yaʿqūbī attributes all responses to the Khārijite accusations against ʿAlī to the caliph himself instead of Ibn ʿAbbās, thereby relegating the

[437] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 307; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3351-3352 (where the rebels only best Ibn ʿAbbās in debate because he acted specifically against ʿAlī's instructions).

latter to the status of a mere mouthpiece himself and stripping him of the rhetorical skills that the majority of the sources under consideration credit him with.[438]

Al-Dīnawarī, on the other hand, does not mention Ibn ʿAbbās in the context of debates with the Khawārij at all, not even as ʿAlī's mouthpiece. Instead, ʿAlī himself negotiates with the Khawārij both at Ḥarūrāʾ and at Nahrawān. Unlike in al-Yaʿqūbī's work, the legitimization of the caliph's conduct in al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār* is thus squarely based on pragmatism and analogy, as observable in the discussion between ʿAlī and Ibn al-Kawwāʾ mentioned above. Over the course of this discussion, ʿAlī does refer to certain verses from the Qurʾān, but these verses do not serve to directly defend the lawfulness of arbitration.[439] In this, they differ from the verses invoked by Ibn ʿAbbās.[440] This is also the only instance in al-Dīnawarī's account of the origin of the Khārijites in which ʿAlī is reported as citing Qurʾānic verses in the context of countering the allegations against him.

This division of arguments between Ibn ʿAbbās and ʿAlī, between religious and pragmatic justifications, is further implied by an account in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* (referred to above in the section on religious justifications) which contains those Qurʾānic verses that were invoked by Ibn ʿAbbās to sanction arbitration in general and the adjudication at Ṣiffīn in particular. However, in the course of one of ʿAlī's debates with the Khārijites, the caliph quite unexpectedly argues that if he had refused his consent to the arbitration, then those who urged him to accept it might have used these very verses *against* him.[441] This is also the only report in the sources considered here in which Q 3:23 ('Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture called to the Book of God, that it may judge between them?') is referred to. Furthermore, whereas Ibn ʿAbbās argues elsewhere that if arbitration is allowed in petty affairs, then it is also allowed in important matters to avoid shedding the blood of Muslims[442], in this 'errant' report from al-Balādhurī, ʿAlī himself

[438] For Ibn ʿAbbās' role as agent of ʿAlī, see below, section 3.1.2. This could imply a somewhat sceptical attitude towards the ʿAbbāsids on the part of al-Yaʿqūbī, although more research needs to be done on his depiction of Ibn ʿAbbās and the ʿAbbāsids before judgment can be passed on this issue. In light of his portrayal of ʿAlī and the ʿAlids, I think it more likely that this is one more example of al-Yaʿqūbī's rather reverent treatment of the caliph instead of a slight directed against Ibn ʿAbbās.
[439] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221-223.
[440] See pp. 106-111.
[441] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 312.
[442] See above, p. 107 and note 407.

mentions this particular rationalization as one of the potential arguments *against* his initial rejection of the arbitration.[443]

Perhaps we have here two originally distinct arguments meant to counter (the Khārijites') allegations against ʿAlī. The 'errant' account extant in al-Balādhurī's work appears to belong to the pragmatic argument of excusing ʿAlī from his acceptance of the *taḥkīm* by emphasizing that he was forced to agree to it. The report itself might not impart much historical information regarding the event itself – if the particular debate in question ever took place, that is – but it does showcase the complex process of transmission and compilation/composition over the eighth and ninth centuries CE as well as the difficulties modern scholars face in trying to untangle the thicket of early Islamic history.

Moral Justifications

The third category of argument employed to vindicate ʿAlī is based on moral considerations and can be dealt with rather briefly. It is not directly connected to the legitimation of the arbitration, but rather with ʿAlī's reasoning concerning his refusal to recommence fighting before the arbiters had made their decision. The historiographical sources preserve a number of reports in which ʿAlī is approached by several Khārijites, often unnamed, and summoned to resume fighting the common enemy, the Syrians. Each time, ʿAlī refuses on the basis that he cannot break his word: "I have granted them [the Syrians] a contract for a [certain] period, and fighting them is not lawful until this period comes to an end."[444] He also quotes two verses from the Qurʾān to legitimize this decision, 5:1 and 16:91, which urge the believers to fulfil the covenants they agree to.[445] ʿAlī is thereby shown to adhere to God's provisions, and his superior morality in the face of opponents who seemingly do not intend to honour their (former) caliph's commitment is reasserted and emphasized.

We also saw above that al-Balādhurī and Ibn Aʿtham preserve reports according to which the Khārijites charged ʿAlī with omitting to take prisoners and spoils after the Battle

[443] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 312.
[444] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 316. See also ibid., 296; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3344, 3360-3361; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 94, 97.
[445] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 589. This passage is reproduced almost identically on 593-594.

of the Camel.[446] In al-Balādhurī's account, Ibn ʿAbbās addresses this accusation with a rather interesting counterargument: he asks the Khārijites whether they intended to take ʿĀʾisha prisoner, referring to her as "your mother ʿĀʾisha b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣadīq [*sic*]"[447] and thereby implying the enormity of potentially taking captive the Prophet's wife and daughter of the revered first caliph. The Khawārij agree with Ibn ʿAbbās and answer his question in the negative.

In Ibn Aʿtham's rendering of this episode, it is ʿAlī himself who argues with the Khārijites. He justifies his decision to prohibit the taking of prisoners from among the Basran women and children by arguing that the women had not fought him, while the children had been born into Islam and hence could not be enslaved. He then adduces Prophetic *sunna* to further validate his actions, reminding the Khawārij of the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and the early believers. The Prophet had not taken the Meccan women and children prisoner but had shown mercy: "So if the Prophet bestowed his favour on the polytheists, do not be surprised that I bestowed my favour on the believers."[448]

Opposition to ʿAlī is thus again shown to rest on misconceptions which can be cleared up, and the caliph himself is portrayed as an image of steadfast morality even in times of conflict. The reference to the *sunna* of the Prophet in Ibn Aʿtham's account further bolsters ʿAlī's claim to righteous conduct, while al-Balādhurī's description of Ibn ʿAbbās' and ʿAlī's respect for ʿĀʾisha – if only implied in the case of the caliph – serves to contradict the unfavourable accounts of outright enmity between one of the Prophet's closest confidants and his favourite wife.

These moral deliberations also seek to establish ʿAlī's religious eminence. The Khārijite demand to recommence fighting is most often accompanied by requests that the caliph repent for his sins, that is, his agreement to the arbitration. Only then would the Khārijites be willing to return to his camp and obey his orders. The same request is also expressed by the Khārijites at Nahrawān when ʿAlī informs them of his decision to fight the Syrians once more after the verdict of the arbiters has been announced. Instead of joining

[446] See above, p. 105.
[447] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 319. This term echoes the title "Mother of the Believers" given to the Prophet's wives.
[448] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 123.

him to engage the common enemy, however, they demand that the caliph repent first. In both situations, ʿAlī refuses to grant their request:

> After my *jihad* with the Messenger of God and my faith should I confess unbelief against myself? 'Then I should go astray and not be of the rightly-guided' (Q 6:56, *ḍalaltu idhan wa-mā ana min al-muhtadīn*).[449]

ʿAlī's religious standing is thus confirmed vis-à-vis the insolent insurgents whose demands for the caliph's repentance are clearly inappropriate considering his status as one of the first converts to Islam and the Prophet's most long-standing companions.

Additionally, the Khawārij are depicted as transgressors who have been led astray by the "devil and their evil inclinations".[450] ʿAlī thus likens them to sheep without a shepherd who have lost their way. This description of the Khārijites echoes Q 21:78 ('And David and Solomon, when they gave judgment concerning the field, when the people's sheep had strayed and browsed therein by night') and emphasizes that the rebels have turned their backs on righteous guidance. He continues: "You separated from me after you pledged allegiance to me…, you broke your oaths and exhausted your faith."[451] As people who have broken their word, the Khārijites' claim that ʿAlī is a sinner can thereby be easily dismissed as the ramblings of misguided fanatics.

Ibn Aʿtham in particular goes to great lengths to assert ʿAlī's superiority in faith and character. More than any other early historiographer, he includes reports that point out the caliph's firm belief, closeness with the Prophet and prudence in political and religious matters. Two examples illustrate this.

First, Ibn Aʿtham's passage on the composition of the arbitration agreement at Ṣiffīn is frequently interrupted by speeches given by ʿAlī's supporters to praise the caliph's excellence, by harsh condemnations of the Syrians and on one occasion by a Prophetic prediction stating that ʿAlī would have to experience his own "day of al-Ḥudaybīya".[452] Even the rebels concede ʿAlī's superiority to them – for example during their dispute with

[449] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 328. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3378; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 561; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 222; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 405; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 89, 97.
[450] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 407.
[451] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 107.
[452] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 8-14.

the caliph at Ḥarūrāʾ. When ʿAlī and the Khārijite *imām* Ibn al-Kawwāʾ finally meet, one of ʿAlī's men tells the rebel to let the more truthful of the two speak first. Accordingly, Ibn al-Kawwāʾ remains silent and lets ʿAlī begin.[453]

Second, Ibn Aʿtham also depicts ʿAlī as the recipient of divine knowledge; on several occasions, the caliph is said to have predicted certain events, among others the exact number of Khārijites that would escape the massacre at Nahrawān[454], how many of his own supporters would be killed in the course of this battle[455], and his own death by the hands of a man from the tribe of Murād (that is, Ibn Muljam al-Murādī).[456]

That it is the Khārijite rebels who have gone astray is furthermore emphasized by an account preserved by al-Balādhurī. During one of ʿAlī's disputes with the Khawārij at Nahrawān, he is confronted with their call to repentance. His response draws not only on his own religious eminence, but also on the divine guidance his community enjoys:

> God forbid that I should have doubted in matters of religion[457] since I became a Muslim or erred since I was rightly guided. Rather, *through us God guided you on the right path* away from error and saved you from unbelief and protected you from ignorance.[458]

By rebelling against ʿAlī, the Khārijites therefore rebel against God; by abandoning ʿAlī, they abandon their only hope of right guidance and so ultimately their hope of salvation. This is a rather bold claim, but the sources once again leave it undisputed by the Khawārij, which is quite surprising considering that they were also remembered as people insisting on the necessity to physically separate from ʿAlī – to perform a *hijra* – rather than just adhere to their principles in private. It also once again confirms that Khārijism as such was not the primary concern of the sources, rendering a response on their part unnecessary.

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[453] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 95.
[454] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 120. The accuracy of his prediction is confirmed on 132.
[455] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 120. The accuracy of his prediction is confirmed on 128.
[456] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 136.
[457] See the entry for "r-y-b" (form 8) in Lane.
[458] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 312-313 (italics added); see e.g. also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3351: "[ʿAlī] follows the truth and right guidance, and those who oppose him are lost and misleading."

The Battle of Nahrawān

Having established the legitimacy of ʿAlī's conduct at Ṣiffīn and his religious and moral superiority over the Khārijite rebels, the sources go on to explain and justify the massacre of Nahrawān, in the course of which ʿAlī's troops utterly defeated his former followers. There seems to have been a perceived necessity in some of the sources to address the issue of ʿAlī's treatment of the Khārijite rebels at Nahrawān – a surprising amount of space is dedicated to drawing attention to the caliph's efforts in seeking to persuade the Khawārij of the error of their ways in a peaceful fashion, lamentably to no avail.

The sources are in agreement concerning the outcome of this battle and state that of the 3,000-4,000 rebels, not more than 10 Khārijites survived unharmed. ʿAlī on the other hand is said to have lost not more than 10-20 men[459], perhaps another example of "the obvious pleasure which the early tradents took in the construction of parallels."[460] In any case, the historiographical tradition asserts that the caliph won this battle with ease and that the Khawārij were slaughtered.[461]

As we have already seen, the caliph goes to great lengths to try and persuade the Khārijites to return to obedience to him. There are numerous accounts of his debates with the rebels, either in person or through the medium of letters and messengers, during which he reminds them of their oath to him, admonishes them on the basis of the Qurʾān (Q 3:105: 'And do not be like those who separated and disputed after clear proofs had come to them') and summons them to "fear of God, goodness (*al-birr*) and the return to what is right."[462] The sources take great pains to emphasize that ʿAlī is unwilling to use force against them; al-Balādhurī in particular preserves several accounts stressing that, at first, ʿAlī is quite prepared to leave the Khārijite rebels to their own devices. At Ḥarūrāʾ, he tells them to go wherever they wish and that he would not oppose them, on the condition that they do not engage in unlawful activities, telling his own followers:

[459] See Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 225; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3385; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 193; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 333.
[460] Noth/Conrad, *Historical Tradition*, 201.
[461] In addition to the references cited at note 459, see al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 224.
[462] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 329.

> We do not deny them [their share of] the tribute and we do not prevent them from entering the mosques and we do not provoke them *as long as* they do not shed blood and do not pursue what is prohibited.[463]

He also holds his supporters back from attacking the Khārijites "until they originate an innovation".[464]

Even though ʿAlī is disinclined to engage the Khawārij, he is eventually forced to take action against them by their vicious assaults on non-Khārijites, in particular the cruel killing of ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb discussed in Chapter Two, and their stubborn refusal to obey him. According to a number of reports, he is prepared to leave the other Khārijites alone as long as the murderers of Ibn Khabbāb are handed over to him.[465] However, incensed by the atrocities committed by the rebels, ʿAlī's followers urge him to engage the Khārijites first before going to Syria to fight Muʿāwiya.[466] His attempts at a peaceful solution have therefore failed: "He [ʿAlī] did not cease to warn and summon them [the Khārijites], but when he saw no signs of submission in them… he prepared the people for war."[467]

However, even in this situation at Nahrawān, ʿAlī orders his soldiers not to commence fighting but to wait for the Khārijites to attack them.[468] After appointing commanders over the various units of his army, he even offers the Khawārij another opportunity to reconsider their position and seek refuge under his banner of safe conduct (*ghāyat al-amn*).[469] Some of them finally give in and return to ʿAlī. The remaining rebels, however, refuse to heed the caliph's summons. Shouting "*lā ḥukma illā li-llāh,* even though

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[463] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 317 (Italics added). See also ibid., 325; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3362, 3363.
[464] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 325.
[465] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3376; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 320, 328; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 107; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 405.
[466] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 220; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3375; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 325, 237, 328; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 405. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 98-105, however, ascribes the initiative to confront the Khawārij to ʿAlī himself. According to this rather long passage, ʿAlī had to deliver three sermons in order to rouse his supporters to march against the Khārijites.
[467] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 330.
[468] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 224; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 331; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 405. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 127-128, appears to present a different picture. In his account, it seems that ʿAlī's men strike first.
[469] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 330; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 223; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3380-3381.

the polytheists may detest it! [Q 9:33]", they charge against ʿAlī's troops and thereby thwart his hopes for a peaceful solution.[470]

Once again, ʿAlī's conduct is explained, legitimized and thus vindicated by shifting responsibility for the events in question from him to both the Khārijites, whose shedding of Muslim blood and persistence in opposition require him to take action, and to his supporters, who demand that he relieve them of the threat posed by the rebels before accompanying him to Syria to fight Muʿāwiya. Not only does ʿAlī's reputation emerge unscathed from this messy conflict, the reports of his actions and decisions both at Ṣiffīn and at Nahrawān became the basis for the Islamic law of war and rebellion as it developed over the course of the first three centuries of Islam.[471]

3.1.2 "Ibn ʿAbbās wa-anta sawāʾun" – The Relationship between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās

The first section of this chapter focused on the narrative role and function of the Khārijites in relation to ʿAlī. The second most prominent actor appears to be ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās, and it is to him that this subsection is dedicated. Ibn ʿAbbās is the cousin of both the Prophet and ʿAlī and one of the ancestors of the ʿAbbāsids. That he plays an important part in the accounts of Khārijite origins is hardly surprising given that the works considered here were all compiled during the reign of the ʿAbbāsids. Nevertheless, the details and the specific function of his representation in the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khārijites deserve a closer examination, as the perceived ties between Ibn ʿAbbās and ʿAlī – both familial and political – constituted a significant aspect of ʿAlid-ʿAbbāsid relations.

To begin with, it should be noted that the early historiographers showed hardly any interest in the military prowess of Ibn ʿAbbās when delineating his part in the dispute between ʿAlī and his former followers. Whatever the reasons for this – a lack of information on his achievements in that area, an awareness of the absence of such achievements, or an interest in emphasizing the importance of different characteristics – almost all of the sources in question cast him in the role of ʿAlī's adviser, confidant and

[470] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 224.
[471] On the importance of ʿAlī for the treatment of rebellion in Islamic law, see el Fadl, *Rebellion*, 34-61 and *passim*.

loyal agent.[472] The only exception to this is the *Taʾrīkh* of Ibn Khayyāṭ, who does not mention Ibn ʿAbbās in connection with the Khārijites at all; al-Yaʿqūbī does mention him as ʿAlī's representative to the Khawārij, but as we have already seen, he ascribes the lines of arguments usually attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās to ʿAlī himself.

ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās first enters the stage at an early point of ʿAlī's confrontation with those who later become Khārijites. Al-Ashʿath b. Qays and his followers have just forced ʿAlī to accept the armistice requested by Muʿāwiya and agree to the settlement of the contended issues through the selection of two arbiters. Now the difficult task of choosing an arbiter for ʿAlī's side arises; although the sources are divided as to whether al-Ashʿath and the *qurrāʾ* had already decided upon Abū Mūsā before ʿAlī made his wishes known, or whether "they"[473] insisted on Abū Mūsā in reaction to ʿAlī's choice of arbiter, they are unanimous in asserting that ʿAlī's preferred arbitrator was ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās.[474]

Much seems to have been at stake for ʿAlī in this confrontation with Muʿāwiya, even if the sources do not provide detailed information on the subject matter of the arbitration. His choice of Ibn ʿAbbās as arbiter therefore both emphasizes the close ties of kinship and trust between the cousins and asserts Ibn ʿAbbās' aptitude for such a difficult task, which in turn underlines the latter's standing as scholar and religious authority. Particularly in Ibn Aʿtham's work, ʿAlī offers high praise for his cousin, emphasizing the family ties between them as well as Ibn ʿAbbās' incorruptible character that seeks no earthly pleasures.[475] When ʿAlī's opponents protest against the election of Ibn ʿAbbās, they consequently do so not on the basis of his inability to fulfil the task at hand, but on grounds of his closeness with ʿAlī: "By God, we do not distinguish between you and Ibn ʿAbbās".[476] This implies that Ibn ʿAbbās was completely loyal to the caliph's wishes, so

[472] This conforms with L. Veccia Vaglieri's assessment that Ibn ʿAbbās was frequently cast in the role of adviser to the caliph. EI^2, "ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās" (L. Veccia Vaglieri).
[473] At this stage, ʿAlī's opponents are always presented as a unified group, regardless of social, political, economic, religious or tribal background.
[474] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 572-573; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 189; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3333; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 391; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2, 96.
[475] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 96.
[476] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205. See also al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 189; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3333; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 293; Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 572; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2. Similar reservations against ʿAlī's choice of al-Ashtar as arbiter are ascribed to al-Ashʿath/"the people"/the *qurrāʾ*, but here the arguments

much so that by choosing him ʿAlī was seen by his supporters/opponents as trying to "be the judge yourself".[477]

We next encounter Ibn ʿAbbās as part of Abū Mūsā's entourage, deployed by ʿAlī to accompany the arbitrator to the agreed meeting place. The sources unanimously assert that ʿAlī did not go with Abū Mūsā himself; according to some, he sent Ibn ʿAbbās instead to lead ʿAlī's men in prayer and see to their affairs.[478] Both positions are prestigious and again serve to illustrate how highly ʿAlī regarded Ibn ʿAbbās and how much he trusted him. Indeed, a report preserved by al-Ṭabarī implies that the arbitration would have ended much better for ʿAlī if Ibn ʿAbbās had been in charge of the negotiation:

> Ibn ʿAbbās said, 'God damn the decision [*raʾy*] of Abū Mūsā! I warned him and told him to be circumspect, but he took no heed.' And Abū Mūsā used to say about ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ: 'Ibn ʿAbbās warned me of the treachery of the evildoer [*fāsiq*], but I trusted him and did not imagine that he would put anything above sincere advice to his community.'[479]

The greatest role given to Ibn ʿAbbās in the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khārijites, however, is that of the caliph's most prominent emissary to the rebels. Al-Balādhurī, al-Dīnawarī and al-Ṭabarī preserve a few accounts that feature envoys other than Ibn ʿAbbās, but in these reports they hardly have a speaking part to play – it is mostly ʿAlī who debates with the Khawārij. These envoys furthermore fail in their efforts to persuade the Khārijites to return to ʿAlī.[480] The only exception here is ʿAlī's emissary Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Ṣūḥān, but he is said to have argued with the rebels in conjunction with Ibn ʿAbbās and they are only successful after ʿAlī himself has contended with the Khārijites.[481]

As discussed above, Ibn ʿAbbās is the main proponent of the religious argument seeking to legitimize ʿAlī's acceptance of the fateful arbitration by alluding to the relevant verses of the Qurʾān that provide a precedence for God's transfer of His prerogative of

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rests not so much on the closeness of ʿAlī and al-Ashtar but rather on the latter's involvement in the war. See e.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 2-3.

[477] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 205.

[478] Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 216; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 211; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3354; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 395.

[479] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3359; Hawting, *Civil War*, 110. See also Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 96.

[480] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221-222; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 311, 327, 330; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3375.

[481] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 311-313, 314.

judgment to human beings, and in doing so vindicate the caliph's decision. Apart from ʿAlī himself, he is the only actor capable of persuading some of the rebels to return to the caliph. The early Islamic historiographical tradition thus makes a point of the close and trusting relationship between Ibn ʿAbbās and ʿAlī by casting the former in the role of the latter's most intimate, reliable and effective confidant, while at the same time emphasizing Ibn ʿAbbās' eloquence and persuasiveness. The same tendency can be observed regarding Ibn ʿAbbās' father – his good relationship with ʿAlī is "a well-known theme" in Islamic historiography.[482]

However, there is a clear hierarchy in the relationship between the caliph and his cousin. In all of the accounts depicting Ibn ʿAbbās' and ʿAlī's interactions with each other and the Khārijites, the latter's superiority over the former is asserted. This is done either implicitly by portraying Ibn ʿAbbās' failure to convince the Khārijite rebels to return, which ʿAlī himself then successfully manages to do[483], or explicitly by presenting him as the addressee of rebuke uttered by ʿAlī.[484] This latter, explicit form of confirming ʿAlī's supremacy over Ibn ʿAbbās is found exclusively in a report transmitted by Abū Mikhnaf and preserved in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*.[485]

When ʿAlī has returned to Kufa from Ṣiffīn, the Khārijites separate from him for the first time. He sends ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās to them but tells him not to dispute with them until ʿAlī himself arrives at Ḥarūrāʾ. Ibn ʿAbbās, however, disobeys ʿAlī's command. Consequently, he fails in his endeavour and, upon ʿAlī's arrival at the scene, is (mildly) reprimanded for defying the caliph's order. ʿAlī then engages the Khawārij himself and succeeds in persuading them to return to Kufa.

Despite Ibn ʿAbbās' disobedience towards the caliph, there appears to be no serious disagreement between the two. The account does not record a response to ʿAlī's rebuke on the part of Ibn ʿAbbās or any consequences for defying his orders. The report also states explicitly that Ibn ʿAbbās was eager to engage the Khawārij in debate so as to counter their

[482] Leder, "Composite Form", 131. See also Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, 108, 147.
[483] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3352-3353, 3363; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 307, 311, 317; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 95-97, 122-125.
[484] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3352.
[485] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3351-3353.

arguments and clear ʿAlī of the allegations levelled against him.[486] Even this report therefore emphasizes the close and trusting relationship between ʿAlī and Ibn ʿAbbās while at the same time confirming the former's supremacy. This observation appears to run counter to the argument put forward by Lassner, that ʿAbbāsid historiography generally reflects the dynasty's desire to legitimize their claims to power by emphasizing their superiority over the ʿAlids.[487] If that was indeed the case to the extent described by Lassner, we would have perhaps expected at least one report in which Ibn ʿAbbās is shown to be more successful than ʿAlī in debating with the Khārijites, but this is not the case.

3.2 Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine and discuss the narratives of Khārijism during ʿAlī's reign as preserved by early Islamic historiography. However, surprisingly little has been said on the Khawārij themselves. This is partly due to the relative scarcity of information regarding these rebels in the sources under consideration and partly because under close scrutiny, what details they do provide appear to focus on other actors and arguments. Three factors contribute to this vague nature of Khārijism presented in the sources in question.

First, it has become clear that there is some confusion over who actually belonged to the Khārijites, who repented and re-joined ʿAlī at Ḥarūrāʾ, who repented and returned to the caliph before the Battle of Nahrawān, who 'went out' twice (first to Ḥarūrāʾ and then again to Nahrawān), and so on. Furthermore, the sources are also rather confused concerning the precise sequence of events, the dates, places or battle positions featured in the narratives of Khārijite origins, as also shown in the Introduction.

Second, the reports on the origins of Khārijism abound with *topoi* and *schemata* that were demonstrated by Noth to be present in the early Islamic historiographical tradition as a whole. The discussion of *awāʾil* in the Introduction demonstrated by way of example that the details on the identity of Khārijite commanders and leaders, the originator of the maxim *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh* or the first sword to be drawn on account of the arbitration ultimately

[486] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3351.
[487] J. Lassner: *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of ʿAbbāsid Apologetics*. New Haven 1986, 4-5, 8. Similarly Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, 71, 77.

belong to one or the other *schema* and hence do not impart a lot of 'historical' information. Rather, they appear to be employed precisely so as to compensate for a lack of secure historical knowledge.

Third, the analysis of the accounts depicting Khārijite thought and deeds revealed that the sources are not primarily concerned with Khārijism itself but rather with other actors and issues. This is particularly evident when looking at the small amount of space they accord to the utterances and actions of Khārijite actors in comparison to the much more extensive and detailed narratives depicting the thought and conduct of their opponents, here in particular the fourth rightly-guided caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.

From this, we can conclude that the sources do not discuss Khārijism as an end in itself but rather employ it as a literary tool in order to contrast or illustrate certain ideas prominent either at the time of the author-compilers or of their sources. The analysis of the reports on the emergence of the Khawārij uncovered three major recurring themes, two of which were discussed in this chapter's analysis.

First, it has been shown that ʿAlī's conduct at Ṣiffīn and afterwards constitutes the major concern of the accounts involving Khārijites. The analysis of the reports portraying the disputes between ʿAlī, sometimes represented by Ibn ʿAbbās, and the Khārijites leads to the conclusion that here the narrative function of Khārijites is to provide an apologia for ʿAlī by invoking, discussing and dismissing potential accusations against him. This is achieved by means of religious, pragmatic and moral arguments:

(i) ʿAlī's eventual acceptance of the adjudication is justified by referring to those Qurʾānic verses that call on the believers to appoint judges to settle certain disputes. The accusation of having erased his title of *amīr al-muʾminīn* from the arbitration document, thereby doubting his God-given right to rule, is countered with reference to Prophetic precedence at al-Ḥudaybīya, when the Prophet had his title erased from the peace agreement between the Muslims and the Meccans. The particular line of religious argumentation that is based on Qurʾānic verses is exclusively evoked by ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās, never by ʿAlī himself, who only argues on the basis of pragmatic considerations and Prophet precedence;

(ii) ʿAlī is furthermore relieved of all responsibility for the arbitration itself on the basis of pragmatic reasoning. Various different actors (al-Ashʿath b. Qays, the *qurrāʾ*, "the people", the future Khārijites) are blamed for forcing both the *taḥkīm* and the arbiter (Abū Mūsā) upon him despite his warnings of the Syrian treachery. The sources also point to the general disunity in his camp and his followers' reluctance to obey him to explain and justify the caliph's acceptance of the *taḥkīm*;

(iii) the Khārijite accusations that ʿAlī committed a sin when he agreed to arbitrate with his enemy are repudiated by emphasizing his moral and religious standing which would have prevented him from sinful conduct. The caliph's moral and religious superiority is asserted and contrasted with the rebels' own lack of morality. This becomes particularly evident in the accounts stating that he could not go back on his word after he had been forced to commit to the arbitration.

The sources also stress that ʿAlī cannot be blamed for the slaughter of his former followers at Nahrawān by pointing to his efforts to bring about a peaceful solution, the Khārijites' murderous conduct towards non-Khārijite Muslims who do not agree with their viewpoint, and the pressure exerted on him by his supporters and the general population to take action against the rebels.

As has become clear, all the relevant sources present the various vindications of ʿAlī put forward either by the caliph himself or by Ibn ʿAbbās as so convincing that large numbers of Khārijites return to ʿAlī. More often than not, no verbal responses are recorded for the Khārijites when confronted with these justifications, but their tacit approval is expressed through their actions: al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh*, for example, does not preserve a verbal reply to ʿAlī/Ibn ʿAbbās, but the recognition of the validity of ʿAlī's arguments by many Khawārij is more than implied in the following line, when he states that several of them returned to ʿAlī.[488]

With three exceptions[489], the Khārijites do not attempt to argue their point beyond the reiteration of their accusations against ʿAlī and their demand that he repent towards God

[488] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 193.

[489] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 307; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3351-3352; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 94. In each of these accounts, it is Ibn ʿAbbās who initially fails to persuade the rebels to return, not ʿAlī. In al-Ṭabarī's report, Ibn ʿAbbās argues with them against ʿAlī's explicit order not to engage in debates before he himself would arrive

for his sin. This once again emphasizes that it is not Khārijism itself with which the sources are concerned. Moreover, the accusations themselves and the caliph's response to them are by no means particular to the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khārijites: in al-Balādhurī's rendition of the murder of ʿUthmān, the rebels demand that he repent and ask God for forgiveness for his sins. ʿUthmān in turn orders them to fear God and return to the truth and His book.[490] Similarly, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī faces severe criticism for his decision to surrender to Muʿāwiya from his own "*shīʿa*". His 'supporters' take up the role previously held by the Khārijites and question al-Ḥasan's decisions and intentions.[491] This particular conflict is thus presented in analogous terms to ʿAlī's difficulties with the Khawārij, down to justificatory speeches and the citation of Qurʾānic passages to legitimize the peace agreement between al-Ḥasan and Muʿāwiya.[492] The parallels between al-Ḥasan and his father were purportedly also noticed by the Khārijites themselves, who attacked the former, shouting "you became an unbeliever like your father."[493]

In short, Khārijite accusations appear to be stock motifs that can be made to fit various contexts. This becomes all the more obvious considering that the depiction of the debates between ʿAlī and the Khawārij, such as they are, also differs from the reports on the confrontations between ʿAlī's messengers and Muʿāwiya at Ṣiffīn. Muʿāwiya defends his opposition to ʿAlī quite eloquently and reacts to the accusations levelled against him by the envoys. Needless to say, he is not persuaded by their argumentation either.[494] In the case of the Khārijites, however, ʿAlī or his agent Ibn ʿAbbās almost always have the last word.[495] A passage in Ibn Aʿtham's *Futūḥ* states that some Khawārij even acknowledge ʿAlī's power of persuasion and refuse to listen to his arguments at Nahrawān, worried that he might be able to convince them to return to him the way he had persuaded the rebels at

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at the scene. Ibn ʿAbbās, however, is impatient to make the Khawārij see the error of their ways and ignores ʿAlī's command. His failure therefore appears to be related to his disobedience.

[490] H. Keaney: "Confronting the Caliph: ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān in Three ʿAbbasid Chronicles", *SI* 1 (2011), 37-65, 62.

[491] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 474-480.

[492] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 475, 476.

[493] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 470.

[494] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3271-3272, 3274-3276.

[495] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3353; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 192; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 311-313, 319; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 221-223; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 395; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 94, 97, 125, 127.

Ḥarūrāʾ.[496] In their conflict with the caliph, the Khawārij are thus reduced to the role of supporting actors whose purpose consists in cueing the leading actor, ʿAlī, to deliver his performance. This is particularly evident in the reports that feature one of ʿAlī's supporters or an anonymous or otherwise unknown rebel. ʿAlī's follower usually enquires about the Khārijites, whereas the rebel confronts ʿAlī with a short statement or sometimes just the famous Khārijite formula; in either case, this narrative tool allows the caliph to give a speech or exclaim a catchphrase on Khārijism.[497]

Second, the relationship between ʿAlī and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās occupied the historiographers, albeit to a lesser extent than the first theme. With the exception of Ibn Khayyāṭ's *Taʾrīkh*, which does not mention Ibn ʿAbbās in connection with the Khārijites at all, all of the sources depict Ibn ʿAbbās as ʿAlī's closest confidant, his messenger to the Khawārij and the only one – apart from ʿAlī himself – who can persuade some of the rebels to return to the caliph. Nevertheless, a clear hierarchy is established between them and ʿAlī's supremacy asserted by a number of reports stating that when Ibn ʿAbbās failed to win over the Khārijites, ʿAlī himself took over the disputations and managed to reconcile the rebels. Al-Yaʿqūbī relegates Ibn ʿAbbās to a supporting character by presenting only ʿAlī as an active agent in the discussions with the Khawārij. Of the historiographical works under consideration, al-Ṭabarī nevertheless preserves the most explicit attestation of Ibn ʿAbbās' subordination to the caliph in a report that has the latter rebuke the former for prematurely commencing discussions with the Khawārij. However, even this account maintains the close relationship between the caliph and Ibn ʿAbbās by indicating that the latter only disobeyed the former's command out of eagerness to confront the rebels and vindicate ʿAlī.

The third major theme, that of Khārijite piety and the violence ensuing from the rebels' particular understanding of what it means to be a Muslim, had already been discussed in Chapter Two and was therefore not addressed.

Over the course of this chapter, it has been emphasized that the main purpose of the narratives of Khārijite origins is to discuss and legitimize ʿAlī's status and conduct.

[496] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 106.
[497] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 313, 314; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3362, 3363; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 128.

However, it is somewhat puzzling to note that, notwithstanding the prominent role given to ʿAlī in the accounts of his confrontations with the Khārijites and in spite of the apparent concerted effort of the sources to vindicate him, it is difficult to avoid the impression that he lacked strength and assertiveness. From the call to arbitration onward, he seems to be strangely cut off from the centre of action – he reacts rather than acts. His own followers threaten to turn against him if he does not give in to their demands, and the quick and unanimous decision for ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ as arbiter on Muʿāwiya's side only serves to stress the disunity in the caliph's camp. Later on, after the arbitration, when ʿAlī intends to engage the Syrians, he is again shown to be held back both by his followers, who are unwilling to fight, and by the Khārijites, whose activities cause the population of Iraq to urge ʿAlī to engage them first. While this frees him from all responsibility for the arbitration itself as well as its ramifications and illuminates the impossible situation he found himself in, it also makes him appear weak to some extent.

Moreover, as already noted by El-Hibri[498], there is a certain irony in the reports which describe ʿAlī's request at Nahrawān that the murderers of ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb be handed over to him, offering to leave the other rebels alone. When confronted with the caliph's demand, the Khārijite rebels respond by saying "we all killed him", refusing to reveal and deliver the murderers.[499] These accounts bear a strong resemblance to those that depict the exchange between ʿAlī and envoys sent to him by Muʿāwiya to demand that the killers of ʿUthmān be held responsible for their crime and/or handed over to the Syrian governor.[500] ʿAlī's failure to avenge the death of his predecessor is thus shown to come back to haunt him, drawing a parallel between his situation and conduct and that of the Khārijites.

One could argue that these two points express an implicit criticism of ʿAlī. El-Hibri understands the irony in these reports to be an expression of the historiographers' disapproval of ʿAlī's overly pious stance prior to becoming caliph. The excessive piety of the Khārijites thus constitutes a reflection of his own.[501] This theory appears rather

[498] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, 248-249.
[499] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3376; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 405; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 119.
[500] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, 249.
[501] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, 248.

intriguing, although I take issue with El-Hibri's claim that the historiographical tradition originally constituted a unified narrative[502] that was not made up of different layers but displayed "unity in scheme and plot line".[503] This view seriously underestimates the complexity of early Muslim story-telling and the processes of transmission and compilation over the course of which Islamic historiography was formed. None of the historiographers under study spoke with a single voice even within their own works, not to mention among each other.[504] The depiction of the events and protagonists of early Islamic history are far too contradictory and multi-faceted to allow for the idea of a unified narrative, even ignoring the practical impossibilities of securing at least the tacit agreement of several generations of Muslims from Spain to India to participate in the creation and maintenance of such a narrative across all tribal, ethnic, linguistic, political and otherwise factional lines. Regarding the historians' assessment of ʿAlī's piety, much more research will need to be done regarding his depiction in the historiographical sources before judgment can be passed on this issue. This seems advisable particularly because El-Hibri appears to base his analysis mainly on al-Ṭabarī, less on other historiographers.

[502] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, ix.
[503] El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics*, 23. See also *Reinterpreting*, 15.
[504] On the multi-voiced character of early Islamic historiography, see e.g. Leder, "Composite Form", 126.

Chapter Four: Khārijites During the Caliphate of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān

The present chapter will look at the portrayal of Khārijism in the accounts of the caliphate of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41 AH/661 CE – 60 AH/680 CE). What we can immediately observe is a radical change in the volume as well as the nature of the reports on Khārijite activities during this period in comparison to the period of ʿAlī's reign. First, the majority of the historiographical sources do not mention any Khārijite activities in Muʿāwiya's time at all; only four of the works provide information on Khārijite rebellions during his caliphate: *Taʾrīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ*, *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* and *Taʾrīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī. Furthermore, Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Yaʿqūbī's chronicles impart only the scarcest details, such as the names, locations and sometimes the dates of Khārijite uprisings, and even these scraps of information are often contradictory.[505]

Second, whereas the stories of the confrontations between ʿAlī and the Khārijites served as a means of engaging in discussions of certain religio-political issues, such as ʿAlī's reasons for agreeing to the arbitration at Ṣiffīn, the accounts of Khārijite revolts throughout the time of Muʿāwiya's rule do not immediately appear to fulfil a similar purpose. While the odd comment on Umayyad or Syrian rule by the author-compilers can be found in al-Ṭabarī and particularly in al-Balādhurī's reports, there is no discussion of Muʿāwiya's policies and decisions even remotely resembling the occupation with ʿAlī's policies and decisions that could be observed in the preceding chapter. In fact, Muʿāwiya does not feature at all in the reports on Khārijite activities. Rather, it is his governors of Iraq, first al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir, then Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān and his son ʿUbaydallāh, who have to deal with the rebels. However, there are hardly any direct confrontations between these governors and the Khārijites either; whatever contact between Khārijites and non-Khārijites occurs is for the most part restricted to the inhabitants of the areas affected by Khārijite activities and the soldiers sent out to fight the rebels. No new themes or motifs are introduced to the reports on Khārijism in this period.

[505] E.g., Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 234, places the revolt against Muʿāwiya at al-Nukhayla in the year 41 AH and under the command of ʿAbdallāh b. Abī al-Ḥawsāʾ. Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 217, states that this revolt took place in 40 AH and was led by Farwa b. Nawfal al-Ashjāʿī.

The subject of piety is an exception to the relative scarcity of thematic substance. As shown in Chapter Two, the author-compilers endeavour to illustrate and frequently to condemn the often extreme piety of the Khārijites; in fact, this is the only element that permeates the material for all three periods covered in this thesis. That piety is the only narrative theme to be continued indicates the importance of this issue not only for the characterization of Khārijites, but also for the formation and negotiation of Islamic religious doctrine. As piety is the major theme that emerges from the examination of the historiographical material for Muʿāwiya's caliphate, the discussion will focus on this subject while attempting to avoid too much repetition of the analysis offered in Chapter Two. Moreover, I will show that there is a new dimension to the issue of Khārijite piety in this period: while its depiction during Muʿāwiya's reign is very similar to its portrayal in the reports of Khārijite origins or the period of the second civil war, we can observe a twist in the understanding and assessment of Khārijite godliness both on al-Balādhurī's and al-Ṭabarī's part. Potential reasons for their particular approaches to Khārijite piety during Muʿāwiya's caliphate will be discussed in the following analysis.

4.1 Analysis

The previous chapter argued that the historiographical material on the emergence of Khārijism is guided by two main themes: the exculpation of ʿAlī and, to a lesser extent, the relationship between ʿAlī and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbās. As noted above, the reports on Khārijite revolts during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān are of a markedly different character. Not only are there fewer accounts, they are also mostly restricted to the structural components of a particular narrative, that is, names, dates and locations. This makes it a lot more difficult to detect any underlying themes or general concerns – historical, political, religious, or otherwise – of the historiographers. However, the general tendency of the accounts of Khārijite origins is continued here: despite preserving a plethora of names and locations, the source material does not provide us with much substantial information regarding the identity or character of the Khārijites.

As stated above, only four of the sources considered for this thesis provide information on Khārijite revolts during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. Of these, only two – al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī – preserve the kind of material that allows us to analyse the narrative function of Khārijites in the reports for this time period, such as letters, speeches or sermons. The other two, al-Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Khayyāṭ, mostly transmit brief references to the dates and locations of Khārijite rebellions that are largely useless for a literary analysis: there is no discernible pattern to these references and particularly in Ibn Khayyāṭ's work no comprehensive narrative that would allow us to investigate the placement of Khārijite-related reports within the larger narrative framework, for example. Furthermore, many of the allegedly Khārijite rebels are not clearly identified as such – it is only with reference to al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's description of the same actors as Khārijites that the identification can be made.[506] The largest Khārijite rebellion of the time period in question, that of al-Mustawrid, is omitted entirely by Ibn Khayyāṭ. Both Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Yaʿqūbī will thus only be considered to a limited extent.

The following analysis will be divided into two main parts. The first section will focus on al-Ṭabarī, while the second will investigate al-Balādhurī. The reason for structuring the analysis for this chapter according to historiographer rather than theme is two-fold: first, al-Balādhurī's work contains a lot of information on various Khārijite rebels and revolts that are not mentioned by al-Ṭabarī at all, which makes it difficult to use their accounts in such a way as to complement one another. As al-Ṭabarī transmits less material, he will also be dealt with first. Dividing the material in this way also helps to identify the concerns of the individual author-compiler, which brings us to the second point: while al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī often transmit the same material, identical in subject matter and frequently even in wording, they appear to draw very different conclusions. Al-Ṭabarī mostly continues the tendency, already identified in Chapter Two, to illustrate Khārijite piety and then discredit it for its socially disruptive effects. Al-Balādhurī, however, preserves a large number of reports that are meant to illustrate Khārijite piety as a positive characteristic at least in opposition to the corruption of Umayyad rule and society. Having

[506] See e.g. Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 234 (on Ibn Abī al-Ḥawsāʾ), 235 (on Saḥm b. Ghālib and al-Khaṭīm), 264 (on Abū Bilāl); al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 221 (on al-Mustawrid).

said that, in al-Ṭabarī's case it is necessary to distinguish between his treatment of activist, i.e., militant, Khārijites and their quietist counterparts. While he clearly condemns the former, there is some evidence of quiet approval in his portrayal of the latter. I will discuss this in more detail below. It will also become obvious that the differences between al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī's approach to early Umayyad-era Khārijism are much more pronounced than was the case for their depiction of Khārijite origins. This indicates once again that by al-Balādhurī's time at the latest, i.e., the second half of the ninth century, a scholarly consensus regarding the position of ʿAlī as a rightful caliph was at least in the process of being formed.

The disparity between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī seems to confirm the conclusions Judd arrived at in his chapter on "Narratives and Character Development" in the works of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī.[507] Using the two scholars' treatment of late Umayyad-era figures and events as a case study, Judd observes that they offer opposing views regarding the decline of Umayyad power: al-Ṭabarī is foremost concerned with matters relating to the upkeep of social order by pointing out the dangers of personal greed and tribal strife.[508] Accordingly, he omits or downplays religious and moral sentiments and motivations wherever possible.[509] Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, focusses on the moral corruption and heretical inclinations of late Umayyad personalities.[510] Hence, while they both manipulate their material in similar ways, they do so to create very different overall themes.[511] As I will demonstrate in due course, Judd's findings are applicable to al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's discussion of Khārijism in the early Umayyad period as well; the pattern he identified is particularly obvious in the comparison of al-Ṭabarī's and al-Balādhurī's assessment of Khārijite piety.

[507] S. C. Judd: "Narratives and Character Development: Al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī on Late Umayyad History", in Günther (ed.), *Ideas*, 209-225.
[508] Judd, "Narratives", 210.
[509] Judd, "Narratives", *passim*.
[510] Judd, "Narratives", 210.
[511] Judd, "Narratives", 210. See also 222.

4.1.1 "No Folk are Worse Enemies of God" – al-Ṭabarī on Khārijism During the Reign of Muʿāwiya I

Al-Ṭabarī is one of only two historiographers examined here whose work includes more than just scraps of detail on Khārijite revolts during the reign of Muʿāwiya. Nevertheless, his reports on Khārijism in this period remain rather lacking in substance, confirming the difficulty of extracting any notion of a specifically Khārijite identity from virtually all of the reports on Khārijism across the entire time span covered by this thesis, as argued in Chapter One. For the most part, al-Ṭabarī limits his reports to descriptions of battles, locations and names of the actors involved, similar to Ibn Khayyāṭ and al-Yaʿqūbī's historiographical works. The only exception to this is the elaborate description of the pursuit of and battle against the period's largest Khārijite revolt led by al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllafa. Nevertheless, there is hardly anything in these accounts that would allow us to identify Khārijites as the particular rebels in question. The *lā ḥukmā* slogan all but disappears from his reports on Khārijite activities [512] and there is only one reference to the supposed point of origin of the Khārijite protest, ʿAlī's "abandonment of the judgment of the Book"[513], in all of al-Ṭabarī's accounts involving Khārijites in this period.

Similarly, the use of Qurʾānic quotations has also decreased significantly here in comparison to the accounts of Khārijite origins. Al-Ṭabarī includes only four instances of Khārijites citing the Qurʾān, two of whom (Abū Bilāl and his brother ʿUrwa) are quietists. There is only one instance of an Umayyad governor quoting the Qurʾān in response to a Khārijite envoy. This change in the frequency of Qurʾānic quotations could be a silent confirmation of the reputation of the Umayyads as impious tyrants on the author-compiler's part. In the case of the Khārijites, this is harder to explain. Many of the Qurʾānic verses they are made to cite in the accounts analysed in the preceding chapter are either in favour of or against the arbitration at Ṣiffīn and thus constitute the opportunity for ʿAlī or his supporters to refute the Khārijites' understanding of the verses in questions. The remaining verses serve to portray their extreme piety, for the most part in their debates and dealings

[512] The only instance in which this slogan is mentioned is found in the report of al-Khaṭīm and Sahm b. Ghālib's rebellion in Basra in 46 AH/666-667 CE. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 83-84. This episode will be discussed below.
[513] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40-41.

with non-Khārijites. As al-Ṭabarī transmits significantly fewer of these debates and descriptions of Khārijite activities in the reports for Muʿāwiya's reign, there are also fewer occasions on which the Qurʾān might be cited. This characteristic of reports on Khārijism in this period changes again in the material examined for the next chapter, which deals with the main period of development for Khārijite thought and doctrine and accordingly abounds with Qurʾānic quotes both in Khārijite and non-Khārijite statements. It also points out again that the period of Muʿāwiya's caliphate constitutes something of an anomaly compared with the reigns of ʿAlī and Ibn al-Zubayr/ʿAbd al-Malik.

Not entirely surprisingly, al-Ṭabarī's accounts of Khārijism under Muʿāwiya's rule do not engage with most of the main themes identified in the reports of Khārijite origins. As ʿAlī no longer features as the main protagonist, there is no need to discuss the allegations against him or to exculpate him. For the same reason, Ibn ʿAbbās does not occupy a particularly important position in connection with the Khārijites anymore. The dangers of Khārijite piety, however, continue to be a prominent theme in al-Ṭabarī's work because its extremism disrupts the social order and threatens to plunge the *umma* into more bloodshed and chaos. Before looking at al-Ṭabarī's treatment of Khārijite piety, however, it is important at this point to make a few observations regarding the form and structure of the accounts he chose to include in his work.

Despite al-Ṭabarī's occasionally rather lengthy reports on Khārijite activities, it is noteworthy that the extensive and elaborate debates between the first Khārijites and ʿAlī or his agents are not reproduced and replaced with reports of discussions between Muʿāwiya or his governors and Khārijite rebels. The reason for this could be that as no person of particular political or religious importance – no prophet or king – appears to have had any profound discussions with the Khārijites in this period, al-Ṭabarī saw no need to include material of this kind in his work. However, this does not explain why what little Khārijite material he did include is often transmitted in detailed and lengthy versions. Moreover, a comparison with the accounts preserved by al-Balādhurī reveals that there certainly was no lack of substantial reports on Khārijites during this period, which might otherwise have explained the relative scarcity of information in al-Ṭabarī's work and even more so the almost complete silence in the other historiographical sources.

Another, more likely explanation is that al-Ṭabarī could not depict the insurgents as righteous warriors fighting the good fight without compromising the consensus the majority of scholars had arrived at by his time, namely, that rebellion was illegitimate regardless of a ruler's tyranny.[514] This position is expressed most clearly perhaps in legal literature, especially in the canonical *ḥadīth* collections such as that of al-Bukhārī (d. 870 CE): his chapter on *fitna* fiercely condemns violence among Muslims, explicitly also when directed against a seemingly impious ruler.[515] As a religious scholar and jurist, this likely had a great influence on al-Ṭabarī's approach to revolt. At the same time, however, he might have struggled with portraying the Umayyad authorities in a positive light as the upholders of law and order – on the whole, the Umayyads' reputation in the Islamic tradition is decidedly negative.[516] As a result, ideological or theological debates between these two groups would have been rather difficult to present to the reader: it appears that in al-Ṭabarī's opinion, neither side was morally superior to the other, as had been the case with ʿAlī vis-à-vis his Khārijite opponents, and hence there were not really any lessons to be learned. Consequently, al-Ṭabarī's accounts of Khārijite revolts during the reign of Muʿāwiya are mostly concerned with tactics rather than ideology. Moreover, when he discusses the quietist Khārijites, Abū Bilāl in particular, his accounts suddenly become more sympathetic to them, or rather more hostile toward the Umayyad governors. As the actions (or lack thereof) of these quietists did not directly threaten the social fabric or the cohesion of the empire, al-Ṭabarī might have felt that he had more room for manoeuvre with regard to criticising the rulers.

That al-Ṭabarī is not particularly fond of either the Khārijites or the Umayyads, however, is made clear throughout his work. He transmits a report according to which the remaining Khārijites rejoice after being informed of ʿAlī's death at the hand of Ibn Muljam. At the end of this report, al-Ṭabarī adds, "May God be satisfied with him [ʿAlī] and not be satisfied with them [the Khārijites]"[517], an explicit condemnation of the rebels and their

[514] Crone, *Political Thought*, 135-138, 229-232; el Fadl, *Rebellion*, 98-99, 112-118, and *passim*; B. Lewis: "On the Quietist and Activist Traditions in Islamic Political Writing", *BSOAS* 49.1 (1986), 141-147.
[515] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 333-350.
[516] Hawting, *First Dynasty*, 11-18. For modern views of the Umayyads, see ibid., 123-128.
[517] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18.

actions. Similarly, he has Muʿāwiya's own governor of Kufa, al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba, denounce his overlord as unjust and tyrannical in a conversation with one of ʿAlī's closest supporters, Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Ṣūḥān. When Ṣaʿṣaʿa insists on praising ʿAlī and criticising ʿUthmān in public, al-Mughīra tells him that "this regime [the Umayyads] has appeared, and we have been ordered to announce ʿAlī's faults to the people." He warns Ṣaʿṣaʿa to comply with Muʿāwiya's orders "to protect ourselves from these folks by means of dissimulation."[518]

Having established al-Ṭabarī's apparent unease regarding the portrayal of both Umayyads and Khārijites, let us now look at the particular concerns that emerge from his presentation of Khārijism in the period under investigation. There is an exception to the distinct lack of narrative substance and a Khārijite personality in the relevant reports transmitted by al-Ṭabarī: the issue of militant piety continues to be an important feature of the scholar's approach to the rebels. It has already been stated at various points that piety and violence constitute the most important features for the characterization of Khārijism. However, while these traits are portrayed as distinctly Khārijite in nature, they do not tell us much about Khārijites either. Rather, they have developed into specifically Khārijite *topoi* following a distinct pattern. In what follows, I will analyse these *topoi* and their functions within al-Ṭabarī's work, drawing particular attention to his distinction between activist and quietist Khārijism.

Al-Ṭabarī's Criticism of Activist Khārijism

Al-Ṭabarī uses his discussion of Khārijite activities to condemn violent piety and armed conflict in general.[519] He employs several different techniques to convey his disapproval of activist Khārijism, the most important of which are *direct intervention in the narrative*, *condemnation by proxy* and *characterization*. I will address each of these techniques in turn and begin by adducing examples of a straightforward condemnation of Khārijism on the

[518] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 38-39. See also p. 34 for an account in which Ṣaʿṣaʿa gives a speech about the first *fitna* but, according to al-Ṭabarī's interjection, says "nothing [negative] about the Syrians because government was theirs at that time."
[519] See also the discussion in Chapter Two.

part of the author-compiler. The section will conclude with a brief discussion of more subtle indications of al-Ṭabarī's censure of the Khawārij.

Direct Intervention in the Narrative

Al-Ṭabarī usually expresses his negative opinion of the Khārijites through the characters in his reports, but on two occasions, his own (or his source's) authorial voice directly emerges from the work to clarify his disapproval of the rebels. Both examples of direct intervention in the narrative occur in the context of the same story and reveal al-Ṭabarī's opinion of Khārijism as well as elements of his story-telling technique. Thus, while the first instance has already been mentioned above, it is important here to take a closer look at the episode in question.

The Khārijite rebel Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān al-Sulamī had participated at the battle of Nahrawān and was among those who had been wounded and later pardoned by ʿAlī. After his recovery, Ḥayyān left his family and went to al-Rayy, a city in northern Iran, with a small group of like-minded companions, among them a certain Sālim b. Rabīʿa al-ʿAbsī. They stayed there until they heard about the assassination of ʿAlī. Summoning his comrades to tell them about ʿAlī's death, Ḥayyān gives them a highly detailed account of Ibn Muljam's deed, whom he refers to as "your brother".[520] Sālim excitedly exclaims: "May God not cut off the right hand of whoever struck his [ʿAlī's] skull with the sword!"[521] Al-Ṭabarī continues by writing, "The folk began to praise God for ʿAlī's death, may peace be upon him and *may God be satisfied with him and not be satisfied with them.*"[522] Ḥayyān's speech carries on, elaborating on the transient nature of this world and the need to engage in *jihād*, already discussed in Chapter Two. However, before letting Ḥayyān

[520] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18.
[521] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 22. It is interesting that Sālim does not appear to know the identity of ʿAlī's killer, even though Ḥayyān had just revealed it in the previous sentence. This could imply that the report was put together from various different accounts; if that is the case, then Ḥayyān's statement and Sālim's exclamation might not have originally formed part of the same account.
[522] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 22 [my emphasis].

continue, a short passage on Sālim b. Rabīʿa is interpolated, stating that he later abandoned the Khārijite way and regretted it deeply.[523]

Al-Ṭabarī accomplishes several things here: first, his condemnation of the Khārijites illuminates his own stance regarding the rebels and puts their actions into perspective for the reader, in case the rebels' celebration of ʿAlī's death was not enough to demonstrate their wickedness. ʿAlī is thus shown to be merciful and benevolent even towards his sworn enemies, while Ḥayyān as a representative of the Khārijites in general is such a vile individual that he does not shy away from openly displaying his joy at the murder of the man who had spared him. Furthermore, by declaring Ibn Muljam to be the Khārijites' brother, Ḥayyān irrevocably associates himself and, by extension, all Khārijites with the actions of one of the most hated men in Islamic history, thereby demolishing all claims to righteousness and true piety.

Second, Sālim's regret for having once belonged to the Khārijites further underscores the sinfulness of their actions and beliefs. At the same time, this also serves to establish his reputation as a transmitter. Apparently, al-Ṭabarī had to justify using a rebel and, according to Islamic heresiography, a heretic as a source; by clarifying Sālim's later remorse for his actions as a Khārijite, al-Ṭabarī circumvents potential accusations of using an untrustworthy informant. The same technique can also be observed with regard to al-Mustawrid's nephew ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUqba al-Ghanawī, the youngest and sole surviving member of the rebel party, who is al-Ṭabarī's main source for reports from within the Khārijite camp.[524] Over the course of the story of al-Mustawrid's revolt, ʿAbdallāh is described as an immature and inexperienced young man[525], which excuses him for his mistakes; at the same time, however, his presence in the Khārijite camp establishes him as an appropriate and reliable transmitter.

[523] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 18.
[524] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40-61.
[525] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 41.

Condemnation by Proxy

Much more usual than these instances of explicit intervention in the narrative, however, is al-Ṭabarī's method of letting his characters express approval or disapproval of certain ideas and issues. A prime example of this can be found in the various speeches and remarks of al-Mughīra regarding Khārijite rebellions in Kufa. When first informed of an impending Khārijite revolt, al-Mughīra warns his subjects to "restrain the impudent among you" before the entire community is afflicted with misfortune. He tells them that he will crush any revolt and set a warning example for those thinking about upsetting public order.[526] The Kufan clan leaders are obviously impressed by his words and implore their people "by God and Islam" to inform the tribal notables about those who might intend "to incite discord or withdraw from the *umma*."[527]

Similarly, when al-Mughīra sends Maʿqil b. Qays against al-Mustawrid, he describes the Khārijite rebels as a "renegade group who withdrew from our community and accused it of unbelief".[528] Like ʿAlī at Nahrawān, however, al-Mughīra does not give Maʿqil *carte blanche* to do with the Khārijites as he sees fit, but instructs him to summon them to repent and return to the *umma* first. If they refuse, Maʿqil is ordered to confront them on the battlefield.[529] Al-Mughīra is thereby shown to follow proper procedure rather than repaying the Khārijites in kind by killing them indiscriminately and without warning. He continues by telling Maʿqil where to look for the rebels and emphasizes once again the importance of quelling their revolt because of their bad influence on the Muslim *umma*:

> They are not allowed to remain more than an hour in any area where you summon them. So if they accept [repentance], good, and if not, oppose them. For they do not stay in a territory for two days without corrupting anyone associating with them.[530]

Finally, the conflict between al-Mustawrid's Khārijites and the governor of al-Madāʾin, Simāk b. ʿUbayd, already discussed in Chapter Two, is another good example of censure by

[526] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 32, 33.
[527] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 33.
[528] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 39. For a description of the Khārijites as "renegades", see also 40, 46.
[529] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 39.
[530] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40; see also 37.

proxy. To revisit briefly: al-Mustawrid had ordered his nephew to deliver a letter to Simāk in which the rebel summoned the governor to fear God, heed the Qurʾān and reject the "innovators" ʿAlī and ʿUthmān both. Simāk is irate at being confronted with the Khārijites' demands and condemns them in a most candid fashion:

> They abandoned right guidance by what they did. They began to recite the Qurʾān to him [al-Mustawrid's nephew], they pretended to humble themselves and to weep. Thus he thought that they had something of the truth. 'Verily, they are just like cattle, nay, they have strayed further from the way' [Q 25:44]. By God! I never saw people who were in more manifest error nor a more obvious calamity than those whom you see![531]

This characterisation of the Khawārij as hypocritical evildoers who pose a threat to the community because of their violent, disruptive behaviour and secessionist tendencies is a clear enough castigation of Khārijism, but it is made all the more severe through al-Ṭabarī's particular selection of personalities said to be thus opposed to the rebels.

Characterization

Al-Mughīra is only one in a series of high-profile Companions and well-known early Muslims who object to the Khārijites' actions and beliefs. He is presented as a fair, honourable and honest person throughout al-Ṭabarī's reports on his governorship of Kufa. In fact, he does not appear to persecute people merely for holding Khārijite beliefs:

> He [al-Mughīra] treated people well and did not ask about their factions… He would say, 'God decided that you will continue to disagree. God will settle between you anything over which you might disagree [Q 42:10].' Thus, the people felt safe with him.[532]

Al-Mughīra's judgment regarding the Khārijite rebels thus weighs even heavier. It also appears that what al-Ṭabarī objects to are not necessarily Khārijite ideas *per se*, but rather the violent, socially disruptive forms that certain strands of Khārijism can take. Religious

[531] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 42.
[532] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 19-20; see also 112.

opposition can be ignored as long as it does not turn openly political. This important distinction also lies at the core of al-Ṭabarī's treatment of the quietist Basran Khārijites, which will be discussed below.[533]

Simāk b. ʿUbayd, the governor of al-Madāʾin opposed to al-Mustawrid, is also far from being depicted as a devoted Umayyad supporter. His refusal to wash his hands of both ʿUthmān and ʿAlī is a clear indication of this. Rather, his attitude of acknowledging both caliphs alongside Abū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is characteristic of the '*sunnī-jamāʿī*' view that was well under way to acquiring majority status within the Muslim communities by al-Ṭabarī's time. [534] In this manner, Simāk is more representative of the wider Muslim *umma* and communal consensus regarding the Khārijites than a symbol of a specifically Umayyad attitude towards Khārijism.

A closer look at the other characters employed to censure Khārijism also reveals a pattern: many of them are not only early converts, but pro-ʿAlid as well. In fact, al-Ṭabarī makes a point of underlining the particular enmity between ʿAlī's supporters and the Khārijites. Consequently, large parts of his depiction of Khārijism during this time period read like a specifically ʿAlid-Khārijite conflict. This becomes evident in two different ways. First, he implies the pro-ʿAlid opposition to the Khawārij by having well-known champions of the ʿAlid cause condemn the aims and intentions of the Khawārij. Two examples serve to illustrate this first element.

While al-Mustawrid seeks refuge with his relative of the ʿAbd al-Qays, another member of the tribe and close companion of ʿAlī, Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Ṣūḥān, who had previously also served as one of ʿAlī's envoys to the Khārijites[535], arrives in Kufa and discovers al-Mustawrid's presence there. Ṣaʿṣaʿa does not want to endanger his tribe by provoking the Umayyads and thus remains quiet about the Khārijite rebels, but he clearly states his opinion of them in a speech he gives to his fellow tribesmen. He begins by calling the ʿAbd al-Qays the "most favoured by God" because they stood firmly on His side through the succession conflicts. During the first *fitna*, they chose to follow the "People of the House

[533] For a similar phenomenon in al-Andalus, see M. Fierro: "Heresy in al-Andalus", in S. Jayyusi (ed.): *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Vol. 2. Leiden 1992, 895-908, 900-903.
[534] Crone, *Political Thought*, 28-29.
[535] See Chapter Three, section 3.1.2.

(*ahl al-bayt*), through whom God first gave us glory". The ʿAbd al-Qays were God's instrument in destroying "the faithless at the Battle of the Camel and the renegades at the Battle of Nahrawān."[536]

Al-Ṭabarī thus establishes Ṣaʿṣaʿa as an avid pro-ʿAlid, perhaps even a proto-Shīʿī, as the use of the term *ahl al-bayt* implies. Furthermore, he interrupts the narrative of Ṣaʿṣaʿa's speech and interjects a short passage stating that Ṣaʿṣaʿa did not mention the Syrians in his speech because they were in power at that time.[537] This further emphasizes the hostility between ʿAlī's faction and the Syrians/Umayyads and also gives al-Ṭabarī an opportunity to voice his disaffection with the Umayyad authorities, implying that they were unforgiving tyrants who did not take kindly to any form of criticism. While this clarifies the position of the ʿAlids' supporters vis-à-vis the Umayyads, it also again prepares the ground for al-Ṭabarī's more sympathetic portrayal of later quietist Khārijism in opposition to unjust Umayyad rule.

Following this important interpolation, al-Ṭabarī picks up the thread of Ṣaʿṣaʿa's speech and lets him continue his censure of the Khārijites. The pro-ʿAlid is rather explicit in his condemnation of the rebels: "No folk are worse enemies of God, you, the family of your Prophet and the community of Muslims than these mistaken renegades".[538] He warns his people not to give shelter to the Khawārij or hold back information about them, arguing that they should not give the (Syrian) authorities grounds for punishing them, another anti-Umayyad sideswipe. He concludes that, "truly, I would win favour with God by shedding their blood, for that is permitted."[539] Notably, this last remark confirms not only the lawfulness of killing the Khārijite rebels – a concern we already encountered in the reports of the battle at Nahrawān –, but also claims that the act of eliminating them is in compliance with God's will.

Ṣaʿṣaʿa's speech is well received – the people react by cursing the Khawārij and swearing to give them up if they are discovered. This effect appears to contradict Ṣaʿṣaʿa's

[536] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 34.
[537] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 34.
[538] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 34.
[539] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 35.

intention of keeping his tribe out of harm's way by not disclosing the rebels' identities, but al-Ṭabarī does not seem too concerned about solving this particular inconsistency.

Another one of ʿAlī's supporters who is shown to be opposed to Khārijism is ʿAdī b. Ḥātim. When al-Mustawrid learns that his presence among the ʿAbd al-Qays endangers his host, he decides to leave. Al-Mughīra is informed about this and summons the tribal leaders to discuss whom to send after the rebels. ʿAdī tells him that he would be happy to go after the Khārijites; in fact, he states that al-Mughīra does not have to worry about volunteers for this particular endeavour: "We are all their enemy and consider their opinion foolish..."[540] As it happens, ʿAdī's words prove to be true: Ṣaʿṣaʿa b. Ṣūḥān and Maʿqil b. Qays vie with each other to be given command over the troops intended to confront the rebels. Finally, al-Mughīra chooses Maʿqil, both because of the friction between the former and Ṣaʿṣaʿa and because Maʿqil is said to be the Khārijites' greatest enemy.[541]

The way in which al-Ṭabarī points out the hostility between ʿAlī's followers and the Khārijites is rather straightforward: on various occasions, he states that the authorities deliberately chose ʿAlī's proponents to do battle against the rebels because they were "the strongest in allowing the blood of these renegades to be shed, and [they] were more courageous against them [the Khārijites] than others, as they had fought them previously."[542] It is for this reason that al-Mughīra sends "the best of the Shīʿa and their cavalry"[543] with Maʿqil to fight against al-Mustawrid.

Similarly, when al-Mustawrid crosses over into Basran territory in order to escape Maʿqil, the governor of Basra, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir, enquires about the rebels and is told that the Kufans sent an army against them. He is informed that Maʿqil and ʿAlī's faction were chosen to fight against the Khārijites because of their hostility towards them. ʿAbdallāh agrees with this assessment and sends for a Basran ʿAlid sympathizer, Sharīk b. al-Aʿwar al-Ḥārithī, whom he orders to put together an army to engage the insurgents and drive them out of Basran territory. In a private conversation, ʿAbdallāh tells Sharīk to select those soldiers who consider killing God's enemies, meaning the Khārijites, lawful, so Sharīk,

[540] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 37.
[541] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 37.
[542] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 37; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 43.
[543] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 39.

who detests the "evil folk" of the Khawārij himself[544], decides to draft the cavalry of the Basran Rabīʿa, who hold Shīʿī views.[545]

Al-Ṭabarī's selection of particular characters as the Khārijites' opponents also allows him to circumvent the problem of depicting either the rebels or the Umayyad authorities as righteous. Neither al-Mughīra nor Simāk b. ʿUbayd are presented as hard and fast supporters of the Umayyad regime; in the former's case, we can even discover occasional (moderately) critical remarks regarding the ruling dynasty. It is thus possible to depict the government's agents in a favourable light and censure the Khawārij without praising the Umayyads. In the same vein, by pitting the Kufan Khārijites against prominent ʿAlid supporters, al-Ṭabarī manages to portray the hostilities as a continuation of the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khārijites, a conflict in which the allocation of the roles played by each side is unambiguous: ʿAlī is right, the Khārijites are wrong. In short, al-Ṭabarī, or perhaps his source, avoids putting the rebels in direct opposition to the Umayyads so that he does not have to praise either faction.

Apart from these rather explicit instances of condemning the Khārijites, al-Ṭabarī uses two more subtle editing and story-telling techniques to convey his disaffection with the Khawārij.

First, several of the Khārijite actors whom we have encountered thus far are said to have participated in the battle of Nahrawān, among them Muʿādh b. Juwayn and Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān. As it has already established by al-Ṭabarī and the various other historiographical works that the rebels at Nahrawān were violent criminals, the very fact that some of the Khārijite leaders during Muʿāwiya's reign belonged to those elements can be considered an example of questioning the rebels' integrity and morality.

Second, al-Ṭabarī ends virtually every entry on a Khārijite revolt with a rather dry remark to the effect that all rebels were killed.[546] This is the case even with the insurgency of al-Mustawrid, which he discusses at considerable length.[547] The last paragraph on al-Mustawrid that the reader is left with can be paraphrased as follows: al-Mustawrid's

[544] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 54.
[545] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 44-45.
[546] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 13, 84, 184.
[547] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 65.

Khārijites and Maʿqil's troops fight each other violently until the Khārijite challenges Maʿqil to a duel. Maʿqil's men implore their commander not to fight "this dog [i.e., al-Mustawrid] of whose soul God has despaired"[548], but Maʿqil accepts the duel. The leaders kill each other, but because Maʿqil had appointed his successor before his death, the Kufans charge against the Khārijites under their new commander and kill them all. The reader's last impression of the various Khārijite uprisings is thus the rebels' utter defeat, which in itself can be understood as being representative of the failure of the Khārijite enterprise as a whole.

The Basran Quietists

The preceding section has shown that al-Ṭabarī uses both explicit and indirect ways of criticising the militant piety of the Khārijites. However, as already noted, his condemnation of Khārijism appears to be quite clearly directed at its violent forms of expression. Here, this means the Kufan Khārijites, mainly al-Mustawrid and his companions. With the failure of al-Mustawrid's revolt, al-Ṭabarī's focus shifts to Basra and the conflict between the Basran governors and the Khārijites there. The single exception is the rebellion of Muʿādh b. Juwayn and Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān in Kufa in 58 AH/677-678 CE, but the main point of the reports on their 'uprising' is not to delineate their interactions with non-Khārijites – as a matter of fact, there are none – but to discuss *jihād* as one of the Khārijite core beliefs.[549] The account does not even disclose the location of their eventual revolt; at the end of the entry, it just states that an army was sent out against them and that they were all killed.[550]

The reports on Khārijism in Basra are markedly different from the accounts of Kufan Khārijism. The accounts of Basran Khārijism have more narrative substance, and there is essentially no condemnation of Khārijism in these stories. There are two main reasons for this: first, most of the Basran Khārijites mentioned by al-Ṭabarī are quietists, meaning that their opposition to the Umayyads is on the whole non-militant. These quietists

[548] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 65.
[549] See section 4.1.2 .
[550] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 181-184.

make a very sudden appearance in al-Ṭabarī's narrative and fulfil a different purpose from their activist counterparts. Second, these Basran Khārijites are opposed to and by two notorious Basran governors, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān and in particular his son ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād. Al-Ṭabarī's work depicts both of them, but especially the latter, as cruel tyrants in line with their steadfast support of the equally tyrannical Umayyads. Consequently, the accounts of Basran Khārijism are a lot more sympathetic to the quietists than the reports discussing Kufan Khārijism are to the activists. Importantly, the quietists are depicted as dissenters, not as rebels who shed blood, which would accord the former a different status according to at least some early Muslim jurists.[551] Nevertheless, these accounts are just as impersonal as all the other reports concerned with the Khawārij that we have looked at so far. Indeed, they are probably even more stylized; it is at this stage in al-Ṭabarī's work that we first encounter the tentative beginnings of the pious martyrdom stories associated with Marwānid-era Khārijism.

Al-Ṭabarī's accounts on the Basran Khārijites focus mostly on two Khārijite brothers, Abū Bilāl Mirdās b. Udayya and ʿUrwa b. Udayya. They begin in the year 45 AH/665-666 CE with Muʿāwiya's appointment of Ziyād as governor of Basra, Khurāsān and Sijistān, and Ziyād's famous inaugural speech in Basra.[552] This is also the first instance in which Ziyād is confronted with Khārijite criticism. At the end of Ziyād's speech, Abū Bilāl reprimands him for threatening his subjects with collective punishment.[553] He quotes Q 53:37-38 ('[Or was he not informed of what is in the scrolls of Moses,] and of Abraham, who fulfilled his obligations? That no soul burdened shall bear the burden of another; that man shall gain only what he endeavours'[554]) and concludes that "God promised us better than you, O Ziyād."[555] While Ziyād has the last word in this confrontation, it is Abū Bilāl who appears as the voice of righteousness.

That Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh's policies transgress the boundaries of acceptable behaviour is reiterated throughout al-Ṭabarī's discussion of their dealings with the

[551] El Fadl, *Rebellion*, 151-152.
[552] Ziyād's speech is quoted at length in al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh,* II, 73-76.
[553] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 74.
[554] My translation mostly follows T. Khalidi: *The Qur'an*. London 2008, 436.
[555] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 76.

Khārijites. Ziyād is reported to have threatened the Basrans repeatedly with dire consequences should they fail to take action against the Khārijites: "By God, take care of these for me or I shall certainly start with you"; "by God, if a single man of them escapes, you won't get one dirham of your stipends".[556] Ziyād and his deputy Samura allegedly also killed many Khārijites, particularly in the aftermath of one of the rare revolts of Basran Khawārij in 46 AH/666-667 CE.[557]

ʿUbaydallāh is depicted as an even more cruel governor than his father and as almost obsessed with persecuting the Khārijites, particularly from the year 58 AH/677-678 CE onward.[558] He is said to have killed groups of Khārijite prisoners, among them Abū Bilāl's brother ʿUrwa b. Udayya, whom we first encountered in the reports of the origins of Khārijism at Ṣiffīn.[559] As Abū Bilāl occupies an important position in Khārijite and Ibāḍī theology as well as the Sunnī tradition, let us examine the story of ʿUrwa's execution by ʿUbaydallāh in greater detail.[560] Both ʿUrwa and Abū Bilāl are said to have participated in the battle of Nahrawān; both of them were wounded in the fighting and carried off the battlefield. Thereafter and until their confrontations with ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād, both apparently lived in Basra as quietists.

Reportedly, ʿUrwa approaches ʿUbaydallāh one day and criticises the state of affairs of the *umma*, quoting Q 26:128-130 ('Do you build on every height a marvellous mansion for your delight? And erect palaces so that you may live eternally? When you strike, you strike like tyrants.'). ʿUbaydallāh assumes ʿUrwa's boldness means that his companions are close by, so the governor just leaves without replying. ʿUrwa is told that he should be cautious and hide from ʿUbaydallāh, who would surely want to kill him for his words. ʿUrwa heeds the warning but for some undisclosed reason decides to go to Kufa, which results in his prompt arrest. He is brought to ʿUbaydallāh, who has ʿUrwa's hands and feet cut off. The governor then demands to know what the Khārijite is thinking. ʿUrwa responds,

[556] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 91; Morony, *Muʿāwiyah*, 101.
[557] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 83-84, 91. However, al-Ṭabarī also quotes a report according to which the same revolt took place in 50 AH/670-671 CE, and he states that the rebels involved were the first to revolt after the "people of the canal" (*ahl al-nahr*), i.e., the Khārijites at Nahrawān in 658. This contradicts all other reports of Khārijite activities after Nahrawān, including his own.
[558] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 185.
[559] See the section on *awāʾil* in the Introduction.
[560] For the following, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 186.

"I think that you ruined this world for me and that you ruined the Hereafter for yourself."[561] ʿUbaydallāh is outraged, kills him and sends for ʿUrwa's daughter, whom he also kills.

In this episode, ʿUbaydallāh is clearly portrayed as the villain. He is a coward who does not dare respond to ʿUrwa for fear of other Khārijites being close by; in fact, it is quite doubtful that ʿUbaydallāh is capable of engaging ʿUrwa in a verbal argument, as his reaction to ʿUrwa's last statement shows: violence is his only means of defence and communication. Thus, the Khārijite's pronouncement regarding ʿUbaydallāh's fate in the world to come remains effective as the final judgment of the governor, a judgment which is further confirmed by his execution of ʿUrwa's daughter. ʿUbaydallāh's killing of a woman who in al-Ṭabarī's narrative at least did not oppose him or the ruling regime is the hallmark of injustice and cruelty embodied in the person of one of the Umayyads' most faithful servants. Conversely, ʿUrwa's concern for the *umma*, his all but reckless honesty in the face of a superior opponent and his fearless piety throughout his excruciating ordeal are reminiscent of early Christian martyr stories. Thus, while the reports of the quietist Basran Khārijites contain the now familiar association of Khārijism and piety, there is no condemnation of Khārijite godliness as dishonest, misguided and socially disruptive. On the contrary, it is their piety and bravery that enables the Khārijite rebels to stand out in their opposition to the irreligious and immoral Umayyads.

The laudable and sincere piety of the quietist Khārijites is best exemplified in the story of Abū Bilāl's imprisonment by ʿUbaydallāh. In comparison to al-Balādhurī[562], al-Ṭabarī transmits a rather short version of this episode[563], but this makes it all the more interesting to look at which details he chose to include. Al-Ṭabarī begins by saying that Abū Bilāl performed the *khurūj* to al-Ahwāz in 58 AH/677-678 CE[564], but immediately

[561] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 186.
[562] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 180-186.
[563] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 186-188.
[564] There are issues with al-Ṭabarī's dating of Abū Bilāl's revolt. While he places Abū Bilāl's rebellion in the entry on the year 58 AH, the report breaks off after only a couple of pages to then be resumed under the entry for the year 61 AH. While he claims that his first account of Abū Bilāl's revolt only included the events up to the Khārijite's victory over the first army sent against him, al-Ṭabarī's extension of the Abū Bilāl episode over three years contradicts the accounts transmitted in the remaining sources. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 390-391. For different dates, see al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 182 (60 AH); Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 251 (the entry seems to be placed under the year 64 AH/683-684 CE, but he also states that Abū Bilāl revolted during the governorship of ʿUbaydallāh, which indicates an earlier date).

continues by explaining that he had been imprisoned by ʿUbaydallāh along with a number of other Khārijites. The jailer was so impressed with Abū Bilāl's religious zeal that he let him leave the prison at night to return to his family; every morning, the Khārijite would be back by dawn. One day, ʿUbaydallāh decided to kill the imprisoned Khārijites, and news of this reached Abū Bilāl, who was at home at the time. The jailer worried that he would not return, but found to his utter surprise that his prisoner was back in the morning as usual. When asked about his reasons for returning despite the threat to his life, Abū Bilāl told the jailer that he "would not be rewarded for your kindness if you were punished because of me."[565] The jailer, who just so happened to be ʿUbaydallāh's milk brother, then interceded on Abū Bilāl's behalf, told the governor the story of the Khārijite's return to prison and asked him to spare Abū Bilāl. ʿUbaydallāh agreed and gave him to his milk brother, who released him. Abū Bilāl's subsequent revolt against ʿUbaydallāh is not discussed in detail by al-Ṭabarī, particularly compared to al-Balādhurī's treatment of the matter, and thus shall not concern us here.

The point of this story is to emphasize Abū Bilāl's exceptional piety, honesty and decency, virtues that are more important to him than his own life. This represents a sharp contrast to the examples of misguided, violent godliness present in the reports of Khārijite origins and activist Kufan Khārijism. As soon as the militancy of this activist Khārijism and thus the bloodshed and social upheaval it creates disappear from the accounts, al-Ṭabarī has no qualms about portraying the Khārijites as pious martyrs who are slaughtered for their beliefs by the Umayyad tyrants. We can conclude, therefore, that he is not so much concerned with, or even opposed to, Khārijism as a specific set of religious ideas or doctrines, but rather with its potential for upsetting law and order, creating conflict within the *umma* and causing bloodshed among the Muslims.

Finally, this is also confirmed by al-Ṭabarī's discussion of the two violent revolts carried out by Basran Khārijites that he chooses to mention.[566] The first case is that of al-Khaṭīm, also known by his proper name Yazīd b. Mālik al-Bāhilī, and Sahm b. Ghālib al-Ḥujaymī. They both rebelled in 46 AH/666-667 CE, proclaiming the *taḥkīm*. Sahm went to

[565] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 187.
[566] Al-Ṭabarī's short description of Abū Bilāl's revolt clearly serves a different narrative purpose.

al-Ahwāz, but returned and asked Ziyād for a guarantee of safe-conduct, which he denied. Instead, he had Sahm crucified. Al-Khaṭīm was exiled to Baḥrayn, but later allowed to return under certain conditions. When he violated his curfew, Ziyād ordered his execution.[567] Al-Ṭabarī also preserves a variant account that places their rebellion in the year 41 AH/661-662 CE, during the governorship of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir.[568]

Both reports of Sahm and al-Khaṭīm's revolt are short and do not impart much detail beyond the structural components. If it were not for the mention of the Khārijite slogan, it would be impossible to tell which particular faction these two allegedly belonged to. In fact, al-Ṭabarī's alternative report does not mention the *taḥkīm* or any other Khārijite identifier; it is only with recourse to his other account of this particular uprising and reports transmitted by different historiographers[569] that we can attempt to determine the identity of these rebels. As sparse as al-Ṭabarī's accounts are, however, they can be read as an implicit condemnation of the Khārijites' actions. First, the report that places their rebellion in 41 AH states that they killed a Companion of the Prophet while he was performing his prayers. This is a particularly repulsive act and directly contradicts the Khārijites' claims to superior godliness. It is also reminiscent of the Khārijites' killing of another Companion, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Khabbāb, shortly before the battle of Nahrawān. Sahm and al-Khaṭīm are thus portrayed as part of a Khārijite tradition of murdering Companions.

Second, the fate both Khārijites eventually suffer can also be understood as a censure of Khārijism in general. According to the Qurʾān [Q 5:33], crucifixion and exile are punishments for those who rebel against God and his Messenger: 'In truth, the punishment of those who make war against God and His Messenger, and roam the earth corrupting it, is that they be killed, or crucified, or have their hands and feet amputated, alternately, or be exiled from the land. This would be their shame in the present life, and in the next a terrible torment awaits them.'[570] While it is true that ʿUrwa b. Udayya is also depicted as suffering one of these particular Qurʾānic sentences (the cutting off of hands and feet), the circumstances of his conflict with ʿUbaydallāh and eventual execution differ substantially

[567] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 83-84.
[568] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 15-16.
[569] See Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 235, 241, 246; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 172-173.
[570] My translation follows Khalidi, *Qur'an*.

in content and narrative technique, which implies a different reading of the ʿUrwa story as one of the Khārijite martyr narratives.

The second instance of armed revolt consists of an even shorter report which states that Qarīb (or Qurayb) of the Iyād tribe and Zuḥḥāf (or Zaḥḥāf) of the Ṭayyiʾ were the first to rebel after the Khārijites at Nahrawān.[571] Al-Ṭabarī does not give much additional information regarding this 'revolt', but he makes his opinion of these Khārijites clear by quoting Abū Bilāl: "God did not draw Qarīb close. I swear by God that I would rather fall from the sky than do what he did [i.e., rebel and cause conflict and bloodshed]."[572] This censure of Qarīb and Zuḥḥāf's actions is doubly damning because it is a Khārijite who condemns his fellow Khārijites in this way. Moreover, it is a quietist Khārijite who opposes his activist companions. Abū Bilāl's special position among his comrades as well as in the Sunnī tradition is thus confirmed in this report that also asserts our earlier observation that al-Ṭabarī is critical of activist, but not necessarily quietist Khārijism.

4.1.2 Al-Balādhurī on Early Umayyad-Era Khārijism

By far the largest amount of material on Khārijite activities during the rule of Muʿāwiya I is contained in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Not only does he transmit the greatest number of reports; in comparison to the other historiographical sources, there is also a greater variety and depth to the accounts he chose to include. Thus, while much of his Khārijite material is similar to and occasionally identical with al-Ṭabarī's reports, al-Balādhurī differs from the latter in two significant ways: first, al-Balādhurī's accounts of Khārijism have a great deal more narrative substance. Where al-Ṭabarī's reports often give hardly any indication at all of a particular rebel's affiliation, intentions or thought, the *akhbār* transmitted by al-Balādhurī for the most part clearly identify the various rebels and revolts as Khārijite. As a result, a much more tangible Khārijite identity appears to emerge from al-

[571] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 91.
[572] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 91. The part about God not bringing Qarīb "close" is a pun on the rebel's name, as both words are derived from the same root. The idea of certain beings and people being drawn close to God (or a worldly ruler) is echoed in a number of Qurʾānic verses. See G. Hawting: "'Has God Sent a Mortal as a Messenger?" (Q 17:95): Messengers and Angels in the Qurʾān", in G. S. Reynolds (ed.): *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 2*. New York etc. 2001, 372-390, 378-379.

Balādhurī's work than could be observed in al-Ṭabarī's case or in the accounts of Khārijite origins. This Khārijite identity is explicitly *narrative*: al-Balādhurī's material is just as infused with *topoi* and other literary tools as al-Ṭabarī's reports or any other work of the early Islamic historical tradition, which once again makes it very difficult to get a sense of the 'real' actors and events behind the stories. Nevertheless, it appears that al-Balādhurī's particular concerns and the scope of his work caused him to focus on Khārijite thought and doctrine to a much greater extent than the historiographers.

Second, al-Balādhurī presents an image of the Khārijites that is notably more positive than al-Ṭabarī's discussion of the rebels. In line with this, the former's criticism of the Umayyads is also much more explicit than the latter's. This can be attributed to the difference between al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī's areas of interest as well: al-Balādhurī is concerned with questions of moral and ethical significance, not statecraft and the ramifications of social unrest; his intent is to entertain and edify his audience. He can thus be more candid in his criticism of the Umayyads.

Despite these differences in narrative substance and the assessment of Khārijism, however, there are also a number of features common to both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's works. These include the employment of the *topos* of Khārijite piety, the condemnation of indiscriminate killing and, to a lesser extent on al-Balādhurī's part, of excessive piety, as well as the special position of Abū Bilāl. In what follows, I will first illustrate al-Balādhurī's approach to the Khārijites as outlined above and then proceed by looking at the similarities to al-Ṭabarī's presentation of Khārijism. This chapter will finish with some concluding remarks regarding the assessment of early Umayyad-era Khārijism in al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's works.

Al-Balādhurī's Presentation of Khārijism: Forms and Functions

Al-Balādhurī's material on Khārijite activities differs from the reports preserved by the historiographical sources through the comparatively well-developed portrayal of Khārijism he provides. This is due to a number of narrative techniques. To begin with, there is much more material that lends itself to a literary analysis as al-Balādhurī preserves a plethora of

Khārijite speeches, statements and poems, narrative elements largely missing from the other sources on Khārijism during this period. This facilitates the identification of the actors as Khārijites and gives us a greater, more varied insight into the rebels' actions and ideas as portrayed in al-Balādhurī's work.

Second, the tendency observed in al-Ṭabarī's work to limit Khārijite statements to a minimum and focus on Umayyads and pro-ʿAlids is reversed by al-Balādhurī. Thus, many of the longer speeches, monologues and dialogues as well as all but one of the poems[573] transmitted in the reports of Khārijite confrontations with government agents and ʿAlid supporters alike are attributed to the rebels, who are given ample opportunity to argue their position. This applies in particular to the Khārijite revolts directed against Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād. In turn, and in contradiction to both the reports analysed in Chapter Three and this chapter's section on al-Ṭabarī, the Khārijites' opponents are frequently restricted to short statements and repetitive stock phrases, while the rebels themselves often argue their point eloquently. Two examples illustrate this.

ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād allegedly arrests a Khārijite while he is governor of Basra, a man called Khālid b. ʿAbbād or ʿUbbād. After some discussion during which Khālid refuses to tell ʿUbaydallāh the location of his fellow Khārijites, the governor quite predictably orders Khālid to curse the "people of Nahrawān". Khālid cleverly responds by stating, "if they were enemies of God, then God cursed them."[574] Ibn Ziyād then demands that Khālid declares his loyalty to the caliph, but the Khārijite avoids a direct answer again by stating that, "if he [Muʿāwiya] is a believer, then he is a friend of God and I am his friend."[575] Frustrated, ʿUbaydallāh finally orders him to be executed.[576]

During the revolt of Abū Bilāl against ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād, one of the soldiers dispatched to fight the rebels tells the Khārijites to "fear God and return [to the community]."[577] We have already come across this particular demand in Chapter Three, where ʿAlī or one of his representatives often uses the exact same words to urge the rebels

[573] The exception is a poem ascribed to ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAwf b. Aḥmar, the commander of Muʿāwiya's troops during the confrontation with the Khārijites at al-Nukhayla. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165.
[574] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 389.
[575] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 389.
[576] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 390.
[577] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 182.

to rejoin the *umma*. While the Khārijites usually offer no response to ʿAlī's request and leave him to have the last word, the situation is quite different in the case of Abū Bilāl's rebellion. Here, the exhortation to return to the community and thus accept the leadership of the Umayyads and their sympathizers provokes an angry reply on the part of Abū Bilāl's Khārijites: "You would have us return to Ibn Ziyād the hypocrite [*al-fāsiq*] who took the blood-money [*dīyat al-muslim*] four times?"[578] There is no response from the government soldiers, no attempt to argue with the rebels or to defend ʿUbaydallāh; essentially, they appear to take over the Khārijites' role as mouth pieces, a technique described in Chapter Three. This role reversal serves to emphasize again that ʿAlī's opponents were in the wrong and therefore had nothing to say in response, just as the Umayyads' troops are now struck speechless by the Khārijites' righteousness.

Third, some of the major Khārijite protagonists appear more developed, more fleshed out in al-Balādhurī's work than in any other source for this time period. Frequently, they seem more tangible and 'real' than their enemies, both Umayyads and ʿAlids. This can be observed first and foremost in the reports on Abū Bilāl.[579] While many of the opponents he encounters remain rather lifeless, indistinct and interchangeable, he himself is described in much more detail. We learn about his family background, his religious and political thought, daily habits, personal virtues and concerns. Most of these details can easily be assigned to one or another *topos*, doctrinal discussion or story-telling technique, but they contribute to creating the illusion of verisimilitude. Moreover, this is the first convincing attempt at creating a realistic image of a Khārijite rebel we have encountered so far, which points out the particular significance of Abū Bilāl in the Islamic tradition.

Thus, while the placement and emphasis of the reports transmitted by al-Ṭabarī still allow us to identify particular concerns in his discussion of Khārijism during Muʿāwiya's reign, the comparative wealth of narrative rather than structural elements in al-Balādhurī's work enables us to extract what at first sight seems to be a more specifically Khārijite identity from the accounts. This is not to say that we can determine with any degree of certainty how the events described actually came to pass – as already noted, al-Balādhurī's

[578] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 182.
[579] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 180-186.

material abounds with *topoi* and literary tools and therefore does not allow us to come to any firm conclusions regarding 'what really happened'. As a matter of fact, the essentials of Khārijite identity we do detect are fundamentally narrative: unlike al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī was apparently interested in discussing the Khārijites beyond the implications of rebellion for the cohesion of the community, and this required him to fill out the otherwise rather skeletal portrayal of early Umayyad-era Khārijism. Hence, what is preserved in his work is – despite an impression to the contrary – not so much a description of the Khārijites as they were in real life, but rather his perception of their significance for early Islamic history. This characteristic of al-Balādhurī's approach to Khārijism nevertheless allows us to make some observations regarding the political, religious and social issues pertinent to his time, as will be demonstrated in due course. The comparison with al-Ṭabarī in particular enables us to trace at least part of the discussion of said issues in the Islamic tradition.

Pious Khārijites, Wicked Umayyads – Opposing Tyranny with Piety

Having addressed the form of al-Balādhurī's Khārijite material, let us now turn to the content of his reports and his assessment of early Umayyad Khārijism. It becomes immediately obvious that al-Balādhurī differs from al-Ṭabarī here as well. While al-Balādhurī often transmits much the same material as al-Ṭabarī, he arrives at very different conclusions: despite criticising the Khārijites' indiscriminate violence against other Muslims in places[580], his portrayal of Khārijism is overall significantly more positive than al-Ṭabarī's. At the same time, his censure of the Umayyads is much more pronounced than the latter's. These two features of al-Balādhurī's work are interconnected – his approach to the Umayyads, which is much less concerned with considerations of statecraft and thus a great deal more condemning than al-Ṭabarī's, allows him to cautiously praise the Khārijites as pious rebels against an unjust regime. As already noted, this can most likely be attributed to al-Balādhurī's focus on morals and ethics, which differs from al-Ṭabarī's concerns.

[580] See the section on similarities between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī below.

There are several ways in which al-Balādhurī expresses his – albeit careful – approval of the Khārijites vis-à-vis the Umayyads and their supporters. The narrative devices he employs to make his point range from explicit statements to subtle literary techniques. I will discuss both groups of techniques in turn, drawing particular attention to the connections and correlations between the narrative content (statements, poems, speeches, etc.) and the techniques (placement, omission, emphasis, interjection, etc.) of the reports transmitted by al-Balādhurī.[581]

Like al-Ṭabarī's *History*, al-Balādhurī's work is suffused with the *topoi* of the Khārijites' piety, longing for *jihād*, ferocity in battle and bravery in the face of overwhelming opposition[582], and it is here that the clearest indications of al-Balādhurī's comparatively favourable depiction of the Khārijites can be found. While al-Balādhurī transmits more material in general and thus also a larger number of accounts that represent the rebels as very concerned with their personal piety and adherence to God's commands, his depiction of these specific (narrative) Khārijite characteristics is quite similar to al-Ṭabarī's portrayal of the Khawārij. In order to be succinct, one example of al-Balādhurī's depiction of Khārijite piety will have to suffice at this point. While the *topos* of Khārijite piety is common to all author-compilers examined for this thesis, the following account also hints at the fundamental difference between al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī's assessment of the rebels' godliness.

According to a report transmitted in the *Ansāb*, a Khārijite called Abū al-Wāziʿ summoned his companions to take up arms after Abū Bilāl's brother ʿUrwa b. Udayya had been executed. He accused his fellow Khārijites of having become neglectful of the "people of injustice (*ahl al-baghī*)" who would take advantage of their inaction and "kill you in your beds like dogs in their kennels (*yaqtalūnakum fī maḍājiʿikum qatl al-kilāb fī*

[581] On techniques of story-telling, see e.g. F. Donner: "ʿUthmān and the Rāshidūn Caliphs in Ibn ʿAsākir's *Taʾrīkh madinat Dimashq*: A Study in Strategies of Compilation", in Lindsay (ed.), *Ibn ʿAsākir*, 44-61; Keaney, "Confronting".

[582] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165 (for a government agent acknowledging the piety of his Khārijite opponent), 183 (for a small Khārijite force putting to flight an Umayyad army 50 times its size), 392 (for a Khārijite exhorting a comrade to engage in *jihād*).

marābiḍihā)."[583] He specifically called on a certain Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq al-Ḥanafī to abandon his restraint:

> You were given a sharp tongue (*lisānan ṣāriman*) and a faint heart (*kalban kalīlan*). Would that the faintness of your heart was in your tongue and the strength of your tongue in your heart (*fa-layta kalāl qalbika li-lisānika wa-ṣalābat lisānika li-qalbika*)! I fear that love of this impermanent world (*al-dunyā al-fāmīya*) conquered your heart and you turned towards it and observed piety in it with your tongue (*fa-milta ilayhā wa-aẓharta bi-lisānika al-zuhd fīhā*).[584]

This speech contains all of the core components of Khārijism as outlined by al-Ṭabarī[585]: piety, the significance of *jihād* and the conviction that the material world is transient, which fuels the Khārijites' desire to find favour with God through armed struggle. At the same time, however, the account also draws attention to those elements that feature prominently throughout al-Balādhurī's presentation of Khārijite rebellions during Muʿāwiya's reign: the injustice of the Khārijites' opponents and the rebels' fear that the ruling party will devastate them if they fail to take action first. Both of these aspects are frequently addressed in al-Balādhurī's material on the Khārijites, as will be discussed in due course, and it is here that the differences between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī are most obvious.

As already noted, these differences are mainly attributable to the scholars' particular concerns: where al-Ṭabarī uses certain reports or kinds of reports to warn against the dangers of excessive, militant piety[586], al-Balādhurī employs the same or similar accounts to focus on the personal devoutness of the Khārijite protagonists in question so as to better illustrate the corresponding injustice and cruelty of the authorities. In this way, Khārijite piety is turned into a foil for Umayyad impiety.

A good starting point for an investigation into Khārijite piety as presented by al-Balādhurī is the story of Abū Bilāl's revolt against ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād. More than that, it is the story of pious, righteous opposition to tyranny *par excellence*. Al-Balādhurī's accounts are much longer and more developed than al-Ṭabarī, focusing in particular on the

[583] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 392.
[584] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 392.
[585] See also the discussion in Chapter Two.
[586] See the first half of this chapter.

events after Abū Bilāl's decision to rebel, which al-Ṭabarī merely glances over. According to al-Balādhurī, Abū Bilāl is driven to revolt by ʿUbaydallāh's merciless persecution of the Khārijites in Basra, including a female Khārijite named al-Thabjāʾ. Al-Thabjāʾ consistently points out ʿUbaydallāh's evil conduct and misdeeds. Abū Bilāl warns her that the governor is looking for her, but she does not want to cause harm to anyone and thus refuses to hide herself. Eventually, Ibn Ziyād seizes her, cuts off her hands and feet and has her killed. Abū Bilāl walks past the execution site in the market and witnesses her ordeal. This, in conjunction with ʿUbaydallāh's mistreatment of the Khārijites and Abū Bilāl himself, leads him to decide on the *khurūj*. The Khārijite thus summons his comrades, accusing the authorities (*al-wulāt*) of "oppressing the righteous (*ahl al-ḥaqq*)" through "treachery and unbelief". He argues that it is a sin to stay behind, and that while it is distressing to draw the sword and kill people, the Khārijites did not begin this conflict. On the contrary, Abū Bilāl emphasizes that they do not seek to provoke anyone, but that they will protect themselves from anyone who tries to oppress them.[587]

Abū Bilāl reportedly leaves Basra with a small number of companions and settles in al-Ahwāz. ʿUbaydallāh sends an army of 2,000 men against them; when informed of this, Abū Bilāl comments that "God is the Helper (*al-mustaʿān*), and they [the government troops] are the helpers of oppression (*aʿwān al-ẓalama*)."[588] The Khārijites refuse their opponents' request to return to obedience towards ʿUbaydallāh, pointing out the governor's iniquity. After some quarrelling, the Khārijites eventually attack the Umayyad army and put them to flight. ʿUbaydallāh is furious that such a small group of rebels managed to defeat his troops and sends out another army, twice the size of the previous one, under the command of ʿAbbād b. Akhḍar al-Māzanī.

The two groups meet at Darābajird on a Friday. ʿAbbād calls Abū Bilāl to obey the authorities (*al-sulṭān*), to which Abū Bilāl reportedly responds: "Do you call us to obedience towards him who sheds blood and violates the sacred ordinances of God, and to return to the hypocrite Ibn Ziyād who kills on suspicion and arrests on confusion?"[589] Then his men charge ʿAbbād's troops and fight them until prayer time. Abū Bilāl asks for a

[587] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 181-182.
[588] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 182.
[589] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 183.

ceasefire for the duration of the prayer and ʿAbbād agrees, but the Umayyad troops hasten the prayer and then attack the Khārijites, who are still prostrated on the ground. No Khārijite turns away from his prayer position until the enemy is upon them. They are all killed and Abū Bilāl's head cut off.[590]

This account of Abū Bilāl's revolt against ʿUbaydallāh and his Umayyad overlords is fundamentally self-explanatory. Abū Bilāl is the reluctant but nevertheless unequivocal hero of the story, pitted against the wicked and ignoble villains as represented by ʿUbaydallāh and his agents. The Khārijites are portrayed as pious and conscientious: they struggle with their choice to rebel against the authorities, but feel they have no option but to oppose the tyranny of the Umayyads. An independent, but very short report of Abū Bilāl's rebellion is anxious to emphasize that he only fought those who fought him and that he did not misappropriate any money.[591] In turn, the longer first account expresses the authorities' wickedness both through Abū Bilāl's accusations and the actions of the government agents, in particular ʿAbbād's vile breach of the ceasefire he agreed to. The army's haste in finishing the prayer – on a Friday, no less – in order to gain an advantage over the otherwise seemingly invincible Khārijites highlights their malevolence and cowardice and contrasts with the fervent devotion of the rebels whose immersion in prayer will not be broken even under imminent threat to their lives. The rebels' iron comportment and unparalleled piety impresses even their enemies: the commander of the first army sent out against Abū Bilāl tells ʿUbaydallāh that he would rather be cursed and alive than praised and dead on account of the Khārijites, who are "a people not like people"[592].

Three elegiac poems in al-Balādhurī's accounts of Abū Bilāl also mourn the passing of the Khārijite and praise his virtues as a pious Muslim at the same time. A fourth one is rather oddly placed at the end of a report that describes the death of Abū Bilāl's brother ʿUrwa and ʿUrwa's daughter at the hands of ʿUbaydallāh. It is said to have been written either by the famous Khārijite poet ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān or another Khārijite named Saʿīd b. Masjūj, although it has been firmly attributed to ʿImrān elsewhere.[593] This poem was

[590] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 183-184.
[591] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 186.
[592] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 183.
[593] See ʿAbbās, *Shiʿr*, 142-143, nr. 154.

reportedly composed upon Abū Bilāl's death and is one of ʿImrān's most well-known pieces (if the attribution is correct). While verses 3-5 were quoted already in Chapter One, it thus bears repeating:

> Abū Bilāl has increased my disdain for this life / and strengthened my love for the *khurūj*;
> …
> I guard against dying in my bed / and strive for death under the spearheads;
> If I knew that my death / was like the death of Abū Bilāl, I would not worry;
> Whoever cares for this world / by God, the Lord of the Kaʿba, I am averse to it.[594]

This poem gives a good indication of how al-Balādhurī perceived the Khārijites, or more precisely, Abū Bilāl and similarly 'righteous' Khārijite rebellions.[595] At the very least, it conveys an impression of the type of stories a courtly audience would have found rewarding. There is not a hint of criticism regarding Abū Bilāl's use of force in al-Balādhurī's work; instead, the rebels are quietly lauded for their opposition to the Umayyads. The inclusion of ʿImrān's poem fits well into this framework, as do the other two poems.

Of the three poems contained within the account of Abū Bilāl's revolt, the first one is also attributed to ʿImrān, while the second one was apparently composed by a female Khārijite, a certain Umm al-Jarrāḥ. Both of them have only been transmitted in fragments in the *Ansāb*. The third one is a poem by Kaʿb b. ʿUmayr al-Sumnī, a companion of Abū Bilāl's. It is located at the end of al-Balādhurī's entry on Abū Bilāl and thus the last impression of his rebellion that the reader is left with. In fact, the placement of this piece implies that the poem could also be read as al-Balādhurī's final comment on this particular expression of Khārijism:

> Ibn Hudayr [Abū Bilāl] sold his soul to God and gained / Gardens of Paradise whose blessings are many;
> a people assisted him whose faces are like / stars of overcast skies whose clouds are dispersed;

[594] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 388.
[595] For al-Balādhurī's assessment of excessively violent, misguided Khārijite revolts, see the following section.

> they advanced with Indian swords and lances / on horses who are prone to running [lit. whose lean backs are protruding].[596]

The rebellion of Abū Bilāl is certainly the most prominent occurrence involving Khārijites in al-Balādhurī's work, but there are plenty of other accounts in the *Ansāb* that similarly portray Khārijite piety in opposition to Umayyad injustice. One such instance is the story of the Khārijite *mujtahid* Khālid b. ʿAbbād/ʿUbbād, whom we have already encountered. Khālid had been held captive by ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād while the latter was governor of Basra, hoping that the Khārijite might disclose the location of his comrades. When Khālid remained steadfast, ʿUbaydallāh ordered him to be executed publicly, on the market. According to al-Balādhurī's account, the Khārijite was emaciated from his continuous fasting in worship; as a result, no one was willing to come forward and kill Khālid. Eventually, a member of ʿUbaydallāh's *shurta* walked past and killed the Khārijite.[597]

The point of this episode is clearly narrative rather than historical: why would ʿUbaydallāh have to wait for an ordinary citizen or a passer-by to kill Khālid? As governor of Basra, he could have just ordered his executioner or one of his soldiers to carry out the sentence. Moreover, how did the people know that Khālid was emaciated from fasting rather than just a poor prison diet? The report mentions no other tell-tale signs of piety like prostration marks or a reputation for particular godliness. Similarly, while public executions were certainly commonplace at the time, the choice of the market place as the execution site also suggests an ulterior narrative motive: the purpose of this report is to establish Khālid – and perhaps by extension the Khārijites more generally – as a pious Muslim, and one who is easily recognized as such by the people. The comment on Khālid's constitution serves to achieve exactly that, both with regard to the hypothetical spectators on the Basran market place and the later readers of al-Balādhurī's work. As a result, the Basran citizens in the story hesitate to kill Khālid, and it would not be unreasonable to assume that this account was also intended to elicit a similar reaction among al-Balādhurī or his source's contemporaries. It takes a representative of Umayyad authority to disregard the Khārijite's status and put him to death. The fact that so many Muslims – and likely

[596] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 186.
[597] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 389-390.

there was no place more crowded and public than the market – refused to kill such a devout man thus emphasizes the particular wickedness of ʿUbaydallāh and the Umayyad authorities.

This wickedness of the Khārijites' opponents also explains and partly legitimizes the rebels' use of force in their struggle against the Umayyads. While al-Balādhurī's work does contain reports that criticise Khārijite violence, there is also some material which suggests that the Khawārij had no choice but to take up arms in order to combat injustice and oppression. In places, the authorities are even depicted as the aggressors who force the Khārijites into action, as we have seen above in the case of Abū al-Wāziʿ exhorting his comrades to fight after the execution of Abū Bilāl's brother ʿUrwa. The Khārijite longing for *jihād* thus appears to go beyond mere doctrine and takes on a slightly worldlier note – it becomes a necessity so as not to be slain by the enemy without resistance.

As a matter of fact, al-Balādhurī's Khārijite material gives the distinct impression that while Khārijism appears to be the subject matter of the reports, once again it is not an end in itself but rather a tool to discuss more significant matters. In this case, it is the ruthless despotism of the Umayyads and their representatives, in particular Ziyād and his son ʿUbaydallāh, who are the centre of al-Balādhurī's attention. The main purpose of the accounts discussing Khārijite activities thus consists in offsetting the ruling dynasty's misdeeds. This becomes particularly obvious in many of the reports that deal with Khārijite revolts without pitting them against any Umayyad agents directly – the tenor of these reports is noticeably more critical of Khārijite violence and doctrine. Additionally, whereas both Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh are portrayed as cruel despots, al-Mughīra fares a lot better. The reports of the several Khārijite rebellions during his governorship of Kufa do not cast him in the role of the hero, but they do not explicitly emphasize Khārijite piety and bravery either. It appears that al-Mughīra was not considered to be a steadfast supporter of the Umayyads; as a result, there was no need to assign the rebels the part of the admirable but ultimately doomed victims.

Clearly, then, it is the Umayyads and their agents who al-Balādhurī, his sources and his audience find fault with. As noted above, Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh bear the brunt of his disapproval. Ziyād, for example, seems to have acquired a reputation for cruelty towards

women, or more precisely, female Khārijites. There are numerous reports according to which he persecuted Khārijite women just as fiercely as male Khārijites, subjecting them to the same punishment of death and crucifixion.[598] On one occasion, Ziyād reportedly gave the 'women' of two Khārijite leaders – presumably their wives and/or concubines – to their opponents after the rebellion in question had been quelled successfully. Only one of the two 'recipients' returned his 'gifts' to the tribe the women belonged to.[599] In another case, Ziyād threatened to exile and withhold the *ʿaṭāʾ* from any tribe that would not follow his examples and crucify any woman who intended to participate in a revolt.[600] Other reports draw attention to Ziyād's threat of collective punishment, as exemplified by Abū Bilāl's protest against Ziyād's inaugural speech in Basra on the grounds that God had abolished this particular form of punishment.[601]

Popular opinion of Ziyād's son ʿUbaydallāh is even worse, as has already been demonstrated in the accounts of Abū Bilāl's revolt and Khālid's execution. In addition to these, there are several reports that portray ʿUbaydallāh as a faithless tyrant who pays no heed to the provisions of Islam or just basic human decency. One such report tells the story of ʿUbaydallāh's imprisonment of a group of Khārijites under the command of Ṭawwāf b. ʿAllāq. He tells the rebels that their release is contingent upon one half of them killing the other half. Twelve Khārijites thus kill twelve of their companions and are subsequently released from prison. When their fellow Khārijites curse them for their actions, they reply: "We were made to do this against our will (*ukrihnā*). Man is forced into unbelief, and he rests easy in belief (*muṭmaʾin bi-l-īmān*)."[602]

Eventually, however, the surviving Khārijites regret their actions deeply and seek redemption. On the basis of Q 16:110 ('Verily, your Lord, to those who emigrated after they had been compelled [to renounce their religion] and thereafter fought [for the cause of God] and were patient, verily, your Lord, after that, is forgiving and merciful'), they pledge

[598] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 173, 176, 177, 181, 388.
[599] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 176.
[600] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 176.
[601] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 180. The account or the edition mistakenly quotes Q 6:6 as the basis for Abū Bilāl's objection to Ziyād's threat of collective punishment. In al-Ṭabarī's version, Abū Bilāl quotes Q 53:37-38, which fits the context exactly. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 76.
[602] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 178.

the *bayʿa* to Ṭawwāf and set out to kill ʿUbaydallāh as a means of asking God for forgiveness. The Khārijites are killed in the course of their undertaking and Ṭawwāf is crucified[603], but both in the eyes of their fellow Khārijites as well as the reader they have at least attempted to atone for their transgression, which certainly cannot be said for ʿUbaydallāh.

The last report in al-Balādhurī's work that deals with ʿUbaydallāh in the context of Khārijite uprisings thus delivers a damning final judgment on him. A Khārijite named ʿĪsā al-Khaṭṭī or ʿĪsā b. ʿĀtik desired the *khurūj* because he reprehended the authorities as represented by ʿUbaydallāh. However, he had daughters and worried about their wellbeing if he were to rise in armed revolt. His companions admonished him for not 'going out', however, and reminded him of ʿUbaydallāh's misdeeds. ʿĪsā agrees with them and confirms this in the strongest possible (poetic) terms:

> I fear God's punishment if I died satisfied / with the rule of ʿUbaydallāh, tyrant and evildoer.[604]

This brief episode is interesting also because it draws attention to another feature of Khārijite piety: the rebels' commitment to their cause is such that even the thought of leaving their own children behind cannot deter them from their course of action. Another example of this can be found in the report of the rebellion of Hawthara b. Wadāʿ, whose father tried in vain to discourage him from his undertaking by appealing to Hawthara's feelings for his own son. Despite Abū Hawthara's best efforts, Hawthara told his father that he longed for his reward in the afterlife more than for his son.[605]

It is not only the Umayyads' notorious governors, however, who have to suffer al-Balādhurī's censure. Equally condemning is his approach to Muʿāwiya, the very founding figure of the Umayyad dynasty. This becomes particularly obvious in the reports of Farwa b. Nawfal's revolt against Muʿāwiya at al-Nukhayla in 41 AH/661-662 CE. According to al-Balādhurī's account, Farwa and about 500 of his companions had not participated in the

[603] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 178-179. Immediately following this report, al-Balādhurī has an alternative account of this episode. However, this alternative version consists only of a few sentences and does not provide any of the details mentioned in the preceding report.
[604] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 393-394.
[605] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165.

battle at Nahrawān because they had had doubts whether fighting ʿAlī was right. When Farwa heard about al-Ḥasan's surrender to Muʿāwiya and the latter's arrival at Kufa, however, he summoned his fellow Khārijites and told them that "someone has come about whom we had no doubt, and we do not doubt that killing him is lawful."[606] His companions agreed and they marched towards al-Nukhayla, where Muʿāwiya had set up camp. When Muʿāwiya learned that Farwa's men intended to fight him, he wrote to al-Ḥasan at Medina and requested that al-Ḥasan fight the Khārijites on his behalf. Unsurprisingly, al-Ḥasan had no intention of doing so. According to the report, he also made it very clear to Muʿāwiya that he should not mistake al-Ḥasan for an ally: "Indeed, if I intended to kill anyone from the *ahl al-qibla*, I would begin by killing you [Muʿāwiya]."[607] He emphasized that the only reason he had not opposed Muʿāwiya was his concern for the "(moral) wellbeing and cohesion of the *umma*."[608]

Thus rebuffed, Muʿāwiya sent a group of Syrian soldiers against the Khawārij, but his men were defeated. He then turned to the Kufans and forced them into fighting the Khārijites by threatening them with the assertion that he would not grant them an *amān* if they refused. The Kufans obliged and killed the Khārijites under Farwa's command; a second revolt instigated by Farwa's successor was also swiftly quelled by the Kufan troops.[609]

The narrative quality of this account is once again rather obvious. Its main objective is to establish Muʿāwiya as an evil character beyond any doubts. Accordingly, the Umayyad is condemned both by al-Ḥasan and the Khārijites. To begin with, ʿAlī's son is shown to have surrendered to Muʿāwiya purely out of concern for the *umma*, whose wellbeing he puts above his own. Al-Ḥasan is thereby exonerated from his decision to relinquish the caliphate, and the fact that he subordinates his own interests to those of the Muslim community conveys that he would have been a much better choice as leader than Muʿāwiya. Interestingly, while al-Ṭabarī's report of the al-Nukhayla incident is otherwise identical to the first part of al-Balādhurī's account, the interaction between Muʿāwiya and

[606] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 163.
[607] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 163.
[608] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 163.
[609] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 164.

al-Ḥasan is altogether absent from al-Ṭabarī's version.[610] This also seems to underline the impression that al-Balādhurī was much more critical in his treatment of the Umayyads.

Second, Farwa's Khārijites reportedly displayed doubts regarding their opposition to ʿAlī. In Muʿāwiya's case, however, there is no such hesitation, no doubt at all about the righteousness of fighting him. This statement of condemnation on the part of the Khārijites is all the more forceful because of their unwillingness to participate at Nahrawān or otherwise oppose ʿAlī with violent means. The severity of their criticism of Muʿāwiya's actions and intentions thus increases as his opponents are depicted in a more favourable manner. In line with this, al-Ḥasan appears to rank the Khārijites among the Muslims, the *ahl al-qibla*, despite their opposition to his father and the current ruler of the *umma*. Third, the Kufans do not fight the Khārijites voluntarily; they are forced to do so by Muʿāwiya and oblige in order to escape his wrath over their support for the ʿAlid cause. This demonstrates Muʿāwiya's political cunning, but it also implies that the Kufans (and the readers) knew quite well that in this case at least, their true enemies were the Umayyads, not the Khārijites.[611]

Having examined the above examples of explicit praise of the Khārijites and censure of the Umayyads, let us now turn to al-Balādhurī's more subtle methods of presenting a carefully positive image of the rebels. Four distinct narrative techniques can be observed: first, unlike al-Ṭabarī's work, the accounts preserved by al-Balādhurī transmit many longer Khārijite statements, speeches and exhortations. Here, the Khawārij are not restricted to short, often repetitive stock phrases or to letting their opponents have the last word. Indeed, on many occasions it is the rebels who have the last word (or poem) and thus pronounce the report's significant concluding judgment of an actor or a certain issue. This is particularly the case in those accounts that portray the Khārijites as victims or opponents of the Umayyads.[612]

[610] See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 9-10. This report is much shorter than al-Balādhurī's version, which also includes the subsequent revolts led by Farwa's successors.
[611] In al-Ṭabarī's account, the Khārijites tell the Kufans exactly that, but fail to convince them as the Kufans appear to fear Muʿāwiya more than the Khārijites. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 10.
[612] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 167, 170, 172, 186, 387.

Second, the placement of certain arguments within a specific report reveals much about the author-compiler's understanding of a particular episode. For example, let us take another look at one of al-Balādhurī's Khārijite accounts already discussed in the preceding section. In juxtaposition of the accounts of Khārijite origins in which ʿAlī urges the Khārijites to "fear God and return to the community"[613] on the one hand and the reports for the period of Muʿāwiya's rule on the other, al-Balādhurī has the Khārijites' enemies call the rebels to "fear God and return [to the community]".[614] While the request is the same, its narrative purpose is markedly different. As discussed in Chapter Three, ʿAlī's demand that the rebels return to the *umma* serves as a means of criticising the wickedness of the Khārijites' actions. Consequently, there is no real narrative need for the rebels to respond; ʿAlī and his representatives have the final word. However, in the case of the Umayyad agents summoning the rebels to obey the authorities and desist from causing communal strife, the same demand elicits an angry and rather eloquent reply from the Khārijites.[615] In fact, al-Balādhurī's presentation of the Khārijites' reaction to the Umayyads' accusations against them lets the rebels resemble ʿAlī more closely than their own predecessors. Like ʿAlī, the Khārijites in question – Abū Bilāl and his followers – are confronted with evil opponents whose understanding of both religion and politics is seriously misguided. In this way, while the identity of both the offending and the injured party differ, the dynamic of the victim-perpetrator relation remains the same. This seems to imply that the reports at hand follow a very general narrative schema into which specific actors and issues are inserted. Once again, this speaks against the presence of a distinctly Khārijite identity or narrative substance in the accounts, although the same appears to apply to their opponents at this point.

A third technique which al-Balādhurī employs to present the Khārijites in a carefully positive way is the use of Qurʾānic quotations. Not only does al-Balādhurī's work contain more citations from the Qurʾān than al-Ṭabarī's material, but they are also

[613] See Chapter Three, section 3.1.1.
[614] See above. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 183, 167, 389 (the last two for examples of a Khārijite refusing to accept Muʿāwiya as leader of the community).
[615] See e.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 182, 183.

exclusively uttered by the Khārijites.[616] To my knowledge, there is not a single account in al-Balādhurī's passages on Khārijite uprisings during Muʿāwiya's caliphate in which an Umayyad or a government representative quotes a verse from the Qurʾān, even where confronted with a Khārijite citing the scripture. This further underlines the piety of the rebels and contrasts it with the Umayyads' own lack of proper religious devotion.

Fourth, al-Balādhurī's use of omission as a story-telling technique also illustrates his comparatively positive approach to Khārijism. A comparison of his depiction of the revolt of al-Mustawrid[617] with al-Ṭabarī's rendering of the same episode[618] reveals that al-Balādhurī's account is not only significantly shorter, but also omits all longer speeches and dialogues uttered by any of the main actors.[619] Thus, neither al-Mustawrid's letter to the governor of al-Madāʾin[620] nor ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUqba's confrontation with the latter[621] is included in al-Balādhurī's account. More importantly, however, al-Balādhurī preserves none of the speeches critical of Khārijism that are transmitted by al-Ṭabarī.[622] In particular, apart from two short remarks[623], there is no indication of a specific enmity between Khārijites and ʿAlid sympathizers in al-Balādhurī's work. His portrayal of al-Mustawrid's uprising thus contains no particular censure of the Khārijites and their motives; al-Ṭabarī's concern with the consequences of rebellion for the social fabric of the *umma* is not discernible in al-Balādhurī's presentation of the accounts. This appears to further confirm Judd's conclusions concerning the differences between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's historiographical approaches and socio-political concerns.[624]

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[616] Al-Balādhurī's work on the Khārijites during Muʿāwiya's caliphate covers pp. 163-186 and 386-393 (-396, covering Ibn Ziyād's persecution of the Khārijites beyond the death of Muʿāwiya) of the edited volume. For instances of the Khārijites quoting the Qurʾān, see *Ansāb*, IV/1, 178, 180, 387, 388, 391.
[617] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 168-171.
[618] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20-64.
[619] Another example of this can be found in the story of Khālid al-Qasrī's rise and fall: al-Balādhurī's version is much shorter and does not mention several of the story elements included in al-Ṭabarī's rendering of Khālid's fate. See Leder, "Features of the Novel", 88, 90.
[620] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 40-41.
[621] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 41-43.
[622] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 33, 34, 37, 39, 40, 42, 64. For a discussion of these speeches, see the first half of this chapter and Chapter Two.
[623] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 169, 170.
[624] See my brief discussion of Judd's findings in the introduction to the analysis of this chapter.

It is possible, of course, that al-Balādhurī either did not know the longer reports which contain the condemnatory speeches, or that in his time, the longer, embellished accounts did not exist. The former possibility is not entirely convincing for two reasons, however. First, the extraordinary length of his *Ansāb* does not seem to imply a shortage of sources accessible to al-Balādhurī. He frequently preserves more variants of a particular report and provides more details than any other contemporary source, including al-Ṭabarī. Second, even though his *isnād*s often differ substantially from al-Ṭabarī's, the reports of al-Mustawrid's uprising are very similar in both works. The sequence of events, the main actors and the locations as well as the wording in many places are the same; it is only the speeches and the episodes pertaining to them that are missing from al-Balādhurī's account. It seems unlikely, therefore, that al-Balādhurī received his information from a very different source or accessed a very different pool of material.

It is more probable, then, that the embellished reports containing the critical speeches had not yet come into existence in al-Balādhurī's period. After all, he apparently died almost half a century before al-Ṭabarī. If this is the case, then either al-Ṭabarī or one of his more immediate informants must be considered the author of these speeches. Alternatively, al-Balādhurī chose not to include said speeches. However, both options would have required rather major interference with the narrative, which seems unlikely.[625] It is also possible that several versions of this episode were in circulation, and that al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī either made a deliberate choice or did in fact only know the one they decided on. Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Yaʿqūbī are no help here, unfortunately, because of the brevity of their works which does not allow us to trace the development of the episode of al-Mustawrid's revolt. At this stage, it is impossible to say who was responsible for the transformation of the account in the transmission process, a phenomenon Leder termed "unavowed authorship".[626] An investigation of other genres of the Islamic tradition, notably *adab* and heresiography, might shed more light on the

[625] Hoyland, "Fiction", 31, with reference to the episode of Khālid al-Qasrī's downfall discussed by Leder. While the story in question is different, the process seems to be the same, indicating that Hoyland's assessment of "straightforward editing" (ibid.) on the part of al-Balādhurī being unlikely also applies to the al-Mustawrid episode.

[626] Leder, "Literary Use", 284-285, 291. See also his "Authorship and Transmission in Unauthored Literature", *Oriens* 31 (1988), 67-81.

provenance and evolution of al-Mustawrid's story, but within the scope of this thesis we will have to restrict our analysis to the historiographical material. In any case, neither the assumption that al-Ṭabarī (or one of his informants) invented or appropriated the speeches in question nor the suggestion that al-Balādhurī dropped them from his narrative change the fundamental difference between the two author-compilers' take on the Khārijites. Al-Ṭabarī thought it necessary to include (or compose) the censorious speeches, whereas al-Balādhurī apparently did not deem it quite as called-for to condemn the Khārijites at every turn. The initial assessment of al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's intentions and concerns in compiling their works still holds up.

Similarities Between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī

The previous section has shown that al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī differ significantly in their approach to early Khārijite piety and violence. However, it also becomes apparent that their works have several features in common. To begin with, despite his more positive assessment of the Khārijites, al-Balādhurī also transmits a number of reports that criticise the rebels' militant piety, particularly where it is displayed to excess. Second, both historiographers employ their material in such a way as to discuss aspects of Khārijite religious and political doctrine; this applies in particular to al-Balādhurī. Third, as has already emerged, both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī accord Abū Bilāl a special position among both his Khārijite and non-Khārijite contemporaries. In what follows, I will briefly address each of these issues.

Some of the reports preserved by al-Balādhurī contain statements about the Khārijites that are more in line with al-Ṭabarī's generally critical portrayal of the rebels, in particular those Khārijites who were opposed to ʿAlī and who are not shown in direct conflict with the Umayyads or their more ill-famed representatives like Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh. Unlike al-Ṭabarī, however, al-Balādhurī appears to focus on the Khārijites' excessive piety and the resulting violence as an end in itself rather than their socio-political implications for the *umma*. In line with his concern for moral and ethical questions, he addresses the actions and ideas of individuals and their impact on other human beings

instead of the big picture as 'personified' in the institutions of state and society. These features can be observed in a number of reports transmitted in the *Ansāb*.

Al-Balādhurī's account of Shabīb b. Bajara al-Ashjāʿī's uprising, for example, introduces the Khārijite as one of Ibn Muljam's companions and thus establishes him as a wicked transgressor involved in the murder of the rightful caliph, ʿAlī.[627] It goes on to emphasize that the rebel "killed every child, man and woman" he came across until he was killed by al-Mughīra's soldiers, but it does not contain any references to or speeches regarding the socio-political state of the Islamic community, the dangers of revolt or the importance of safeguarding the peace and cohesion of the *umma*.[628]

Similarly, the report depicting the revolt of Hawthara b. Wadāʿ al-Asadī begins by stating that Hawthara did not agree with Farwa b. Nawfal's hesitation regarding the righteousness of fighting ʿAlī and the legitimacy of his assassination by Ibn Muljam.[629] Like Shabīb, Hawthara is thus presented as a transgressor whose extremism has clouded his judgment, as evidenced by his opposition to ʿAlī. According to the report, Muʿāwiya then told Hawthara's father to plead with his son, but to no avail. Hawthara is determined to receive his reward in the afterlife, an ambition that leads his father to conclude that Hawthara is "excessively proud and disobedient" (*ʿātin*; the adjective can also mean 'revolting, corrupt, unbelieving').[630] Muʿāwiya reportedly sent 2,000 men under ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAwf, among them Hawthara's father, to fight the Khārijites; as usual, the rebels were utterly defeated and almost all of them killed.[631] Interestingly, the report does not finish here but goes on to mention that ʿAbdallāh felt regret at killing Hawthara, who had been a devout Muslim with *sujūd* marks on his face. Four lines of poetry on ʿAbdallāh's remorse and Hawthara's piety conclude the report.[632]

ʿAbdallāh's moral conflict – having to kill a pious man who nevertheless threatened the life of other Muslims and rebelled against the ruler – could well be a reflection of al-

[627] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 166. To my knowledge, this is the only mention of Shabīb in this context, and the report does not have an *isnād* which might have helped to identify the possible origin of this story.
[628] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 166.
[629] See above, pp. 169-170, 171.
[630] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165. It is also possible that Muʿāwiya pronounces this judgment of Hawthara; the Arabic simply says "*qāla*" without specifying the speaker.
[631] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165.
[632] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165.

Balādhurī's own dilemma: does the end (opposing the tyrannical Umayyads) justify the means (rebellion and bloodshed)? What were ordinary Muslims such as ʿAbdallāh to do in a situation like this, which side were they supposed to choose? Undoubtedly, such contemplations had lost nothing of their relevance and difficulty by al-Balādhurī's time.

Another, much less ambivalent example of censuring Khārijism can be found in al-Balādhurī's material on the uprising of Sahm b. Ghālib and Yazīd b. Mālik, more commonly known as al-Khaṭīm al-Bāhilī. Sahm and al-Khaṭīm rebelled in Basra in 44 AH during the governorship of ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir. Sahm was apparently the first to accuse other Muslims of unbelief.[633] One day when he led the morning prayer, a man called ʿUbāda b. Qurṣ al-Laythī along with his son and nephew walked by. The rebels stopped them and asked them who they were, to which they replied that they were Muslims. The Khārijites accused them of lying, but ʿUbāda insisted, saying that he had opposed the Prophet at first but then came to follow him. According to ʿUbāda, the Prophet accepted him after he (ʿUbāda) professed the *shahāda*. When he asked the Khārijites to accept the same and let him and his relatives go, however, the rebels called him an unbeliever (*kāfir*) and killed all three of them. The governor of Basra went into battle against Sahm and al-Khaṭīm himself; many Khārijites were killed, but both leaders survived and were granted an *amān* by Ibn ʿĀmir.[634] During the governorship of Ziyād or ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād, both of them were eventually killed and crucified.[635]

This story of ʿUbāda's murder, albeit brief, nevertheless clearly identifies the Khārijites in question as transgressors who murder other Muslims in cold blood. In fact, it is reminiscent of the story of the murder of ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb by a group of Khārijites under the command of Misʿar b. Fadakī, discussed in Chapter Two.[636] In both cases, the Khārijites kill a Companion and/or the son of a Companion without the slightest regard for his status; in both cases, they deny other Muslims their membership in the *umma* and declare them to be unbelievers. The victims in both stories appear rather astonished by the Khārijites' behaviour: ʿAbdallāh b. Khabbāb struggles to believe that a group of people

[633] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 172.
[634] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 172-173.
[635] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 173.
[636] See section 2.3 ('The Murder of Non-Khārijite Muslims').

displaying such outward piety should nevertheless murder other believers without batting an eyelid; ʿUbāda appears perplexed that the Khārijites refuse to acknowledge him as a Muslim when the Prophet himself had accepted him into the community. This last point in particular stresses how far the Khārijites, or at least Sahm and al-Khaṭīm's group, have deviated from the righteous cause they claim to uphold. What was acceptable to the Prophet is apparently not good enough for the rebels. In their incessant religiosity, they overshoot the mark and thereby transgress the boundaries of acceptable religious behaviour. Thus, the Khārijites' attempts at defending, or rather re-creating, a righteous community of believers place them firmly outwith the *umma*.

The similarities between the two episodes are striking, implying the formation of a story prototype that could be employed in various settings, much like the *topoi*, schematizations and stock phrases discussed in Chapters One and Two. We should therefore consider the murder of pious and well-known Muslims another sub-*topos* of Khārijite piety, with clear connections to the 'longing-for-*jihād*' motif. The presence of this sub-*topos* in the historiographical tradition further contributes to the impression of insubstantiality regarding the Khārijites' identity in the source material and brings to mind Noth's description of the blank formulae found in conquest narratives, addressed in the Introduction.

On the whole, however, al-Balādhurī's critique of Khārijism is rather mild in comparison to al-Ṭabarī. This is also illustrated by an interesting tendency in the former's Khārijite material, alluded to above: with the exception of the rebellion of Shabīb b. Bajara, every report containing censorious statements concerning the Khawārij also includes some form of criticism directed against the Umayyads, or more specifically, Ziyād or ʿUbaydallāh.[637] While this does not necessarily detract from al-Balādhurī's condemnation of Khārijite violence, especially with regard to the depiction of Khārijite violence towards other (non-Umayyad) Muslims, the references to Ziyād or ʿUbaydallāh's tyranny qualify the severity of his rebuke to a certain extent.

[637] For Hawthara b. Wadāʿ, see al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 165; for Sahm and al-Khaṭīm, 173. See also 176 (Qarīb/Qurayb and Zuḥḥāf/Zaḥḥāf) and 178-180 (Ṭawwāf b. ʿAllāq).

The second feature common to both historiographers is the discussion of material whose purpose is the examination of Khārijite religious and political doctrine. We have already seen this in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of the Khārijites' longing for *jihād*: the placement and wording of many of these accounts clearly imply that they serve a narrative rather than a purely historical end (if such is ever the case). In other words, while the Khārijites' alleged statements on *jihād* and its importance for a devout Muslim life are incorporated into reports of their activities, they do not necessarily contribute much to moving the story along but instead endeavour to illuminate this particular aspect of Khārijite doctrine. To illustrate this, let us take another look at the rebellions of al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllafa in 42-43 AH/662-664 CE[638] and Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān in Kufa in 58 AH/677-678 CE.[639]

Like all historiographical material, the accounts discussing these two revolts purport to tell the reader about specific historical events, about 'what really happened'. However, their purpose is also to establish certain ideas as Khārijite doctrine. In both cases, this becomes rather obvious in the series of statements uttered by various Khārijites during the process of electing their particular leader. To begin with, let us examine the reports discussing the election of Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān as commander by his fellow Khārijites. The first two subsequent statements already serve to demonstrate that *jihād* is the core element of Khārijism, pointing out the rebels' fear of divine punishment for leniency in *jihād* and their certainty of heavenly rewards for pursuing it.[640] This commitment to doing battle for God is further confirmed by Ḥayyān during the Khārijites' discussion of suitable locations for a revolt: even though he is convinced that his group does not stand a chance, he rests assured in the knowledge that "God knows that you exert yourselves in *jihād* against His enemy and yours", and that they will thus have "His reward, and escape from sin."[641]

Despite being comparatively long at four pages, al-Ṭabarī's material on Ḥayyān's revolt is rather lacking in substance. The speeches and interactions between the Khārijites serve to convey the importance of *jihād* to the rebels, ignoring, perhaps even relishing the fact that they are heavily outnumbered and condemned to death. This applies even to their

[638] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20-64, here 20-21.
[639] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 181-185.
[640] Thus Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān and Muʿādh b. Juwayn. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 181; see also 184.
[641] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 183, 183-184.

discussion of where to rebel, an otherwise rather odd conversation. Needless to say, just how al-Ṭabarī's informants and their sources gathered the specific details of Ḥayyān and his companions' speeches and deliberations remains obscure. It is doubtful that a non-Khārijite was present at their meetings, and according to the report, every single member of Ḥayyān's group was killed by the governor's troops and thus could not pass on the rather specific details. Be that as it may, it is clear that the point of this report (and others) is the discussion of Khārijite socio-political and religious thought, an observation that is also substantiated by the fact that Ḥayyān's final speech[642], for instance, appears to closely resemble that of Ibn Wahb before the battle of Nahrawān in wording and tenor.[643] This once again confirms the conclusions arrived at in Chapters One and Two, that certain stock phrases and ideas had come to be associated with the Khārijites and were variously combined and recombined, regardless of the particular circumstances of a specific revolt. It also confirms the lack of a specifically Khārijite identity as already observed in the accounts of Khārijite origins at Ṣiffīn and displayed in al-Ṭabarī's material on Khārijism during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya, discussed in the first half of this chapter.

The report of the election of al-Mustawrid in 42 AH/662-663 CE follows a similar, but more complex pattern. It does not address *jihād* as the focal point of Khārijite life as such but rather discusses the Khārijites' approach to the question of leadership. According to the account, the prominent Kufan Khārijites at the time, among them Ḥayyān and Muʿādh b. Juwayn, assemble and discuss whom to elect as their leader. The first two statements by al-Mustawrid and Ḥayyān establish the reportedly Khārijite doctrine of egalitarianism – neither of them is concerned about "which of you would govern me"[644], stressing that they are "satisfied with every one of my brothers".[645] The immediately following declaration by Muʿādh qualifies this egalitarianism by pointing out that not all of them are "virtuous enough for that command", stating that when people are equal in virtue, the most accomplished in war and religion must take charge. The idea of the leader as *primus inter pares* is thus introduced to the doctrinal melange. Upon hearing Muʿādh's

[642] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II. 184.
[643] See Chapter One, section 1.2.
[644] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 20.
[645] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 21.

argument, both al-Mustawrid and Ḥayyān declare their willingness to follow him in good egalitarian fashion, but he refuses because they are older than him. The pre-Islamic principle of seniority is thus shown to be upheld by the rebels, who eventually agree on al-Mustawrid as the oldest.

While the later passages on al-Mustawrid's revolt are overwhelmingly 'structural' in nature in that they focus mostly on the locations and participants of his various battles with al-Mughīra's troops, the beginning as illustrated here is predominantly literary. Like the report of Ḥayyān's election, this account of al-Mustawrid's appointment as leader serves to establish Khārijite doctrine and render it recognizable to the reader. As such, it is similar to Ibn Wahb's election in the same way as Ḥayyān's. As argued in Chapter One, it appears that a basic *schema* for Khārijite elections can be discerned in the historiographical material that corresponds to the various Khārijite *topoi*: in all three cases, the prospective leader declares his intentions, emphasizes the fleetingness of this world and the importance of *jihād*, shows his willingness to follow another of his comrades and finally has to be persuaded to take command. Other components can be present, such as the rebels' gathering to discuss potential locations of revolt, but the above can be observed for all major Khārijite revolts led by a prominent Khārijite. We can thus conclude that in al-Ṭabarī's case at least, even those elements that at first glance appear to convey genuine Khārijite material specific to individual revolts and rebels belong to a set of stock ideas and *topoi* with a decidedly literary and often heresiographical objective.

Turning to al-Balādhurī, it is immediately obvious that he does not focus on *jihād* as much as he discusses the *khurūj* of women. Other, comparatively minor concerns include the rebels' treatment of *dhimmīs*[646], the Khārijite practice of *istiʿrāḍ* [647] and the position of the *imām*[648]. These less prominent issues will not be discussed here. The involvement of

[646] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 173. In this report, the Khārijites let a group of Jews go because as *dhimmīs* they are protected. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 325. Generally, Khārijites are said to have respected the life and property of *ahl al-kitāb*, which is in line with their strict observance of Qurʾānic provisions. See EI^2, "Khāridjites" (G. Levi della Vida).

[647] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 172 (where it is implied by the Khārijites questioning ʿUbāda about his identity), 173 (again implicit in the statement that the Khārijites let a group of people go because they claimed to be Jews), 175, 180.

[648] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 175, where a group of Khārijite rebels is divided over the issue of whether an *imām* is necessary in order to do battle.

women in several rebellions appears to have hit a nerve with al-Balādhurī, his sources and his audience, however. He transmits far more material dealing with female Khārijites than is the case for any other doctrinal issue or historiographer.[649] Chronologically, the first mention of female participation in a Khārijite rebellion can be found in his account of the rebel Abū Maryam, a *mawlā* of Banū al-Ḥārith b. Kaʿb. According to the report, Abū Maryam was the first to allow women to accompany him during his uprising. They were all killed by the troops al-Mughīra sent against them.[650] This appears to be a general theme in al-Balādhurī's material: whenever a woman is mentioned as a participant in a Khārijite rebellion, her fate is almost always certain death. This applies even to those who are not involved in active opposition to the Umayyads, as the cases of ʿUrwa's daughter[651] and al-Thabjāʾ[652] show. Moreover, female Khārijism is linked with Ziyād or ʿUbaydallāh's cruelty in virtually all instances: the unfortunate victims are variously mutilated, crucified, drowned, simply "killed" or "given" to the Umayyads' allies.[653] One report specifically says that Ziyād crucified and stripped a female Khārijite, threatening to do the same to any other woman who decided to take up arms. Consequently, "the women held back from the *khurūj* for fear of being exposed."[654]

These reports make abundantly clear what happened to the Khārijite women who were involved in armed rebellion. They serve as a warning to both male and female believers, emphasizing the dire consequences of a woman's participation in rebellion for her life and, even more importantly, her honour. Regardless of the account's historicity, Ziyād's alleged stripping of the female Khārijite will certainly have had an effect on al-Balādhurī's audience. This implies that the issue of women partaking in an armed uprising might have still been relevant at the time al-Balādhurī composed and compiled his work; in any case, it made for some very entertaining story-telling. It is safe to say that the idea of women taking up arms was rather frowned upon in most circles. This is further confirmed by al-Balādhurī's employment of Abū Bilāl as a critic of female involvement in Khārijite

[649] See al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 167, 173, 176, 177, 180, 181, 388, 391-392
[650] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 167-168.
[651] See above, p. 153, 164.
[652] See above, p. 163.
[653] See note 649.
[654] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 177.

revolts – three times on two separate occasions, the Khārijite is shown to expressly disapprove of women fighting alongside men.[655] Apparently, Abū Bilāl was also the first to condemn the *khurūj* of women.[656] That al-Balādhurī uses Abū Bilāl to voice his criticism also stresses further the exceptional position this particular rebel occupies among his comrades in the early Islamic (historiographical) tradition.

This leads us to the third feature common to both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī. Like the former, al-Balādhurī devotes particular attention and praise to the figure of Abū Bilāl, and like al-Ṭabarī, he expresses his appreciation of the Khārijite in two ways: first, his depiction of Abū Bilāl's actions and beliefs is much more positive in comparison to both the representation of the Umayyads as well as excessively violent Khārijism. Second, al-Balādhurī uses Abū Bilāl to criticise the actions not only of the Umayyads and their supporters, but also of militant Khārijites.[657] We have already observed the second point in the preceding paragraph with regard to the accounts discussing female participation in the *khurūj*, but this is not the only Khārijite doctrine or conduct that Abū Bilāl is made to condemn. For example, he was apparently opposed to the allegedly Khārijite practice of *istiʿrāḍ*, the investigation of others regarding their religio-political beliefs.[658] He is also shown to disapprove of some Khārijites' unbridled use of force, for instance in the report dealing with the uprising of Qarīb (or Qurayb) and Zuḥḥāf (or Zaḥḥāf). It states that "Abū Bilāl said about them: 'Qarīb [or Qurayb], God did not draw him near, and Zuḥḥāf [or Zaḥḥāf], God did not efface his sins (*lā ʿafā allāh ʿanhu*).'"[659] This condemnation is all the more damning because it is uttered by another Khārijite; at the same time, it emphasizes Abū Bilāl's outstanding status among the Khawārij, which gives him the authority to make definitive pronouncements on Khārijite conduct and doctrine.

The first point – al-Balādhurī's depiction of Abū Bilāl as particularly pious and righteous vis-à-vis the Umayyads and extreme Khārijites – has already been demonstrated

[655] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 167, 180 (where his disapproval of female participation is mentioned twice).
[656] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 167.
[657] For al-Ṭabarī, see section 4.1.1 ('The Basran Quietists').
[658] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 180.
[659] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 175. The statement about Qarīb/Qurayb (*lā qarrabahu allāh*) is a pun on his name, which is derived from the same root (q-r-b) as the condemning verb (*qarraba*). For al-Ṭabarī's rendering of Abū Bilāl's criticism of this particular revolt and the pun on Qarīb/Qurayb's name (though without the reference to Zuḥḥāf/Zaḥḥāf), see above, note 572.

above and does not need to be discussed any further at this point. It is interesting to note, however, that while al-Ṭabarī's positive assessment of Abū Bilāl seems to be based mostly on his status as a quietist Khārijite, al-Balādhurī appears to focus on the rebel's piety that led him to take up arms and revolt when he could no longer stand his wicked opponents' misdeeds. Once again, this points out the difference between the two historiographers: al-Ṭabarī acknowledges that Abū Bilāl was a righteous and devout believer who was forced into rebellion, although this is a last and desperate resort which should be avoided at almost all cost. Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, appears much happier to celebrate, or at least approve of, Abū Bilāl's revolt as a pious man's opposition to injustice and tyranny. This might also explain why al-Balādhurī's account of Abū Bilāl is significantly longer and much more detailed than al-Ṭabarī's. Contemplations of morally and ethically correct human behaviour thus outweigh considerations of statecraft in al-Balādhurī's work.

4.2 Conclusion

The present chapter looked at the representation of Khārijism during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya from 40 AH/661 CE until 60 AH/679-680 CE. The discussion focussed on al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī as the only author-compilers to provide accounts with the narrative substance necessary for a literary analysis. The investigation of both scholars' approach to Khārijism revealed an interesting dichotomy: while both al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī present much the same material and focus on the Khārijite *topoi* of piety and desire for *jihād*, they arrive at very different conclusions with regard to their interpretation of these aspects. Al-Ṭabarī offers a negative view of early Umayyad-era Khārijism that is based on the consequences of the Khārijites' excessive piety and resulting violence for the *umma*. He condemns the rebels for causing social unrest and bloodshed, which not only threatens the cohesion of the Islamic community but also poses a (potential) danger to the stability of the empire.[660] The specific identity of the rebels in question does not matter much at this point – al-Ṭabarī merely uses the Khārijites to point out the dangers of rebellion against the ruling authorities. His criticism of militant Khārijism is further confirmed by the fact that

[660] On this feature of al-Ṭabarī's work, see also Hodgson, "Pre-Modern", 55, 58.

his depiction of the Basran quietist Khārijites is significantly more positive in comparison. As the immediate threat of a (Khārijite) revolt drops from the narrative, al-Ṭabarī appears more comfortable to address the Umayyads' misdeeds in turn and to carefully portray the Khārijites as pious believers who are oppressed, persecuted and martyred for daring to challenge the rulers' misconduct.

Al-Balādhurī presents a much more favourable image of the Khawārij. He transmits many of the accounts that are also found in al-Ṭabarī's work, but instead of using them to discredit Khārijite piety and condemn the rebels' commitment to *jihād*, he employs his material to emphasize the Khārijites' godliness in opposition to the wickedness of the Umayyads and their representatives as embodied by Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād in particular. In contrast to al-Ṭabarī's portrayal of Khārijism, al-Balādhurī depicts the Khawārij as righteous believers who are frequently forced to take up arms in order to defend themselves against the authorities, or because they can no longer ignore the rulers' wrongdoing. Thus, in the majority of the accounts transmitted in the *Ansāb*, the rebels are presented as morally superior to their opponents. Al-Balādhurī's work also contains some reports that are critical of Khārijite violence, but they are comparatively rare and appear to focus on those rebels using an inordinate amount of force as well as Khārijites who were not in direct confrontation with a prominent representative of the ruling elite. Consequently, we find the harshest condemnation of their actions in the accounts that describe Khārijite violence against ordinary members of the *umma* or Muslims of a high religious standing, such as the Companions.

The difference between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī's assessment of Khārijism is perhaps based on their particular concerns as scholars. Al-Ṭabarī appears mostly interested in issues pertaining to questions of statecraft, communal cohesion and imperial stability. As a result, he cannot praise the Khārijites' piety because the violence it breeds poses a danger to the Islamic community and state. Indeed, the dangers of rebellion are such that he appears to discourage it regardless of the ruler's conduct – any ruler is better than anarchy. This is not to say that he approves of the Umayyads. On the contrary, his rather low opinion of the dynasty, and in particular its agents Ziyād and ʿUbaydallāh, is obvious in his discussion of their interactions with the Khārijites. This dilemma of depicting a conflict in

which neither side is morally superior to the other is partly solved by his selection of prominent pro-ʿAlids and other respected members of the *umma* as the Khārijites' opponents. In this way, al-Ṭabarī can circumvent the problem of having to portray either the Khārijites or the Umayyads as being in the right, and by presenting the Khārijite phenomenon essentially as a continuation of their conflict with ʿAlī, he can also further delegitimize the rebels' accusations against the fourth caliph.

Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, seems to be much more interested in questions of ethics and morals, and how these are relevant to and influence an individual's behaviour. Consequently, he presents both activist and quietist Khārijites as devout Muslims opposed to the impiety and tyranny of the Umayyads. As he is not very concerned with the ramifications of rebellion for the institution of the state, he is also free to voice his criticism of the rulers. Hence, his material is much more condemning of the Umayyads than al-Ṭabarī's work. External influence, such as a scholar's occupation or patronage, on a particular work can thus be shown to be of prime relevance in the analysis of how a specific event, group or individual is portrayed, even if the pool of material accessed by the scholars in question is similar or identical. This is obvious in both author-compilers' treatment of Khārijite doctrine as well: whereas al-Ṭabarī focusses on *jihād* and questions of leadership, both issues that are significant in the context of state-subject relations, al-Balādhurī discusses the consequences of women's participation in rebellion, a matter that in practice certainly applied to individuals only and which posed a number of moral questions as illustrated by Ziyād's stripping of a female Khārijite. We can assume, however, that all of these topics were very much still relevant and controversial in scholarly circles at the time al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī compiled their material. At the very least, they made for some intriguing evening entertainment.

Another difference between the two scholars is the scope and variety of the accounts regarding Khārijites during Muʿāwiya's caliphate they transmit. Al-Balādhurī's work contains much more information than al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*, which is partly due to the latter work being much shorter than the *Ansāb*, but which might also be explained with reference to both genre and al-Balādhurī's particular interests. His Khārijite material gives the impression of a much more tangible Khārijite identity than was the case in al-Ṭabarī's

work. However, this is misleading: while al-Balādhurī preserves many Khārijite speeches and poems, and appears to focus on the rebels as an end in itself, a closer examination of the reports reveals that the Khārijites are again a narrative tool that here serves to contrast the Umayyads' impiety. Many of the accounts contain elaborate Khārijite statements and debates with their opponents, but most of them are comprised of pious stock phrases that are employed time and again irrespective of the specific circumstances of an individual revolt and can be assigned to one or the other Khārijite *topos*. The selection of several Khārijite leaders is a prime example of this: the wording, tenor and course of action are similar, in part even identical in the reports portraying the election of Ibn Wahb, al-Mustawrid and Ḥayyān b. Ẓabyān as commanders of their particular rebel groups. There is certainly more narrative substance in al-Balādhurī's reports on Khārijite activities during this time period, but while this conveys the impression of a more developed representation of Khārijism, a specifically Khārijite identity behind these accounts remains just as indiscernible here as it is in al-Ṭabarī's work on the period and the accounts of Khārijite history in general.[661]

The origins of both scholars' Khārijite material remain partly obscure as well. While al-Ṭabarī provides the *isnād* for most of his reports, we cannot trace the evolution of his reports further back than circa the mid-eighth century CE. As in the case of the narratives of the Khārijites' emergence at Ṣiffīn, he appears to have relied mainly on Iraqi transmitters from that time period, most prominently Abū Mikhnaf (d. 774 CE), who seemingly provided the bulk of al-Ṭabarī's information on the early Khawārij in general. Other authorities quoted by al-Ṭabarī include Wahb b. Jarīr (d. 822 CE), ʿAwāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 764 or 770 CE) and Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 810 or 821 CE), all of whom are known for transmitting Khārijite material, but he only refers to them on a couple of occasions. His material attributed to Wahb b. Jarīr is basically identical to Ibn Khayyāṭ's sparse information on the Khārijites, also transmitted on Wahb's authority, meaning that he either used Ibn Khayyāṭ's work or accessed the same pool of information. In any case, this confirms the likely formation of their Khārijite reports in the milieu specified above.

[661] See also Chapters One and Two.

Al-Balādhurī, on the other hand, only gives the *isnād* on two occasions. Both times, the two immediate authorities quoted are Zuhayr b. Ḥarb (d. 849) and Wahb b. Jarīr. The vast majority of his information follows a simple *qālū* ("they said"). This is highly unusual in comparison to the accounts analysed in the third chapter, almost all of which have an *isnād*, although he seems to have used *qālū*/*qāla* frequently throughout the *Ansāb*.[662] Of the two accounts featuring an *isnād*, the second one, ʿUrwa's execution by ʿUbaydallāh, is almost identical to al-Ṭabarī's version of this episode both in wording and with regard to the *isnād* (the first account is not included in al-Ṭabarī's work). Nevertheless, this does not mean that we can simply turn to al-Ṭabarī's work to identify the origin of al-Balādhurī's reports, even where they transmit identical information. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, while the two author-compilers often preserve almost identical accounts, they almost always provide entirely different chains of transmission as well. Second, on at least one occasion, al-Balādhurī's information regarding a particular event is closer to Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's version, who provides a different *isnād* from al-Ṭabarī's rendering of the occurrence.[663] Third, al-Balādhurī's work contains a much larger and more varied number of reports on the Khārijites, some of which contain both passages identical to al-Ṭabarī and material not included by the latter.[664] Clearly, al-Balādhurī (like all other historiographers) reshaped his material in such a way as to make the identification of its origins rather difficult. Al-Yaʿqūbī's work is not helpful here either, of course, as he provides virtually no *isnād*s at all throughout his work. Thus, while we can say with certainty that al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī received much of their information from the same source pool, it is very difficult to determine with any degree of certainty the original form, provenance and authorship of their material before it began the slow process of systematisation in eighth-century CE Iraq.

[662] K. Athamina: "The Sources of al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*", *JSAI* 5 (1984), 237-262, 237-240.
[663] The episode in question is the revolt of Sahm and al-Khaṭīm. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 172, and Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 235, both mention the murder of the Companion ʿUbāda b. Qurṣ al-Laythī, whereas al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 83-84, does not. Ibn Khayyāṭ transmits his version on the authority of Abū ʿUbayda and Abū al-Ḥasan, al-Ṭabarī quotes "ʿUmar on ʿAlī".
[664] Compare e.g. al-Balādhurī's much more detailed version of Farwa b. Nawfal's revolt at al-Nukhayla (*Ansāb*, IV/1, 163-164) with al-Ṭabarī's report of only a few lines (*Taʾrīkh*, II, 10).

Chapter Five: Khārijism from the Second *Fitna* until the Death of ʿAbd al-Malik

This chapter will look at the final period under consideration, the reigns of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya (r. 60-64 AH/680-683 CE), ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr (r. 61-73 AH/680-692 CE) and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 73-86 AH/692-705 CE). This period was dominated by the second *fitna*, or civil war, that followed the death of Muʿāwiya in 680 CE and lasted until the death of Ibn al-Zubayr in 692 CE. It was a tumultuous time that witnessed a succession crisis within the Umayyad clan that led to violent conflict among the Syrian factions, the (at least temporary) transition of power from Damascus to the Ḥijāz and from the Umayyad house to the Zubayrids, and widespread revolts and social unrest in Iraq, Iran and northern Arabia in the form of various ʿAlid and Khārijite revolts.

Unsurprisingly, the chronicles preserve a wealth of material for this rather eventful period in Islamic history. In contrast to the source material for the previous chapter, however, this also includes a plethora of *akhbār* pertaining to Khārijite activities across almost all of the historiographical works. In order to structure the abundance of reports and to avoid repetition, I will focus mainly on those aspects that are new to the sources' treatment of Khārijism. The basic conclusions arrived at in the preceding chapters are still the same: Khārijites are not the major concern of the author-compilers and their sources, and what we are dealing with is not a straightforward, 'sober' historiographical portrayal of Khārijism 'as it was' but a literary construct that serves a variety of narrative purposes. Nevertheless, the stories of Khārijite activities in this period address some new elements related to the specific historical events the sources purport to describe. This chapter will focus on the most important of these new elements and include further details in the footnotes, where relevant.

Two Khārijite revolts in particular seem to have attracted the curiosity of the author-compilers: the insurgency of the Azāriqa and the rebellion of the most famous Khārijite of the late seventh century CE, Shabīb b. Yazīd al-Shaybānī. The latter is particularly prominent in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*. His treatment of Shabīb's rebellion, including the (connected?) revolts of Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ and Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba, covers 120

pages in the Leiden edition of the Arabic text.[665] Unlike the entries for the Azāriqa, who constitute the second most important Khārijite movement in al-Ṭabarī's writing on that period, Shabīb's story also continues uninterrupted by other events, demonstrating the significance al-Ṭabarī placed on this particular Khārijite. The details, especially the sequence and exact dating of events, are nevertheless often confused or contradictory.[666] I will thus gloss over most of the structural components of these reports and only mention what I believe to be the major points of the Shabīb story. It is worth noting here as well that the focus of the historical works lies almost exclusively on the extremist and violent forms of Khārijism. There is hardly any information on the quietists, including the Ibāḍīya and the Ṣufrīya[667], who, if we believe the historical tradition, developed in Basra alongside the town's more militant offspring such as Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq. Similarly, the much more moderate Najdites feature in the reports to a significantly lesser degree than their contemporaries among the Azāriqa. Evidently, extremists like the Azāriqa and successful rebels like Shabīb were useful to make a point about the dangers of civil strife and militant piety, the dos and don'ts of warfare and a whole range of other issues. The lack of interest in the quietists of this period displayed by the early historians can perhaps be explained by the very nature of the revolts mentioned at length in the historical sources: for the first time, we are confronted with major uprisings that are either successful at establishing control over a significant territory (the Najdīya) or manage to elude the authorities while wreaking havoc on an unprecedented scale relative to earlier Khārijite uprisings (the Azāriqa, Shabīb). The actions (or lack thereof) of the quietists, in Basra and elsewhere, pale in comparison to the terror inspired by the militants.

In what follows, I will offer an analysis of the major aspects of Khārijism in this period as portrayed in the sources. Needless to say, I will only address those groups and individuals who are discussed at some length by the sources. As alluded to above, this excludes both the Ibāḍīya and the Ṣufrīya, both of whom appear to be of little importance to

[665] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 881-1000.
[666] See e.g. the remarks in Rowson, *Restoration*, translator's foreword and pages 60, 69 note 283, 93, 112 and 118.
[667] For the explicit characterization of the founders of those two Khārijite groups as quietist, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 518.

the historians in the time period covered by this chapter. The analysis is followed by some concluding remarks on the significance of Khārijism for the remembrance of Islamic history during the period 680-705 CE.

5.1 Analysis

The sources transmit an abundance of reports regarding Khārijite activities in this period, addressing a multitude of topics and themes. Despite the unruliness and diversity of this material, however, two main inferences emerge, both of which have already been put forward in the preceding two chapters: first, Khārijites are not the focus! The historical works' major concerns lie with other actors and issues. Second, there is a noticeable literary character to the stories of Khārijite endeavours that demonstrates the pitfalls of adhering to an unrestrainedly positivist approach to reading and writing (Islamic) history. As in the case of Chapter Three, which looked at the representation of Khārijism during the period of ʿAlī's rule, we are once again confronted with somewhat of a consensus about the main events in Khārijite history during a specific time period, with most of the sources providing a roughly coherent picture of the major Khārijite revolts and interactions with their opponents. While there is a larger degree of variance between the individual sources compared to Chapter Three, we can still speak of an early Islamic historiographical tradition on Khārijite history during the second *fitna* and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate. Hence, the present chapter will also be structured according to themes rather than individual author-compilers.

There are several Khārijite-specific motifs that featured in the material analysed for the first two periods and appear once again in the reports that form the basis of the current chapter. Predictably, most prominent among them are the focus on Khārijite forms of piety, the emphasis on the rebels' commitment to *jihād* and their famous prowess in battle. As I showed in Chapters One and Two, these are recurrent motifs that permeate the narratives of Khārijism irrespective of particular historical settings; most Khārijite statements and sentiments can thus be shown to be stock phrases without much bearing on the distinct circumstances described in the various accounts. While I will not spend much time

discussing any of these aspects unless they are related to a new theme, the mere fact of their existence points out two things: first, that we are dealing with a schematized portrayal of Khārijism which assigned specific attributes to the individuals and groups subsumed under this heading; and following from this, that the identity ascribed to the various Khārijite groups is in fact *collective* and thus has very little explanatory value with regard to individual motivations for becoming a Khārijite. This collective identity cannot readily be used for positivist purposes; instead, what emerges from the sources is a *literary* Khārijite identity about whose historicity next to nothing can be said with any degree of certainty.

Observations on Late Sufyānid and Early Marwānid-Era Khārijism

The aspects that are peculiar to Khārijism in this period nevertheless lead to the overarching conclusion we are already familiar with: Khārijites are not the primary concern of our sources. Furthermore, there is virtually no more narrative substance to the reports of Khārijite endeavours in this period than in the previous time spans covered in the previous chapters. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, this does not mean that there is absolutely no historical kernel to the reports that purport to preserve Khārijite history – indeed, it would be absurd to assume that we are confronted with a wholly imaginary narrative of the first two centuries of Islamic history. But there is no getting past the acknowledgment that whatever historical 'truth' has survived in the sources is woven into and often buried underneath a complex construct of literary and rhetorical elements many of whose subtleties and double entendres had already been lost to the passage of time when the reports finally found their way into the works of al-Balādhurī and his fellow historiographers. What we can determine, however, are the main threads forming this construct, the predominant topics and themes that clearly lay at the heart of those narratives which were passed on and refashioned over time to finally take on their familiar form in the sources that have come down to us. This is not to say that all of the reports fit into roughly the same pattern, of course, but as I will demonstrate in what follows, there are enough similarities in a good proportion of the material to allow us to draw some general

conclusions regarding the nature of the concerns that appear to have been of prime importance to members of the early Islamic *umma*.

What, then, are the main themes in the material that purports to record the history of the various Khārijite groups during the second *fitna* and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik? If it is not about the Khārijites as an end in themselves, who or what occupied centre stage in the accounts of Khārijism preserved in the sources? In the following analysis, I will argue that the reports at hand focus mainly on five distinct subjects, all of which use the stories of Khārijite activities to illustrate and/or contrast their objectives. These five themes can be summarized as follows and will be addressed in the order given here: i) the political and military importance of al-Muhallab and his family; ii) the volatility of Khārijism as a direct counterpoint to the *jamāʿī* approach; iii) the censure of the Umayyad governors of Iraq; iv) the faults and merits of Ibn al-Zubayr; and lastly, v) military strategy.

"He Has No Equal" – The Importance of al-Muhallab and the Muhallabids

The conflict between al-Muhallab and the Azāriqa is one of two major topics in the sources' Khārijite material for this time period (Shabīb being the other). Al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Aʿtham all transmit a comprehensive account of the war waged between al-Muhallab and the Azāriqa under its different leaders, covering dozens of pages, but with the exception of Ibn Khayyāṭ, the other author-compilers considered here also mention al-Muhallab and his struggles against these particular Khārijites. While the sources preserve sometimes diverging reports of particular events in this drawn-out confrontation, they have one thing in common: their main focus rests not on the Azraqites, but on al-Muhallab and his sons. This applies in particular to Ibn Aʿtham, who preserves the largest amount of material on the Muhallabid-Azraqite battles and represents the strongest proponent of al-Muhallab's family among all the works examined for this thesis.

Regardless of the length of their particular reports, all the sources agree on al-Muhallab's courage, superior battle skills and the enormous effort he put into fighting the Khārijites despite the cost to himself and his family. When the Azāriqa first begins to terrorize the people of Basra and the surrounding region, the Basran notables and common

people alike "know" that the best, indeed the only person to fight off the rebels successfully is al-Muhallab, the *shaykh al-nās* and *sayf al-ʿirāq*.[668] The sources reiterate this over and over.[669] This is 'proven' when the commanders sent out in pursuit of the Azāriqa before al-Muhallab is appointed all fail in their mission and are either killed or put to flight, in most cases losing the majority of their troops to the ferocious Khārijites.[670] The situation is so dire that the Basrans insist on al-Muhallab despite his recent investiture over Khurāsān, pleading with Ibn al-Zubayr to send him after the Azraqites.[671] According to one report preserved by al-Ṭabarī, the people are so desperate that they even forge a letter from Ibn al-Zubayr to al-Muhallab, ordering him to fight the Khārijites: "The reward for that will be greater than for going to Khurāsān, so go against them rightly guided, fight the enemies of God and of you, and protect your rights and those of the people of your garrison town."[672] This account is even more striking as the suggestion to fabricate the letter seems to have been made by the very commander Ibn al-Zubayr had sent to Basra to take charge of affairs there, indicating both the panic inspired by the Azraqites' violence and the faintheartedness experienced by everyone except al-Muhallab.

Once al-Muhallab accepts his task of fighting the Khārijites and the Basrans have agreed to his conditions, the tide turns on the Azāriqa. Proving that the people's belief in him is well-founded, al-Muhallab succeeds in defeating wave after wave of Azraqites hurling themselves against him and his men. He is shown to be a shrewd commander, well versed in battle tactics and strategy, courageous and pious. Accordingly, he wins almost every encounter against the Khārijites, despite his enemy's famous prowess in battle.[673] On the rare occasion he is defeated or at least fails to achieve a clear victory, the sources are

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[668] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 264.
[669] See e.g. al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 126; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 280; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 11; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 422; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 583, 765.
[670] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 580, 581-582; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 251, 252; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 126; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 279, 280; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 406, 407, 408-410. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, skips the pre-Muhallabid battles against the Azāriqa altogether and focuses exclusively on al-Muhallab's exploits.
[671] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 11 (where the Basran governor writes the letter to al-Muhallab on the authority of Ibn al-Zubayr); al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 281; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 423.
[672] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 582-583.
[673] See e.g. al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 265; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 282, 284; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 16, 19, 29, 32, 34-35, and VII, 29, 31, 33, 41, 45; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 424, 426, 430; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 584-585, 588, 1006.

quick to excuse him, for example blaming the cowardice of his (Basran) troops.[674] He is so successful that he not only survives the regime change after the death of Muṣʿab and ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr, but retains his exalted position as the Azraqites' most feared adversary under al-Ḥajjāj and ʿAbd al-Malik, who does not hesitate to express his supreme confidence in al-Muhallab regarding the Khārijite problem and rewards his achievements quite handsomely.[675]

Consistent with this depiction of al-Muhallab, even the most committed rebels grow weary and despair of their chances at defeating him. Instead, they lament their forced retreats first to al-Ahwāz and then further into Iran to Kirmān and Sijistān, grudgingly acknowledging his superior battle skills and unparalleled bravery that leads him to fight relentlessly even after having "received 17 wounds"[676]:

> If we are distressed by al-Muhallab, that is because he is / a man of war and the lion of the people of the east;
> Perhaps he causes us grief and perhaps we / cause him grief in everything we share;
> …
> He makes us taste war and we make him taste [war]; / everyone says to the other: taste![677]

What is even more striking than the Khārijites' praise of their opponent's skills is the claim of a number of reports that individual and groups of Azraqites abandoned their cause in favour of seeking protection with (and thus from!) al-Muhallab.[678] While this reportedly occurred mostly after internal divisions among the Khawārij, it is still an almost unheard-of event that testifies to al-Muhallab's reputation as "a man of war" and casts doubt on the sincerity of many Azraqites' beliefs. It is best exemplified by an exchange between Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa and one of his critics who questions Qaṭarī's commitment to battle: "If you truly seek God and the Hereafter, then persevere and die as we will die with you, but if not, then

[674] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 587.
[675] See e.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 825, 855; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 17, 78; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 272, 275; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 126.
[676] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 32.
[677] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 284. See also ibid., 286; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 29, and VII, 43, 67.
[678] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 58-59, 63, 69.

leave your companions so that they can enter al-Muhallab's protection."[679] Equally unusual are the stories according to which the Azāriqa – of all Khārijite groups – turned their backs on the battlefield and fled before al-Muhallab.[680] This includes even Azraqite leaders like ʿUbayda b. Hilāl "who had never withdrawn from battle until that day" but retreated from al-Muhallab's son Mudarrik "howling like a dog".[681] Similarly, another Azraqite leader by the name of Ṣāliḥ b. Mukhrāq tried to bolt when al-Muhallab's son al-Mufaḍḍal proved too formidable an enemy. Al-Mufaḍḍal consequently mocked his cowardice: "Where to, O Ibn Mukhrāq? If you are truthful [in what you believe], you will persist!"[682]

Virtually all of these stories are related by Ibn Aʿtham, emphasizing his special interest in and endorsement of al-Muhallab and his family. This becomes particularly clear in his depiction of al-Muhallab's sons. He is the only author-compiler who includes comprehensive information on the sons' involvement in their father's wars with the Azāriqa. He states that al-Muhallab had ten sons, all of whom he summoned to join him in his pursuit of the Khawārij and all of whom answered his call.[683] Like him, they are shown to be courageous and skilled fighters who are just as committed to wiping out the Khārijites as al-Muhallab himself, engaging in both verbal and physical battles with their enemies.[684] During one of the Azraqites' nightly attacks, it is al-Muhallab's son Mudarrik who is the first to mount his horse and lead his men again the Khārijites. "Since that night, Mudarrik was beloved by his brothers and the people."[685] Even al-Muhallab's nephew Bishr is part of the company pursuing the Azāriqa and delineated as another valiant warrior.[686]

Ibn Aʿtham's treatment of the Muhallabids stands out among all the considered sources and thus warrants a closer look. The focus on al-Muhallab and his family indicates that we are confronted with components of a heroic story, almost a hagiography. Indeed, al-

[679] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 55. But see a very similar report on p. 57 according to which Qaṭarī's critic says he would be quit of Qaṭarī if he fled. This fits the usual representation of Khārijite attitude much better than the account cited above.
[680] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 284, 286 (where his flight from al-Muhallab costs Qaṭarī his leadership); Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 34, and VII, 27, 28, 31, 43, 44, 67, 69; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 588.
[681] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 27.
[682] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 44.
[683] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 24.
[684] See e.g. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 24-25, 31, 40-41, 45, 53-55, 61, 66.
[685] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 33-34.
[686] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 37, 43.

Muhallab's continued success against the foe everyone else fails to overcome coupled with his nearly preternatural insight into the Azraqites' troop movements could perhaps be construed as his own little miracle story. At least this section of Ibn Aʿtham's work could thus possibly be regarded more as an example of *adab* than of *taʾrīkh*. Robinson ascribes this tendency of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* to it being part of the tradition of conquest monographs "where romantic heroism is as prominent as a careful chronology is absent" and contrasts Ibn Aʿtham's narrative style with "the sober and eirenic traditionalism exemplified by al-Ṭabarī or al-Balādhurī".[687] I disagree with Robinson's assessment of al-Balādhurī as a "sober and eirenic" traditionalist and would be careful about lumping Ibn Aʿtham's work in with other *futūḥ* works such as al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* or al-Azdī's *Futūḥ al-Shām*: unlike al-Balādhurī's, al-Azdī's or ps.-Wāqidī's *futūḥ* works, Ibn Aʿtham includes many detailed passages on events of early Islamic history that are not conquest history, the long chapters on the first civil and Khārijite history being cases in point, and are thus either not included at all or mentioned only briefly in those other conquest monographs.[688] Ibn Aʿtham's focus thus seems to be different, combining both conquest and generally Islamic history in his work, ordered chronologically. As I have remarked elsewhere, however, it is certainly true that Ibn Aʿtham's choice of narrative style and content make him stand out from the remaining historiographical sources discussed in this study.[689]

Let us return to Ibn Aʿtham's treatment of the Muhallabids. In addition to the portrayal of al-Muhallab as a skilled and fierce warrior, he is also represented as a pious Muslim. In Chapter Two, I referred to the story of the Azraqites' attack during the month of pilgrimage and al-Muhallab's outrage at their breach of the sanctity of the Day of Sacrifice. His use of Qur'ānic verses to counter the rebels' assertions that they are doing God's work has also been mentioned already.[690] In agreement with this depiction of al-Muhallab's godliness, he does not claim his victories against the Khārijites for himself but attributes

[687] Robinson, *Historiography*, 42.
[688] On the *futūḥ* works of al-Azdī and ps.-Wāqidī in comparison to Ibn Aʿtham's compilation, see J. Scheiner: "Writing the History of the *futūḥ*: The *futūḥ*-works of al-Azdī, Ibn Aʿtham and al-Wāqidī", in P. M. Cobb (ed.): *The Lineaments of Islam. Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner*. Leiden 2012, 151-176, 154-156. For al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ*, see Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī: *Liber Expugnationis Regionum: Futūḥ al-Buldān*. Ed. M. de Goeje. Leiden 1866.
[689] See also Chapter Six, the section on Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.
[690] See above, section 2.3.

them to God. This works in two ways: while al-Muhallab is presented as a steadfast believer, the Azraqites are shown to have incurred God's wrath at the same time. After one of his first successful battles against the rebels, for instance, al-Muhallab sends a letter to the Basran governor to inform him of the Khārijites' defeat. He describes the battle and concludes: "But then God sent down his aid to the Believers and smote the faces of the unbelievers. Their tyrant [*ṭāghiyah*] fell… and God killed them in the battle."[691] Throughout, al-Muhallab refers to his men as Muslims and to the Khārijites as unbelievers, reinforcing the rebels' image as deviators. Similarly, following one of his last battles against a severely worn-down Azāriqa, al-Muhallab says to his soldiers: "Praise be to God who returned us to security and freed us from the burden of war and repelled the affair of this enemy."[692]

Ibn Aʿtham preserves not only the most extensive depiction of the Muhallabids' courage and skills in warfare, but also of al-Muhallab's piety. He transmits a letter to the Basrans in which al-Muhallab reportedly describes the fighting between his men and the Khārijites and exhorts the people of Basra to stay strong in the face of adversity. He essentially accuses the Khawārij of being misguided hypocrites, but assures the townspeople that the rebels cannot cause any permanent damage to God's religion:

> Islam is not weakened by those who leave it (*lā yūhinu al-islām khurūj man kharaja minhu*), and those who deviate from it do not render it defective (*wa-lā yaʿībuhu ilḥād man alḥada fīhi*)… Those who plot against Islam are many and those who support it are few, and not everyone who fights in the name of Islam belongs to its people (*wa-laysa kull man yuqātil ʿan al-islām min ahlihi*), but he who fights for the religion of Islam is one of its people (*wa-lakinna man yuqātil ʿan dīn al-islām fa-huwa min ahlihi*).[693]

In the same way, al-Muhallab exhorts his men before battle on religious grounds, emphasizing the religious dimension to the conflict with the Khārijites that is predominant in the source material for this period: after urging his soldiers to speed the Khārijites' "exit from life (*mukhārij min al-ḥayāt*; a pun on the term 'Khawārij')", he tells them that

[691] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 589; Hawting, *Collapse*, 173.
[692] Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 288. See also Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 29.
[693] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 24.

> these people [the Azāriqa] fight against your religion and your world, and if they overpower you, you will have no religion and no world. So fight them over what they fight you for![694]

Certainly the most explicit portrayal of al-Muhallab's religious fervour is once again found in Ibn Aʿtham's work. According to the account, just before another ultimately successful battle against the Khārijites, al-Muhallab reminds his sons of their mission: "I fight for God and you fight for God and your father. You defend the religion of Islam; God has blessed every one who fights with you with the intention for *jihād*..."[695] Interestingly, this statement is also reminiscent of Khārijite sentiment and could just as easily have been uttered by one of the rebels.[696] At the same time, however, it is so general as to render it virtually meaningless, thwarting any attempt at pinning down its affiliation with a particular religious movement or set of beliefs. This phenomenon has already been discussed in some detail in Chapter Two and thus does not need further elaboration at this point.

In line with the overall portrayal of al-Muhallab as a fierce warrior, successful commander and pious Muslim, it is not surprising to read that things begin to go wrong again as soon as he is removed from his position. According to the sources, this seems to have happened more frequently than one would perhaps expect given his many successful campaigns against the Azāriqa. Nevertheless, due mostly to politics and personal grudges held against him[697], al-Muhallab is recalled several times. The sequence and chronology of events are confused, and it is possible that the sources present what was originally only one report of al-Muhallab being dismissed from office as several different, fragmentary accounts. This seems at least somewhat likely as the reports of al-Muhallab's endeavours during the reign of the Zubayrids and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik exhibit certain similarities that indicate a replication process of the *khabar* narrating the episode in question. It is also possible that the stories of al-Muhallab's removal are completely invented in order to make a point both about his superiority as a warrior and the necessity

[694] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 30-31.
[695] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 65.
[696] Compare with the various Khārijite statements mentioned in Chapter Two, section 2.2.
[697] See e.g. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 316; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 855, 856.

of sound decision-making (or lack thereof) among the authorities. I will come back to this issue at a later stage; suffice it to say at this point, both Ibn Aʿtham and al-Ṭabarī transmit a number of reports illustrating the dire consequences resulting from the decision to recall al-Muhallab from his pursuit of the Azāriqa.[698]

The first instance of al-Muhallab being replaced as commander in charge of the army chasing the Khārijites apparently occurs under Zubayrid authority.[699] Muṣʿab himself removes al-Muhallab and puts ʿUmar b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Maʿmar in charge instead. This story being transmitted by Ibn Aʿtham, much of it is cast in poetry, but the events can be summarized as follows: Ibn Maʿmar pursues the Azraqites who are at that point encamped at Sābūr. The Khārijites "know" that Ibn Maʿmar is on approach and thus decide to attack him at night. Qaṭarī provokes Ibn Maʿmar by boasting about the Khārijites' fierceness:

> Nightly fighting holds gains for the *shurāt* / but for the deviators it holds perdition;
> Participating in it is desirable [for the *shurāt*] / [but for the deviators] it means afflictions [bearing down on them] like torrents.[700]

Enraged, Ibn Maʿmar charges Qaṭarī, but the Khārijite strikes him and Ibn Maʿmar flees back to his companions. As the fighting intensifies, Ibn Maʿmar asks one of the soldiers who had served under al-Muhallab how the latter had managed to defeat the Khārijites. The man responds that al-Muhallab had been shrewd and patient, implying that Ibn Maʿmar had acted hastily without the necessary circumspection. The two groups fight until morning, when Ibn Maʿmar's men are put to flight and many have fallen under the Azraqites' swords. The Khārijites raid Ibn Maʿmar's camp and then return to Sābūr. Ibn Maʿmar blames his Basran troops for not fighting with him the way they had for al-Muhallab, saying that they did not trust him because he is a Ḥijāzī while al-Muhallab is an Azdī from Basra. Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr is informed of Ibn Maʿmar's defeat and regrets having removed al-Muhallab, so he decides to reinstate him as he is now convinced that al-Muhallab is the only one who can successfully fight the Khārijites.

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[698] In addition to the examples cited below, see Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 316-318, where Bishr b. Marwān removes al-Muhallab from office against ʿAbd al-Malik's orders.
[699] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 41-47.
[700] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 44.

A very similar event allegedly takes place after ʿAbd al-Malik has secured the caliphate for himself by defeating the Zubayrids in 692 CE. According to al-Ṭabarī's account[701], ʿAbd al-Malik appoints his brother Bishr as governor of Kufa and Khālid b. ʿAbdallāh as governor of Basra. When Khālid arrives, he puts al-Muhallab in charge of the taxes and special revenue of al-Ahwāz instead of letting him continue his fight against the Azāriqa. In his place, Khālid sends his representative in one of the districts of Fārs, Muqātil b. Mismaʿ, as well as his own brother, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbdallāh, after the Khawārij. Qaṭarī, by that point in charge of the Azraqites, engages them in combat during which Muqātil is killed and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz is forced to flee. Al-Muhallab sends a messenger to ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, magnanimously consoling him for his flight and reminding him that other had fled from the Khārijites before him. He reassures ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz that reinforcements will be sent soon. Curiously, it is also al-Muhallab who informs Khālid b. ʿAbdallāh of his brother's defeat instead of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz himself. Khālid sends a letter to ʿAbd al-Malik informing him of this latest fiasco. The caliph is not amused and chastises Khālid for sending his brother rather than al-Muhallab, "who is fortunate in judgment, good in management, skilful and experienced in war – a man of war and the son of men of war!"[702] He instructs Khālid to send al-Muhallab against the Khārijites in al-Ahwāz, saying that Bishr's Kufan troops will supplement al-Muhallab's Basran army, that al-Muhallab is to have supreme command over the mission and that all decisions fall to him. Predictably, as soon as al-Muhallab is back in charge, the tide turns and the Azāriqa flee from the government troops.[703]

Ibn Aʿtham's report of this event is significantly longer than al-Ṭabarī's and emphasizes much more strongly Khālid's foolishness and al-Muhallab's wisdom and foresight. Al-Muhallab repeatedly offers Khālid advice on how to fight the Khārijites, but Khālid turns him down each time, only regretting his conduct towards al-Muhallab when the Azāriqa prove to be superior to him and his men.[704] Nevertheless, when al-Muhallab advises Khālid against sending his brother ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, Khālid ignores him again, going

[701] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 822-825. See also Ibn Aʿtham's report of the same event, *Futūḥ*, VI, 298-312.
[702] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 825; Fishbein, *Victory*, 203.
[703] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 826-827.
[704] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 300-302.

so far as to conceal a letter sent to him from ʿAbd al-Malik ordering him to put al-Muhallab back in charge. The Basrans are worried because they "know" that Khālid's brother is incapable of fighting the Khārijites successfully; even from Syria a poet sends words about the people's concerns (!), but to no avail.[705] As foreseen by everyone except Khālid, the Azraqites utterly defeat ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz's army, put him to flight and kill his wife who had accompanied him for some unknown reason. Only then, and when confronted with the Basrans' fear of another Azraqite attack on the town, does he truly see the error of his ways and apologize to al-Muhallab for disregarding his sound advice. In a letter, he states that only al-Muhallab can withstand "this enemy of dogs" and asks him to "remove this sorrow from your land".[706] Al-Muhallab and his men agree enthusiastically, and as is by now rather obvious, once al-Muhallab is in charge again, the Azāriqa suffers defeat after defeat.

Finally, there are also several accounts of al-Ḥajjāj's initial impatience with al-Muhallab's course of action against the Khārijites. He repeatedly orders him to speed up his pursuit of the rebels, eventually sending envoys to report back on al-Muhallab's conduct in battle. In line with the preceding accounts, every envoy confirms al-Muhallab's supreme efforts and incredible stamina against a near invincible enemy, emphasizing the commitment shown not only by al-Muhallab himself, but also by his sons and troops. Eventually, al-Ḥajjāj has to admit the unfairness of his accusations. Al-Muhallab, as usual, bears all of this with a stoicism of almost preternatural proportion; his slow and careful approach to engaging the Azāriqa is shown to be borne of his strategic genius: rather than wasting his men and his resources by charging the rebels at every turn, he waits for their self-destructive tendencies to take effect and is eventually proven right again when the Azāriqa finally splits into various subgroups who are defeated one after the other.[707]

The point of these reports is rather obvious. Apart from a few overambitious and spiteful individuals, everyone – including the author-compilers' intended audience – knows that al-Muhallab is unsurpassed as a military leader and battle strategist. Even the Khārijites acknowledge that al-Muhallab is the only one who can oppose them effectively. When

[705] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 302-304.
[706] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 310.
[707] For all this, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1003-1007; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 285, 287-288; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 17-26.

Bishr b. Marwān dismisses al-Muhallab from his post, the Khārijites rejoice and Qaṭarī sends Bishr a message gleefully pointing out that they are now free to roam the lands unopposed.[708] Similarly, on his way to Sābūr, Ibn Maʿmar sends the Khārijites a poem (although as to how he would have passed it along to them, Ibn Aʿtham provides no information) boasting about his battle skills, deriding al-Muhallab and accusing him of cowardice, of being a fraud whose popularity is down to his winning personality rather than any real achievements in combat. The Azraqite leader ʿUbayda b. Hilāl in response mocks Ibn Maʿmar's pretensions:

> Hold on! Don't hasten towards us, Ibn Maʿmar / for you are even less than al-Muhallab;
> You have no business (*ḥaẓẓa*) in the art of war / and you have no loyal follower (l. "who sacrifices their mother and father for you");
> …
> If you fought us – and you won't! – / you would suffer horribly from it;
> We are not weak, our spears are long / and we do not fear whoever approaches us…[709]

Unsurprisingly, the Khārijite's prediction becomes true and Ibn Maʿmar suffers a humiliating defeat at the Azraqites' hands. His boasting and ridicule of al-Muhallab are thus shown to be signs of his own weakness and incompetence while al-Muhallab's superiority is confirmed by friend and foe alike.

To summarize, I have shown that al-Muhallab and the Muhallabids constitute one of the major concerns discussed in the Khārijite material for this period. In fact, Ibn Aʿtham in particular focuses on al-Muhallab to such an extent that the Azāriqa appears almost as a deliberate foil for him, purposefully set up as near invincible opponents so as to better demonstrate his many achievements. This impression is fostered also by the similarities between the accounts of the Azāriqa and Shabīb and their subjugators, al-Muhallab and the Syrians under Sufyān b. al-Abrad respectively. Several of the themes in the reports of both Khārijite movements are very similar: both the Azraqites and Shabīb travel around Iraq and Iran a lot, wreaking havoc wherever they go; both are notorious for their ferociousness in

[708] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 316.
[709] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VI, 43.

battle; both can only be ultimately defeated by one particular commander, defeating almost every single one of the many armies sent out against them; and both the Azāriqa and Shabīb are portrayed as promoting a rigid view of militant piety. Whatever the historical value of the accounts, then – and we know for a fact that Qaṭarī existed at the very least, whether or not he was a champion of Azraqite Khārijism[710] –, it seems rather likely that we are confronted with a highly dramatized version of the events in question that might or might not have had much to do with 'what really happened'. The similarities between Shabīb and the Azāriqa imply that this particular form of representation is a literary tool that follows a particular set of narrative guidelines in order to convey certain notions.

In the case of al-Muhallab's conflict with the Azāriqa, the sources praise his skills as a warrior and his piety as a Muslim. He is shown to be the only military commander who represents a serious challenge to the Azāriqa and is capable of doing permanent damage to them. In fact, he is the only leader who continuously manages to keep the upper hand vis-à-vis the Khārijites. In consequence, the decision to remove him from his position, based as it is on petty politics and personal grudges, has disastrous ramifications that can only be remedied by reappointing al-Muhallab as commander-in-chief over the troops pursuing the Khawārij. His reputation among his own men, his contemporaries and later generations of Muslims is best exemplified in a poem recited by al-Muhallab's messenger to al-Ḥajjāj after wiping out the main body of the Azāriqa:

> We caused the disease of the Azāriqa to perish forever / and they became [extinct] like ʿĀd and Thamūd;
> And we accomplished with al-Muhallab what / he wished for in his wisdom;
> …
> I achieved this with al-Muhallab / I am sure I did not thank him enough;
> all of us are like his own children to him / when asking us about our fallen;
> with his own hands he treats our wounded / and fixes us a feast like a birth feast;
> every good thing that the people say about him / regarding [his] bravery and good morals is right;
> people [can] find an equal replacement for whom they lost / [but] not for the *shaykh* [i.e., al-Muhallab], he has no equal.[711]

[710] Coins were minted in his name in the mid-690s CE. See Madelung, *Religious Trends*, 56-57.
[711] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 74-76.

"God has Cast the Fierceness of the Khārijites in Their Own Midst"[712] *– The Volatility of Khārijism*

The historiographical works abound with reports about the inherent volatility of Khārijism.[713] The constant divisions among the various Khārijite factions and subgroups are a major theme of the source material for this period, leading to the almost inevitable conclusion that the explosive nature of the rebel factions ultimately causes their defeat.[714] This is certainly true for the Azāriqa and the Najdīya, and as we will see, elements of this phenomenon can also be observed in the story of Shabīb. As has already been noted, the historical sources are much less concerned with the more moderate strands of Khārijism in this period, in part certainly because they were significantly less prone to the violent splits characteristic of the militant Khawārij. The bulk of information on the moderate Khārijites is thus found in the heresiographical and to a somewhat lesser extent in the *adab* tradition. In any case, it is telling that the only surviving branch of Khārijism, the Ibāḍīya (if one accepts their Khārijite ancestry, which is certainly not always the case among the Ibāḍīs themselves), represents the only Khārijite division that rejected violence against non-Khārijite Muslims wholeheartedly and allowed its followers to live among them in peace, making provisions even for such important acts of ritual like prayer, food and inheritance.

The continuous tension characteristic of the many Khārijite groups is based first and foremost on disagreements over doctrine. The inflexibility of Khārijism regarding matters of belief and practice is shown to cause an extraordinary amount of dissent. The most detailed accounts of the disagreements between the Basran Khārijites that ultimately led to their division into the four factions best known across the tradition – the Azāriqa, the Najdīya, the Ṣufrīya and the Ibāḍīya – are transmitted by al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī. Curiously, Ibn Aʿtham has nothing at all on the doctrinal conflict between the Basran

[712] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1007.
[713] E.g. al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 286; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 17, 55, 63; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, VI/1, 395, and IV/2, 462, 463, 465, 466, 467; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 272-273, 275; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 518-520, 1006, 1007.
[714] E.g., al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 457-459, where Najda's followers split from him, causing the subject population of his territory to rise against and eventually kill him and several of his agents; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1007.

Khārijites and the resulting division into the four groups. He does preserve reports of internal strife among the Azāriqa, but only in the context of their interactions with al-Muhallab and how he managed to take advantage of this weakness. Further, their division in Ibn Aʿtham's rendering of that episode is caused not by doctrinal issues but by disagreement over whether or not to flee from al-Muhallab, emphasizing anew that Ibn Aʿtham's focus is entirely on the latter and not the Khārijites.[715]

Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī's reports vary in the details, for example, the former has the Khārijites split after their joint departure from Basra to al-Ahwāz whereas the latter places this event in Basra and subsequent debates in the form of an exchange of letters between the quietists in Basra and the militants in al-Ahwāz. Nonetheless, the general assertion is the same: the dissent is caused by the extremist claims of the future Azraqites, among them that *istiʿrāḍ* is lawful. Other bones of contention are the permissibility of *taqīya*, the status of the *quʿūd*, the killing of enemy children, the necessity of performing a *hijra* and following from this, whether non-Khārijite territory should be considered *dār al-kufr*. There is no need to go into doctrinal detail here; suffice it to say, the various Khārijites argue with each other on the basis on Qurʾānic verses, illustrating beautifully how skilled rhetoricians can make just about anything work in their favour, and ultimately split up, declaring one another hypocrites and unbelievers and attacking each other's views:

> Damn him! Whatever opinion he held, Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq was sincere… But now he has lied and accused us of lying when he says that the people who have rejected the divine grace and ordinances are infidels, that they [Ibn al-Azraq's party] dissociate from polytheism, that we must shed the blood of the polytheists and act similarly with their property, something which has been forbidden to us.[716]
>
> God is quit of you [Ibn Ibāḍ], for you have fallen short, and God is quit of Ibn al-Azraq, for he has gone too far. God is quit of you both.[717]
>
> You have lost the men [ʿAṭīya b. al-Aswad's followers], but you have not lost Islam! God has granted you rest from five things: from the worthlessness (*jufāʾ*) of Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa, the stupidities (*akhlāṭ*) of ʿUbayda b. Hilāl, the haughtiness

[715] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 57-60, 63-64.
[716] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 519.
[717] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 519.

> (*nakhwat*) of ʿAmr al-Qanāʾ, the deviation of ʿAbd al-Rabbih al-Saghīr, and the *fitna* of ʿAṭīya b. al-Aswad.[718]
>
> Najda wrote to Nāfiʿ and summoned him to return to his original beliefs and to leave behind what he had innovated.[719]
>
> Ibn Abāḍ [*sic*] and the Ṣufrīya wrote to Nāfiʿ rejecting his declaration that the quietists are unbelievers and his appropriation of property before battle and the killing of children.[720]

Another issue that is said to cause frequent disagreement and secession among the Khawārij is the question of leadership, or more specifically, which qualities and opinions are needed to qualify a man for the position of *imām*. Unsurprisingly, while in theory all appear to agree that the best, the most virtuous and courageous and pious of Khārijites should be in charge[721], just who that person is and whether certain actions or beliefs disqualify him for that position is subject to heated and often lethal debate.[722] Even more so than the doctrinal differences, this innate instability weakens the rebels significantly, especially as it appears to be such an important matter that it arises in even the most inopportune moments. The following brief but rather comical episode from the Shabīb story transmitted by al-Ṭabarī will demonstrate this.

The scene is the major battle between al-Ḥajjāj himself and his troops on one side and Shabīb's rebel group on the other after the latter's attack on Kufa. In the thick of the battle, Shabīb is suddenly approached by one of his men, who asks him: "What do you say about Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ and how do you testify concerning him?" Shabīb, quite understandably, is a little confused as to whether this really is the time to get into this issue: "Here and now, in the midst of this situation, with al-Ḥajjāj looking on?" Shabīb's companion insists, and so Shabīb declares himself quit of Ṣāliḥ. In response, the man declares himself quit of Shabīb and leaves with all of the remaining Khārijites in tow

[718] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 63-64. A few lines down on the same page we find al-Muhallab's statement about the same five Khārijite leaders being the "five companions of the devil", quoted above, section 2.3. This is another nice example of the parallelism Noth identified as one of the literary features of early Islamic historiography (see p. 121, note 460).
[719] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, VI/2, 403-404.
[720] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, VI/2, 406.
[721] E.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 441, 446; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 985-986; and the election episodes discussed in Chapters One and Two.
[722] E.g. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 462; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 57-58, 63; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1006-1007.

except 40 of Shabīb's closest companions. Al-Ḥajjāj observes rather astutely, "[t]hey have a dispute", and orders his men to attack. The consequences are disastrous as Ghazāla, Shabīb's wife, is killed in the confusion.[723]

Apart from such bothersome practical details as to how the other Khārijites could have just left in the middle of battle or how Shabīb's remaining 40 men could have possibly withstood al-Ḥajjāj's army of 4,000 – even allowing for a disproportionately high number of casualties among the latter –, the purpose of this report and others like it is clear: it serves to delineate the volatility of Khārijism and the resulting weakness that makes it prone to failure. What little heresiographical material is contained in the historical *akhbār* for this period of Khārijite history has the same objective. Its major concern is not the doctrinal content in itself, which is sketchy at best and obviously schematized, but rather the potential for division and strife resulting from a far too unyielding and punctilious understanding of Islam displayed by the Azāriqa and others. The perpetual disagreements over often minute doctrinal details and the near-impossible requirements imposed on the leader illustrate not only the pettiness of the Khārijite mindset, but – most importantly – point out the inherent fallibility of Khārijism and its obsession with militant piety, which is thus discarded as a viable model for a Muslim way of life.

Connected to this rejection of the volatile nature of Khārijism is an issue that we have already come across in al-Ṭabarī's material on Khārijite revolts during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya, namely, the dangers of tribal and civil strife. As I argued in Chapter Four, al-Ṭabarī appears rather preoccupied with the repercussions of revolt for the social, political and religious cohesion of the Islamic empire. This can be observed again in the reports for this period, and not just in al-Ṭabarī's work. Moreover, this particular concern also seems to be related to the development of the *sunnī-jamāʿī* view and more specifically to the formation of the 'four-caliph-thesis'. I will demonstrate both points in what follows.

Both al-Ṭabarī and particularly al-Balādhurī preserve a number of reports blaming the initial success of the Khārijites in Basra on the tribal strife that emerged there and in Iraq more generally after the death of Yazīd I in 63 AH/683-684 CE. When ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād eventually fled Basra for Syria, the revolts and tribal strife that had simmered under

[723] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 967; Rowson, *Restoration*, 117.

his governorship broke out in earnest and threatened the safety of the garrison town and its hinterland. Among the rebels were the Khārijites who, depending on the report, had used the chaos after Ibn Ziyād's flight to escape from his prison. The Basrans were so distracted by the tribal discord that they did not pay much attention at all to the Khārijites who were therefore able to use the situation to their advantage.[724] These accounts are a clear warning of the dangers of civil strife for it can have ramifications that extend far beyond a simple feud between two (or more) tribal sections. Given the right circumstances, participation in any factional dispute is thus shown to carry the potential for bloodshed of an unforeseen magnitude, at least if we believe the reports of the thousands of victims, soldiers and civilians alike, that the Khārijites left in their wake.

The clearest indication that tribal strife was a major concern of the early Islamic scholars, however, is found in the reports on the murder of Masʿūd b. ʿAmr al-Azdī. While the various reports differ in detail, the nucleus of the story can be summarized thusly: at some point shortly after Yazīd's death, the Basrans rebelled against ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād who fled to Syria. Before his somewhat hasty departure, he appointed Masʿūd as his deputy. The precise details of what follows are seriously confused, but in any case it seems that the Tamīm and the Qays were dissatisfied with him. However, Masʿūd refused to leave his post and was eventually murdered. The circumstances of his death are not clear at all; al-Balādhurī alone transmits a plethora of different reports. Nevertheless, most accounts claim the involvement of both the Khārijites and the Tamīmī chief, al-Ahnaf b. Qays. According to these accounts, a group of Khārijites had left Basra and was encamped nearby. Al-Ahnaf reportedly sent a message to these Khawārij and told them that Masʿūd was their common enemy, disclosing his location in the process. Thereupon, the Khārijites entered Basra, killed Masʿūd and a number of his supporters, and were subsequently driven out of town again by Masʿūd's enraged Azdī clansmen.[725]

[724] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 517-518, 581; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 105-106, 401. For a report of an Iraqi soldier being allowed to take part in the battle against Shabīb precisely because him and his men had "never participated in factionalism", see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 956.

[725] For all this, and the various different stories, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 461; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, VI/1, 396-427.

What is important here for our purposes is the connection between the Khārijites and the tribal discord ravaging Basra. Clearly, the murder of Masʿūd was a significant story – al-Balādhurī devoted over 30 pages to the variant reports, with only a few other topics thrown in for good measure. However, it is not the Khārijites who are the point here but rather the issue of the conflict between Azd and Tamīm/Qays. Leaving aside al-Ahnaf's role as a cunning politician getting rid of his rival by using a third party, the Khārijites are obviously just a convenient tool, both within the context of the story and for its re-telling in the literature. No statement of theirs regarding Masʿūd is transmitted, no indication at all as to why they would be doing al-Ahnaf's bidding as he is certainly not a fellow Khārijite, nothing beyond the mere mentioning of their involvement. Nevertheless, it is only because of the chaos caused by intertribal strife that the Khārijites can cause such havoc. While they did not instigate it, they certainly reap the profits of the civil discord resulting from a dangerous focus on tribal *ʿaṣabīya*. In order to prevent such discord, it is necessary to unite as many people as possible under as wide an umbrella as feasible, and it is at this point that we turn to the development of the four-caliph-thesis.

The source material gives the impression that the status of ʿAlī and ʿUthmān is still one of the main issues in the Khārijites' opposition to the non-Khārijite majority of the *umma* in doctrinal matters. This might appear surprising at first, considering that the period in question seems to have given rise to the formation of Khārijite groups with far more developed beliefs than the first protesters at Ṣiffīn or the rather lacklustre rebels of Muʿāwiya's time. However, it makes perfect sense within the context of opposition to civil strife and a mindset of religious radicalism, both of which were certainly relevant issues in the ninth and tenth century CE when the source material was codified. Civil discord and religious fervour constituted exactly the kind of milieu in which the Khārijites reportedly thrived. The historiographers preserve several reports according to which the Khārijites dissociate from either ʿUthmān or ʿAlī or both[726] and are condemned for their rejection of the two rulers:

[726] E.g. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 515, 882-883, 900; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 138; Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 248; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 92, 93-94; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 395.

> I have heard what you have accused him [ʿUthmān] of, but it was not like that. Rather, he always acted worthily and I bear witness to you and to those here present that I am a friend of Ibn ʿAffān in this world and in the next, and a friend of his friends and enemy of his enemies.[727]

Ibn Aʿtham preserves a very telling story of al-Ḥajjāj interrogating a number of Khārijites after Shabīb's death and the defeat of his men. When the survivors from among Shabīb's companions are brought to him, al-Ḥajjāj questions them about their religious beliefs. Without fail, they all reply that they follow the religion of one or another Biblical prophet, from Noah to Muḥammad, and without fail, al-Ḥajjāj agrees with them. However, when he asks about their opinion on ʿAlī and ʿUthmān, each one of the rebels calls them both unbelievers. In response, al-Ḥajjāj orders their execution. This goes on for some time until he encounters the last Khārijite sent to him, who says that he follows Muḥammad, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar but does not revile ʿUthmān and ʿAlī, either. Consequently, al-Ḥajjāj releases him.[728]

There are some odd elements to this story. First, why would al-Ḥajjāj, a steadfast supporter of the Umayyads in general and ʿAbd al-Malik in particular, care about the reputation of ʿAlī? Second, why would this last rebel have joined the Khārijites if he had no problem with ʿUthmān and ʿAlī? As we have just seen, the rejection of these two rulers is still one of the hallmarks of Khārijism. The potential positivist answers to these questions aside, from a literary point of view, the objective of Ibn Aʿtham's story is obviously to establish the soundness of both ʿUthmān and ʿAlī as caliphs alongside Abū Bakr and ʿUmar and to denounce the rejection of the former two as heretical. The fact that al-Ḥajjāj is remembered for his loyalty to ʿAbd al-Malik only strengthens this point. What is more, it appears that the problem is not necessarily religious in nature as al-Ḥajjāj approves of his prisoners' self-identification as followers of Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, and so forth; rather, what he takes issue with is the socio-political element involved in rejecting various important members of the *umma* as unbelievers.[729] The Khārijites' definition of the *umma* is shown to be too

[727] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516-517; Hawting, *Collapse*, 101.
[728] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 92-95.
[729] Some of the Khārijites also reject Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr and, as usual among the Khawārij, Abū Mūsā and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ. Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 93.

narrow, incapable of encompassing a large enough section of the population, let alone the majority, to avoid factional conflict.

Finally, the reports of Shabīb's rebellion contain a very telling episode that underlines the irreconcilable difference between Khārijism and the *jamāʿī* approach. At one stage during his revolt, Shabīb comes up against a combined army of Kufan soldiers under the supreme command of Zāʾida b. Qudāma. Before the battle, Zāʾida exhorts his troops to fight the Khārijites whom he denounces as riffraff and deviators:

> O servants of God, you are the virtuous many, afflicted by a wicked few… Take a look at them, by God! They are not even two hundred – diners on a single head of cattle! They are nothing but bandits and renegades, and they have come to you only to spill your blood and take your spoil… They are few, and you are many; *they belong to a sect, while you belong to a community*.[730]

In sum, the Khārijites' volatility and particularity regarding their acceptance of individual members and entire divisions of the Muslim society constitutes a counterpoint to the *sunnī-jamāʿī* approach that seeks to unite as many members of the *umma* as possible. Factionalism, religious extremism, a pedantic obsession with the letter of the Qurʾān and a radical insistence on minute doctrinal issues all lead to bloodshed and strife, which in turn threatens the stability of the Islamic empire and its society. As the Khārijites violate the precepts of *jamāʿī* politics and refuse to listen to reason, the response has to be just as fierce as their own behaviour towards non-Khārijites. It is possible, then, that the material discussing the Khārijites' attitude towards ʿUthmān and ʿAlī developed at the same time the four-caliph-thesis was being worked out. If we can trust the *isnāds* of the *akhbār* in question[731], that would indicate a tentative date of the late eighth/early ninth century for the initial stages of the formation process of one of Sunnism's core tenets.

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[730] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 923; Rowson, *Restoration*, 75 [italics added]. Note the emphasis on the Khārijites being the "wicked few" opposing the "virtuous many" – this is a direct reference to the Qurʾānic "small group"/"large group" dichotomy so often employed in Khārijite rhetoric, but Zāʾida reverses it to decry the much smaller rebel party.

[731] Al-Ṭabarī relates both accounts quoted in notes 727 and 730 on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf and, in the case of the first, Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī. Ibn Aʿtham does not provide individual *isnāds*, but the authorities listed in his introduction to the *Futūḥ* are all firmly late eighth/early ninth century CE transmitters, such al-Madāʾinī.

"The Hypocrites' Chief" – The Censure of Umayyad Governors Continued

In Chapter Four, I argued that al-Balādhurī in particular used the narratives of Khārijite endeavours to criticise the tyranny and impiety of the Umayyads as represented by their government officials and especially ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād.[732] The same mechanism is at work in the material for this period, as exemplified in a statement by Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ intended to exhort his companions to revolt:

> You see how injustice has become the rule and justice has been effaced. These [Umayyad] governors only increase in their excesses and arrogance toward the people, their remoteness from right, and their effrontery before the Lord. Ready yourselves, then, and send for your brethren who desire, as you do, to reject the wrong and summon to the right.[733]

In order to avoid repetition, however, I will only discuss the reputation of al-Ḥajjāj. The portrayal of this particular Iraqi governor is more complex than that of Ibn Ziyād, who seems to have been universally disliked by just about everybody. As we have already seen, however, al-Ḥajjāj is not exclusively cast as a villain; his insistence on the legitimacy of both ʿAlī and ʿUthmān, for instance, puts him firmly within the *jamāʿī* camp. Nevertheless, most of the works considered here transmit a number of reports ranging from mildly critical to wholly damning. In what follows, I will first look at implicit as well as explicit condemnations of al-Ḥajjāj in the context of Khārijite revolts and then conclude this section by reinforcing the Khārijites' censure of al-Ḥajjāj with examples of non-Khārijite criticism of the governor. I will show that despite their differences in background, political views and religious affiliation, Khārijites and non-Khārijites raise more or less the same accusations against al-Ḥajjāj.

Most of the sources mention al-Ḥajjāj's reputation for instilling fear in his subordinates and for being a harsh master in general, portraying him as often unreasonable and unjust in his decision making. His religious credentials are often called into question as well, implying that he cares more about worldly success than following God's commands.

[732] See Chapter Four, section 4.1.2.
[733] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 884; Rowson, *Restoration*, 36.

This applies to his conduct with regard to both Khārijites and non-Khārijites. Interestingly, the most severe criticism of al-Ḥajjāj is found in reports regarding the latter rather than the former. Nevertheless, let us take a look at Khārijite accusations at this governor first. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Aʿtham are the two author-compilers who preserve the most specific allegations levelled against al-Ḥajjāj by the rebels and will thus be discussed in somewhat more detail than the remaining works.

Ibn Aʿtham in particular transmits a range of accounts that attack al-Ḥajjāj's commitment to Islam. In the wake of Shabīb's defeat by an army commanded by Sufyān b. al-Abrad, al-Ḥajjāj has some of the surviving rebels brought to him, as I already mentioned in the preceding section. He asks the first Khārijite he interrogates, the *shaykh* of the rebels according to the report, whether he prefers this world to the next. The Khārijite replies: "No, O Ḥajjāj! Rather, I chose the Hereafter over this world with my *khurūj* against you and your transgressing companion [i.e., ʿAbd al-Malik]." Thereupon al-Ḥajjāj orders his head to be cut off, but the *shaykh* tells him to wait a little because he wants to recite two lines of poetry first. Al-Ḥajjāj grants this and the Khārijite states:

> Before God, I declare myself quit of ʿAmr [b. al-ʿĀṣ] and his party / and of ʿAlī and the people of Ṣiffīn;
> and of Muʿāwiya the deviator and his party / God does not bless the damned.

Then he is killed and al-Ḥajjāj moves on to the next Khārijite.[734]

Not much needs to be said about the obviously literary character of this episode. The piety of the Khārijite rebel who does not beg for mercy but uses his last breath to dissociate himself from those he believes are transgressors might be misguided, but it is certainly a way to illustrate al-Ḥajjāj's apparent lack of godliness that causes men everyone to revolt against him. The discussion of his condemnation by non-Khārijites following this section will further confirm this image of al-Ḥajjāj. It is also apparent in his interactions with another one of the captive Khārijites, and a woman at that. After he has released the one Khārijite who does not revile ʿUthmān and ʿAlī[735], a female Khārijite and one of their

[734] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 92.
[735] See above, p. 211, note 728.

mutakallimāt called Umm ʿAlqama comes forward to confront al-Ḥajjāj, who says: "O enemy of God! Praise be to God who killed your father, your brother and your husband [who were all Khārijites as well]!" She responds by saying, "Yes, praise be to God who sent them to Paradise and placed me behind them."[736] They argue for a while, but al-Ḥajjāj gets angry because she keeps averting her eyes, so eventually he orders her to look up at him. However, she responds rather boldly: "Verily, I hate to look upon him who God does not lay his eyes on!" Al-Ḥajjāj is not amused and orders her execution, and while the swords cut her open, she keeps repeating the Khārijite slogan *lā ḥukma illā li-llāh*.[737]

This is a classic, if brief, Khārijite martyrdom story. It is certainly a *topos* as her demise closely resembles that of other (in)famous Khārijites, from Ibn Muljam[738] to ʿUrwa b. Udayya[739] to Shabīb b. Yazīd[740]. It serves to demonstrate not only the indomitable fortitude of the Khārijites but also their piety – unshakable until the end –which al-Ḥajjāj cannot hope to defeat. While he might be victorious in the military sense, morally he has already lost. No matter how many Khārijites he orders to be executed, their godliness will always contrast with his own rather lacklustre religious credentials. Exactly the same mechanism could be observed in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of the Basran quietists during Muʿāwiya's rule, discussed in Chapter Four.

The final and simultaneously most powerful example of a Khārijite pointing out al-Ḥajjāj's failings as a Muslim in Ibn Aʿtham's work is found in his account of Shabīb's revolt. When Shabīb invades Kufa, he eventually comes up to al-Ḥajjāj's residence and calls out to him: "O enemy of God! O son of Abū Righāl! O brother of Thamūd! Come out to us!"[741] While the "enemy of God" reference is universal, the allusion to Abū Righāl certainly is not. There are two main traditions regarding Abū Righāl: either he was the Thaqafī tribesman who guided Abraha in his campaign against the Meccans, or the sole

[736] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 95.
[737] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 96.
[738] See Chapter Six, the section on Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*.
[739] See Chapter Four, section 4.1.2.
[740] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 973-975.
[741] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 88.

surviving member of Thamūd who died after leaving the sanctuary of Mecca.[742] Ibn Aʿtham appears to combine both versions here, as al-Ḥajjāj was a Thaqafī and Shabīb also calls him "brother of Thamūd". In any case, neither comparison is particularly flattering. In fact, Shabīb declares in no uncertain terms that he considers al-Ḥajjāj an unbeliever of the worst kind. Al-Ḥajjāj responds by telling his men not to react at all, hoping that God would destroy the Khārijites.[743] Alas, his hopes are in vain, and after some fierce fighting, al-Ḥajjāj and his men flee before Shabīb.[744] This in itself indicates that God is not particularly partial to al-Ḥajjāj, and the account of his flight adds insult to injury by implying that he is also a coward. Thus, three little phrases are enough to seriously put al-Ḥajjāj's status and qualities as a Muslim into question.

Another way in which Ibn Aʿtham casts a negative light on al-Ḥajjāj is the conflict between the governor and al-Muhallab regarding the best way to engage the Azāriqa. While there is no explicit criticism of al-Ḥajjāj in these reports, his attitude towards al-Muhallab reflects badly on him, particularly within the framework of Ibn Aʿtham's glorification of the Muhallabids. Al-Ḥajjāj is shown to be impatient, demanding that al-Muhallab take action despite the latter's expertise in dealing with the Azraqites: against al-Ḥajjāj's request, al-Muhallab would prefer to wait either for the death of Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa or for the Khārijites to split up or else get tired of war. Al-Ḥajjāj is unconvinced, however, going so far as to accuse al-Muhallab of prolonging the war with the Khawārij for his own enjoyment.[745] He then sends out messengers to assess al-Muhallab's commitment to battling the Khārijites. Considering Ibn Aʿtham's portrayal of al-Muhallab, it comes as no surprise that each and every envoy returns to al-Ḥajjāj with a glowing testimony of the Muhallabids' steadfastness in the face of as fierce an enemy as the Azāriqa, and al-Ḥajjāj has to acknowledge al-Muhallab's efforts eventually.[746] In this manner, al-Ḥajjāj is depicted as unreasonable, prone to rashness and lacking the necessary background

[742] EI^2, "Abū Righāl" (S. A. Bonebakker). For more variants of the Abū Righāl story, see J. Stetkevytch: *Muhammad and the Golden Bough. Reconstructing Arabian Myth*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, 36-49.
[743] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 88.
[744] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 90. See also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III-IV, 139.
[745] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 18.
[746] For all this, see Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, VII, 17-26. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 1004-1005; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 287.

knowledge to make an informed decision, which not only casts doubt on his abilities as a governor but also contrasts with the patience and circumspection of al-Muhallab, who emerges from this conflict of opinion as the clear victor.

Turning to al-Ṭabarī, it appears that the material discussing al-Ḥajjāj's shortcoming in his work is mostly related to non-Khārijites, perhaps in order to render the disapproval heaved upon this notorious figure even more damning than his condemnation exclusively by rebels would otherwise imply. The only explicitly negative depiction of the governor stemming from his persecution of the Khārijites is found in the Shabīb story. As in Ibn Aʿtham's material, there are reports of al-Ḥajjāj's cowardice when directly confronted with the Khawārij himself, even dressing up some of his *mawālī* in his own clothes in order to escape Shabīb's notice.[747] Likewise, it takes him a few days to make up his mind about engaging Shabīb's rebels himself despite the havoc wreaked by the Khārijites both in Kufa and her surroundings.[748] However, his bad reputation among either his contemporaries or the later generations or both is most obvious in the story of Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. Ṭalḥa, the grandson of the famous Companion, and his death at the hands of Shabīb.

Al-Ṭabarī preserves three consecutive but very different versions of Muḥammad b. Mūsā's death in battle against the Khārijites, the first from Abū Mikhnaf, the second on the authority of "someone other than Abū Mikhnaf" and the third from ʿUmar b. Shabba on Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā. Abū Mikhnaf's report emphasizes Muḥammad b. Mūsā's courage, stating that while many of his comrades have surrendered to Shabīb, Muḥammad continues to fight, stopping only to order the call for prayer. When the Khārijites charge him after completing their prayer, he recites Q 29:1-3 ('Alif. Lām. Mīm. Do the people reckon they will be left to say "we believe" and not be tried? We put to the test those who came before them, so that God may know those who were sincere and those who were lying') and fights them until he is killed.[749] In Abū Mikhnaf's report, Muḥammad is thus shown to be a pious and brave Muslim until the end, recognizing his duty to stand

[747] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 966, 967. See also Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 274.
[748] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 963, 966. For the entire story of Shabīb's second invasion of Kufa and the ensuing battle with al-Ḥajjāj, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 956-968. Al-Ṭabarī is the only early source to report two invasions of Kufa, all other works only list the one that includes the battle between Shabīb and al-Ḥajjāj. See Rowson, *Restoration*, 70 note 283.
[749] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 926-927.

firm in his belief and accept whatever hardships might come his way as God's will. The death of such a righteous man is lamentable and highlights the dire consequences of (Shabīb's) *fitna*, but it is also a pretty straightforward Islamic tale of martyrdom. The second and third accounts, however, are rather more complex and throw a very undesirable light on al-Ḥajjāj.

The report from "someone other than Abū Mikhnaf" is completely different from the first. According to this version, ʿAbd al-Malik appointed Muḥammad b. Mūsā as governor of Sijistān and sent him on his way, telling him to go through Kufa. The caliph advised al-Ḥajjāj to provision Muḥammad with troops and supplies, but Muḥammad continued to postpone his departure from Kufa against the advice of his companions who cautioned him that he might get embroiled in conflict if did not leave.[750] Of course, those words proved 'prophetic' when Shabīb rebelled against the Umayyads. The report in question picks up a few pages later: while Muḥammad is in Kufa, al-Ḥajjāj asks him to fight Shabīb, which Muḥammad agrees to. Shabīb, however, beseeches him several times not to engage in battle against the Khārijites because Muḥammad is Shabīb's neighbour in Kufa, where the rebel apparently owns a house, and thus entitled to Shabīb's protection. He tells Muḥammad that al-Ḥajjāj only uses him to get rid of the rebels instead of taking them on himself. Muḥammad insists on fighting Shabīb, however, calling for single combat. Shabīb gives in, but once again pleads with him not to throw away his life so needlessly. Alas, Muḥammad does not desist and Shabīb kills him. Then, however, he has Muḥammad dressed and buried according to custom, buys up the spoils taken from his camp and sends them to Muḥammad's family, justifying his actions against the protests of his fellow Khārijites.[751]

While the content of this account differs greatly from that of the first, the positive depiction of Muḥammad b. Mūsā remains, albeit with a focus on his sense of duty rather than his piety. The blame for his death rests firmly on al-Ḥajjāj's manipulations, while Shabīb, who wields the death blow after all, is excused for his actions as he did not have a choice. At this point, Shabīb is portrayed as an honourable combatant who goes out of his

[750] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 920.
[751] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 927-928.

way to avoid bloodshed rather than as the violent rebel other reports make him out to be. The third report from ʿUmar b. Shabba confirms this depiction and is similar in content, but its condemnation of al-Ḥajjāj is even more pronounced.

The third variant begins by praising Muḥammad's bravery and valour against the Khārijite Abū Fudayk, whom he fought on the Arabian Peninsula, and points out Muḥammad's marriage ties to ʿAbd al-Malik.[752] Muḥammad is appointed as governor by ʿAbd al-Malik, and when he passes through Kufa on the way to his province, "it [is] suggested to al-Ḥajjāj" that Muḥammad could be a potential threat as he might not always do as told by al-Ḥajjāj because of his position and his bravery. Al-Ḥajjāj should thus greet him, praise his bravery, then mention how Shabīb is causing problems and that he hopes God will rid them of the Khārijites through Muḥammad. Al-Ḥajjāj does as suggested and Muḥammad agrees to pursue Shabīb. The Khārijite rebel in turn tries to dissuade Muḥammad from fighting him by arguing that al-Ḥajjāj set him up and saying that he valued Muḥammad too highly to see him die. Muḥammad, however, does not go back on his word to al-Ḥajjāj and is eventually killed by Shabīb in single combat.[753]

As in the second report, both Muḥammad and Shabīb are painted as tragic heroes. Muḥammad is presented as an honourable man whose sense of duty ultimately dooms him. Shabīb so obviously does not want to kill Muḥammad but is left out of options because of Muḥammad's insistence. Al-Ḥajjāj, on the other hand, is portrayed as an unsavoury, manipulative character who does not refrain from sending a righteous man to his death in order to secure his own power and position. His particular interests are more important to him than a fellow Muslim's life; his selfishness prevents him from considering the greater good. Worse even, he lets his actions and opinions be dictated by equally disreputable elements. In consequence, this and the preceding account call into question not only al-Ḥajjāj's suitability for the office of governor, but also pass a harsh judgment of his qualities as a Muslim and a human being more generally.

The negative image of al-Ḥajjāj in the accounts of his interactions with the Khārijites is confirmed by the reports of his dealings with non-Khārijites as well. Indeed,

[752] ʿAbd al-Malik was married to Muḥammad's sister ʿĀʾisha. See Madelung, *Succession*, 379.
[753] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 928.

the disapproval of his actions is even more pronounced here, as we shall see in due course. Al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī both transmit plenty of stories pitting rather prominent Muslims against al-Ḥajjāj. For the time period in question, this applies in particular to al-Balādhurī's portrayal of Ibn al-Zubayr's death and its aftermath as well as to al-Ṭabarī's depiction of activities in the Umayyad camp during the uprising of Shabīb. Let us begin by looking at al-Balādhurī's accounts of the interaction between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Zubayr's mother Asmāʾ bt. Abī Bakr after her son's death in battle against al-Ḥajjāj's troops.

As we saw above[754], Asmāʾ is very outspoken when it comes to criticising al-Ḥajjāj. I have already discussed her statement that by killing Ibn al-Zubayr, al-Ḥajjāj ruined the Hereafter for himself. This not the only example of her disapproval, however. Like Shabīb in Ibn Aʿtham's work, she is shown to insult al-Ḥajjāj by calling him "Abū Righāl" as well[755], voicing her contempt of the Iraqi governor who is likened to the worst of the pre-Islamic unbelievers in this fashion. This epithet is especially scathing as Ibn al-Zubayr was a revered Companion, the first child to be born after the *hijra*, the grandson of Abū Bakr and son of one of Muḥammad's closest confidants. The contrast between al-Ḥajjāj and Ibn al-Zubayr could thus not be any greater. Along these lines, even ʿAbd al-Malik reproaches al-Ḥajjāj for crucifying Ibn al-Zubayr after his death[756], a punishment the latter had feared greatly in the event of his defeat.[757] On another level, the use of the appellation "Abū Righāl" by a non-Khārijite is one more example of the lack of a distinctive Khārijite identity or essence and underlines once again that the point is not necessarily *who* says something but *what* is being said. In this case, there appears to be a universal dissatisfaction with al-Ḥajjāj's religious qualities that is shared by Khārijites and non-Khārijites alike.

Al-Balādhurī chose to finish the section on Ibn al-Zubayr and the conflict between his mother and al-Ḥajjāj with a particularly damning assessment of al-Ḥajjāj, implying perhaps that in his opinion, Asmāʾ's statement really is the last word on this whole affair. She tells al-Ḥajjāj: "I heard God's messenger (ṣ.) say: 'Among Thaqīf [al-Ḥajjāj's tribe] there are the destroyer (*mubīr*; one who is excessive in destroying others) and the liar'…

[754] See Chapter One, section 1.1.
[755] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 386.
[756] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 385.
[757] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 377.

Regarding the destroyer, you are him!" Al-Ḥajjāj responds by saying, "[I am] the destroyer of hypocrites, the destroyer of hypocrites (*mubīr al-munāfiqīn*)." Asmāʾ, however, retorts: "Nay, rather, their [the hypocrites'] chief!"[758]

Al-Ṭabarī's work contains equally negative reports concerning al-Ḥajjāj within the context of a variant report on Shabīb's battle with the governor in Kufa. It is an eyewitness account transmitted from ʿUmar b. Shabba, who was also the authority quoted for the third variant of al-Ṭabarī's account of Muḥammad b. Mūsā, discussed above. It appears, then, that at least some of ʿUmar b. Shabba's material was decidedly critical of al-Ḥajjāj, certainly more so than in comparison to Abū Mikhnaf. The report relevant here emphasizes this point: according to the eyewitness, al-Ḥajjāj summons his advisors and military commanders after Shabīb has defeated all of the armies sent out against him. The governor asks for advice, telling his companions to speak their mind even if they disagree with him. The only one to speak up frankly is Qutayba b. Muslim, stating that al-Ḥajjāj had "neither feared God nor defended the Commander of the Faithful nor shown any commitment toward his subjects."[759] Al-Ḥajjāj is enraged and asks who has spoken so boldly. Qutayba repeats his words, and when the governor inquires what he meant by them, he tells al-Ḥajjāj to go out against the enemy himself to call them to account. Al-Ḥajjāj listens to his advice, and after a fierce battle two days later, the Khārijites are defeated.[760]

Another version of this report follows the first one. Here, al-Ḥajjāj reprimands the Kufans for their lack of commitment in fighting Shabīb and requests Syrian troops to be sent to him instead. At this point, Qutayba stands up and says, "You have shown commitment neither to God nor to the Commander of the Faithful in fighting them."[761] Al-Ḥajjāj again asks Qutayba about his meaning, to which his critic responds that al-Ḥajjāj sent out noble commanders but only gave them inadequate troops from the "riffraff". Unsurprisingly, they are defeated, and the commanders are so ashamed that they fight to the death. Qutayba advises the governor to go out against the rebels himself, with "men your

[758] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 387.
[759] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 962; Rowson, *Restoration*, 112.
[760] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 962-963.
[761] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 963; Rowson, *Restoration*, 114-115.

equal, who will defend you as they do themselves."[762] Al-Ḥajjāj follows his suggestion and the rebels are eventually defeated.[763]

The point of this entire variant section on Shabīb's battle with al-Ḥajjāj is clearly the interaction between Qutayba and the governor. Qutayba's courage in speaking up against a man who is feared by friend and foe alike is certainly an important aspect, but the harsh criticism of al-Ḥajjāj is even more significant. It fits in well with the preceding examples of al-Ḥajjāj's reputation among both Khārijites and non-Khārijites as here, too, al-Ḥajjāj is chastised for his shortcomings as both a Muslim and a governor. His reprimand of the Kufan troops for their lack of spirit is turned on him, pointing out quite sharply that the responsibility for defeating Shabīb rests with him, not anyone else. His policy of sending out only incompetent men with his commanders reflects very badly on his decision making and puts the blame for Shabīb's success firmly on his head. It is only when he follows the advice of a better man and better commander than himself, the formidable Qutayba b. Muslim, that he is finally successful in his campaign against the Khārijites.

To conclude, there are several reports in the historiographical tradition regarding this time period that throw a negative light on al-Ḥajjāj, both in his capacity as governor and as a Muslim. The fact that such prominent members of the *umma* as Asmāʾ bt. Abī Bakr and Qutayba b. Muslim condemn al-Ḥajjāj's conduct only exacerbates the harsh assessments of his persona. This unfavourable image is universal: both Khārijites and non-Khārijites essentially agree on al-Ḥajjāj's failings. The similarity of the accusations levelled against him by both groups also points out again that there is hardly anything distinctly Khārijite about the individual insurgents and factions portrayed in the source material, an observation that is particularly obvious in the use of the epithet "Abū Righāl" by Shabīb as well as Asmāʾ. Lastly, the focus on al-Ḥajjāj reinforces the point that the material does not discuss Khārijism as an end in itself but in order to raise other issues. This is especially the case for the reports of Qutayba's dealings with al-Ḥajjāj. The conflict between Shabīb and

[762] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 964; Rowson, *Restoration*, 115.
[763] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 963-964. For an earlier example of al-Ḥajjāj being advised by a prominent Muslim – here Zuhra b. Ḥawīya, a veteran of the conquest of Iraq and a hero of al-Qādisīya – see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 942.

the governor is a subsidiary matter that is only relevant in so far as it serves as a stage on which to perform the drama featuring al-Ḥajjāj and Qutayba.

"I Am a Friend of Ibn ʿAffān in This World and the Next"[764] *– Ibn al-Zubayr and the Khārijites*

After al-Muhallab and al-Ḥajjāj, the sources are concerned with one other major figure in early Islamic history: ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr. The interactions between Ibn al-Zubayr and the Khārijites are mostly limited to the early stages of his caliphate, at the time of the first siege of Mecca before the death of Yazīd I. There is no direct contact between them after that event, other than Ibn al-Zubayr appointing military commanders, chief among them al-Muhallab, to fight the Azāriqa and the Najdīya. The portrayal of Ibn al-Zubayr that emerges from these accounts is rather mixed, especially in the rendering of al-Balādhurī. I will first give an overview of the Khārijite involvement with the Zubayrid cause and then proceed to discuss how Ibn al-Zubayr's approach to the Khawārij reflects on his character in the works of al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī, as they are the only two sources to transmit relatively detailed information on the conflict between Ibn al-Zubayr and the Khārijites.

Both al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī confirm that on the occasion of the Syrians' first siege of Mecca, the Khārijites or Khārijites-to-be decided to support Ibn al-Zubayr against the forces of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya.[765] Al-Ṭabarī explains the Khārijite involvement as follows: after the death of Abū Bilāl[766], ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād became even more invested in the persecution of the Khawārij and strove to eradicate them completely. Hence, when Ibn al-Zubayr established himself in Mecca and the Syrians marched against him, the Khārijites gathered to discuss their options. In this version of the story, told by al-Ṭabarī on the authority of Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī and Abū Mikhnaf, Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq is given credit for convincing his fellow Khārijites to support Ibn al-Zubayr:

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[764] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516.
[765] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 425-426, 514-517, 529; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 394-395, and IV/2, 401, 372-373, 455.
[766] See Chapter Four.

> God sent down the Book to you and in it He imposed *jihād* as an obligation upon you and remonstrated with you with clear eloquence. The swords of the evil ones and those with enmity and oppression [i.e., the Syrians] have been unsheathed against you. Now there is this one who has risen in Mecca [i.e., Ibn al-Zubayr], so let us go out together and we will come to the sanctuary and join this man. If he is of our opinions, we will join him in *jihād* against the enemy; if his opinions are different from ours, we will fight in defense of the sanctuary to the best of our ability and afterward consider our situation.[767]

The account continues by stating that Ibn al-Zubayr was pleased with their support and even implied that he shared their views, avoiding *istiʿrāḍ*. They fought together until the death of Yazīd and the Syrians' departure from Mecca. The hostilities having ceased, the Khārijites discussed how to proceed, with one party saying they were wrong to have joined Ibn al-Zubayr who not long ago had opposed them in his calls for vengeance for ʿUthmān. Thus, they decided to interrogate him about his views on ʿUthmān, but Ibn al-Zubayr, worried about his safety as only a few of his supporters were around, told them to return in the evening. The Khārijites did so and were met by a large group of Ibn al-Zubayr's men armed and ready for conflict. Nevertheless, Nāfiʿ told ʿUbayda b. Hilāl to explain the Khārijites' views on Muḥammad and his successors up to ʿUthmān, so ʿUbayda told Ibn al-Zubayr that they accepted Abū Bakr and ʿUmar but not ʿUthmān because of his many transgressions, which he names in detail:

> ʿUthmān (…) created reserved areas, favored kinship, appointed youths to positions of authority, abolished the lash and laid aside the whip, destroyed the Book, shed the blood of the Muslim, beat those who rejected oppression, granted shelter to him whom the Messenger had expelled, and beat those with precedence in merit, drove them out and disposed them. Not content with that, he seized the spoils [*fayʿ*] which God had given to them and shared it out among the godless ones of Quraysh and the shameless ones of the Arabs.[768]

Ibn al-Zubayr agreed with their assessment of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar but disagreed strongly with their censure of ʿUthmān, saying that he was the one person alive that day who knew

[767] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 514; Hawting, *Collapse*, 98.
[768] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516; Hawting, *Collapse*, 99-100.

the most about ʿUthmān. Upon hearing this, the Khārijites and Ibn al-Zubayr dissociated from each other and the Khārijites split into factions upon their return to Basra.[769]

Al-Balādhurī's reports of the Khārijites' initial support for Ibn al-Zubayr are somewhat shorter and emphasize a different issue. In agreement with al-Balādhurī's focus on moral questions and his depiction of the Khārijites as extremely pious (if extremely misguided, too)[770], his account stresses that the Khawārij chose to join Ibn al-Zubayr not to help a potential ally but in order to defend Mecca, "the Sanctuary of God and His House."[771] So a group of Khārijites, among them Najda b. ʿĀmir and ʿAṭīya b. al-Aswad, made their way to Mecca. Of note, there is no mention at all of Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq in al-Balādhurī's reports regarding direct Khārijite interactions with Ibn al-Zubayr. When the Khārijites arrived in Mecca, "the" poet told Ibn al-Zubayr that a people had arrived who had killed his father unlawfully, referring to the Battle of the Camel that many Khārijites had participated in on ʿAlī's side, and asked him whether he would be satisfied with these people. Ibn al-Zubayr replied by stating that even if the devil himself helped him against the Syrians, he would accept him.[772] The rest of the account resembles al-Ṭabarī's report: after the Syrians had left the Ḥijāz, the Khārijites decided to investigate Ibn al-Zubayr's stance on both ʿAlī and ʿUthmān. When he disagreed with them, they left and returned to Basra, where they divided into factions.[773]

Now, both al-Balādhurī's and al-Ṭabarī's version of these events reflect rather negatively on Ibn al-Zubayr. However, while his opportunism is pointed out clearly in al-Ṭabarī's rendering, it is not elaborated on, and he manages to redeem himself from a *jamāʿī* point of view with his outspoken support of ʿUthmān and dissociation from the Khārijites when their views on ʿUthmān are revealed. Al-Balādhurī's account is somewhat more critical. Ibn al-Zubayr is not only presented as unscrupulous in his attempts to gather support, but also as an unprincipled cynic who does not mind relying on the same people who were involved in killing his father. Of course, the remark about the "devil" joining him

[769] For this entire episode, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 513-517. See also Ibn Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 248.
[770] See Chapter Four, introduction and section 4.1.2.
[771] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 394.
[772] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 395.
[773] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 395.

does not reflect well on the Khārijites either. Nonetheless, al-Balādhurī also transmits a report that rectifies Ibn al-Zubayr's approach to an extent. The account is a little confused regarding the actual timeline, as it seems to combine the first with the second siege of Mecca in which Ibn al-Zubayr eventually lost his life.

Al-Balādhurī mentions that a group of Egyptians who later became Khārijites of great courage and strength fought for Ibn al-Zubayr, presumably during the Syrians' first attack on Mecca, and inflicted great damage on the enemy. Ibn al-Zubayr, however, was troubled by their stance on ʿUthmān and said: "By God, I do not like that I seek assistance against my enemy among those who hate ʿUthmān."[774] The Khārijites responded by pointing out that they did not fight with Ibn al-Zubayr, "a man who charged our forebears with unbelief, we only fight for the inviolability of this house [i.e., the Kaʿba]."[775] Then they split from him. The account continues by stating that fighting grew fierce, now presumably during the second attack in 692 CE, until Ibn al-Zubayr was in a dire situation. One of his men told him off for alienating the Khārijites-to-be, reminding him of his statement regarding the help of the devil and claiming that even the Prophet himself asked for assistance from the hypocrites and the Jews in his wars.[776]

Here, then, Ibn al-Zubayr is shown to be somewhat more discerning in his choice of comrades. At the very least he is uncomfortable with the Khārijites' rejection of ʿUthmān. In fact, this report contains two avenues of redemption for Ibn al-Zubayr. First, it is at least implied that Ibn al-Zubayr is under pressure from his men who did not want to lose the Khārijites' support because of their fierceness in battle. More importantly, however, the reference to the Prophet's practice excuses him for accepting help from the Khārijites. Apparently, Muḥammad himself was not averse to a little opportunism if the end justified the means. At the same time, the Khārijites are likened to hypocrites and *dhimmīs* which represents another way of criticising them. The allusion to Muḥammad's *sunna* as a method of vindicating suspect behaviour is a technique we already encountered with regard to ʿAlī, pointing out once again that we are dealing with a dramatized version of history rather than sober 'fact'.

[774] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 372.
[775] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 373.
[776] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 373.

Second, the Khārijites' insistence that they do not fight for Ibn al-Zubayr but rather for God and his sanctuary emphasizes their piety, but also frees Ibn al-Zubayr from accusations of collaboration with rebels and heretics. Most of the reports mentioning the Khārijites' participation in the defence of Mecca highlight this aspect[777]; indeed, there is nothing to indicate that Ibn al-Zubayr agrees with any of their views outside the universal acceptance of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Even al-Ṭabarī's reports make clear that Ibn al-Zubayr only implied his approval of Khārijite beliefs, so while he can justifiably be called an opportunist – and did he really have another choice in the face of the Syrians' march on Mecca? –, nothing worse can be said about him and his dealings with the Khārijites. In point of fact, al-Ṭabarī also preserves a very brief statement according to which not only the Khārijites joined Ibn al-Zubayr, but also al-Mukhtār, both of whom would later be fought by the Zubayrids. Reportedly, even some women joined Ibn al-Zubayr in his fight against the Syrians.[778] This indicates that the defence of Mecca was not necessarily an act of support for Ibn al-Zubayr, but rather an act of piety performed by Muslims of all persuasions. Hence, the stories of Khārijite support for Ibn al-Zubayr can also be read as a condemnation of Yazīd and his Syrian army who dared put in danger the birthplace of Muḥammad.

How to Wage War and Win Battles – Khārijite Revolts as a Military Aptitude Test

The four preceding points of this chapter as well as Chapters Three and Four addressed Khārijism as a tool for discussing individuals and topics of chief concern with regard to both their historical and contemporary significance for Muslim society and the Islamic Empire of the ninth and tenth century CE. The treatment of Khārijite revolts in the historiographical works serves as a means of (re)constructing the past according to the requirements of the present, as evidenced by such major themes as the vindication of ʿAlī, the condemnation of the Umayyads or the dangers of tribal and civil strife. The source material for the time period of the second *fitna* and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik, however,

[777] See the references listed at notes 55 and 58.
[778] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/2, 107.

also uses the subject of Khārijite revolts to get across certain points that at first glance at least appear comparatively minor, such as the use of gender or the recurrence of certain motifs. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, not all of these can be addressed. However, one of these minor aspects, the use of Khārijism as a military aptitude test for the government troops sent to fight the rebels and a theme virtually exclusive to al-Ṭabarī's work, shall be examined in the final segment of this section for reasons that will become obvious rather quickly.

Al-Ṭabarī and/or his sources' depiction of the Khārijite revolts, in particular the Shabīb story, reads like a military how (not) to-manual in large parts. It contains a plethora of remarks that clearly have strategic or tactic relevance and together form a kind of 'mirror for commanders' giving advice on warfare: always make sure to dig a trench around your camp[779]; do not split up your troops as the individual units are weaker than the combined whole[780]; wait for assistance whenever possible[781]; always stay in battle formation[782]; be prepared for nightly attacks[783]; do not forget to put up sentries[784]; avoid disagreement between individual commanders[785]; make sure your soldiers are competent and loyal to their leader to avoid desertion[786]; avoid preconceptions and do not make hasty decisions, but prepare for all eventualities.[787]Here, then, Khārijism serves to assess the skills of the various government armies and in particular their leaders, or rather, the story of Shabīb's revolt specifically is to a large extent a story of military failure on the part of the Umayyad troops. We have already encountered elements of this phenomenon in the reports of al-Muhallab's wars against the Azāriqa: whenever he is removed from his position, the Khārijites manage to regain the upper hand. "Do not remove a successful commander" can therefore be added to the above list of warfare advice.

[779] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 975, 890, 903, 930, 932.
[780] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 903, 942.
[781] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 896-897.
[782] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 930, 932, 959, 970.
[783] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 875, 892, 903-904, 969.
[784] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 900, 960.
[785] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 761, 856, 877, 878, 897, 908, 913-914, 933.
[786] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 587, 853, 857, 888, 898, 902, 926, 930, 948, 952-953, 954, 957, 964, 970, 973.
[787] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 897, 909-910, 933, 943-946, 960.

Two rather self-explanatory examples illustrate how a few comments on war strategy can pronounce a rather harsh judgment of an individual commander's or governor's capabilities. The first is taken from al-Ṭabarī's portrayal of the conflict between al-Muhallab and the Azāriqa. According to Abū Mikhnaf, when Bishr b. Marwān arrived in Basra after being appointed as governor by his brother ʿAbd al-Malik in 74 Ah/693-694 CE, the caliph ordered him to send al-Muhallab against the Azraqites. Bishr should let him choose the best soldiers from Kufa and Basra, as ʿAbd al-Malik trusted al-Muhallab completely in taking care of the Khārijite problem. Bishr, however, was annoyed that his brother had chosen al-Muhallab instead of letting him choose his own commander, leading him to send ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mikhnaf – Abū Mikhnaf's great-uncle – to Kufa to select the most experienced men.[788] Moreover, instead of counselling ʿAbd al-Raḥmān about the troops, strategy or anything else, Bishr tried to incite him against al-Muhallab, telling him to question al-Muhallab whenever possible and to take over command if and when the situation presented itself. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, however, was outraged at Bishr's attempts to influence him against his own clansman, as both belonged to the tribe of Azd.[789]

Bishr's death a short while later delayed the battle with the Azāriqa[790], but a year later al-Muhallab and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān moved against the Khārijites in Rāmhurmuz, pursuing them to Fārs when the rebels fled. Both al-Muhallab and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān set up camp, but while al-Muhallab dug a defensive trench around his, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was convinced that their swords would be sufficient defence against the Azraqites. Consequently, when the Khārijites attacked at night, they found al-Muhallab's camp protected and therefore snuck into ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's instead, killing him in the ensuing battle.[791]

This story of al-Muhallab and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's collaboration against the Khārijites combines several aspects of the 'mirror for commanders': an attempt at sowing discord between two military leaders; a nightly attack; and the importance of digging a trench. While ʿAbd al-Raḥmān is an honourable man who withstands Bishr's attempts at

[788] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 855-856.
[789] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 856.
[790] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 857.
[791] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 875.

manipulation, he is also shown to be imprudent in his decision to forego a defensive trench, bringing about his own death which could have easily been avoided by following al-Muhallab's example. Of course, this also serves to once again underline al-Muhallab's skills as a warrior. Generally speaking, it is an obvious example of foolishness in the face of a dangerous enemy and thus a warning to all military men to avoid such lethal mistakes. Lastly, it also reflects badly on Bishr, who had objected to his brother's appointment of al-Muhallab and selected ʿAbd al-Raḥmān as his champion, implying that ʿAbd al-Malik really did know better than Bishr and that al-Muhallab really was the best choice.

The second example can be found in al-Ṭabarī's account of Shabīb's rebellion. Al-Ḥajjāj orders a certain Sufyān b. Abī al-ʿĀliya al-Khathʿamī to join forces with al-Ḥārith b. ʿUmayra, the commander who had just succeeded in killing Shabīb's companion/predecessor Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ. Sufyān's army took a while to assemble, but Sufyān was impatient to proceed, so he ignored the message of Sawra b. Abjar al-Tamīmī, the head of the cavalry scouts, to wait for his arrival. Sufyān set off to pursue Shabīb and finally caught up with him, but he was so eager to fight the rebel that he dismissed the counsel of one of his unit commanders, who strongly urged him to be cautious and reconnoitre the area first. Sufyān refused to listen and led his troops right into an ambush prepared by Shabīb's Khārijites. Sufyān and some of his men fought vigorously, but most of his soldiers were cut down without any effort on the part of the Khawārij. The only reason Sufyān managed to escape was because one of his servant boys sacrificed himself for him.[792]

This episode contains several themes as well, among them the disagreement between Sawra and Sufyān and the latter's resistance to advice. Sufyān's decision to leave the cavalry scouts, of all army units, behind comes back to haunt him when he walks into Shabīb's trap and is responsible for getting most of his men killed, unnecessarily so. As in the first example, Sufyān's behaviour reflects badly not only on himself, but also on al-Ḥajjāj, whose ill-fated appointment of Sufyān calls into question his own capabilities as a judge of character, a military commander and a governor. This feature of the accounts of Khārijism in the period under study confirms once again that the focus rests not on the

[792] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 896-898.

rebels as an end in itself, but instead serves to demonstrate other matters. It is part subtheme to the criticism of Umayyad authorities, evident especially in Qutayba b. Muslim's censure of al-Ḥajjāj discussed above, and part manual on how to wage war and win battles (or not). While elements of this 'mirror for commanders' are echoed in the other sources' discussion of al-Muhallab and the consequences of his temporary removal from office, the notable concern with military tactic is peculiar to al-Ṭabarī's rendering of the Khārijite wars.

One explanation for this could be al-Ṭabarī's heavy reliance on Abū Mikhnaf for the accounts of the Azāriqa and Shabīb's uprising. As mentioned in passing, some of Abū Mikhnaf's ancestors were reportedly involved in the battles with the Khārijites, and al-Muhallab as an Azdī warrior will certainly have captured the imagination of his fellow tribesmen, so it would not be unreasonable to assume that Abū Mikhnaf had a particular interest in reports of this kind. Furthermore, neither al-Balādhurī nor Ibn Aʿtham seem to have relied on Abū Mikhnaf much, certainly not to the extent al-Ṭabarī did. This might explain why their focus lies firmly on different subjects, but it also makes it extremely difficult to determine whether al-Ṭabarī quoted whatever material of Abū Mikhnaf's he could access, or whether this emphasis on military strategy results from al-Ṭabarī's selection of the relevant reports from among Abū Mikhnaf's works. It might have been a way for al-Ṭabarī to criticise the Umayyad authorities without being too obvious, as his objective of condemning tribal strife and emphasizing the importance of social and imperial stability did not necessarily invite open censure of the government, even that of a bygone dynasty who did not fare too well in the overall judgment of their successors. However, much of this is conjecture and would be very difficult to prove with any degree of certainty.

Excursus: What Makes a Khārijite a Khārijite?

In his *Taʾrīkh,* al-Ṭabarī transmits a rather curious episode under the entry for the year 77 AH/696-697 CE, an account of the rebellion of one Muṭarrif b. al-Mughīra b. Shuʿba against ʿAbd al-Malik. He is the only author-compiler among the examined sources to preserve a relatively detailed report of this event – none of the others even mentions it

within the context of Khārijite activities during this time period. The report of this rebellion is placed directly after the death of Shabīb, with whom Muṭarrif was alleged to have communicated prior to his decision to revolt against ʿAbd al-Malik, and before al-Ṭabarī's final remarks on the defeat of the last Azraqite faction by al-Muhallab and Sufyān b. al-Abrad. Thus, al-Ṭabarī's choice of placement implies a Khārijite context for Muṭarrif's rebellion, but as we shall see in due course, Muṭarrif is never clearly identified as a Khārijite. On the contrary, it appears that what al-Ṭabarī (or his source Abū Mikhnaf?) is trying to do is to differentiate between Khārijite insurgents and rebels of another kind.

The sequence of events regarding Muṭarrif's rebellion can be summarized as follows: Muṭarrif was the governor of al-Madāʾin. When he learned that Shabīb was on approach, he asked al-Ḥajjāj for reinforcements and was sent a few hundred men under the command of ʿAbdallāh b. Kannāz and Sabra b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mikhnaf, whose father had died in battle against the Azāriqa.[793] When Shabīb crossed the Tigris and reached Bahurasīr, Muṭarrif cut the bridge between them, but then asked the Khārijite to send over some of his companions in order to study the Qurʾān together and consider Shabīb's religious convictions. Shabīb agreed to this but in return demanded envoys from Muṭarrif, who gave in after some deliberation and reassurances from Shabīb. Muṭarrif and the Khārijites argued for a few days but were unable to convince the other side of the rightness of their beliefs. Muṭarrif, however, felt that he could no longer fake his obedience to al-Ḥajjāj and ʿAbd al-Malik and decided to rebel regardless of whether the Khārijites would follow him. His decision was apparently also influenced by his fear of al-Ḥajjāj, who he was convinced would hunt him down ruthlessly as soon as he heard about Muṭarrif's interactions with Shabīb. Muṭarrif gathered his men and went to al-Daskara, where he informed them of his intention to revolt. Ibn Kannāz and Sabra pretended to agree with him, but left in secret and informed al-Ḥajjāj of Muṭarrif's uprising. Muṭarrif set out regardless, engaged in some short skirmishes with both government armies and some Kurds, and finally made his way to Hamadhān to ask the governor, his brother Ḥamza, for supplies. From there, he went to Qum and Qāshān, from where he sent letters to al-Rayy to gather support for his cause. Some hundred men from al-Rayy joined Muṭarrif, but then the

[793] See the preceding section.

governor of Iṣfahān asked al-Ḥajjāj to send an army against Muṭarrif's troops. After a long and fierce battle, Muṭarrif was eventually killed.[794]

This episode is fascinating for its use of Khārijite language and sentiment by a prominent Muslim engaging in a non-Khārijite rebellion against the authorities. The point of this entire report seems to be a discussion of legitimate leadership and the correct election process, and it is here that Muṭarrif and Shabīb differ. In fact, it appears that this is the only issue they cannot agree on – otherwise, Muṭarrif's beliefs and language are model Khārijite. This is obvious from the very beginning. When Shabīb's men first come to him, Muṭarrif asks them to expound their Khārijite beliefs, which the rebels are only too happy to do:

> What we advocate is the Book of God and the *sunnah* of Muḥammad, God bless him. What we object to for our people is the expropriation of the spoils, the failure to enforce the Qur'ānic punishments, and the autocratic nature of the regime.[795]

Muṭarrif agrees with them wholeheartedly and then asks the Khārijites to join him in his intentions to "fight with me against these renegade tyrants over the innovation they have introduced and to summon them to the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His Prophet."[796]

When Muṭarrif decides to revolt against ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj, he tells his advisers that he had

> abhorred the deeds of these oppressors [i.e., the Umayyads] all along, protesting against them in my heart and working to undo them as much as possible with my own deeds and orders. Now that their sins have become so great, and I have encountered these people who strive against them, I have decided I have no choice but to oppose and resist them, if I can find allies to support me against them.[797]

This is all classic Khārijite sentiment as portrayed by the historiographical tradition. However, his use of Khārijite language is most obvious in the exhortations addressed to his soldiers and potential allies in al-Rayy:

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[794] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 979-1000.
[795] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 984; Rowson, *Restoration*, 132.
[796] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 984; Rowson, *Restoration*, 132.
[797] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 987; Rowson, *Restoration*, 134-135.

> God has prescribed jihād for His creatures, and commanded them to act with justice and benevolence; He has said in the revelation He sent out, "Help one another to righteousness and piety, but help not one another to sin and injustice; fear God, God is harsh in punishment." [Q 5:2] I make God my witness that I have cast off my allegiance to ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf… [I have] no desire for followers who are not committed to jihād against the tyrants. I summon you to the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His Prophet and to fight against the oppressors.[798]

Finally, he writes in his letter to the people of al-Rayy:

> We summon you to the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His Prophet, and to jihād against him who has obstinately rejected the truth, expropriated the spoils, and abandoned the judgment of the Book… [A]nd no one can obtain God's good pleasure except by adhering steadfastly to God's command and waging jihād against God's enemies.[799]

Both the call to *jihād* as a sacred duty to God and the particular accusations of expropriating the spoils and abandoning the judgment of the Qurʾān are specific Khārijite concerns; the wording as well as the intent are virtually indistinguishable from similar speeches or letters composed by Khārijite rebels.[800] At no point in the account of his revolt, however, is Muṭarrif referred to as belonging to the *shurāt*, the Khawārij, the *ahl al-nahrawān*, the *muḥakkima*, or any other more or less common appellation for the Khārijites, nor does he pronounce the *lā ḥukma*-slogan. Indeed, Muṭarrif himself recognizes that Shabīb would never follow him due to their differences regarding the question of legitimate leadership[801], and when he asks one of his men about the outcome of the battle between Shabīb and al-Ḥajjāj in Kufa, the man says, "I was hoping that Shabīb would win; even if

[798] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 988-989; Rowson, *Restoration*, 136.
[799] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 993; Rowson, *Restoration*, 140.
[800] See e.g. the sermon of Ṣāliḥ b. Musarriḥ in al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 882-884; ʿUbayda b. Hilāl's explanation of Khārijite tenets in al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 516; and the various accusations gathered in Chapter Three, section 3.1.1. Muṭarrif's allegation that al-Ḥajjāj and ʿAbd al-Malik are "tyrants and despots, who follow their own vain opinions, seizing people on idle suspicions and killing them out of simple anger" (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 999; Rowson, *Restoration*, 145) echoes earlier Khārijite accusations against ʿUbaydallāh b. Ziyād (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV/1, 183).
[801] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 987.

he was in error, he would be killing another in error", implying that Muṭarrif shared that view.[802] What, then, makes a Khārijite a Khārijite?

The one issue Shabīb and Muṭarrif cannot agree on is the question of who the candidates for legitimate leadership are and how they should be elected. Both of them clearly disagree with the mode of appointment introduced by Muʿāwiya and perpetuated among others by the current caliph ʿAbd al-Malik. The Khārijites allegedly have a rather liberal approach to leadership in a tribal sense, emphasizing that Quraysh do not have any special rights because of their kinship with the Prophet. If that were the case, then the first caliphs – accepted by the vast majority of the *umma* – would have been wrong to exercise authority over Muḥammad's family. Instead,

> the best of the people in God's eyes is the most pious of them and (…) the one worthiest of this position [leadership] is the most pious, the most excellent, and the one with the greatest strength to bear the burdens of their affairs. We were the first to protest oppression, to work to undo tyranny (*ghayyara al-jawr*), and to fight against the factions.[803]

Thus, as long as Shabīb "makes no change or alteration [in religion]", his position as *imām* of his Khārijites is undisputed.[804]

Muṭarrif, on the other hand, is shown to hold a more 'traditional' opinion, stating that the question of rulership should be decided by a council like the one appointed by ʿUmar, pointing out to the Khārijites that said council would select "*al-riḍā min quraysh*".[805] If they phrased it that way, he tells the Khārijites, they would also gain more followers as the Arabs would be satisfied with this stipulation. Shabīb's men reject this notion, however:

> The people of truth lose nothing with God for being few, and the oppressors gain no good for being many. Our abandoning our truth, for which we rebelled, and entering into this 'council' to which you summon us would be a sin and a defeat, giving aid and comfort to the oppressors and showing our weakness.[806]

[802] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 992; Rowson, *Restoration*, 139.
[803] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 986; Rowson, *Restoration*, 134.
[804] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 985; Rowson, *Restoration*, 133.
[805] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 984.
[806] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 986; Rowson, *Restoration*, 133-134.

Muṭarrif will not be persuaded, however, and holds fast to his belief that a council should decide who rules the Muslim polity.[807]

The reports appear sympathetic to Muṭarrif: Abū Mikhnaf, al-Ṭabarī's only source for this episode, describes him as one of al-Mughīra's "excellent and noble" sons.[808] He was "one of the best governors" ever sent to the people of al-Madāʾin, "energetic in suppressing immorality and condemning injustice."[809] At the same time, Abū Mikhnaf/al-Ṭabarī emphasizes the people's fear of al-Ḥajjāj and the Iraqi governor's unjust behaviour.[810] This is particularly obvious in the brief remarks on Muṭarrif's communication with Shabīb in the main body of the Shabīb story as transmitted by al-Ṭabarī, again on the authority of Abū Mikhnaf: even though Shabīb tells Muṭarrif that all obligations between them have been repudiated as Muṭarrif had not rendered allegiance to the Khārijite, Muṭarrif tells his men to come out in open rebellion as al-Ḥajjāj would fight them anyway, regardless of the outcome of Muṭarrif and Shabīb's interactions.[811] Al-Ḥajjāj is evidently the villain in this story, which can thus be added to the examples of censure concerning the Iraqi governor.

It is certainly possible, likely even, that the discussions about legitimate leadership expressed in this episode reflect real religio-political debates regarding who held the right to rule and how and by whom that certain someone should be chosen, possibly in reaction to Muʿāwiya's declaration of Yazīd as his successor or ʿAbd al-Malik's appointment of al-Walīd and Sulaymān as heirs. M. A. Shaban's claims that Muṭarrif "opposed the ʿAbdulmalik-Ḥajjāj policy of using Syrian troops in Iraq and the inexorably increasing authority of the *Amīr al-Muʾminīn*" as well as "the revival of the Madīnan regime under Qurayshite leadership, conceding a large measure of autonomy to the provinces" appears a

[807] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 989, 993. See also P. Crone: "On the Meaning of the ʿAbbāsid Call to al-Riḍā", in: Bosworth, C. E., et al. (eds.): *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times. Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1989, 95-111, 96.
[808] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 979-980.
[809] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 981; Rowson, *Restoration*, 129.
[810] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 990, 991, 994-995.
[811] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 947.

little far-reaching and does not seem to be all that well supported by the material he cites.[812] In any case, the question of Muṭarrif's 'real' intentions, does not concern us here; 'what really happened' is safely outwith the purview of this thesis.

What this account of Muṭarrif's rebellion also appears to imply, however, is that there were certain criteria for defining Khārijism. The report leaves no doubt that Muṭarrif is a rebel, but despite his use of expressly 'Khārijite idiom', he is not counted among the Khawārij, presumably precisely because of his difference of opinion with Shabīb regarding rulership of the *umma*. By being shown to differ from Shabīb regarding the question of legitimate rulership, Muṭarrif escapes the blame of being counted among the Khawārij, even if he is initially reported to have been open to their arguments. Considering the emphasis put on his praiseworthy attributes introducing the account of his rebellion, I would argue that the vindication of Muṭarrif is one of the chief objectives of depicting his disagreement with Shabīb, taking issue with Dietrich's assessment that Muṭarrif "had foolishly taken the first opportunity to rebel in alliance with the Khāridjīs."[813] Having said that, however, I also disagree with Shaban, who argues that "in reality the two [Muṭarrif and Shabīb] had nothing common."[814] Once again, Shaban leaves the reader a little puzzled over his interpretation of the source material: if anything, al-Ṭabarī's account makes it difficult to find anything that they did *not* have in common. This, of course, throws the one bone of contention – the question of Quraysh prerogative – into even sharper relief, thus fulfilling its purpose as an effective narrative technique.

The fact that Muṭarrif is portrayed as using 'Khārijite language' underlines again that there is hardly anything distinctive about the mode of expression attributed to Khārijism by the historiographical sources. Moreover, the grievances expressed by the Khawārij are in fact shown to be shared by many others with very different beliefs and agendas, giving the impression of widespread discontent with the Umayyads among Muslims (and non-Muslims) of all social strata and tribal backgrounds in this period. At the

[812] Shaban, *Islamic History*, 108.
[813] EI^2, "al-Ḥadjdjādj b. Yūsuf" (A. Dietrich).
[814] Shaban, *Islamic History*, 108. The Muṭarrif episode appears to have confused a number of scholars: Crone and Hinds in *God's Caliph* (pp. 60-61) expressly do not count Muṭarrif among the Khawārij, but in her *Slaves on Horses*, published six years earlier, Crone had called Muṭarrif one of "the Khārijites in the days of Ḥajjāj" (p. 8; see also p. 133).

same time, however, the account of Muṭarrif's revolt is one of the few that contains a specific marker of Khārijite identity beyond the common *topoi* of piety and militance, namely the refusal to restrict the office of the *amīr al-muʾminīn* to Quraysh. What we have here, then, is perhaps also an attempt at associating the Khārijites with certain doctrines in a way reminiscent of the heresiographical literature. The idea that the caliphate, or rulership at least, should be restricted to the Prophet's tribe was probably well-established and widely accepted at the very latest by the time al-Ṭabarī's work was compiled – the Khārijites' refusal to accept what had become the norm further emphasizes their outlandish claims and stubborn deviation from the Muslim community's *ijmāʿ*, thereby consolidating the readers' and listeners' impression of the Khawārij as a sect of heretical fanatics.

5.2 Conclusion

The present chapter has demonstrated the use of Khārijism as a narrative tool that is employed to illustrate topics and actors of great significance for the formation of the historiographical and doctrinal consensus of the early Muslim *umma*. 'Consensus' should not be taken to mean that all of the historiographers examined in the course of the study unanimously agreed on how to approach each and every individual subject, of course. Such perfect accord is impossible considering the range of ideological, political, occupational, religious, socio-economic and not least literary backgrounds not only of the author-compilers themselves, but also of their sources (and their sources' sources). Nevertheless, the preceding discussion of the source material on Khārijism during the period of the second civil war and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate has shown that certain topics were clearly of interest to a majority of Muslim scholars. In this, the last period under study resembles the first time span investigated here, that is, ʿAlī's conflict with the Khārijites. Unsurprisingly, due to the immensely complex context of the second *fitna* and its ramifications as well as the growth of Khārijism over the 25 years between its alleged inception at Ṣiffīn and the accession of Yazīd I, a larger amount of topics common to most historiographers could be identified in the reports of Khārijism in this period than was the case for ʿAlī's caliphate. The predominant themes that emerged from the analysis of the

source material were i) the martial skills of al-Muhallab and his family; ii) the volatility of Khārijism as an antithesis to the importance of communal cohesion in an increasingly fragmented polity; iii) the condemnation of Umayyad agents as illustrated by the criticism of the Iraqi governor al-Ḥajjāj; and iv) the relationship between Ibn al-Zubayr and the Khārijites that joined his ranks to defend Mecca and the Kaʿba during the Syrians' first siege of the city. A final topic of clear concern to al-Ṭabarī was also included in the discussion because of its marked prevalence in al-Ṭabarī's material on the armed conflicts between the Khārijites and their various opponents: extensive passages in his accounts of the Azāriqa and Shabīb b. Yazīd read like a manual of military strategy, outlining the consequences of both prudent and foolish decision-making in war.

The historiographers' focus was mostly on the activist Khārijites in this period. This is not necessarily surprising, as the recounting of the *umma*'s internal conflicts was of utmost historical, literary and doctrinal significance. Nevertheless, the sources' almost total disregard for the more moderate or outright quietist factions of the Khawārij is a little unexpected. Even the Najdīya, who, if we can trust the historiographical record, were politically much more successful than the Azāriqa, occupies very little space compared to the amount of material on the Azāriqa. The mid-680s CE are commonly regarded as the starting point of the *uṣūl al-khawārij*, the four main groups within Khārijism that all later 'sects' are reportedly descended from: the Azāriqa, the Najdīya, the Ṣufrīya and the Ibāḍīya.[815] While the heresiographers preserve the largest amount of material on the Azāriqa[816], they also discuss the 'doctrines' of the moderate or quietist Khārijites at length. This is not reflected in the historiographical works and emphasizes the different concerns expressed in both genres. Heresiography is of course interested in the depiction and dissection of controversial heretical beliefs that ultimately lead to a negative definition of right belief and right practice, or orthodoxy. The Azāriqa might have been a particularly thrilling subject of study, but the moderates and quietists were (nearly) as important.

Based on the historiographers' concerns as they emerge from the material on Khārijism during this period, it is safe to say that doctrine was not a terribly important issue.

[815] Lewinstein, "Making", 77.
[816] Lewinstein, *Studies*, 37 n. 9; idem, "Azāriqa", 252.

This is further emphasized by the fact that the only scholars addressing Khārijite doctrine to some extent are al-Balādhurī and Ibn Aʿtham, both of whose works have decidedly *adabī* traits. Rather, the early historians were on the whole apparently more interested in presenting Khārijism as a problem of rebellion against both the rulers and the *umma*. The quietists were less useful in this regard than the militant Khārijites such as Nāfiʿ b. al-Azraq, Qaṭarī b. al-Fujāʾa or Shabīb b. Yazīd. The issue of rebellion was certainly also a concern of the heresiographers, as expressed in al-Shahrastānī's famous dictum that everyone who had at any point in the history of mankind rebelled against the rightful ruler of their time is considered a Khārijite.[817] However, there were a host of other doctrinal matters that were similarly important to the heresiographers, like the Khārijites' different opinions on marriage and inheritance or the status of the children of unbelievers. Nevertheless, the heresiographers and the historiographers also had something in common in their treatment of Khārijism: it is not an end in itself, but ultimately serves to illustrate the correct way of being Muslim by embodying all deviations from the right path.

[817] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī: *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*. Ed. A. ʿA. Muhannā and ʿA. Ḥ. Fāʿūr. Beirut 1992, I:132. See also el Fadl, *Rebellion*, 248, and Kenney, *Rebels*, 30-31.

Chapter Six: Observations Regarding the Historiographical Tradition on Khārijism

The historiographical works selected for this study cover a wide range of political, religious and occupational affiliations. While they are all examples of Iraqi historiography, they nevertheless transmit diverse material and employ their narrative devices in different ways. As expected, there are variations concerning the number of reports on the Khārijites contained in the individual works and the particular narratives that are preserved. Some stories are only presented by certain author-compilers whereas other accounts are included in all the chronicles under consideration, albeit in varying detail. Some accounts are almost identical in phrasing but differ in the *isnād*[818]; sometimes the same version of a report is used by several historiographers, but the placement and emplotment differ considerably. Several characteristics emerging from the study of the historiographical works warrant a closer look. The first of these is the question of whether we can indeed speak of an early Islamic historiographical tradition on Khārijite origins.

Is There a Historiographical Tradition on Early Khārijite History?

The short answer is yes, however the longer answer starts with a 'yes, but…' and requires some qualification. Despite the various differences between the early historiographers and their works, we cannot observe major deviations from the story of early Khārijism as outlined in the Introduction. There are certainly variations in the number and length of reports transmitted by the individual scholars, but with very few exceptions they all tell the same story overall. Even Ibn Aʿtham, whose portrayal of the Khārijites is quite different from that of the other sources, does not present a radically different view of early Khārijite history. Moreover, as stated in the Introduction, there appears to be a broad consensus on the events of Khārijite history as it was intertwined with the history of the early Muslim *umma* in general. This consensus is clearest concerning the conflict between ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Khārijites, but a similar agreement can be discerned in the accounts of Khārijism during the second *fitna* and the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik. Even the second

[818] Compare e.g. the accounts concerning ʿUrwa b. Udayya as originator of the *lā ḥukma*-phrase in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 295, 296 ("*qālū*") with al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3338-3339 (Abū Mikhnaf).

period under study, the caliphate of Muʿāwiya, is not contested among the historiographers concerning the activities of the Khawārij. While only a comparatively small amount of relevant accounts has been preserved, and only al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī convey details beyond the reports' structural components, the few historians who transmit material on the Khārijites in this period differ in the details, but not the overall framework of events. Finally, the historiographers not only agree on the major episodes in the formation of Khārijism, but also on the *meaning* of these episodes. As demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, Khārijites are presented in more or less the same way across all of the works examined here. Their primary narrative purpose lies in the provision of cautionary tales against the dangers of militant piety and an exclusionist definition of true belief. This broad accord among the selected historians thus enables us to speak of an early historiographical tradition on Khārijism when referring to the main events in Khārijite history.

At the same time, however, there are occasionally marked differences in the way the various scholars engage with the issue of Khārijism. These differences are not primarily related to the events themselves, but rather to the events' assessment within a particular narrative unit or a historiographer's work. This became clear in Chapter Four, for instance, where al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī used similar material to come to very different conclusions regarding the validity of Khārijite opposition. Another example is Ibn Aʿtham's treatment of the Muhallabid wars against the Azāriqa, discussed in Chapter Five: while the other sources emphasize the group's despicable acts of violence against other Muslims, Ibn Aʿtham has the primary objective of building up a heroic narrative around the figure of al-Muhallab whose presence in the account far outweighs that of his Khārijite opponents.

It appears, then, that the historiographers had distinct individual concerns beside their participation in the formation and continuation of the 'Khārijite consensus'. These concerns are most obvious in those works that transmit the largest amount of narrative material, that is, the compilations of al-Balādhurī, Ibn Aʿtham and al-Ṭabarī. Al-Balādhurī as a courtier and caliphal boon companion certainly had his noble audience to consider when he gathered his material, and it is thus not surprising that he transmits many more edifying or entertaining stories than al-Ṭabarī or al-Yaʿqūbī, for example. His *Ansāb* has

clear traits of *adab* literature and is therefore also concerned with questions of good conduct, with morals and ethics. These characteristics are also reflected in his treatment of Khārijism, as has been noted in the preceding chapters. Al-Ṭabarī as a more or less independent scholar who probably considered himself primarily a jurist and not a historian appears interested more in issues of statecraft, of communal cohesion and the dangers of *ʿaṣabīya*. Ibn Aʿtham is the most decidedly pro-ʿAlid source among the analysed works and makes no pretence of his sympathies: his depiction of ʿAlī, for example, turns the fourth caliph into an almost semi-divine figure who is able to predict the future and has access to special knowledge.[819]

These individual concerns had a distinct influence on the interpretation of Khārijism in early Islamic historiography. Thus, while the overall consensus was adhered to across the spectrum of political and religious affinities, there are definite nuances in the way the historians engaged with the problem of Khārijite resistance. These nuances are hardly ever acknowledged in modern scholarly literature. One problem is certainly the (sometimes unavoidable) pronounced reliance on the *History* of al-Ṭabarī among scholars[820], but the consensus regarding the broad outline of Khārijite history also tends to obscure the finer points of the primary sources' engagement with the rebels. Nevertheless, a closer look at the representation of Khārijism contributes both to a clearer idea of the assessment of this controversial phenomenon in early Islamic history and a greater understanding of the narrative methods and individual concerns of the Muslim scholars of the formative period.

The question of the historiographical tradition on Khārijism and the observations concerning the differences in the various works under study lead to the second point that should be addressed for the evaluation of the sources' treatment of Khārijite history, the issue of so-called 'proto-Sunnī' and 'proto-Shīʿī' sources.

[819] See the discussion below as well as Chapter Three.
[820] See Judd, "Narratives", 224.

Proto-Sunnī and Proto-Shīʿī Sources

Four of the historiographical works under consideration, the *Taʾrīkh* by al-Yaʿqūbī, Naṣr b. Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab* are often regarded as proto-Shīʿī sources [821], while the remaining compilations are considered either proto-Sunnī sources or of unknown religio-political affinity. The distinction between proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī sources is murky at best; regarding the portrayal of Khārijite history, the former works generally emphasize the importance of the *umma*, while the latter display strong ʿAlid sympathies. However, over the course of my analysis I did not systematically distinguish between so-called proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī sources because I do not believe that such a distinction has much value for the period and events investigated here. First, the process of the formation of Sunnism and Shīʿism was completed only some time after the youngest author-compiler considered here, al-Masʿūdī, had died. Second, ʿAlī and the Prophet's family (however defined) held a revered position among many Muslims, ʿAlids, ʿAbbāsids, ʿUthmānīs and *jamāʿī*-minded believers alike.

Third, the parallel study of the reports on Khārijite origins preserved by the sources reveals that both proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī works follow the same basic framework of Khārijite history outlined above, and they often transmit similar or identical material. This is a feature of early Islamic historiography in general: "wherever one turns, one finds compilers of different dates, origin and doctrinal persuasions presenting the same canon in different arrangements and selections." [822] Concerning the initial protest against the arbitration (or its outcome), for instance, al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Masʿūdī

[821] On Ibn Muzāḥim, see e.g. C. Brockelmann: "Naṣr ibn Muzāḥim: der älteste Geschichtsschreiber der Schia", *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* IV (1926), 1-23, and the EI^2 entry (C. E. Bosworth); on Ibn Aʿtham, see e.g. Rosenthal, *Historiography*, 230, and L. I. Conrad: "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī", in J. S. Meisami/P. Starkey (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. Vol. I. London etc. 1998, 314; on al-Masʿūdī, see e.g. T. Khalidi: *Islamic Historiography: The Histories of Masʿūdī*. Albany 1975, and J. Bray: "ʿAbbāsid Myth and the Human Act: Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih and Other", in Kennedy (ed.), *Fiction and* Adab, 1-54, 43; al-Yaʿqūbī's case is more controversial: scholars have argued about the extent and degree of his Shīʿī tendencies, with the author of his EI^2 entry (M. Q. Zaman) leaning towards classifying him as a (proto-) Shīʿī. See also W. Millward: "Al-Yaʿqūbī's Sources and the Question of Shaiʿa Partiality", *Abī-Nahrain* xii (1971-1972), 47-74; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 102; Y. Marquet: "Le Shiʿisme au IX^e siècle à travers l'histoire de Yaʿqubi", *Arabica* XIX (1972), 1-45, 101-138; E. Daniel: "Al-Yaʿqūbī and Shīʿism Revisited", in J. E. Montgomery (ed.): *ʿAbbasid Studies*. *Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*. Leuven etc., 2004, 209-232; Crone, *Slaves*, 11.

[822] Crone, *Slaves*, 11.

all name ʿUrwa b. Udayya as originator of the *la ḥukma*-phrase; the remaining works offer a different selection of accounts of this episode.[823] As regards the events immediately following the request for arbitration, Naṣr b. Muzāḥim, al-Dīnawarī and Ibn Aʿtham report that the Syrian and Iraqi *qurrāʾ* met after the Syrian call for armistice, discussed the *maṣāḥif* and then jointly agreed on the appointment of two arbiters.[824] The remaining sources, however, do not record a particular involvement of the *qurrāʾ*. Al-Dīnawarī has been called a pro-ʿAlid[825] or even (within limits) a Shīʿī historian[826], but others have argued for a different understanding of his work.[827] I would agree with the latter: his portrayal of Khārijism, at least, betrays no particularly pro-ʿAlid (not to mention proto-Shīʿī) tendencies, and his sympathies for ʿAlī were certainly nothing unusual at the time. As Chapter Three illustrates, all sources are agreed on the justification of ʿAlī's conduct at Ṣiffīn and afterwards. It is possible that al-Dīnawarī's occupation with Iranian history and heroes has prompted some to consider him a Shīʿī, but such a connection is entirely anachronistic and betrays modern ideas of 'Iranian' being synonymous with 'Shīʿī'.

The transmission of identical material among both allegedly proto-Sunnī and proto-Shīʿī sources strongly suggests that all of the author-compilers had access to more or less the same pool of material from which they selected their reports, and it confirms that some form of consensus regarding the events of early Khārijite history had already been arrived at in the late ninth century CE. The process of the selection of material therefore reveals a lot more about the particular sympathies and concerns of the historiographers in question than simply labelling them as proto-Sunnī or proto-Shīʿī, much the same way that a scholar's audience or occupation can often tell us more than a work's association with a particular genre of literature.

Fourth, as we will shortly see, there are too many disparities between what are considered proto-Shīʿī sources to speak of something even remotely resembling a separate proto-Shīʿī tradition on Khārijism. We can therefore only refer to these works as being pro-

[823] See the section on *awāʾil* in the Introduction.
[824] Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 571-572; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 204-205; Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 1-3.
[825] See the very brief discussion in A. Tayyara: "Origin Narratives and the Making of Dynastic History in al-Dīnawarī's Akhbār", *DMES* 23 (2014), 54-75, 55.
[826] Petersen, *ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya*, 168.
[827] Tayyara, "Origin", 55-56, and *passim*.

ʿAlid or as having strong ʿAlid sympathies. Ibn Aʿtham is the only one I would clearly consider part of a developing Shīʿī identity, but as stated above, he will be discussed in another section below. A few cases in point from the period of ʿAlī's reign, investigated in Chapter Three, will suffice to clarify the differences between these allegedly proto-Shīʿī works.

Regarding the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khawārij, al-Yaʿqūbī does in fact present this confrontation from a distinctly pro-ʿAlid point of view, but this is much less obvious in the works of the other three allegedly pro-ʿAlid historiographers. The material on Ṣiffīn from the call to arbitration onward that is preserved by Ibn Muzāḥim, for example, does not contain decidedly proto-Shīʿī material and was incorporated into the main 'non-ʿAlid' historiographical works by al-Ṭabarī and al-Dīnawarī in particular, seemingly without a problem. For example, when comparing *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*'s reports on Khārijite origins with the other major chronicles, it emerges that the accounts about the originator(s) of the *lā ḥukma*-slogan and the role of the *qurrāʾ* are practically identical in content (and the former also in phrasing) to the ones preserved in al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*.[828] This is possibly because, as indicated by the title, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* does not address the events after ʿAlī's departure from Ṣiffīn, which include the vast majority of the interactions between the Khārijites and ʿAlī. Hence, Ibn Muzāḥim's compilation does not contain the elaborate speeches and sermons ascribed to ʿAlī or Ibn ʿAbbās in their confrontations with the Khārijite rebels by some of the other works and offer less of an opportunity for the propagation of decidedly pro-ʿAlid material. Nevertheless, the ʿAlid sympathies attributed to this historian were apparently not regarded as an issue by the later historiographical tradition that happily used his reports.

Even the depiction of the events leading to ʿAlī's agreement to the arbitration varies depending on the pro-ʿAlid source. Whereas Ibn Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham emphasize the role of the *qurrāʾ* in forcing ʿAlī to accept the arbitration and in choosing Abū Mūsā, al-Yaʿqūbī does not mention the *qurrāʾ* in connection with the Khawārij at all, and al-Masʿūdī

[828] For the originator of the *lā ḥukm*-phrase, compare al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 210, with Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 588; for the role of the *qurrāʾ* in negotiating the arbitration agreement and choosing Abū Mūsā, compare al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 204-205, with Ibn Muzāḥim, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 571.

only mentions in passing that there were *qurrāʾ* among the rebels who withdrew to Ḥarūrāʾ. He in turn primarily blames al-Ashʿath b. Qays for the arbitration.

All four sources furthermore disagree concerning the origin of the *lā ḥukma*-phrase. Naṣr b. Muzāḥim and Ibn Aʿtham are rather more outspoken in their criticism of the violent piety of the *qurrāʾ*/Khārijites than al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Masʿūdī. Finally, Ibn Aʿtham, al-Masʿūdī and al-Yaʿqūbī all transmit a distinct and unrelated description of the murder of ʿAlī by Ibn Muljam. In the case of the reports of early Khārijism, then, the material contained in the pro-ʿAlid works appears to have been rather varied. While we can discern a rough consensus across the range of historiographical sources as regards the main events of Khārijite history and its interpretation, no such conclusion can be drawn for the issue of a proto-Shīʿī/pro-ʿAlid tradition on Khārijism.

Nevertheless, this statement on the absence of an established pro-ʿAlid tradition on Khārijite history before the death of al-Masʿūdī in the second half of the tenth century CE must be qualified to some extent by the observation that all of the pro-ʿAlid works have one thing in common: they have a lot less to say on Khārijism than their non-ʿAlid counterparts. They do not discuss internal Khārijite events and debates at any length at all. For example, where al-Ṭabarī, al-Dīnawarī and al-Balādhurī each preserve a relatively long passage detailing the election of Ibn Wahb al-Rāsibī as head of the Khārijites and his speeches, the pro-ʿAlid sources contain hardly more than a reference to his name and rank. Although Khārijite arguments are not elaborated upon as a general rule with the limited exception of al-Balādhurī's material on the internal conflicts between the various Khārijite groups in Basra in the mid-680s CE, there is virtually nothing in the four 'pro-ʿAlid' works that would allow the reader to get a glimpse of Khārijite thought and motivation beyond the generic call for abandonment of the arbitration process, repentance towards God, and the necessity of *jihād*.

This almost total lack of information on the Khawārij in the pro-ʿAlid sources is quite unexpected. At least in the case of al-Masʿūdī and particularly Ibn Aʿtham, space cannot have been an issue. For instance, the latter devotes over one hundred pages to the events from the call to arbitration at Ṣiffīn until the murder of ʿAlī – about as much as al-Ṭabarī. However, where al-Ṭabarī provides comparatively many details on internal

Khārijite affairs, Ibn Aʿtham preserves an endless stream of speeches, sermons and letters attributed to ʿAlī, much more so than any other source. For the first period under study here, this fits with the other pro-ʿAlid sources, who also focus on ʿAlī to a greater extent that the 'non-ʿAlid' works. Of course, this is not surprising for scholars considered to have had strong ʿAlid sympathies. It confirms, however, the use of Khārijism as a narrative tool rather than an end in itself. This occupation with ʿAlī and ʿAlid matters also explains these works' relative lack of detail regarding Khārijite history after ʿAlī's caliphate. Ibn Aʿtham's work is the only one that transmits a significant amount of material on later Khārijism, for the period of the second *fitna* and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate, but the vast majority of his accounts are concerned with al-Muhallab and the Muhallabids. Possibly this can be explained by the historical record that has several prominent members of the Muhallabid family join the ranks of the Hāshimīya before and after the ʿAbbāsid revolution[829], which would fit with Ibn Aʿtham's fixation on ʿAlid affairs.

To conclude, although the pro-ʿAlid sources do not preserve the same material and can therefore not be classified as being part of a specific and separate pro-ʿAlid tradition on Khārijism, they share a decided disinterest in Khārijites and their challenge to ʿAlī beyond the portrayal of ʿAlī's superiority. Moreover, whereas Khārijism in the 'non-ʿAlid' historiographies serves a number of narrative purposes, primarily the rejection of militant piety, it seems that the pro-ʿAlid works have little use for Khārijites where they do not serve to vindicate ʿAlī. Accordingly, they transmit very little information on post-ʿAli Khārijites. This reluctance might have something to do with the fact that the Khārijites were remembered as a wholly misguided reaction to ʿAlī's conduct and ultimately as the caliph's downfall. Pro-ʿAlid historians might therefore have been more hesitant to use Khārijism as a means of criticizing the Umayyads to avoid casting a positive light on the group responsible for ʿAlī's death. At the same time, they were perhaps less concerned with the issue of communal cohesion as this was a concern that apparently arose among non-ʿAlids/proto-Sunnīs as a reaction to the formation of Shīʿism.[830]

[829] EI^2, "Muhallabids" (P. Crone).
[830] J. Berkey: *The Formation of Islam. Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*. Cambridge etc. 2003, 141-143.

Having discussed the lack of a distinct tradition of pro-ʿAlid approaches Khārijism, let us now turn to the final section of this chapter and look at the most peculiar of the historians examined in this study, Ibn Aʿtham. Some of his work's idiosyncrasies have already been pointed out, but it is worth investigating a little further.

The Case of Ibn Aʿtham's Kitāb al-Futūḥ

Almost nothing is known about Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī with any degree of certainty, including his birth or death date, his early life, scholarly career or place of residence. While his *nisba* implies a connection to Kufa, it is not at all clear whether he was born there, studied with the city's authorities or was otherwise connected to it. The entry on Ibn Aʿtham in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* comprises a mere 486 words[831]; not a single monograph has been published either on Ibn Aʿtham or his work in western scholarship, and only a handful of articles have been published on this author-compiler.[832]

Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* stands out from the other sources: its treatment of early Khārijite history, while adhering to the same basic framework, differs quite substantially from the other historiographers' approach. First of all, Ibn Aʿtham transmits a lot of material that is not found in any of the other sources, and much of what he preserves seems to have been disregarded by the later historiographical tradition. There are numerous examples of this, including the long 'debate' between Ibn ʿAbbās and a Khārijite opponent after the Khawārij have separated from ʿAlī and withdrawn to Ḥarūrāʾ, discussed in Chapter Three.[833] The caliph sends Ibn ʿAbbās to the rebels to serve as his envoy, and the ensuing debate about the state of the *umma* after the Prophet's death and ʿAlī's irreplaceable role as the one person who can rebuild and maintain the Muslim community after Muḥammad is unique in content. This discussion, or rather monologue on the part of Ibn ʿAbbās, is also the only example of Ibn ʿAbbās engaging in a long, detailed and

[831] EI^2, "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī" (M. A. Shaban).
[832] In addition to the articles cited above, see H. Massè: "La Chronique d'Ibn Aʿtham et la conquête d'Ifriqiya", *Mélanges Gaudefroy-Démombynes*, Cairo 1935, 85-90; Z. V. Togan: "Ibn Aʿtham al-Kufi", *Islamic Culture* 44 (1970), 249-252; U. Sezgin: "Abū Miḫnaf, Ibrāhīm ibn Hilāl aṯ-Ṯaqafī und Muḥammad ibn Aʿṯam über ġārāt", *ZDMG* 131 (1981), *1*-*2* (Wissenschaftliche Nachrichten).
[833] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 90-95. See Chapter Three, section on 'pragmatic justifications'.

eloquent verbal confrontation with the Khārijites – in all other reports, he is shown to defend ʿAlī against the rebels' accusations, but in a brief and almost stylized manner.[834]

Another instance is Ibn Aʿtham's rendering of the murder of ʿAlī. The standard version is that Ibn Muljam, sometimes accompanied by two fellow Khārijites, decided to kill ʿAlī to punish him for his transgressions. The variants that include his two companions have them determine to also kill Muʿāwiya and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, but they both fail in their assignments. Ibn Muljam arrives at Kufa, spends some time in the city and encounters his bride-to-be, Qaṭamī, who wants him to murder ʿAlī to avenge her family members who died opposing ʿAlī at Nahrawān. Ibn Muljam attacks and strikes the caliph while he is the mosque leading the morning prayer; a few days later, ʿAlī succumbs to his wounds and Ibn Muljam is executed or tortured to death, depending on the source.[835] Some reports have him demonstrate his immense piety by only crying out under torture when his executioners remove his tongue, loath that he should be alive for even an hour without being able to praise God.[836] Other accounts just state that he was executed after ʿAlī's death.[837]

Ibn Aʿtham's description of Ibn Muljam and his murderous enterprise is radically different from the story found in all other historiographical works. In his version, Ibn Muljam does not travel to Kufa specifically to kill ʿAlī. While there, however, he falls in love with Qaṭāmi, a Khārijite woman. It is she who incites him to murder ʿAlī when she demands this deed as part of her dowry. While her particular request for ʿAlī's blood is part of the standard version of this episode, Ibn Muljam is usually shown to have already decided to kill ʿAlī himself. In Ibn Aʿtham's rendering, however, Ibn Muljam is rather reluctant and acknowledges the evil inherent in this task[838], wondering whether he is doing the right thing by attempting to kill the caliph.[839]

Unlike in the standard version, Ibn Muljam also encounters the caliph in Kufa prior to the assassination attempt and is deeply impressed by ʿAlī's prediction of his death, to the

[834] See Chapter Three, sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.
[835] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 411-417; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 35-39; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 212; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3457-3465; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 227-229; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 430-432, 432-437, 446.
[836] Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 39; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 228-229; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 446.
[837] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II, 214; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 3464.
[838] See above.
[839] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 136-139.

precise day, by the hands of a Murādī, Ibn Muljam of course belonging to Banū Murād.[840] Yet more surprisingly, he calls ʿAlī *amīr al-muʾminīn*, which is in stark contrast to many of the other sources, which make a point of Ibn Muljam's refusal to regard ʿAlī as *amīr al-muʾminīn*.[841] According to Ibn Aʿtham, Ibn Muljam even voices his doubts to his bride-to-be right up until the moment he leaves the house to attack ʿAlī, quoting a Prophetic *ḥadīth* according to which

> the most miserable [man] of the [pre-Islamic] ancestors (*al-awwalīn*) is Qadār b. Sālif, the slayer of Ṣāliḥ's camel[842], and the most miserable [man] of the Islamic generations (*al-ākhirīn*) is the slayer of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[843]

We can conclude from this, then, that Ibn Aʿtham appears to have been concerned with confirming and strengthening ʿAlī's reputation as the most pious and excellent of his contemporaries much more so than the other author-compilers under study. Ibn Aʿtham transmits the largest number of speeches and sermons attributed to ʿAlī, and he portrays the caliph as sharing in divine knowledge by having him predict certain events that promptly take place, among them the manner of his own death.[844] These elements mark his work as distinctly pro-ʿAlid, more so than the other allegedly 'proto-Shīʿī' works discussed above. While we cannot speak of a fully-fledged Shīʿī vision in Ibn Aʿtham's work, on the basis of his sections on Khārijite history at least and in particular in his treatment of the conflict between ʿAlī and the Khārijites, he seems to come closest to a properly proto-Shīʿī work among the historiographies studied here.

In any case, it is noteworthy that none of the prediction episodes mentioned above were incorporated into the later works considered here, nor were Ibn Aʿtham's accounts of Ibn ʿAbbās lengthy debate with the Khārijites at Nahrawān or his version of the Ibn

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[840] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 136, 137.
[841] See e.g. Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 37; al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 412; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 228; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, II, 434, 437.
[842] According to the Qurʾān, Ṣāliḥ was a pre-Islamic prophet who was sent to the people of Thamūd. However, they rejected his teachings and killed the camel that God had sent to them as a sign or test despite Ṣāliḥ's warnings. They were all killed in retribution for their transgression of God's commandment. See EI^2, "Ṣāliḥ" (A. Rippin).
[843] Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ*, IV, 139.
[844] For other predictions by ʿAlī, see the references cited at notes 454-456.

Muljam narrative. Similarly, his singular focus on al-Muhallab and the Muhallabid family, discussed in Chapter Five, sets him apart from the other sources considered here. We do, however, find at least the prediction stories in another type of literature, namely *adab*. Al-Mubarrad's *al-Kāmil fī-l-Lugha wa-l-Adab,* for example, cites both Muḥammad's prediction that ʿAlī will experience his own "Day of al-Ḥudaybīya" and ʿAlī's prediction about the number of men who will fall in battle against the Khārijites.[845] It also appears to preserve elements of the Ibn Muljam episode as presented by Ibn Aʿtham: Qaṭamī has a very active role in exhorting Ibn Muljam to attack ʿAlī; the caliph and his assassin meet before the murder takes place; and ʿAlī predicts his death at the hand of Ibn Muljam.[846] A comprehensive comparative analysis between Ibn Aʿtham's work and *adab* compilations was beyond the scope of this study, but this might prove to be a fascinating avenue of future research.

Whatever the precise reason, it seems that Ibn Aʿtham's work did not conform too well with the slowly evolving broad consensus of early Islamic historiography. In his 2011 PhD dissertation *The Echoes of Fitna: Developing Historiographical Interpretations of the Battle of Siffin,* Aaron Hagler argues that *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* was purposefully excluded from the agreed-upon framework of early Islamic history in order to explain the perceived disinterest in Ibn Aʿtham's work shown by historians from al-Dīnawarī onwards. Hagler's case study is the story of Ṣiffīn. He maintains that there were two contemporary early versions of the Ṣiffīn narrative, Ibn Muzāḥim's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* and the relevant chapters in Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. According to Hagler, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* rather than Ibn Aʿtham's version became "the historical vulgate text" for the Ṣiffīn episode.[847] The reason for the later historians' choice of Ibn Muzāḥim's work over Ibn Aʿtham's, he argues, can be found in the literary conventions of the third century AH/ninth century CE: while Naṣr b. Muzāḥim adhered to the established *akhbārī* mode of historical writing, providing *isnād*s and structuring his narrative in small-scale *khabar* units of text, Ibn Aʿtham chose to deviate from this particular mode and instead composed his work in the *muʾarrikhī* style, mostly avoiding *isnād*s and composing an uninterrupted flow of narrative. Unfortunately,

[845] Rescher, *Kharidschitenkapitel*, 19, 23.
[846] Rescher, *Kharidschitenkapitel*, 31, 32, 35.
[847] Hagler, *Echoes*, 19, 30-34.

he seems to have been ahead of his time and thus suffered the indignation of his contemporaries, who preferred the more "scholarly" style of his colleague Ibn Muzāḥim.[848]

Now, Hagler's argument is based on his assumption of Ibn Aʿtham's contemporaneity with Ibn Muzāḥim. But this points to another issue that will have to be addressed by future research on *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* and its author-compiler: why should we assume such an early date for Ibn Aʿtham? Islamicists today seem to generally agree that Ibn Aʿtham worked and died in the early ninth century CE[849], but older scholars argued for a later death date, the year 926-927 CE.[850] While Conrad in his entry on Ibn Aʿtham in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* argues that this later date is "an old Orientalist error", he does not give an explanation for his conviction that this is a mistake. Unfortunately, the sole reference to a scholarly work on Ibn Aʿtham that Conrad cites under 'further reading' is one of his own papers that was never published. It seems that an unofficial version circulated for a while[851], but I have not been able to obtain a copy. This is regrettable because he refers to details about Ibn Aʿtham's work that are not commonly mentioned, such as the apparent continuation of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* by two later Sunnī scholars, who covered the period from Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate until the reign of al-Muqtadir (295-320 AH/908-932 CE). None of this additional information is found Shaban's EI^2 entry on Ibn Aʿtham, although it is cited (on Conrad's authority) in Bowen-Savant's recent publication on post-conquest Iran.[852]

The generally agreed composition date of Ibn Aʿtham's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, which is 204 AH/819 CE according to Shaban, Conrad and others, seems rather early. In his EI^2 entry, Shaban does not clarify the basis on which he arrived at this date or the impression

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[848] Hagler, *Echoes*, 90-91.

[849] See e.g. "Ibn Aʿtham" (Shaban); Conrad, "Ibn Aʿtham", 314; Scheiner, "Writing", 162.

[850] See e.g. C. Brockelmann: *GAL. Supplement, vol. I*. Leiden 1937, 220 (5c); Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:329 (33); Fraehn: *Indications bibliographiques…à nos employés et voyageurs en Asie*. St. Petersburg 1845, 16; Rosenthal, *Historiography*, 230.

[851] See Claudio Jacono's reply to Sean Anthony's query about Conrad's work on H-Net: http://h-net msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-mideast-medieval&month=1102&week=b&msg=kJ/c4Se5OFmu4qgUYXXFpg&user=&pw=, last accessed on 26 September 2014, 3pm.

[852] S. Bowen-Savant: *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion*. Cambridge etc. 2013, 200. See also the discussion in A. Borrut: *Entre mémoire et pouvoir. L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72-193/692-809)*. Leiden 2011, 91-93.

that Ibn Aʿtham was a contemporary of al-Madāʾinī (135-225 AH/752-840 CE) other than Ibn Aʿtham's use of early Iraqi and Ḥijāzī authorities such as al-Madāʾinī, Abū Mikhnaf or al-Zuhrī[853], which taken on its own is no argument at all. Later scholars such as al-Ṭabarī clearly had access to the same material in some form or other, and in the absence of a definite original text that can be attributed safely to Abū Mikhnaf or another early historian, it is next to impossible to tell whether Ibn Aʿtham's reports were closer to this supposed original than the version of a later historiographer. Shaban's contention that Ibn Aʿtham's work can be used as a corrective for al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* is thus problematic.[854] We appear to have a *terminus ante quem* of 1199 CE for the compilation of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, as this is apparently the year in which the first partial Persian translation of the work was completed. Several copies of this translation have survived, while only one complete manuscript of the Arabic work has come down to us.[855]

In his *ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, Shaban provides more information on his decision to classify Ibn Aʿtham as an early ninth-century CE historian. He argues that Ibn Aʿtham's use of the phrase "*ḥaddathanī*" ("he told me") in relation to al-Madāʾinī (752-839 CE) means that Ibn Aʿtham was a contemporary of his famous source, and he accepts the note of the earliest Persian translator of the first part of the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* stating that Ibn Aʿtham composed his work in 204 AH/819 CE.[856] Now, Shaban's reasoning for basing the composition date of 819 CE on these two factors is a little questionable. First, he assumes that the historian mentioned by Ibn Aʿtham as his source is al-Madāʾinī because of the frequent recurrence of al-Madāʾinī's name as an authority for important traditions. However, the name actually given in the *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is not Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Madāʾinī, but Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Qurashī. Shaban dismisses this as a mere scribal error, which is entirely possible.[857] However, his uncritical acceptance of the composition date given by the Persian translator appears a little odd in this light, particularly considering that the oldest surviving Persian manuscript is from the sixteenth

[853] "Ibn Aʿtham" (Shaban).
[854] "Ibn Aʿtham" (Shaban). See also M. A. Shaban: *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*. Cambridge 1970, xix.
[855] "Ibn Aʿtham" (Shaban).
[856] Shaban, *ʿAbbāsid*, xviii.
[857] Shaban, *ʿAbbāsid*, xviii.

century CE.[858] While there are no major deviations between the Persian translations and the oldest Arabic manuscript of the work available to us, the latter is only a century older than the oldest Persian manuscript.[859] This means we are confronted with a transmission process of at least 500 years; while Balʿamī apparently used Ibn Aʿtham's work in his 'translation' of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* and thus narrows down the *terminus ante quem* to a tentative date of 352 AH/956 CE[860], the alleged year in which Balʿamī finished his work, we still need to be cautious about ascribing too early a death date to Ibn Aʿtham. In the same vein, Scheiner's argument that the later death date of 926 CE must be incorrect because al-Balādhurī, whose death date is commonly given as 892 CE, quotes Ibn Aʿtham[861] is problematic as well. The date of 892 CE is not attested anywhere but only an estimate based on al-Balādhurī's teachers and students. Second, what would speak against al-Balādhurī being an older contemporary of Ibn Aʿtham whose work he quoted among a host of other earlier and contemporary sources?

Assigning a later death date to Ibn Aʿtham would at least solve some of the problems Hagler encountered in trying to make this scholar fit into the *akhbārī-muʾarrikhī* framework he used in his dissertation. What he considers unusual stylistic choices and anachronistic features, such as the flowing style of his narration or the occurrence of reports and themes that can usually only be found in later works of historiography[862], could be explained much better were we to assume a later date for the composition of *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*. Again, this issue will have to be explored elsewhere in detail, but depending on the outcome, we might have an explanation for the 'exclusion' of Ibn Aʿtham's work from the developing historiographical consensus of the ninth century CE as it was written down in the works of Ibn Khayyāṭ, al-Balādhurī or al-Dīnawarī.

[858] A. N. Kurat: "Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Aʿtham al-Kūfī's Kitāb al-Futūḥ and Its Importance Concerning the Arab Conquest in Central Asia and the Khazars", *Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 7.2 (1949), 274-282, 276-277.
[859] Kurat, "Kitāb al-Futūḥ", 275-276, 276-277.
[860] Kurat, "Kitāb al-Futūḥ", 277.
[861] Scheiner, "Writing", 162.
[862] Hagler, *Echoes*, e.g. 34, 46-47, 56, 63, 65.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to analyse the representation of early Khārijite history from the Battle of Ṣiffīn until the death of ʿAbd al-Malik in the historiographical sources of the formative period of Islam**.** Unlike previous studies of Khārijite history, poetry and doctrine, my approach to the selected works of historiography was based on a literary understanding of the sources as *texts*, not databanks of hard facts that can be utilized for a reconstruction of historical circumstances 'as they really were'. As such, no attempt was made to reconstruct Khārijite history, as the issue of factual authenticity and historicity was of little consequence for the objective of this study. This literary approach to the source material allowed us to investigate the historiographers' specific concerns in their various portrayals of early Khārijites history during the specified period.

Two main findings arose from the literary analysis: first, neither a distinct and well-developed literary Khārijite identity, nor a convincing 'historical' one, can be discerned in the accounts' depiction of the rebels' thoughts and deeds in the second half of the seventh century CE. What does emerge is a stereotype that associates the Khawārij with specific attributes, predominantly a proclivity for militant piety that exceeds all bounds of moderation. This stereotype permeates the reports of Khārijism to such an extent, however, that the individual circumstances of a particular rebel or insurgency mean very little, conveying the impression that Khārijism was a wholly unchanging and unchanged phenomenon. The occasionally very detailed reports of Khārijite activities, such as the revolts of Shabīb or al-Mustawrid b. ʿUllafa, cannot conceal that there is actually very little substance to these accounts once one strips away their structural components and stereotypical features. The impression of monotony is reinforced by the fact that the Khārijites' utterances in particular are just as static and hence predictable, relegating Khārijite slogans and arguments to the status of mere stock phrases.

This characteristic of the historiographers' Khārijite material is rooted in the second main conclusion put forward by this study: despite the frequent occurrence of Khārijites in the events of early Islamic history as depicted in the selected sources, Khārijism is portrayed not for its own sake, but in order to illustrate and discuss other protagonists and subject matters. Khārijite rebels thus serve as mere mouthpieces for unpopular, flawed or

plainly heretical statements, providing a convenient foil for the discussion and rejection of particular ideas. The main purpose of Khārijites is to demonstrate the inherent dangers of extreme religious devotion. We saw that the early Islamic historiographical tradition presents the Khārijites as strict adherents of the divine provisions enshrined in the Qurʾān, exemplifying the pious conduct expected of devout Muslims. However, the lack of moderation displayed by the rebels leads them to pursue a distorted idea of godliness: for example, their rebellion against the fourth rightly-guided caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, causes them to separate from the community and thus damage the unity of the believers. By claiming the right to accuse non-Khārijite Muslims of unbelief and to kill them, they transgress the (religious, moral, social) boundaries of right and wrong. Misguided, excessive piety therefore results in impiety and bloodshed among believers, threatening the very fabric of Muslim society. Khārijism thus serves as a cautionary tale against allowing one's religious zeal to degenerate into mindless violence and lead one straight into unbelief.

The importance of this *topos* is demonstrated by its ubiquity in the reports across all three periods investigated in this thesis. At the time many of the reports on Khārijite revolts were composed, collected and narrated, heated debates between the proponents of different versions of Islam occasionally led to violent conflict in parts of the Islamic Empire, most famously perhaps in Baghdad in the tenth century CE. It is possible that these clashes had an impact on the extant shape of the narratives on Khārijism. In any case, Khārijism as remembered by the early historiographical tradition fits well with the scholarly rejection of rebellion and the emphasis on communal cohesion prevalent at the time, ideas that were perpetuated by the increasing religious and political fragmentation of the *umma* in the ninth and tenth century CE. It comes as no surprise, then, that the sources make a point of condemning the Khārijites' exclusionist definition of Islam and declaring their words and deeds as deeply misguided; the employment of Khārijite piety as a foil for Umayyad immorality could only be observed infrequently for the period of Khārijite origins.

In addition to the *topos* of militant piety among the Khawārij, various concerns emerge from the accounts that are peculiar to specific periods of history. As regards the caliphate of ʿAlī, the stories of Khārijism serve mainly to explain and justify the caliph's actions from the call to arbitration at Ṣiffīn onwards. During the reign of Muʿāwiya, the two

main sources for this period – al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* and al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* – are divided in their focus: al-Balādhurī is mostly concerned with presenting Khārijite piety as a counterexample to the wickedness of the Umayyads' agents, while al-Ṭabarī follows the established pattern of condemning Khārijism, but restricts his criticism largely to its activist version. The last period investigated here, the era of the second civil war and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate, reveals the most comprehensive set of themes related to the portrayal of Khārijism. The focus lies on the wars between the Azāriqa and al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra and the volatility of Khārijism, a motif that is related to the *topos* of militant piety but concentrates more on intra-Khārijite conflict.

The literary approach to Khārijite history not only allowed us to determine the Khārijites' narrative functions in the texts, but also revealed some of the historiographers' particular concerns in composing their depictions of the rebels. Al-Balādhurī's work, for example, was evidently interested in moral and ethical questions as well as the kinds of stories that would entertain and edify his audience. Ibn Aʿtham could be shown to have had a distinct interest in arguing the ʿAlid cause, building up ʿAlī as the most excellent Muslim after Muḥammad and having him share in some of the Prophet's special knowledge such as the power of premonition. At the same time, his narrative style is highly dramatic and epic in places, particularly in the passages that deal with al-Muhallab and read almost like a hagiography. Al-Ṭabarī, on the other hand, seems to have been engaged with issues of statecraft and communal accord, criticizing factionalism and rebellion as causes of civil strife. It was more difficult to assess the particular interests and concerns underlying the representation of Khārijism in the works of Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, al-Dīnawarī, al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Masʿūdī because of the relative scarcity of material they transmit on Khārijite history after the reign of ʿAlī. This applied especially to Ibn Khayyāṭ, whose *Taʾrīkh* in the form that has come down to us provides little more than structural components and *topoi* where Khārijism is concerned, and even those are far and few between. Al-Masʿūdī was a similarly difficult case as most of his material on the Khawārij seems to have been included in other works of his, according to his own statement.[863] Al-Yaʿqūbī seems to provide a more firmly ʿAlid reading of early Islamic history, both concerning Khārijism and the

[863] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, I-II, 100-101; III-IV, 100.

major events of this period more generally, but the question of his Shīʿism remains controversial. Finally, al-Dīnawarī appears to transmit roughly the same material found in Ibn Aʿtham, al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī, albeit to a much smaller extent than any of them. The major themes in his material on Khārijite history conform with the majority of the other historiographical works, but attempting to identify particular objectives in al-Dīnawarī's portrayal of the Khawārij beyond these themes proved rather ineffective.

The form and content of the historiographical material studied in this thesis furthermore granted us some insight into the developing consensus on important events in early Islamic history. There appears to have been a fairly well-formed agreement on Ṣiffīn and the course of ʿAlī's conflict with the Khārijites, for example. While the details differ, the story's overall framework was firmly in place; even Ibn Aʿtham, whose work differs from the other sources to a considerable extent in the elaboration of particular episodes, does not deviate from the established outline. Such a broad agreement cannot be determined for the narratives of Khārijite activities during the period of Muʿāwiya's reign because many of the examined sources do not provide much or any information on the rebels in that era, but there are a number of Khārijite insurgents, for instance al-Mustawrid, who are mentioned by all of the sources that preserve relevant reports. Still, there is much variation in the accounts, with al-Balādhurī in particular transmitting details on Khārijite revolts not discussed by any of the other works. While his work is much more extensive than all of the other compilations and thus contains a lot of material excluded by the latter, it is likely that the interests of both al-Balādhurī and his audience influenced the volume of Khārijite material as well. As mentioned in the Introduction, some of the reports transmitted by al-Balādhurī alone can also be found in works of *adab*, indicating the different focus of the *Ansāb*. Concerning the last period under study, we once again encounter a certain consensus on Khārijite activities, although it is not quite as pronounced as was the case for ʿAlī's caliphate. There is a greater variance in the details as well as the selection of accounts included in the historiographical compilations – for instance, Ibn Aʿtham focusses predominantly on al-Muhallab's battles with the Azāriqa and preserves the only account of ʿImrān b. Ḥiṭṭān's flight from al-Ḥajjāj, while al-Ṭabarī engages mostly with Shabīb's revolt. Al-Balādhurī transmits the largest amount of reports that deal with the

Khārijites doctrinal disagreements and provides the most detailed section on the Najdīya, while al-Dīnawarī's treatment of Khārijism in this period consists of a mere eleven pages in the printed edition that are dedicated exclusively to the Azāriqa. Many of these differences can again be explained with reference to the author-compilers' particular concerns. Nevertheless, the broad outline of Khārijite history in this era is agreed upon by all sources.

The similarities in the representation of Khārijism during the first and the third period can also be extended to the sources' engagement with Khārijite piety. As in the stories about ʿAlī's conflict with the Khawārij, the condemnation of Khārijism in the reports pertaining to the third period is decidedly religious in character, while the criticism expressed in the accounts discussed in the fourth chapter was based just as much, if not more, on the socio-political dangers of rebellion. This is likely because only al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī provided enough material suitable for a literary analysis of Khārijism during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya. Neither of them appears to have been particularly concerned with the religious aspects of Khārijism in that period: al-Ṭabarī's main focus were the consequences of communal strife, whereas al-Balādhurī was largely preoccupied with criticizing the Umayyad governors of Iraq rather than the Khawārij. The source material for Chapter Five, in contrast, offers dozens of accounts that attack the Khārijites on a specifically religious basis. This becomes particularly obvious in those reports that accuse the Khārijites of misunderstanding and misrepresenting Islam. In the context of the stories told about Khārijite history in the first and last periods under study, this makes a lot of sense. The Khārijites' allegations against ʿAlī were decidedly religious in nature as they attacked his position as rightful caliph and eminent Companion, even questioning his status as a Muslim. These accusations therefore needed to be refuted on religious grounds as well, using both the Qurʾān and the *sunna* to vindicate him. The period of the second *fitna* and ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate, on the other hand, is remembered as the starting point of Khārijite factionalism which culminated in the emergence of the four *uṣūl al-khawārij*: the Azāriqa, the Najdīya, the Ṣufrīya and the Ibāḍīya. The doctrinal strife among these factions, the resulting volatility of Khārijism vis-à-vis more community-minded attempts at defining the *umma* and not least the rebels' opposition to Ibn al-Zubayr on the basis of his

endorsement of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān all lent themselves to censure targeting the Khārijites' flawed religious beliefs.

Finally, it should be noted that the condemnation of Khārijism is based first and foremost on the rebels' deeds, not their words. This is evident in the distinction between activist and quietist Khārijites – most pronounced in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* – that was discussed in Chapter Four, but it is also illustrated by the fact that apart from a few reports in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb* that deal with internal disagreements among the Khawārij, we do not encounter any extended discussions or arguments about Khārijite beliefs or doctrines. The debates with the Khārijites at Ḥarūrāʾ and Nahrawān are a different matter because they serve a distinct purpose, namely the vindication of ʿAlī's conduct at Ṣiffīn and subsequent to the adjudication. Beyond that, what matters from a narrative point of view is the Khārijites' specific brand of piety that causes violence and bloodshed within the *umma*; unlike in heresiographical works, the elaboration of individual doctrines is surplus to requirements. At the same time, this further emphasizes the stereotypical depiction of Khārijism in the early historiographical literature: individual traits are curtailed as much as possible in favour of creating a Khārijite typecast that can be re-employed regardless of the distinct circumstances and that evokes in the audience an immediate association with particular characteristics. In that way, Khārijism becomes another building block in the narrative repertoire of early Muslim story-telling.

Much further research needs to be done as regards the literary portrayal of both Khārijite and early Islamic history. A first step in that direction is the acknowledgment that our sources are primarily literary constructs that have to be studied as such and cannot merely be mined for the data they provide. This thesis examined the historiographical tradition of the formative period of Islam, and within this literature it was restricted mostly to the major chronicles. Future research could pursue a literary study of Khārijism focusing on other types of historical writing such as prosopography or local historiography, or on other periods of history. Later historiography, particularly with the reappearance of the Syrian tradition of Islamic historical writing in the shape of Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571 AH/1176 CE) or Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH/1373 CE), also constitutes a promising avenue of scholarship. Moreover, the literary study of Khārijite history could (and should) also be extended to

other genres of literature, such as *adab* or *ḥadīth*. A comparative analysis of the depiction of Khārijism in various types of literature would also shed light on the particularities of different genres and allow for a comprehensive analysis of the discourse on Khārijism. Such studies would not only broaden our understanding of how the Khawārij were remembered, but also illuminate processes of composition and redaction, and thus the formation and continuity of the Islamic literary tradition in general. Finally, a literary analysis of Islamic history could also be applied to other groups and 'sects' in medieval Islam.

While I would not argue that it is altogether impossible to reconstruct the events of the formative period of Islam, the present thesis has shown the perils of choosing one set of reports over another. By casting the Khawārij alternately as disgruntled Bedouin or religious zealots expecting the immediate end of the world, we fail to recognize the narrative function of Khārijism as a literary device, almost as a *topos* of its own, that tells us more about the particular concerns of individual scholars and the literary conventions of eighth to tenth-century CE historiography than the 'true' intentions of those individuals who were remembered as Khārijites. The themes identified in the narratives that have reached us in the ninth and tenth-century compilations point to the fact that we need to be much more careful in our attempts at understanding the Khārijite phenomenon: the stereotyping inherent in the depiction of Khārijism requires us to seriously reconsider how much we know about Khārijite history, and how much we can ever reasonably expect to know.

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