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Preliminary Notes on the Term and Institution of *al-Shākiriyya* in Early Islam (ca. 14–218 H/635–36–833 CE) Mainly According to the Arabic Sources

Abstract The aim of this paper is to study the nature of the term and institution of *al-Shākiriyya* by re-examining the Arabic sources pertaining to the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsī caliphate. It is difficult to discern the character of the *Shākiriyya* in the service of the Arab commanders in Central Asia from the Arabic sources. They provide no information on ethnic composition, mobilization, military training or potential ties between a commander/master and his *Shākir*. This applies mainly to the Umayyad period, but also to the first 'Abbāsī period up to al-Ma'mūn's rule (813–833). It is also impossible to determine from them the possible connections between the ancient Central Asian military institutions and military institutions in the Islamic world. From evidence about the *Shākiriyya* in the Arabic sources we can usually discern a distinct military character, though it is noteworthy that in some cases the term *Shākirī* can be translated as meaning a loyal adherent, or even a servant. While relatively extensive, the evidence at hand from the Umayyad and the early 'Abbāsī periods is too limited to fully demonstrate that a) the *Shākiriyya* units denote Turks and b) that these allegedly Turkish units performed their service for the 'Abbāsī caliphs according to concepts and practices derived from the Central Asian steppe.

Keywords: *Shākiriyya*; Umayyads; early 'Abbāsids; early Islamic army; early Islamic history and historiography

Introduction

During my current study of al-Ma'mūn's army in Khurāsān, I came upon several pieces of evidence relating to a corps of *Shākiriyya* at al-Ma'mūn's court in Marw. In checking the nature of the term and institution in the Arabic sources, I naturally went back in history to the Umayyad period and even earlier, to the period of

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the Arab conquest. I am now in the preliminary stage of processing the material so gathered. However, the Arab sources I examined are for the most part not decisive. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the characteristics of the contemporary *Shākiriyya* from them.

A Brief Summary of Scholarly Views Regarding *al-Shākiriyya*

Barthold commented that the *Shākiriyya* is sometimes mentioned in Arabic sources as a ruler's personal guard. He presents several examples related to Transoxania, according to which non-Arab rulers and also some tribal leaders and senior Arab commanders possessed a guard of this type.¹ Barthold argued that the origin of the word is the Persian *chākar* (literally, servant).² This seems to be the accepted opinion among some scholars.³ From Narashakhi's description of the queen of Bukhārā's court, it seemed to Barthold that the *Shākiriyya* was a kind of honour guard. It included young noblemen sent in mutual exchange from the courts of other rulers, like the sons of European knights who served at the courts of their kings and dukes.⁴

Shaban described this institution as an Iranian one in its origin, agreeing that the root of the word is Persian and its meaning is servants.⁵ He argued in a similar vein to Barthold (but without citing him) that the *Shākiriyya* performed the same military service for their leaders that European knights in the Middle Ages did for their kings. In the 'Abbāsi period, primarily in that of al-Mu'taṣim, this institution was transferred from the east to the heart of the caliphate. Many leaders and local princes from the east joined al-Mu'taṣim. Following ancient customs prevalent in the east, their loyal followers accompanied them and created the *Shākiriyya* regiments, as a way to continue to serve their leaders in the heart of the empire when those leaders became *mawālī* of the ruler. Others came individually and joined the *Shākiriyya* of the ruler himself. Shaban brings a string of references to prove his claims. However, though these references mention the *Shākiriyya*, most of them are from the period of al-Mu'taṣim and onward.

1 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1159 [= Barthold 1928, 180]: the year 85 H/704–705 CE, the *Shākiriyya* of Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarqand, ruler of Sordia, see no. B/4, below; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1155: an Arab tribal leader of Khuzā'a, see no. B/3, below.

2 Barthold 1928, 180.

3 E.g., Beckwith 1984, 38, note 43: "the word is merely the Arabicized form of Persian *chākar*;" Yonggyu 2004, 40.

4 Barthold 1928, 180 (quoting Narshakhi, *Ta'rikh Bukhārā*, pp. 7–8 [= Frye 1954, 9]).

5 Shaban 1976, 2: 64–65, quoting the translation of al-Marwazī in Minorsky 1942, 18.

They do not provide enough information to justify Shaban's broad and detailed explanation.⁶

Forand argued that the *Shākiriyya* of the Iranian/Soghdian princes and rulers in Central Asia mentioned by the Arabic sources denotes "corps of slaves" and that it is "impossible to establish beyond a doubt that individuals constituting a *shākiriyya* among the Umayyads [governors and senior commanders] were of servile status."⁷

Beckwith argues for a Central Asian (Soghdian) origin of the institution of *al-Shākiriyya*, and this has been accepted by some scholars.⁸ He quotes Chinese sources of the period describing the *chākars'* Turkish and Soghdian guard corps as courageous and fierce warriors.⁹ More comprehensive studies in this vein have been carried out by Yonggyu and (recently) De La Vaissière (see below).

From a single Arabic passage where a Turkish general says: "I am the slave ('*abd*) of the Khāqān from his *Shākiriyya*,"¹⁰ Beckwith concludes that:

...the relationship between lord and *chākar* was extremely close indeed; al-Iskand's ally Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, speaks of his feudal relationship to his Western-Turkic liege-lord...It appears, therefore that the members of the central Asian guard corps spoke of themselves as *the slaves of their lord* [my emphasis].

We need more than one (equivocal) piece of evidence to corroborate such a social-cultural and ethnic institution, despite Beckwith's lively depiction.

Yonggyu is more cautious in his definitions. Regarding the above evidence, he believes that the word "slave" ('*abd*) is used here metaphorically and does not denote "simple slaves."¹¹ *Chākars* "often labelled themselves as their lords' slaves, even if mostly metaphorically and nominally."¹² Yonggyu brings

6 Shaban 1976, 2: 64–65, quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 8, 928, 1373, 1427, 1605; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (ed. Tornberg), 7, 32; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 2, fol. 271a [= ed. Hyderabad, 8, 331].

7 Forand 1962, 10–11.

8 Beckwith 1984, esp. 39–40; Yonggyu 2004, chapter one, esp. 39–75; De La Vaissière 2007, esp. 59–158.

9 Beckwith 1984, 37: Chinese sources describing the *chākars* in Bukhārā and Samarqand; the word *chākar* in the Chinese sources is *che-chieh* (Beckwith 1984, 37, nn. 41 and 42); I cannot judge these pieces of evidence.

10 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1542: أنا عبد الخاقان من شاكريته; see the discussion of Yonggyu below.

11 Yonggyu 2004, 63: "Indeed they are not simple slaves, because they are also of the highest echelons of society."

12 Yonggyu 2004, 63.

several pieces of evidence from Chinese sources (some from the 7th century), where the *chākars* of the Turkish *qaghan* are called “slaves of the *qaghan*,” denoting in his view subordinates.¹³ Regarding Forand’s assertion that “the *Shākiriyyah* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves,”¹⁴ Yonggyu argues that this conclusion “is somewhat extreme...it is probable that the *chākars* in Iran and Central Asia were fully subordinate to their rulers and that they were servile elements in the service of the rulers.”¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Beckwith speaks only of Central Asia while Yonggyu distinguishes between Iran and Central Asia. Yonggyu adds (following Forand’s examples) that al-Ṭabarī provides many examples showing that the Iranian ruler had the “right of life and death over the members of *shākiriyya*.” But this assertion cannot be proved from the texts he adduces.¹⁶

Some Major Characteristics of *al-Shākiriyya* in Central Asia.

Yonggyu asserts that Chinese sources from the 7th century attest to special military forces called *chākars*.

...inner Asian historians and Sinologists have in general regarded the term as referring to the elite armed forces constituted by Central Asian Turko-Persian ethnic groups.¹⁷...Other currently available sources in Chinese also indicate that *chākars* are peoples associated to Iranian groups.¹⁸

The military skills, courage and extreme loyalty of the *chākars* are well attested to and demonstrated in the Chinese sources.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Yonggyu adds, “The Chinese sources are not forthcoming when it comes to the question of by what mechanism such a special bond between the inner Asian ruler and his retainers was created.”²⁰ The same can be said about the Arabic sources pertaining to the Umawī and the early ‘Abbāsi caliphate.

13 Yonggyu 2004, 63.

14 Forand 1962, 11.

15 Yonggyu 2004, 68.

16 Yonggyu 2004, 68, quoting Forand 1962, 11, citing al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 965, 1155, 1609, 1927 (nos. B/1, B/3, B/11 and B/15 in this paper).

17 Yonggyu 2004, 44–45.

18 Yonggyu 2004, 46.

19 Yonggyu 2004, 68–69.

20 Yonggyu 2004, 70.

De La Vaissière's Conclusions

De La Vaissière devotes large parts of a recent book to a broad in-depth discussion of the *Shākiriyya*. He expands some of the conclusions of Beckwith and more especially of Yonggyu, arguing that the *Shākiriyya* was strictly a special institution within the Soghdian armies in Transoxania.²¹ In his view the professional soldiers called *chākar* constituted “the most specific element of the military Soghdian life.”²²

De La Vaissière relies mainly on two groups of Chinese and Arabic sources. The Chinese sources enable him to establish unequivocally that the *chākars* were “an elite guard restricted to a few selected companions.”²³

Les *chākar* étaient les soldats d'élites des nobles et des rois, distingués par leur bravoure, entretenus, éduqués et adoptés fictivement par eux afin de s'assurer de leur fidélité. Ils les suivaient à la guerre comme dans le service quotidien. La plupart d'entre eux devaient être des gens du commun, mais des rois pouvaient avoir des *chākar* nobles.²⁴

Persian or Soghdian Origin?

Unlike some of the scholars that preceded him, De La Vaissière argues against the Persian-Sasanian origin of this institution via the word itself. The etymology of the word is from the Soghdian and not the Persian language; although it does not appear in known Soghdian sources (mostly religious texts), it is found in the Arabic and the Chinese sources.²⁵ All the Arabic (almost exclusively from al-Ṭabarī) and the Chinese sources that mention the *Shākiriyya* pertain to Central Asia (Transoxania). Al-Ṭabarī never mentions these units in his descriptions of the Arab conquests of the Sasanian territories.²⁶

De La Vaissière admits that the word *chākar* does appear in 10th century Persian texts (for example, Narshakhī), but unlike Barthold²⁷ he argues that the meaning of the word is servant or apprentice and that it refers to an institution

21 De La Vaissière 2007, 59.

22 De La Vaissière 2007, 68: “Les soldats professionnels nommés *chākar* forment l'élément le plus spécifique de la vie militaire sogdienne.”

23 De La Vaissière 2007, 69–70: “d'une garde d'élite restreinte à quelques compagnons choisis.”

24 De La Vaissière 2007, 86.

25 De La Vaissière 2007, 68.

26 De La Vaissière 2007, 72–73.

27 See above.

basically different from that of the *chākars* of Central Asia.²⁸ The main difference between the *chākars* of Transoxania and Narshakhī's *chākars* is the inferior social status of the latter. According to the Zoroastrian point of view, they are non-noble servants performing base work. The descriptions of the court of the Queen of Bukhārā by Narshakhī are completely different from the military institution of the *chākars* depicted in the Chinese sources.²⁹

The difference between the meaning of the term *chākar* in the Persian versus the Arabic and Chinese texts explains (in De La Vaissière's opinion) the apparently single text of al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (*Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*) in which he describes the *Shākiriyya* units in the army of the Sasanian general Rustam during the battle of al-Qādisiyya in the year 15 H/636 CE.³⁰ This conclusion poses some difficulties.

A) There is a similar text recorded by al-Ṭabarī (no. 1): "The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by *Shākiri* men; and from among these sixty thousand fifteen thousand noblemen (also) were accompanied."³¹

B) The term *al-Shākiriyya* in different forms (e.g., *wa-Shākiriyyatuhu*) appears at least two more times in Ibn Ṭāhir's book in connection with two different periods of the 'Abbāsī caliphate 1) In the year 136 H/754 CE, the *Shākiriyya* of caliph Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāh (r. 132 H/749 CE–134 H/756 CE) is mentioned in al-Kūfa/al-Hāshimiyya.³² (No. C/3 [20]) 2) The *mawālī* and the *Shākiriyya* in Sāmarrā' rebelled during the short reign of caliph al-Musta'in (Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mu'taṣim; r. 248 H/862 CE–252 H/866 CE) due to the latter's political deeds, among them the imprisonment of al-Mutawakkil's two sons al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad and the release of al-Ḥasan b. al-Afshīn from prison.³³

28 De La Vaissière 2007, 88.

29 De La Vaissière 2007, 74–75.

30 De La Vaissière 2007, 73, and note 194, quoting Zakeri 1995, 184; "on peut assurer que lorsque Maqdisī décrit des *chākar* parmi les suivants de Rostam et de Yazdergerd III durant la bataille de Qadissiyya, dans son *Livre de la création et de l'histoire*, il se sert simplement d'un mot commun à Balkh au X^e siècle pour décrire des serviteurs de souverains sassanides très différents des *chākar* centre-asiatiques et qui, dans l'Iran sassanide portaient certainement un autre nom."

31 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 1, 2258: وكان جنده مائة وعشرين ألفاً: ستين ألف متبوع مع الرجل الشاكري, ومن الستين ألفاً خمسة: عشر ألف شريف متبوع.

32 Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad'*, 6, 76, records a tradition relating the plot by the caliph and his brother al-Manṣūr to assassinate Abū Muslim; the caliph backs down from his decision, ordering one of his *Shākiriyya* (فقال لبعض شاكريه) to tell his brother not to kill Abū Muslim.

33 Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad'*, 6, 123: وشغب الموالي والشاكرية...; according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 1533, al-Ḥasan was released from prison in 250 H/864 CE. The insurrection against al-Musta'in and the release of al-Mu'tazz from prison occurred in 251 H/865 CE (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 1545;

C) It is difficult to accept the historiographical method applied by De La Vaissière to al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir's work in general and to this specific text in particular. Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir was a native of Jerusalem, a contemporary of the famous geographer Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (known as al-Muqaddasī/al-Maqdisī, d. ca. 1000). Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir emigrated from Jerusalem to Bust in Sijistān, where he wrote his book around 355 H/966 CE (not in Balkh as De La Vaissière believes). Very little information survives regarding him; it is not known exactly when he left Jerusalem and when he settled in Bust.³⁴ His work was written in Arabic, not in Persian.

the rebels referred to are Turks). I did not find the expression *al-mawālī wa-l-Shākiriyya* in al-Ṭabarī's work, but this phrase does appear even earlier in other sources, e.g. during al-Mutawakkil's reign (r. 232 H/847CE–247 H/861 CE), when the latter ordered the preparation of an extraordinary celebration in honour of his young son, al-Mu'tazz, who had finished learning and reciting the Qur'ān. This unprecedented celebration was held in Barkuwārā, one of al-Mutawakkil's palaces. See al-Mu'āfā b. Zakariyyā', *al-Jalīs al-Ṣāliḥ*, 3, 103–105; 105: "he [the caliph] ordered the most prominent dignitaries, the most distinguished *mawālī* and *al-Shākiriyya* to be present in Barkuwārā...": وَأَوْعَزَ إِلَى النَّاسِ مِنَ الْأَكْبَارِ وَوَجْهِ الْمَوَالِي وَالشَّكْرِيَّةِ بِحَضُورِ بَرْكُورَا: حدثنا الحسن بن القاسم الكوكبي قال حدثني أبو يوسف يعقوب بن بنان الكاتب قال حدثنا أبو العباس أحمد بن محمد بن موسى بن الفرات قال حدثنا القاسم الكوكبي قال حدثني أبو يوسف يعقوب بن بنان الكاتب قال حدثنا أبو العباس أحمد بن محمد بن موسى بن الفرات قال حدثنا أبي وجماعة من شيوخنا

to the famous Banū l-Furāt family, several of whose members held the offices of secretaries and viziers under the 'Abbāsīs (mainly from the end of the 3rd/9th century) and the Ikshidīs (in the 4th/10th century). They were pro-Shi'a. On Banū l-Furāt, see D. Sourdel, "Ibn al-Furāt", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, 3, s.v. (on Aḥmad and his father, see p. 767b.), but esp. Sourdel 1959–60 (index); for parallel sources for the tradition, see for example Ibn al-'Imrānī, *al-Inbā'*, 1, 118–119 and 281, n. 285, an exhaustive bibliography; Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughya*, 8, 3764–3765; Ibn 'Asākīr, *Ta'riḥ*, 18, 314–316. On Barkuwārā, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam* (Beirut ed.), 1, 410; Le Strange 1905, 52. See also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 1627, where we find the phrase *al-atrāk wa-l-mawālī* (in al-Musta'in's army); Gordon 2001, 224, n. 242, argues that the *mawālī* mentioned here are Turks as well: "there is good reason to think Turks are meant here as well. In other words, a distinction is made here between two groups of Turks." See also al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ*, 3, 1582 (year 251 H/865 CE): "The *Shākiriyya* and the *Abnā'* [contingents] support[ed] al-Mu'tazz while the Turks and their supporters broke rank and fought against him": واجابه الشاكرية والأنباء واعتزل الأتراك ومن كانفهم وحواربوه. It is noteworthy that there is a distinction here between the *Shākiriyya* and the Turks; for the involvement of the *Shākiriyya* corps in the civil war, see for example, Saliba 1985, index ("*Shākiriyyah*"); for a historical survey of the civil war, see Shaban 1976, 2: 80–85, but esp. Gordon 2001, 90ff., and 224, n. 238 for further bibliography.

34 *Kitāb al-Bad' wa-l-ta'riḥ* was for a long time ascribed to Abū Zayd Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Balkhi (d. 322 H/934 CE), mainly due to the assertion of Ḥāji Khalifa in *Kashf al-zunūn*, 1, 227, but see also Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīda*, 249 (mentioned by Morony 1988, 353); van Ess 1978, 322 (S. 581); Adang 1996, 49. On al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (a brief mention of the author and his book), see Goitein 1982, 192–193 (the original Hebrew version of this article appeared in 1953); Sarkis 1928–30, 1: 241–242; al-Zirikli 1980, 1: 133–134, 7: 253, 8: 285; Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 12: 294; "Al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir," p. 762a; *GAL*, I, p. 337; S. I, p. 222; Sezgin 1967, 1: 337; Rosenthal 1968,

[It] recalls al-Mas‘ūdī’s *Murūj [al-Dhahab]*, but history here is envisaged from a more philosophical and certainly from a more critical point of view. The author displays a good knowledge of ancient and alien religions, whose cultural value he stresses without however ceasing to place Islam above them. He follows the usual order. Beginning with the creation of the world, he devotes the first three volumes (half of the whole work) to ancient history and to philosophical, theological, geographical, etc. considerations and does not reach a consideration of Islam until the fourth volume (cf. the parallel lay-out of al-Mas‘ūdī’s work, in which these earlier topics occupy only two volumes out of five), finally reserving a restricted place for the Umayyads and ‘Abbāsīds....Such a disdain may possibly arise precisely from the originality and free thought of a writer who seems to have maintained a certain independence and not to have been an adherent of any religious movement of the age when he lived.³⁵

The historical parts of this work preserve many pieces of evidence of utmost importance, which are not found in other sources known to me.³⁶

In the introduction to the historical section of his work, the author asserts that it “is based on what we have found in the books of the authors of history (في كتب أهل الأخبار).” From a cursory reading it is clear that Ibn Ṭāhir relied heavily on earlier sources, including well-known works such as al-Ṭabarī’s (or his sources; this should be established by a special study).³⁷ Many times he quotes written works or transmitters from which he accumulated his historical information. This is done according to the traditional methodology of the great historical written Arabic works. The examples are numerous and it is sufficient to cite only a few here.³⁸

From a cursory check of Ibn Ṭāhir’s work *al-Bad’ wa-l-Ta’rikh* it is clear that he was very learned in *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, historical and other kinds of Islamic literature. The sections of pre-Islamic history that deal with *al-mabda’* and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* until the beginnings of Muḥammad’s mission, the life of the Prophet

index, esp. 114–115; Khālīdī 1976. Khālīdī quotes the short mention of the author by Sezgin, Rosenthal and Miquel (see the bibliographical citation above in this note); Miquel 1967, 1: 212–217, and index; see also Khālīdī 1994, 153–154; Adang 1996a, esp. pp. 48–50, and index; Adang 1996b, esp. 59–60; Morony 1988.

35 “Al-Muṭaḥhar b. Ṭāhir.” But see Khālīdī 1976, who considers him a Mu‘tazilī.

36 See the short evaluation of the man and his work in this vein by Sezgin 1967, 1: 337 (quoted in Gil 1992, 421).

37 For example, compare al-Muṭaḥhar b. Ṭāhir, *al-Bad’*, 6, 75–76, to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 85–86 (partly related by al-Ṭabarī from al-Madā’ini); see full discussion below (‘Abbāsī, no. C/3 [20])

38 E.g., II, p. 150: *وروي عبد الله بن مسلم بن قتيبة في كتاب المعارف*; *وروينا عن وهب بن المنبه*; or: *وروي عبد الله بن محمد بن إسحاق فيما يروي عن يونس بن بكير*; p. 151: *وفي كتاب*; *وروي محمد بن إسحاق فيما يروي عن يونس بن بكير*; p. 153: *وأصبت في كتاب أخبار زرنج*; p. 152: *[تأريخ ابن خردادبه وروي وهب [بن المنبه] وقد روي همام عن قتادة عن عكرمة عن*; p. 154: *ولرأيت في كتب بعض أهل التنجيم ذكروا تواريخ الأنبياء وروي أبو جعفر*; p. 156: *بذكر ما رواه أهل الأخبار روي عبد المنعم بن إدريس عن ابن عباس*; p. 155: *ابن عباس رضي الله عنه...وفي رواية الكلبي*...

and the history of the caliphate are written in the familiar tradition of the important Islamic historians of the 9th and 10th centuries. Even an anecdote about an alleged disputation between the chief commander of the Arab force in front of Yazdajird (no. A/1.3, below), is written in accordance with the style, spirit and contents of many of the traditions of the early Arab-Muslim conquests, as found in the early Arabic *Futūḥ* literature—for example, the works of Abū Mikhnaḥ (d. 157 H/774 CE), al-Azdī (d. around 190 H/805–806 CE or 210 H/825–826 CE), al-Qudāmī (d. between 201 H/816–17 CE or 210 H/826–27 CE), Muḥammad b. ‘Ā’idh (d. 232 H/847 CE) or Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. ca. 184 H/800 CE). Ṭāhir seldom quotes his historical sources in these early sections. Although his work has long been edited and used in research, it has not been properly studied; I do not know of an in-depth study of the author or his important work.³⁹

Though it is tempting to compare the *Shākiriyya* and the institution of knighthood in the European Middle Ages (as argued by Barthold and Beckwith⁴⁰), there should be reservations regarding the equation. It is refuted, for example, and treated with great caution and reservation by De La Vaissière.⁴¹ If such comparisons are made, they should be put forward in great detail and with profound caution. The regimes in the east and in the west were very different in character.⁴²

Other researchers mention the *Shākiriyya* but do not discuss it or attempt to clarify its character.⁴³

The Term *Shākiri*/*Shākiriyya* in the Arabic Sources

Used to mean military contingents: marked MC

³⁹ See Khālīdī 1976, 2.

⁴⁰ Beckwith 1984, 35 and note 26: comparing the *Shākiriyya* guard corps with “the system found among the Germanic peoples of late Classical and early medieval Europe,” the *comitatus*.

⁴¹ De La Vaissière 2007, 83–84, argues against Beckwith but mainly against two articles by P. Golden from 2001 and 2004 (not read by A. E.).

⁴² For example, see the reservations of Cahen and Lambton in their discussion of the *iqṭā’* regime in the east and attempts to compare this regime with European feudalism, Lambton 1965; Cahen, “Iḳṭā’”, *EF*, 3, 1088–1091.

⁴³ Pipes 1981, 137, note 215; Lassner 1980, 136 (regarding al-Mu’ṭaṣim’s period). Levy 1969, 418–419, translates the *Shākiriyya* of al-Mutawakkil (847–861) as referring to new recruits in contrast to the old regiments. He was mistaken in his *understanding* of the term. In relation to the citation (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 3, 1510) according to which *al-Abnā’ wa-l-Shākiriyya* rebelled against the Turks, he believes that *Abnā’* means “sons”, that is, new recruits. What is meant here are in fact the veteran *Abnā’* regiments.

Used to mean non-military, servant or slave: marked NM/SE/SL

A) The Period of the Conquest of al-‘Irāq (14 H/636 CE): MC? Instead of S/: SE/NM?

These may be the earliest pieces of evidence at our disposal, recording the term *Shākiriyya/Shākiri* as in use in the year 14 H/636 CE[!], during the battle of al-Qādisiyya in al-‘Irāq. Two versions of these terms appear in the sources. Both describe the army of Rustam, the chief general of the Persian army.

A/1) The First Version, According to Ṭabarī

This version is recorded by al-Ṭabarī from Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. ca. 184 H /800 CE), who transmitted the following tradition from three informers: “The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by the *Shākiri* man; and from among these sixty thousand fifteen thousand noblemen (also) were accompanied.”⁴⁴ Friedmann renders the term *Shākiri* in this sentence as “servant:” “The army of Rustam consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand men. Sixty thousand were accompanied by servants (*shākiri*); from the [other] sixty thousand, fifteen thousand were noblemen accompanied [by dependents].”⁴⁵

In another place, al-Ṭabarī (via Sayf b. ‘Umar) records: “Rustam set out with one hundred and twenty thousand men, all of them accompanied by dependents. Together with their dependents they numbered more than two hundred thousand. He set out from al-Madā’in with sixty thousand men, accompanied by dependents.”⁴⁶ In this version the *Shākiriyya* are not mentioned.

A/1.2) The second version, According to *Kitāb al-Bad’ wa-l-Ta’rikh*

“Rustam arrived and encamped in al-Ḥīra at the head of sixty thousand regular (paid) soldiers, besides (the accompanying units) of the supporters, the followers

⁴⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2258: وكان جنده مائة وعشرين ألفاً: ستين ألف متبوع مع الرجل الشاكري, ومن الستين ألفاً خمسة عشر ألف شريف متبوع.

⁴⁵ Friedmann 1992, 53.

⁴⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2250: وخرج رستم في عشرين ومائة الف, كلهم متبوع, وكانوا يأتياهم أكثر من مائتي الف; وخرج من المدائن في ستين ألف متبوع; the translation is that of Friedmann 1992, 46.

وجاء رستم فنزل الحيرة في ستين ألفا من المقاتلة سوى الأشياع والأتباع: "and the *Shākiriyya*:"⁴⁷ والشاكرية

Here, the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned not as part of the regular paid army but as one of the auxiliary units.⁴⁸

A/1.3) The *Shākiriyya* of Yazdajird: MC?/; S/NM?

Ibn Ṭāhir relates in another tradition that several senior commanders were sent to Yazdajird by Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ to persuade the king to recognize the superiority of Islam, demanding that he become a Muslim or "pay the *jizya* while being humiliated,⁴⁹ standing while a whip is over his head" (فالجزية تؤديها و أنت صاغر قائم و السوط على رأسك). They were received by Yazdajird's son who responded: "If you were not messengers I would have killed you." So they answered: "We shall take your land and send you to exile from it." So he asked: "What is your proof (for this)?" and they said: "Our Prophet (*ṣal'am*) informed us about this, and there was nothing that he informed us about which did not materialize." Yazdajird's son (or is it the king himself?) said something in Persian to one of his *Shākiriyya* (فراطن بعض شاكريته) and he came quickly with a date-basket which contained dust of the earth, and he said: "Take this, this is what you'll get from me..."⁵⁰

This tradition is undoubtedly a *topos*, a literary convention, with many parallels in early Islamic sources on the conquests. Still, it was woven around some solid historical events, incorporating the names of real Arab commanders and places. Whoever spread this tradition was certain that the Sāsānian prince and/or king had a *Shākiriyya*. The nature of the *Shākiri* himself is not clear from this anecdote; he may have been a servant, or a soldier who belonged to a *Shākiriyya* military institution.

It is also noteworthy that this example is from a very early period, and that it deals with the Sāsānian (Persian) army in al-ʿIrāq; it does not touch on Central Asia.

⁴⁷ Al-Maqdisī, *al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*, 5, 171.

⁴⁸ For a different analysis and interpretation of this evidence, see De La Vaissière 2007, 73, who doubts the authenticity of this evidence (quoting only al-Maqdisī); and see the discussion above.

⁴⁹ This is a paraphrase of the well-known Qur'ānic verse (9 (*al-tawba*):9), as well as an interpretation of this verse, which clearly attests to the later origin of the text.

⁵⁰ Al-Maqdisī, *al-Bad' wa-l-ta'rikh*, 5, 172.

B) The Umawī Period

B/1) al-‘Irāq: MC

The first time the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned is in 77 H/696–697 CE, during the fierce battles between al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf and Shabīb b. Yazīd al-Shaybānī al-Khārījī in al-‘Irāq (mainly near al-Kūfa). One of al-Ḥajjāj’s notables and commanders, Khālīd b. ‘Attāb al-Riyāḥī al-Tamīmī,⁵¹ was sent from al-Kūfa at the head of his *Shākiriyya* (*fī Shākiriyyatihi*) to fight Shabīb. The tradition was recorded by al-Ṭabarī from ‘Umar b. Saḥabba through Khallād b. Yazīd from al-Ḥajjāj b. Qutayba.⁵²

B/1.1) MC

Miskawayh relates that Khālīd b. ‘Attāb headed a company of soldiers of Ahl al-Kūfa together with his *mawālī* and his *Shākiriyya*.⁵³

B/1.2) MC

Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd relates that Khālīd b. ‘Attāb “came out with a group of his *mawālī* and his *Shākiriyya* and his cousins:” فخرج في جمع من مواليه وشاكريته وبنى عمه.⁵⁴

On the face of it, this is an exception to the geographic-social pattern established by some scholars, since its setting is not connected to the east (Khurāsān) and certainly not to Transoxania. Khālīd b. ‘Attāb was a Kūfī, who during his ca-

51 On Khālīd b. ‘Attāb, see Crone 1980, 112; al-Ziriklī 1980, 2: 297 (his entry); see also Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 227; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 12, 161–162; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 16, 172–175: his biography; 172: governor of al-Rayy; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamhara* (ed. Ḥasan), 217 and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 12, 161: governor of Iṣfahān after his father; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 7, 403: governor of al-Rayy; al-‘Askarī, *Taṣḥīfāt*, 2, 872.

52 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 965 (وجاء خالد بن عتاب في شاكريته); my emphasis); the *isnād* is on pp. 963 and 964: ‘Umar b. Saḥabba < Khallād b. Yazīd < al-Ḥajjāj b. Qutayba [b. Muslim?]. In some of the traditions, *‘iṣāba* (a company of soldiers) appears instead of the *Shākiriyya* (see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 961; al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rikh*, 5, 333), or *jamā‘a* (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 9, 24: a *jamā‘a* of 4000 soldiers). See also the next footnote.

53 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, 2, 308. The text is slightly garbled: فخرج معه بعصابة [؟=ومعه عصابة؟] من أهل الكوفة مع مواليه وشاكريته.

54 Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ*, 4, 271; Forand 1962, 10. His conclusions regarding this and other examples are farfetched.

reer served as the governor of al-Rayy and Iṣfahān in the Jibāl district (also far away from Transoxania). This was the heart of the Sāsānian kingdom. Did he recruit his *Shākiriyya* there?

Crone has already noted that at least two members of Khālid b. ‘Attāb’s sub-tribe (Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘) were connected to Khurāsān. The first was Ḥabīb b. Qurra [b. Nu‘aym b. Qa‘nab...b. Hammām b. Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘], who was the governor of Balkh in 29 H/649–650 CE on behalf of ‘Uthmān.⁵⁵ But there is a chronological gap of about 50 years between Khālid b. ‘Attāb’s campaign and Ḥabīb b. Qurra’s governorship. The evidence in al-Ṭabarī (from 29 H/649–650 CE) is the only mention of Ḥabīb b. Qurra in the sources. Nothing more is known of him, certainly not about any *Shākiriyya* contingents of his, nor is anything known about his relations with the family of Khālid b. ‘Attāb.

The second person mentioned by Crone is al-Abrad b. Qurra b. Nu‘aym, the brother of Ḥabīb.⁵⁶ His daughter was married to Yazīd b. Qurrā‘ al-Riyāḥī or al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī, who lived in Marw.⁵⁷ As in the case of Ḥabīb b. Qurra, no connection is recorded between Khālid b. ‘Attāb and al-Abrad b. Qurra or between their families. It seems that the Khurāsānī background and connections of Khālid b. ‘Attāb with these distant relatives and with the districts of Khurāsān and Transoxania need to be established on firmer ground.⁵⁸

All the other pieces of evidence from the Umawī period (except two) are connected to Khurāsān and Transoxania.

55 Crone 1980, 113 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 1, 2831).

56 On him, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamhara*, 216; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 227; Ibn Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl*, 1, 10–11; he is only mentioned in these sources.

57 Crone 1980, 113 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1569: al-Riyāḥī); but see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1691: al-Ḥanzalī, a different sub-tribe of Tamīm.

58 De La Vaissière 2007, 72–73, note 193, mentions the evidence (according to al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rikh*) about Khālid b. ‘Attāb’s *Shākiriyya* in al-Kūfa (al-‘Irāq), but argues, relying on Crone’s observation, that “mais Crone 1980, p. 113, souligne les forts liens de sa famille avec le Khorassan (elle compte dans ses rangs un gouverneur de Balkh).” Crone’s assertion (1980, 113) about the Khurāsānī connection of Khālid and his father ‘Attāb to Khurāsān is not attested to by the sources she quotes. Furthermore, she confuses ‘Attāb and his son Khālid, mistakenly arguing that it was ‘Attāb who had a *Shākiriyya* (quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 950). ‘Attāb’s different contingents are mentioned on this page, but no *Shākiriyya* contingents are listed. I am unable to trace any connection between ‘Attāb and his son Khālid and Khurāsān.

B/2) Khurāsān: MC

In 82 H/701–702 CE Thābit and Ḥurayth, the sons of Quṭba, *mawālī* of Khuzā‘a and two commanders of the governor of Khurāsān al-Muhallab b. Abī Ṣufra, left al-Muhallab’s camp with “three hundred of their *Shākiriyya* and their loyal and close Arab adherents.” The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’inī (most probably from a written work) < al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad b. Ya‘lā al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 163 H/780 CE),⁵⁹ whose “father was one of the authorities of al-Ṭabarī on the events in the wars of the Arabs on the frontiers of Khurāsān in 30–90 H/651–709 CE.”⁶⁰

B/3) Transoxania: MC

In 85 H/704–705 CE, Thābit and Ḥurayth, the two tribal leaders and commanders mentioned above, found a refuge in Tirmidh (in Transoxania, on the Oxus river) dominated by Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī.⁶¹ At a certain stage Thābit turned against Mūsā and with the help of the princes of Transoxania fought against him. Thābit had to guard against assassination and ordered a group of his *Shākiriyya* “to guard him, to sleep in his house at night, and with them, a group of Arabs (ومعهم قوم من العرب).”⁶²

Barthold argued for the Iranian origin of this personal guard (*Shākiriyya*), but no indication of this guard’s ethnicity is included in the source he quoted. He further argued that the phrase “and with them, a group of Arab tribes” means Thābit’s enemies in the camp of the leader of Khuzā‘a. The text is not as clear-cut as Barthold deems, and it is definitely possible to assume that the *Shākiriyya* that appears in this text also included Arabs.⁶³

59 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1082: وفخرجا في ثلاثمائة من شاكريتهما والمنقطعين إليهما من العرب; Forand 1962, 11; the expression والمنقطعين is rendered by Hinds 1990 as: “three hundred of their *shākiriyya* and Arab adherents [my emphasis]” and by De La Vaissière 2007, 71 as “et leur *suivants* arabes [my emphasis].”

60 Lichtenstädter, “al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad....al-Ḍabbī,” *EF*, 7, 305–306.

61 On Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, index, esp. 1145ff.; Shaban 1979, index, esp. 58–49, 58–62; on al-Thābit and Ḥurayth, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, index, esp. 1145ff.; Shaban 1979, index, esp. 57–61.

62 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1155; وأمر قوما من شاكريته يحرسونه ويبيتون عنده في داره ومعهم قوم من العرب; Barthold 1928, 183; De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 181.

63 Barthold 1928, 183; Hinds 1990, 99: “they being accompanied by some Arabs.”

B/4) Transoxania: SE/NM

The *Shākiriyya* of Ṭarkhūn, the king of Samarqand and ruler of Soghdia, is mentioned in the year 85 H/704–705 CE. He is in a military camp, leading a coalition of non-Arabs and Arabs against Mūsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī, who has gained control over Tirmidh. Ṭarkhūn is described sitting in his tent, “and his *Shākiriyya* had lit fires before him.” They scattered when they heard the voice of one single enemy soldier who entered the tent and is killed by Ṭarkhūn. Then the *Shākiriyya* returned and Ṭarkhūn scolded them, saying “You fled from a [single] man.” Then his slave girls entered the tent and the *Shākiriyya* fled.

It seems that the *Shākiriyya* in this case are servants, not soldiers; certainly not courageous warriors since they did not even try to resist their lord’s attacker.⁶⁴ The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’ini].⁶⁵ It is unsound to conclude from this text, as Forand did, that “the *Shākiriyya* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves.”⁶⁶

B/5) Jurjān/Khurāsān: NM/SE?

In 98 H/716–717 CE, in the course of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab’s long siege of Jurjān (located southeast of the Caspian Sea), “a non-‘Arab (soldier?) from *Khurāsān*—who was with Yazīd—went out to hunt with a *Shākiriyya* of his.” While chasing a wild mountain goat (antelope?: وعل), he discovers a small path in the mountains leading to the besieged fortress. This evidence is connected to the east via *Khurāsān* (but not Transoxania); the identity of the “hunter” is not clear. Was he a commander or an Iranian notable? The *isnād* is as follows: al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’ini] < “the group that transmitted to him the report about Jurjān and Ṭabaristān.”⁶⁷

Al-Ṭabarī records two additional conflicting versions (see below) of the identity of this soldier or commander who discovers the secret pass to the besieged city while hunting. In these versions, the “heroes of the anecdote” are Arabs.

⁶⁴ Cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 71: “ils veillent sur sa tente mais ne résistent pas à une attaque.”

⁶⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1159–1160; the beginning of the long tradition (mention of al-Madā’ini) is on 1146; Barthold 1928, 180; Forand 1962, 10; De La Vaissière, 2007, 71, note 182 (quoting al-Ṭabarī).

⁶⁶ Forand 1962, 11.

⁶⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1330–1331: *إذ خرج رجل من عجم خراسان كان مع يزيد يتصيد ومعه شاكريّة له*; is it possible that the phrase *شاكريّة له* denotes a female *Shākir*?

It is clear that we are again faced with a *topos*, but some elements of the anecdote may have a grain of authenticity.⁷¹ It is interesting (and may be of importance) that the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned in connection with an Iranian. The two other Arab commanders are not connected to a *Shākiriyya*.

Again, it is worth reminding ourselves that the term *al-Shākiriyya* was a common, well-known term in the mid-9th century when al-Madā'inī lived and worked.

B/6) Syria/Dābiq. Between 96 H/715 CE and 99 H/717 CE, the Reign of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik: NM/SE?

Yāqūt quotes an anecdote that he most plausibly copied from *Akhbār al-Naḥawiyyīn* (The History of the Grammarians),⁷² a book by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik, Abū Bakr al-Sarrāj, known as al-Ta'rikhī (d. 291 H/903–904 CE)⁷³: “And he related in the tradition whose *isnād* concludes with al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml/Zaml al-Saksakī, who was one of the close associates of al-Manṣūr من وكان من أصحاب المنصور),⁷⁴ who said:

We were together with Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik [r. 96/715–99/717] in Dābiq,⁷⁵ when al-Shahḥāj [b. Wadā'] al-Azdī al-Mawṣilī⁷⁶ rose up in his presence and said [in incorrect Ara-

71 Cf. the summary of al-Madā'inī's tradition in al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* (Beirut, 1987), 471: “[Yazīd] laid siege to the fortress for seven months, with no apparent results, then a man (a soldier?) directed and guided them towards a road to their fortress”: “فزل عليها سبعة أشهر لا يقدر منها شيء... ثم إن رجلا...؛ De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 183 (according to al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, 2, 1331), refers only to one man, “un Iranien de Ṭūs.” This combines the two versions and two different commanders rendered by al-Ṭabarī.

72 Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, 1, 27. Yāqūt copied the traditions from the book that was before him, see 1, 5 and 13; 2, 551: “ونقلت في كتاب محمد بن عبد الملك التاريخي في أخبار النحويين قال: ...; this book was already mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 95; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 46: “كتاب تاريخ النحويين see also *GAL*, S3, 157. It is not mentioned by Sezgin.

73 On him, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 3, 151; 11, 69; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī used an autograph of the author (quoted by Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 59, 254): “قرأت في كتاب محمد بن عبد الملك التاريخي: بخطه; al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, 1, 442; Yāqūt, *Udabā'*, 1, 5–6; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh*, 23, 278–279, who does not give the exact date of his death; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī*, 4, 35; al-Ṭihirānī, *al-Dharī'a*, 21, 28 quotes Yāqūt and gives birth and death dates (200 H/815–816 CE to 291 H/903–904 CE).

74 For this social-political institution within the early 'Abbāsī court, see Elad 1995, 93, n. 17; al-Ḍaḥḥāk should be added to the list of the *ṣaḥāba* of al-Manṣūr: وكان من أصحاب المنصور.

75 “A locality in the 'Azāz region of northern Syria. It lies on the road from Manbij to Anṭākiya upstream from Aleppo on the river Nahr Ḳuwayḳ.” Sourdel, “Dābiq,” *ET*², 2, 72; see also Le Strange 1890, 426.

76 For more on him, see below.

bic, not according to the rules of the Arabic grammar]: ‘Oh Commander of the Faithful, Our father has died and left a large sum of money but our brother took control of our father’s money and took it...’ Upon hearing the incorrect Arabic the caliph became very angry and addressed the speaker with harsh bold words and added ‘Take this man who speaks incorrect Arabic from me.’ So one of the *Shākiriyya* took his hand saying [also in incorrect Arabic]: ‘Get up for you have offended the Commander of the Faithful.’ Hearing the incorrect, faulty Arabic, the caliph cursed the *Shākiri* and ordered to drag him away by his legs.⁷⁷

Yāqūt records only the last transmitter of the tradition, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml/Zaml b. ‘Amr al-Saksakī (Kinda), a well-known Umawī Arab notable who lived in Bayt Lihyā, one of the villages of Damascus.⁷⁸ His father was one of the closest and most senior associates of caliph Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (r. 64 H/684 CE–65 H/685 CE). He was also a minor transmitter of *ḥadīth*.⁷⁹ His son, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Zamal/Ziml related traditions about Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; in another tradition he gives an eyewitness description of the audience of caliph Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 101 H/720 CE–105 H/724 CE).⁸⁰ He was appointed by caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 125 H/743 CE–126 H/744 CE) as the governor of al-Yaman.⁸¹ Yazīd b. al-Walīd (r. 126 H/744 CE) confirmed his appointment as the governor of al-Yaman and Ḥaḍramawt where he remained as governor under Marwān b. Muḥammad (r. 126 H/744 CE–132 H/750 CE) for two years and a few months.⁸² His brother al-Ḥajjāj b. Ziml accompanied Marwān b. Muḥammad on his flight to Egypt and was killed with him in Būṣīr.⁸³ Yāqūt adds an interesting and otherwise unknown fact about him: that he continued to serve the ‘Abbāsī caliphs as well and was one of the *ṣaḥāba* of caliph al-Manṣūr.

77 Yāqūt, *Udabā’*, 1, 27; on p. 25 Yāqūt starts to quote al-Ta’rikhī’s work: وحدث فيما أسنده إلى الضحاك بن زمل السكسي، وكان من أصحاب المنصور قال: كنا مع سليمان بن عبد الملك بدياق، إذ قام إليه الشجاع الأزدي الموصل، فقال يا أمير المؤمنين: إن أبينا هلك وترك مال كثير، فوثب أختنا على مال أبينا فأخذه، فقال سليمان: فلا رحم الله أباك ولا نبيح عظام أخيك، ولا بارك الله لك فيما ورثت، أخرجوا هذا اللعان عني. فأخذ بيده بعض الشاكرية وقال: قم فقد أدبت أمير المؤمنين، فقال: وهذا العاص بظن أمه اسحبوا برجله
78 On him see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 263–266; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 384, 432; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *al-Jarḥ*, 4, 461; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, 4, 96.
79 On him, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 19, 79: وكان من وجوه أصحاب مروان بن الحكم .
80 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 264: on Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; 265: in the presence of Yazīd (= al-Azdī, *Ta’rikh al-Mawṣil*, 15: called Ibn Ramal instead of Ziml/Zaml); on the lineage of the family, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab Ma’add*, 1, 195.
81 Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 384.
82 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, 24, 265; see also Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 432.
83 Al-Azdī, *Ta’rikh al-Mawṣil*, 136–137: related by his brother al-Ḍaḥḥāk to al-Haytham b. ‘Adī; Crone 1980, 104.

B/6.3)

A partially parallel tradition (again, not mentioning the *Shākiri/ghulām*) was related by al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml to another famous scholar, ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak (118 or 119 H/736 or 738 CE–181 H/797 CE).⁸⁸

A Short Analysis of this Tradition

The impression one gets from reading this tradition is that it has some grain of authenticity. It was related by well-known notables and scholars (that is, real historical figures). The last link is an Umawī/‘Abbāsī notable, who was the associate of both Umawī and ‘Abbāsī caliphs and himself an eyewitness to the event. It is of importance that al-Haytham b. ‘Adī and ‘Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak, two completely different famous scholars from different regions of the Islamic world, both reported this tradition from al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml.

Both al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Ziml (the last transmitter) and al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ al-Mawṣilī were contemporaries of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik; al-Shaḥḥāj came to him to Dābiq, where this caliph lived for several years, and died there.⁸⁹

However, some of the main features of the tradition were related about an anonymous man (رجل), who appears before Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, the governor of al-‘Irāq (d. 53 H/672–673 CE), complaining in incorrect Arabic that his brother had seized his father’s inheritance. Upon hearing his Arabic, Ziyād scolds and/or curses him. No *ghulām/shākiri* is mentioned. No *isnād* is attached to this version of the tradition; no names beside that of Ziyād are mentioned, and nor is any geographical background or name. We are facing a stereotypical literary form or *topos*. It is similar to other examples of this kind found in special chapters in the *adab* literature dealing with anecdotes about the *lahḥānūn* (those who spoke incorrect Arabic).⁹⁰

88 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh*, 20, 142 [=Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 9, 4187]: سحاج instead of... قال حدثنا عبد الله بن المبارك عن الضحاك قال قام السحاج [=الشحاج] الموصلي الى سليمان ابن عبد الملك بدابق فقال يا أمير المؤمنين ان أبنينا هلك فوثب أختنا فأخذت مالنا فاقطعته فقال لا رحم الله أباك ولا عاقى أخاك ولا رد عليك مالك ولا حياك

89 Eisener, “Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik,” *EF*, 9, 821–822.

90 For the tradition about Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān and the man who was cheated by his brother, see for example al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān*, 2, 222: وقال بعضهم: ارتفع إلى زياد رجل وأخوه في ميراث: 8:....; al-Jāhīz, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-aḍḍād*, 8: وقال رجل لزياد: إن أبنينا هلك: إن أبنينا هلك وإن أبنينا غصبنا ودخل رجل على: 1, 206–207: al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A’shā*, 1, 206–207:....; على زياد فقال له: إن أبنينا هلك وإن أبنينا غصبنا زياد بن أبيه فقال إن أبنينا مات وإن أبنينا مات وإن أبنينا فأكله فقال زياد للذي أضعته من كلامك أضر عليك مما أضعته من مالك

This last section has taken me beyond my field of expertise. My aim is to understand the social-military meaning of the *Shākiriyya* institution in the early Islamic period, and I am afraid that this long discussion has brought me to a dead end. Reading version A of the tradition gives the sound impression that it is authentic. But after reading the second version (where Ziyād b. Abihi is the main figure instead of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik), that seems less clear. All that can be safely said is that the word was used in the middle of the 8th century, and in this specific tradition about Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Shaḥḥāj b. Wadā‘ it *can* denote a servant or a slave. In this case I prefer this meaning to a military interpretation.

B/7) Transoxania; Soghdia: MC

In 104 H/722–723 CE, the governor of Khurāsān Sa‘īd b. ‘Amr al-Ḥarashī led the campaigns against Soghdia. Al-Ṭabarī reports the events of the conquest (as in most of the traditions relating the history of Khurāsān during the Umawī period) from the book[?] of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Madā‘inī (d. ca. 225 H/840 CE) from his authorities (*aṣḥābihi*). Al-Ḥarashī’s army conquers the city of Khujanda.⁹¹ After the city’s surrender, one of the Soghdian senior commanders, Kārzanj, sends a message to his nephew that al-Ḥarashī is plotting to kill the Soghdian noble commanders; therefore the nephew “took out pieces of green silk cloth, cut it into strips and tied the strips around the heads of his *Shākiriyya*, then he came out, he and his *Shākiriyya* and attacked the (Umawī soldiers) and killed some.” The *isnād* is al-Ṭabarī < ‘Alī [b. Muḥammad al-Madā‘inī] < from his authorities (*‘an aṣḥābihi*).⁹²

B/8) Khurāsān; Transoxania: MC

In the year 111 H/729–730 CE during Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign, two army commanders, ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr al-Ṣuraymī, al-Samarqandī, and Wāṣil b. ‘Amr al-Qaysī, are mentioned as having fought the Turks in Transoxania and commanding a *Shākiriyya* with whom they attacked the enemy. The *isnād* is as follows: al-

⁹¹ On the city, see Bosworth, “*Khudjand(a)*”, *EP*, 5, 45–46.

⁹² Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1445: أخرج فرندة خضراء فقطعها عصائب وعصبتها برؤوس شاكريته ثم خرج هو وشاكريته؛ فاعترض الناس فقتل ناسا the green colour had any significance in Transoxania/Soghdia; noteworthy is that al-Ma’mūn changed the colour of the ‘Abbāsīs from black to green.

Ṭabarī < ‘Alī b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’īnī] < Abū l-Dhayyāl [Zuhayr b. Hunayd al-‘Adawī].⁹³ We do not know anything about the ethnic character of the soldiers of this *Shākiriyya*.

Abū l-Dhayyāl al-Zuhayr b. Hunayd was one of al-Madā’īnī’s main informers about the battles of the Muslims in Khurāsān (especially in Transoxania) during the Umawī period, mainly during the reign of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 96 H/715 CE–99 H/717 CE). Abū l-Dhayyāl most plausibly had a work about the Muslim conquests of Transoxania. In that case the information in it was related to him by members of his family, either by his uncle al-Muhallab b. Iyās, or perhaps directly by his grandfather Iyās b. Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān b. Qamī’a, or by the latter’s two brothers ‘Ubaydallāh and ‘Abdallāh, commanders of the Arab forces in Transoxania in 96 H/714–715 CE during the governorship of Qutayba b. Muslim⁹⁴ and probably later on as well. Iyās’ father Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān and Iyās himself were in Khurāsān already in 65 H/684–685 CE and are mentioned among the Arab commanders in Khurāsān who took part in the tribal war in the province following the death of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya.⁹⁵ Zuhayr b. Ḥayyān was the leader of Banū ‘Adī (Quraysh) and carried the clan’s flag in battle.⁹⁶

B/9) Khurāsān; Transoxania: MC/?

In the year 112 H/730–731 CE, within the framework of the battles of the governor of Khurāsān al-Junayd b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān in Transoxania, al-Ṭabarī reports from the book[?] of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā’īnī from Abū l-Dhayyāl [Zuhayr b. al-Hunayd al-‘Adawī (on him see the preceding note)], that in one of the battles (of

⁹³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528: فخرج عاصم بن عمير السمرقندي وواصل بن عمرو القيسي في شاكريّة: mentioned by De La Vaissière 2007, 71, note 185; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528, note n, according to ms. BM: وحمل واصل والشاكريّة: [read: شاكريته] instead of شاكريّة; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1528, lines 12–13: . على العدو .

⁹⁴ *Naqā’id Jarīr wa-Farazdaq*, I, p. 357 (cited by Blankinship 1989, p. 42, note 189): correct Blankinship 1989, p. 42, note 189, “al-Hunayd b. Iyās” to “Zuhayr b. Hunayd”; al-Ṭabarī records dozens of his traditions via ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Madā’īnī. Abū l-Dhayyāl, Zuhayr b. Hunayd was also a minor *muḥaddith*, for example, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3, 305 and al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 9, 428. Is Abū l-Dhayyāl, a *rāwī* of Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, relating traditions about the battles of Abū Muslim in Khurāsān in 129 H/746–747 CE, and also about the battles between Marwān b. Muḥammad and the ‘Abbāsīs in 132 H/750 CE, Abū l-Dhayyāl al-‘Adawī? See Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’rīkh* (index). Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 5, 370, informs us of a commander of the governor of Khurāsān (Naṣr b. Sayyār) named Abū l-Dhayyāl fighting against the forces of Abū Muslim.

⁹⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 495, ll. 7ff.

⁹⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 490; 495: carrying the flag of Adī.

that year), the Muslim army was defeated. One of the Muslim commanders received a safe-conduct from Ghūrak, a Turkish prince of Samarqand, but the Khāqān of the Turks did not approve of the safe-conduct and Ghūrak consequently apologized to the Arab commander for its withdrawal saying: “I am a **slave of the Khāqān**, from his *Shākiriyya*.”⁹⁷

Beckwith concludes from this passage that:

...the relationship between lord and *chākar* was extremely close indeed; al-Iskand’s ally Ghūrak, the king of Samarkand, speaks of his *feudal relationship to his Western-Turkic liege-lord*...It appears therefore that the members of the central Asian guard corps spoke of themselves as the slaves of their lord. [my emphasis]

De La Vaissière also stresses the importance of this text:

C’est un texte important. Il ne s’agit pas là d’une simple alliance militaire: le roi de Sogdiane se définit comme le subordonné du qaghan dans la stricte continuité de l’histoire longue de l’Asie centrale. Un siècle et demi après Maniakh, c’est bien sur la longue durée que sont établis les liens politiques entre qaghans turcs et princes sogdiens.⁹⁸

Again, we need more than one (equivocal) piece of evidence to corroborate this social-cultural and ethnic institution.

B/10) Transoxania: MC/?

In 119 H/737 CE, in one of the battles in Transoxania between the Khāqān of the Turks (who was aided by al-Ḥārith b. Surayj al-Tamīmī)⁹⁹ and Asad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī, the governor of Khurāsān, “the Khāqān drew support from Transoxania, the inhabitants of Ṭukhārīstān and Jīghawayh [read Jabghūyah?] al-Ṭukhārī, along with their kings and their *Shākiriyya*, to the number of thirty thousand.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1542: أنا عبد لخاقان من شاكريته [my emphasis]; see also the discussion of Lee Yonggyu above.

⁹⁸ De La Vaissière 2007, 96; *ibid.*, 72 and 96: “Je suis l’esclave du Khāqān de sa *shākiriyya*: reading لـخاقان instead of لـخاقان.

⁹⁹ On him, see Kister, “al-Ḥārith b. Surayj,” *EF*, 3, 223–224.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1604 (after the translation of Blankinship 1989, 140): no specific source is given by al-Ṭabarī (“it is said”: *wa-yuqālu*) ويقال وأقبل خاقان وقد استمد من وراء النهر وأهل الطخاري وقد استمد من وراء النهر وأهل [جيجويه = جيجويه] الطخاري بملوكهم وشاكريتهم بثلاثين ألفا mentioned by Forand 1962, 10, and translated by De La Vaissière 2007, 72, note 188.

B/11) Transoxania. The Same Year, 119 H/737 CE: MC

Within the same framework of the battles of Asad b. ‘Abdallāh, who appointed al-Qāsim b. Bukhayt al-Maghārī al-Azdī in charge of the overall order of the army. “He put the Azd, the Banū Tamīm and al-Juzjān b. al-Juzjān and his *Shākiriyya* on the right wing.” The transmitter, ‘Amr b. Mūsā, is not otherwise identified.¹⁰¹

B/12) Transoxania (al-Khuttal). The Same Year, 119 H/737 CE, Once Again within the Framework of the Battles of Asad b. ‘Abdallāh in Transoxania: SE/SL? NM?

Asad led an army against al-Khuttal, conquered the city, captured its king and executed him. It is related that during the battles, Asad “came upon a river, while thirsty—with none of his servants around, he asked for water.” One of his commanders, al-Sughdī b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, Abū Ṭu‘ma al-Jarmī, had with him a *Shākiri*, who had with him a Tibetan horn; so al-Sughdī took the horn, put *sawīq*¹⁰² in it, and then poured water from the river on it, turned it and gave the drink to Asad and a small number of the senior commanders of the army.¹⁰³ There is no indication that this *Shākiri* was a soldier; he may have been a servant.

101 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1609: وفجعل الأزد وبني تميم والجوزجان بن الجوزجان وشاكرته ميمته; *ibid.*, note i, in ms. B: ميمنة; the name of the transmitter is on 1608, l. 16; mentioned by Forand 1962, 11, and De La Vaissière 2007, 72.

102 Blankinship 1989, 163: “parched barley;” for the meaning of the term, see Waines, “Sawīq,” *EI*², 9, 93.

103 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1631: ومضى أسد حتى انتهى إلى نهر وقد عطش ولم يكن أحد من خدمه فاستسقى وكان السغدّي بن عبد الرحمن أبو طعمة الجرمي معه شاكري له ومع الشاكري قرن تَبَّتِي فأخذ السغدّي القرن فجعل فيه سويقا وصبب عليه ماء من النهر وحركه وسقى أسدا وقوما من رؤساء الجند; Beckwith 1984, 37, note 40 (correct: 1637 to 1631); De la Vaissière 2007, 72; Beckwith 1984, 37, speaks about al-Iskand, “the displaced king of Kish and Nasaf...against whom the Arabs—including Naṣr b. Sayyār—had fought for nearly a decade. Al-Iskand was known to the Chinese as the “King of the *Chākars*.” [quoting Wang Ch’in-jo, *et al.*, ed. Li Ssu-ching, *Ts’u fu yüan kwei*, i-xx, Taipei, 1972]. “...in 737 Naṣr was with Asad in the so-called Battle of the Baggage [quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1597] against the Qaghan of the Turkish who had al-Iskand...with his *chākars* and their allies.” And on p. 38, Beckwith speaks again of al-Iskand and his *chākars* (quoting al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1717–1718); I was unable to find al-Iskand’s *chākars* (*Shākiriyya*) in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḥ*, 2, 1597, or 1717–1718, or in any other page of this work.

B/13) Secretary/ Transoxania; Farghāna: NM

In 121 H/739 CE, Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsān, sent Sulaymān b. Ṣūl to the ruler of Farghāna with the written pact of reconciliation between them (بكتاب الصلح بينهما). When Sulaymān reached the ruler's court, the latter asked him, "Who are you?" Sulaymān answered: "a *Shākiri*, the deputy of the (chief) secretary of the governor (شاكري, خليفة كاتب الأمير)." ¹⁰⁴ Who is this Sulaymān b. Ṣūl? This is the only source that mentions him. It is highly plausible that this *Shākiri*'s father was the ancestor of the famous family of scholars and notables known by the nickname al-Ṣūlī. Ṣūl was of Turkish origin, the ruler of Dihistān (near Jurjān) and then for a short time the lord of Jurjān, who (according to one version) was converted to Islam by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab when he conquered Jurjān in 98 H/716–717 CE. According to family tradition, though, Yazīd b. al-Muhallab sent him to become a Muslim at the hands of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, and he was sent by the latter to al-Madina where he converted to Islām. ¹⁰⁵ Many of his descendants are known to have had flourishing careers under the early 'Abbāsīs. His son, Muḥammad b. Ṣūl, was one of the 70 *du'āt* of the 'Abbāsī "Revolution." ¹⁰⁶ If our assumption is correct, an unknown son of Ṣūl worked as a secretary at Naṣr b. Sayyār's court in Marw. In any case, he defines himself as a "*Shākiri*, the deputy of the (chief) secretary of the governor." In this case, the meaning of the term does not seem to be connected to military service.

104 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 2, 1695; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 4, 449; cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 72: "Je suis *shākir* et l'envoyé secrétaire de l'émir." ("I am a *shākiri*, the messenger, secretary of the Amīr.")

105 The first version: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ*, 6, 115; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1, 45; the second version: al-Sahmī, *Ta'riḫ Jurjān*, 236; the tradition is recorded from the *Ta'riḫ* of al-Sal [!]?āmī (that is, Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī al-Sallāmi; lived around 350/961); his book was entitled *كتاب التاريخ في أخبار ولاية خراسان* usually mentioned as *كتاب التاريخ*. On him, see Sezgin 1967, 1: 352 (rendering his name as al-Salāmi); and esp. Rosenthal 1968, 321–322 and n. 7 (al-Sal-lāmi); for quotation from al-Sallāmi's book, see for example, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2, 521 [= al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi*, 16, 228]: *قال السلامي في أخبار ولاية خراسان*.

106 On the family and some of its most important members, see Leder, "al-Ṣūlī," *EP*, 9, 846–848. On Muḥammad b. Ṣūl, one of the 70 *du'āt*, see *Akhbār al-'Abbās*, index; al-Ṭabarī, index. Ṣūl died in the "battle of al-'Aqr," that is, 'Aqr Bābil near Karbalā', al-'Irāq, at the side of his master Yazīd b. al-Muhallab who rebelled against Yazīd II in 101 H/720 CE. See Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 1, 45–46; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ*, 6, 115; for detailed accounts of the revolt and battles, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, II, 1395ff (Ṣūl is not mentioned though); Shaban 1976, 93–95; Crone 1980, 133; Hawting 2000, 75–76.

B/14) Khurāsān; Marw: MC? NM?

In the year 121 H/738–739 CE the noted ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr (no. 8) served as commander of the army of the people[?] of Samarqand.¹⁰⁷ In the year 128 H/745–746 CE he came (from Samarqand?) to Naṣr b. Sayyār, the governor of Khurāsān, and joined him along with additional Arab forces in his battle against Abū Muslim and his armies.¹⁰⁸ In the year 131 H/748–749 CE ‘Āṣim was captured and executed by Abū Muslim. The tradition tells that while yet captive and before he was killed, a *Shākiri* that he had in Khurāsān recognized him and ordered his slave [? *ghulām*] to hide him in a subterranean place (a conduit by which water enters?:*sarab*), and not to disclose this hiding place to anyone.¹⁰⁹ I do not know if what is meant is a servant or a soldier of the *Shākiriyya* army with whom he fought in Transoxania. It is noteworthy that this *Shākiri* owned a slave. Perhaps he was well-to-do and of noble Iranian (Turkish?) descent. Wellhausen, who most probably had before him a large part of the sources (though he does not cite them) explains that:

...following the example of the distinguished Iranians, the Arab gentlemen took with them into the field a personal following of servants (*Shākiriyya*). These servants also took part in the fighting and sometimes decided the struggle.¹¹⁰

B/15) Khurāsān; Marw: MC

In the year 128 H/745–746 CE, during the fierce tribal wars in Khurāsān between the coalition of governor Naṣr b. Sayyār’s Muḍarī (Qaysī) and the Azd and Rabī‘a led by Juday‘ b. ‘Alī al-Kirmānī al-Azdī, the governor’s forces in Marw were on the verge of defeat. “Tamīm b. Naṣr b. Sayyār, sent **his** *Shākiriyya*, who were stationed[?] in the Dār of Janūb bt. al-Qa‘qā‘ [b. al-A‘lam al-Azdī], but the soldiers of al-Kirmānī shot at them from the roofs, so they (the *Shākiriyya*) knew of the

107 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1690: وهو على جند أهل سمرقند

108 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1920.

109 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 8: on his *Shākiri* (mentioned by Shaban 1976, 2: 65): فلقية شاكري كان له: بخراسان فعرفه...فأدخله في سرب وقال لغلام له إحتفظ به ولا تطلعن على مكانه أحدا; cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 72, with a different translation: “‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayrest fait prisonnier par un *chākar*, qui le connaissait car il lui avait été attaché au Khorassan.” On the execution of ‘Āṣim b. ‘Umayr, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1691; on him, see also *Akhbār al-‘Abbās*, index.

110 Wellhausen 1963, 496.

enemy and were on their guard against them.” The *isnād* is as follows: ‘Ali b. Muḥammad [al-Madā’inī] < his authorities (*ashyākhīhi*).¹¹¹

B/16) Khurāsān; Marw: NM/SE?

The same date (128 H/745–746 CE), the same *isnād*. Two commanders of al-Kirmānī unhorsed A‘yan, the *mawlā* and one of the chief clerks (in charge of the ink stand) of the governor Naṣr b. Sayyār, killed him, and killed some of his *Shākiriyya* (as well).¹¹² While the previous source references the *Shākiriyya* of a distinguished Arab tribal leader (most probably of a military nature), this evidence speaks of the *Shākiriyya* of the chief clerk of the governor, a *mawlā*. One wonders whether this *Shākiriyya* consisted of soldiers at all. Nothing is said regarding their ethnic origin or social status.

B/17) Between 105 H/724 CE and 107 H/725–726 CE: NM/SE?

Ibn al-‘Adīm quotes from the book of Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī (flourished in the first half of the 9th century), “The History of the Barmakis” (*Akhbār al-Barāmika*),¹¹³ who heard from an eyewitness (Iṣḥāq al-Balkhī the

111 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1927, ll. 12–14: *وبعث تميم بن نصر شاكريته وهم في دار الجنوب بنت القعقاع فرماهم أصحاب الكرماني من السطوح ونذروا بهم*; [my emphasis]; Forand 1962, 11; the *Shākiriyya* were stationed in a *dār*. This must have been a huge *dār* with a large court. There are many examples of descriptions in the Arabic sources of such very big *dārs* comprising many buildings and a very large court.
112 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2, 1928, ll. 4–5: *فصرعوا أعين مولى نصر وقتلوه وكان صاحب دواة نصر وقتلوا نفرا من*; *شاكريته*; the *isnād* starts on 1917.

113 Very little is known about Abū Ḥafṣ, ‘Amr [‘Umar?] b. al-Azraq al-Kinānī. He is thoroughly discussed in Bosworth 1994. He wrote a book on the history of the Barmakis, briefly discussed by Bouvat 1912, 19, who quoted Abū Ḥafṣ especially through the citations of the mid-14th century Persian work of ‘Abd al-Jalīl Yazdī, *Ta’rīkh Āl Barmak* (Bouvat 1912, 10–13); Sourdel 1959–60, 129, mainly relying on Bouvat. Both Sourdel (1959–60, 130–131) and Bouvat noticed several citations from Abū Ḥafṣ’ work, mainly in Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Wüstenfeld ed.), 4, 817 (Beirut ed., 5, 307) [= Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 232–235 (with slight changes)]. Yāqūt is the only Arabic source quoted by Bouvat and Sourdel that mentions our author by name (rendering ‘Umar instead of ‘Amr), but neither he nor Ibn al-Faqīh mention the title of the author’s book. The first to cite the title *Akhbār al-Barāmika* was Rosenthal 1968, 429, footnote 3, according to the manuscript of Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab* (Paris ms. ar. 2138, fol. 15b.). Rosenthal 1968 and Bosworth 1994 name him ‘Umar, but in all cases he is quoted by Ibn al-‘Adīm (*Bughya*, 3, 1547; 7, 3019 (ed. Sezgin, 6, 651); 10, 4706 (ed. Sezgin, 10, 451); 4753 (ed. Sezgin, 10, 484), his name is ‘Amr; but see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 10, 184; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rīkh*, 16, 7 (the title of the

poet, of whom it is said that he lived in Ruṣāfat Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik during the latter’s reign) who saw Barmak (the ancestor of the Barmakīs), arriving at Hishām’s palace in al-Ruṣāfa *at the head of 500 Shākiri*.¹¹⁴ This occurred at the beginning of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign (between 105 H/724 CE and 107 H/725–726 CE).¹¹⁵

Barmak was a Buddhist high priest of the temple of Nawbahār near al-Balkh.¹¹⁶ According to Abū Ḥaḥṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī, Barmak arrived at al-Ruṣāfa with his son Khālīd, where (according to several traditions) he was converted to Islam at the hands of the caliph himself.¹¹⁷ Even if the number

book is rendered differently [?]: في أخبار البرامكة وفضائلهم: Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Wüstenfeld ed.), 4, 817 (Beirut ed., 5, 307): in the last three sources his name is given as ‘Umar. He transmitted directly from al-Jāhīz (d. 255 H/869 CE) (Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 7, 3020). In another tradition, transmitted by the famous poet Abū Tammām, Ḥabīb b. Aws (d. 231 or 232 H/845 or 846 CE), caliph al-Ma‘mūn (d. 218 H/833 CE) demands Abū Ḥaḥṣ, ‘Umar [read ‘Amr] b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī to be his *wazīr* and the latter refuses politely and wittily (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādādī, *ibid.*).

114 Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 3, 1547 [ed. Sezgin, 4, 40]: وكان...وحدثني إسحاق البلخي الشاعر: في أخبار البرامكة تأليف أبي حفص [ابن العميد] = [قرأت...حكي عن برمك أبي خالد بن برمك، برصافة هشام بن عبد الملك في أيامه أنه رأى برمك قدم على هشام بن عبد الملك في خمسمائة شاكري.... وحدثني إسحاق البلخي الشاعر: عمرو بن الأزرق الكرماني قال: منزلته وأعلى فأنكرمه: قال.

115 In 107H/725–726 CE, Barmak was appointed as governor of Balkh by Asad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1490 [= Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (Beirut ed.), 4, 378]; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 6, 118; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 1, 261.

116 Sourdel 1959–60, 1: 129–133; Abbas 1988; Barthold-[Sourdel], “al-Barāmika,” *EP*, 1, 1033.

117 Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 3, 1547 [ed. Sezgin, 4, 40]; see also the long and detailed traditions of Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Kirmānī about Barmak and his son, Khālīd at Hishām’s court at al-Ruṣāfa. Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya* (ed. Zakkār), 7, 3019ff. Cf. the reserved and cautious remarks of Crone 1980, 76 (relying on Bouvat 1912, 32): “...a similar behavioural pattern is exemplified in the story that Barmak had gone to the caliph’s court to convert.” Sourdel 1959–60, 1: 132 casts doubt on the authenticity of the traditions about Barmak’s associations with the Umawī caliphs ‘Abd al-Malik and Hishām, arguing against Bouvat’s assertions (“mais tout le reste paraît être pure légende...Nous n’oserons donc pas dire, après L. Bouvat, que ‘Barmak et son fils Khalid, par leurs mérites et leurs richesses, exercèrent une grande influence à la cour des khalifes umayyades).” D. Sourdel, in Barthold-[Sourdel], “al-Barāmika,” *EP*, 1, 1033: “He is a figure known to us by information which is to a large extent legendary. Thus it is that he is held to have possessed medical knowledge and to have treated among other patients [the text lists only one patient, Maslama; no other person is mentioned] on which he bases the Umayyad prince Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1181).” See also Sourdel 1959–60, 1, 132, note 2: “mais tout cela reste très hypothétique.” It seems that the information about Barmak’s skills as a physician is corroborated by the tradition recorded by Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughya*, 7, 3019. The prince was Maslama b. Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik, and not Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik as Sourdel believed (his source, al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1181 mentions Maslama, with no name of the father added). The tradition was related by Sa’id b. Maslama b. Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik to Abū Ḥaḥṣ, ‘Amr b. al-Azraq al-Kirmānī, and was read by Ibn al-‘Adīm from the former’s book on the History of the Barmakīs, describ-

of *Shākiriīs* is exaggerated, the narrator defines a big company who came with Barmak as *Shākiriīs*. In the case of Barmak the Buddhist priest, it is doubtful that they were a personal military guard and so were probably not similar to the *Shākiriyya* contingents in the service of the Soghdian noblemen in Transoxania. Nothing is said about their ethnic origin or social status.

It is noteworthy that both Bosworth and De La Vaissière interpret this text differently. Bosworth's translation reads: "[H]e saw Barmak brought before Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik in a body of 500 slaves (*shākiri*). Hishām treated him with honour..."¹¹⁸ It seems that the sentence: أنه رأى برمك قدم على هشام بن عبد الملك في خمسمائة شاكري should be rendered: "He arrived [at Hishām's court] at the head of 500 *shākiri*." De La Vaissière translated (following Bosworth): "Barmak fut conduit devant Hishām b. 'Abd al-malik au sein d'un groupe de 500 *shākiri*...." De La Vaissière concludes in regard to this text that:

Un corps de 500 *chākar* aurait été présenté au calife omeyyade Hishām (724–743) à Damas. Ce sont sans doute des prisonniers capturés au Tokharestan, car parmi eux se trouvait l'ancêtre des Barmécides, gardien du grand monastère bouddhique, le Nawbahar de Balkh.¹¹⁹

This text has served as a basis for arguing for the Central Asian rather than Middle Eastern origin of the *Shākiriyya* in the early 'Abbāsī period within the elites of the 'Abbāsī court. The Barmakīs are also considered by De La Vaissière to have been military troops ("étant donnée l'origine centre-asiatique des troupes comme des Barmécides..."),¹²⁰ but this cannot be deduced from the Arabic text.

Partial Conclusion

Forand argues, following some of the examples above (nos. B/4, B/10; see also n. 121 below, *al-Aghānī*), that:

...the *shākiriyyah* as it occurs in the Arabic sources refers to a corps of slaves, partly domestic and partly military, in attendance upon the person of local potentates in Iran and central

ing how Barmak treated his father and cured him (perhaps of impotence). These traditions from the book of Abū Ḥafṣ were not known to Sourdel; Ibn al-'Adīm's *Bughya* was still unprinted when Sourdel's book was published. See the detailed discussion of this matter by Bosworth 1994, 270–271.

118 Bosworth 1994, 273–274.

119 De La Vaissière 2007, 144; see also 155.

120 De La Vaissière 2007, 150: argues against Gordon's view of the Middle Eastern origin of these units.

Asia...it is impossible to establish beyond a doubt that individuals constituting a *shākiriyyah* among the Umayyads were of servile status the *shākiriyyah* of the Iranian rulers must have been slaves.

This unequivocal conclusion cannot be derived from the texts quoted by Forand.¹²¹ He finds support for this assertion from the fact that in all the cases he checked the term *Shākiriyya* “occurs with the possessive pronominal suffix and in each case it would be rendered into English as ‘his *shākiriyyah*’, possibly indicating the master’s actual possession of the servant.”¹²² Unfortunately, mere use of the possessive pronoun does not enable us to understand the nature of the *Shākiriyya* nor the nature of the connection between the leader and his *Shākiriyya*. Moreover, one of the decisive pieces of evidence for the slave nature of the *Shākiriyya* is the “passage in Ṭabarī (II, 1159–1160), where an incident is described in which Ṭarkhūn threatens to exercise his right of life and death over the members of his *shākiriyyah*.”¹²³ The Arabic text (al-Ṭabarī, II, 1159–1160) does not imply any such assertion. Forand’s conclusions were accepted in full by Yonggyu, so the same reservations regarding Forand’s conclusions and method can be applied to Yonggyu’s treatment of the Arabic sources regarding *al-Shākiriyya*.¹²⁴ In regard to the last piece of evidence adduced by Forand, Yonggyu says inaccurately that, “In fact Ṭabarī provides *many examples* [! my emphasis] that the Iranian ruler had the right of life and death over the members of the *Shākiriyya*.”¹²⁵

121 Forand 1962, 10 (al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1159–1160, 1604); 11: corps of slaves. The text in al-İsfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 14, 110: فلما نظرت في وجهي سرت وجهها فأخبرني شاكري أن المرأة هي أم شارية جارية إبراهيم

122 Forand 1962, 11.

123 Forand 1962, 11.

124 Yonggyu 2004, 41–42, 68, quoting Forand’s text and sources, 10–11; 68: “The great Islamic historian Ṭabarī seems to have understood the *chākar* as someone who was possessed by the ruler.” Here Yonggyu also follows Forand’s argument about the use of “the possessive pronominal suffix with the term *Shākiriyya*” concluding “Thus, this Arabic expression...is used to indicate the master’s actual possession of the servant.” It is almost superfluous to remark that this is not al-Ṭabarī’s interpretation, but that of his early sources.

125 Yonggyu 2004, 68, quoting Forand 1962, 11; and several references from al-Ṭabarī, also after Forand, but the only citation for this matter brought by Forand, that is al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 2, 1160, is not mentioned by Yonggyu.

Ibrāhīm b. Adham is known widely in legend as the ruler of Balkh, who abdicated his throne to take up the ascetic life...[but there]...seems to be no historical basis for this belief. The first source to give him royal status is al-Sulamī (d. 412 H/1021 CE), the legendary nature of whose account is sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that it includes a description of Ibrāhīm's encounter with the immortal prophet Khidr; however, from al-Sulamī onwards this legend is found firmly rooted in the accounts of Ibrāhīm's life.¹³⁴

Without going deeper into this topic which is far from my scholarly expertise, suffice it to say that even from a cursory reading of some of the relevant sources on Ibrāhīm b. Adham (e.g., the works of Abū Nu'aym, al-Qushayrī, al-Sulamī and Ibn 'Asākir), it can be argued that these authors did not invent the traditions, they relied upon earlier sources and traditions and quoted them faithfully. By checking the *isnāds* of the (relatively) late sources, it can be safely argued that Ibrāhīm's noble Iranian [?] origin was well established in the 8th century.¹³⁵ The imaginative, inventive, colourful and clearly biased traditions that describe his revelations and awakening from the earthly, materialistic world must have had some basis. Not every *ṣūfī* was a noble prince. Even if the traditions about the 20 or 30 *Shākiris* of Ibrāhīm b. Adham were invented, they were beautifully invented, based on a real kernel of history. The term was widely current in the 8th century and well known to the authors, who naturally assumed that a noble Khurāsānī must have had *Shākirs*. What the nature of these *Shākirs* was cannot be ascertained from these traditions.

The following examples are from the reign of Abū l-'Abbās al-Saffāh (r. 132 H/750 CE–136 H/754 CE).

C/2) [19] Khuttal, Transoxania, 133 H/750–751 CE: MC?

In this year, the governor of Balkh on behalf of Abū Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Khālīd b. Ibrāhīm al-Raba'ī, al-Dhuhli,

set out from al-Wakhsh towards al-Khuttal and entered the city. The king of the province, Ḥ.n.sh b. al-S.b.l offered no opposition to him; a group of the *dahāqīn* of al-Khuttal came to him and entrenched themselves with him. Some of them fought in the roads, mountain passes and the fortresses. When Abū Dāwūd laid a close siege on the fortress, the king went out of the fortress at night; with him were **his** *dahāqīn* and *Shākiriyya* until they arrived at the land of Farghāna, then he left it, and through the land of the

¹³⁴ Jones, "Ibrāhīm b. Adham," *EF*, 3, 985–986.

¹³⁵ The many traditions in his biographies in Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 7, 367–395; 8, 3–58, and Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 7, 277–352, can serve as case studies.

word is unclear] moved on while I and he [the caliph] remained in the Qaṣr while his *Shākiriyya* [was stationed] at the gate (وبقيت أنا وهو في القصر وشاكريته بالباب)¹⁴³

This is a typical conventional tradition, one of many that provides inner ‘domestic’ information about al-Manṣūr such as dreams, palace or court intrigues and the like, often from servants, *mawālī* or slaves/(both female and male), secretaries or chamberlains of the caliph and even from his mother.¹⁴⁴

The following examples are from the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170 H/786 CE–193 H/809 CE).

C/5) [22]: SE?/MC?

The *Shākiriyya* of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd al-Barmakī, al-Rashīd’s *wazīr*:

Ibn Mazrū‘ related from his father who said: ‘While riding along with the entourage of Yaḥyā b. Khālīd [al-Barmakī, d. 190 H/805 CE], a common man carrying a letter appeared before him and said: “May God bestow his favours on the *Amīr*; sign this letter”; but the *Shākiriyya* hastened towards him, chiding him away from the sides of his cortège, but he (Yaḥyā) said: ‘Leave him alone’ ... and he asked him to get closer and signed the letter for him.¹⁴⁵

Ibn Mazrū‘ is Naṣr b. Mazrū‘ al-Kalbī, one of the earliest Arab genealogists, who composed a book about the vices of the Arabs (mainly dealing with defects in, or causes of blame or reviling of, the lineage of Arab notables: (مثالب).¹⁴⁶

143 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’riḫ*, 32, 340–341; وحنده [؟] وبوانيه [؟]; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, 8, 220, and Ibn al-‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makiyya*, 4, 546; ونوايه وحنده; the *isnād* :..... Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim < Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib < Ṭayfūr; Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim (Bashīr) was a *kātib* of Turkish origin, who held a secretarial office in Baghdād. He left it to dedicate his life to the study and transmission of *ḥadīth* and died in 235 H/850 CE; on him, see al-Bukhārī, *al-Kabīr*, 7, 349; Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *al-Jarḥ*, 8, 170; Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Thiqāt*, 9, 173; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫ*, 13, 80–82; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’riḫ*, 60, 304–310; 305; وكان له ديوان وتركه. I was not able to identify Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib.

144 For example, Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’riḫ*, 32, 303; 69, 231; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫ*, 1, 87: a similar *isnād* to the previously discussed tradition which ends, however, with al-Manṣūr’s mother:Manṣūr b. Abī Muzāḥim < Abū Sahl al-Ḥāsib < Ṭayfūr *mawlā amīr al-mu’minīn* < *Salāma umm amīr al-mu’minīn*: about a dream she had while pregnant with al-Manṣūr.

145 Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, 184: وحدث ابن مزروع عن أبيه قال: في موكب يحيى بن خالد كنت أسير: وحدث ابن مزروع عن أبيه قال: في العامة ومعه كتاب فقال فعرض له رجل من أصلح الله الأمير، اختم هذا الكتاب، فيادر إليه الشاكرية يزجرونه من حواشي موكبه، فقال: العامة ومعه كتاب فقال فعرض له رجل من استدناه فختمه له....دعوه

146 So far I have not found a biography dedicated to him; he is not mentioned by Rosenthal, Duri (Conrad), Humphreys, Khalidi or Robinson, or by Brockelmann (*Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur*) and Sezgin 1967; nevertheless he is quoted in the sources (mainly relating to the genealogy of Arab tribes and notables), e.g. al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya), 20, 75,

C/6) [23]: SE?/MC?

From the second piece of evidence it is learned that Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī (d. 183 H/799–800 CE), one of Hārūn al-Rashīd's senior commanders,¹⁴⁷ sent one of his chamberlains (*aḥad ḥujjābihi*) from al-Raqqā in al-Jazīra with a gift of money to the poet Muslim b. al-Walīd (d. 208 H/823 CE).¹⁴⁸ The *ḥājib*, dressed in black clothes, a woolen head cover, and a girdle, was accompanied by a *Shākiri*.¹⁴⁹ No information is given about this *Shākiri*, who may have been a soldier, one of the *Shākiriyya* of Yazīd b. Mazyad (if he had one), or a domestic servant/slave.

C/7) [24] al-‘Irāq. Baghdād (?): SL/SE

Al-Mas‘ūdī records an account by Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Abdī al-Khurāsānī al-Akḥbārī (d. after 332 H/943 CE),¹⁵⁰ related by him to caliph al-Qāhīr (r. 320 H/932 CE–322 H/934 CE): Zubayda, Umm Ja‘far, Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife and al-Amīn's mother, “was the first [among the caliphs' wives?], who employed the *Shākiriyya*, the eunuchs and the slave-girls in all kinds of duties and messages, performing them on (the back of) riding animals, going out to fulfil her needs with her letters and epistles.”¹⁵¹

where he is mentioned among those authors that composed a book on the *mathālib* [of the Arabs] ; al-Mas‘ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-l-ishrāf*, 81, l. 13; Abū l-Baqā‘, *al-Manāqib al-mazyadiyya*, 1, 302, 327–329, where he is termed Naṣr b. Mazrū‘ al-Kalbī al-Nassāba; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta‘rīkh*, 47, 348; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba*, 5, 605.

147 On him, see Crone 1980, 169.

148 On him, see al-Ziriklī 1980, 7: 223; Kaḥḥāla 1957–61, 12: 233; Sezgin 1967, 2, 528–529; I. Kratschkowsky, “Muslim b. al-Walīd,” *E.Ī*, s.v.

149 Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19, 42 (ed. Samīr Jābir, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, n.d.):

فإذا رجع عليه سواد وشائنية ومنطقة ومعه شاكري
50; Ibn Munqidh, *Lubāb*, 138.

150 On him, see Rosenthal 1968, 52–53; al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 7, 658: index prepared by Ch. Pellat, the editor.

151 Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, 5, 213 [= 8, 298]: وهي أول من اتخذ الشاكريّة والخدم والجواري يختفون على الدواب في جبهاتها ويذهبون في حوائجها برسائلها وكتبها mentioned by Forand (in connection with the *Shākiriyya*); partly translated with a discussion (not on the *Shākiriyya*, though) by Ayalon 1999, 129 (translation) and 130; I relied on Ayalon's translation.

I understand the expression *al-Shākiriyya* here not as a military unit, but perhaps as household attendants. They are mentioned together with other domestic servants and slaves who performed secret or discreet errands for Zubayda.¹⁵²

C/8) [25] al-‘Irāq, Baghdād: MC

Al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr records in his book *al-Zakhā‘ir wa-l-tuḥaf* (written in 463 H/1070–1071 CE) a long tradition from al-Faḍl b. al-Rabī‘ (the son of the above-mentioned al-Rabī‘), the famous *wazīr* of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Amīn, in which he gives a long detailed description of the clothes, fine objects, weapons etc. that were found in Hārūn al-Rashīd’s store houses (الخزائن) upon al-Amīn’s ascendance to the caliphate. Among the weapons he mentions “50,000 swords of [for?] the *Shākiriyya* and the slaves (العلمان).”¹⁵³

C/9) [26] al-‘Irāq, Baghdād (?): SE/NM

The famous singer Mukhāriq relates that he visited the poet Abū l-‘Atāhiya alone “and I had no *ghulām* (slave) and no *shākiri* with me (وليس معي غلام ولا شاكري).”¹⁵⁴

The following examples are from the reign of al-Amīn (r. 193 H/809 CE–197 H/813 CE).

C/10) [27]: SE/NM

Upon ascending the caliphate al-Amīn took the famous singer ‘Arīb from her owner for himself. Her owner ‘Īsā b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ismā‘il, known as the *Marākibī*

152 Forand’s translation of this text (1962, 11–12): “the first (of the Abbasid house) to form a *shākiriyya* to wait upon her personally and serve as a mounted cortege when she went out in public,” is not accurate. De la Vaissière 2007, 146 translates: “la première qui organisa une troupe de *chākar*, d’eunuques et de filles esclaves, qui chevauchaient à ses côtés, exécutaient ses ordres...” I follow Ayalon’s translation of the Arabic phrase: يختلفون على الدواب في جهاتها.

153 Ibn al-Zubayr, *al-Zakhā‘ir*, 214 (the beginning of the inventory), 217 (the 50,000 swords) [my emphasis]; quoted by al-Ḥamawī, *Thamarāt al-awrāq*, 405; al-Ghazūlī, *Maṭāli‘ al-budūr*, 2, 479 (both quote al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr); De La Vaissière 2007, 146, note 382 (quoting al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr).

154 Al-Raqīq al-Qayrawānī, *Quṭb al-surūr*, 622.

(that is, the one who is in charge of the royal stables), passed by the new caliph and wanted to kiss his hand but the caliph, who held a grudge against him,

ordered that he be held back (from him); the *Shākiri* did this, but the *Marākibi* beat him and said: ‘Do you prevent me from kissing the hand of my master?’ When the caliph dismounted, the *Shākiri* came and complained against *al-Marākibi*, so al-Amin summoned him and ordered that his head be cut off.¹⁵⁵

One wonders if the *Shākiri* who was beaten was really a soldier and one of the caliph’s bodyguards, as asserted by Forand.¹⁵⁶

The following examples are from the reign of al-Ma’mūn (r. 198 H/813 CE–218 H/833 CE).¹⁵⁷ There are a few instances in the early ‘Abbāsī caliphate in which a *Shākiri* or a *Shākiriyya* are in the service of a caliph. In the period of al-Ma’mūn’s rule, a military unit named “al-Shākiriyya” is mentioned in the service of the caliph. It is also recorded by the sources that some of al-Ma’mūn’s senior commanders had *Shākiriyya* contingents in their service.

C/11) [28]: MC

The first piece of evidence we have is from Marw, Khurāsān between the years 193 H/809 CE and 202 H/817 CE. It is related by al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣalt, one of the close associates of al-Ma’mūn’s *wazīr*, al-Faḍl b. Sahl: “I was summoned one day by him (al-Faḍl), who informed me that he wished to gather for me 4,000 [soldiers] from the *Shākiriyya* and the *jund* and appoint me as their commander, thereby turning me into one of his commanders, with conditions and rights of his commanders.” Al-Rayyān refuses this proposal.¹⁵⁸

155 Al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Dār al-Kutub ed.), 21, 63 (Būlāq ed. XVIII, p. 180): فلما ولي الخلافة جاء المراكبي ومحمد [الأمين] راكب ليقبل يده فأمر بمنعه ودفعه ففعل ذلك الشاكري فضربه المراكبي وقال له: أتمنعني من يد سيدي أن أقبلها؟ فجاء الشاكري لما نزل محمد فشكاه فدعا محمد بالمراكبي وأمر بضرب عنقه mentioned by Forand 1962, 12; on *al-Marākibi*, see al-Zirikli 1980, 5: 105.

156 Forand 1962, 12 (quoting *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 180): “Amin himself was served by household attendants called, in the singular, *shākiri*, and who in one instance at least functioned as his bodyguards.” The text does not allow for such farfetched conclusions.

157 The following four pieces of evidence (no. 11[28]–14[31]) were also dealt with in Elad 2010, 45–48.

158 Al-Tanūkhī, *al-Faraj*, 2, 346: كنت في خدمة الفضل بن سهل على ما كنت عليه من نقته بي واستنابته, فدعاني في وقت من الأوقات إلى أن يضم إلي أربعة آلاف من الجند والشاكرية ويقودني عليهم, ويجريني مجرى قواده, فامتعت عليه من ذلك... the long tradition was copied by al-Tanūkhī from the lost part of al-Jahshiyārī’s *Kitāb al-Wuzarā’ wa-l-kuttāb*; al-Tanūkhī’s text was copied by ‘Awwād 1964, 31–36 (the mention of the *Shākiriyya*

In the tradition, the joining of the two expressions *al-Shākiriyya* and *al-jund* may indicate the different expressions have different meanings, though the term *al-Shākiriyya* seems to denote a unit with a military character. We do not know the relative size of each unit with any precision, as the number 4,000 also includes soldiers from the army (*al-jund*). The combination of the terms *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya* is most common during the Sāmarran period.¹⁵⁹

C/12) [29]: MC

The second tradition is from the year 201 H/816–817 CE, when al-Ma'mūn (still in Khurāsān), decides to nominate 'Alī l-Riḍā as Crown Prince. Therefore he summons the *wulāt*, the judges, the (senior) commanders (*al-quwwād*) and the *Shākiriyya* and the offspring of al-'Abbās, explaining “he wants this matter to be rooted in the hearts of *al-'amma*, *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya*.” In the first part of the tradition the army, *al-jund*, is not mentioned, and *al-Shākiriyya* appears by itself among groups of notables. Therefore it seems that the *Shākiriyya* also has a special high status. In the second part, the pairing (this time reversed) of *al-jund* and *al-Shākiriyya* appears again.¹⁶⁰

C/13) [30]: MC

From a tradition that describes the end of the siege of Baghdad in Muḥarram 198 H/September 813 CE, we learn that Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn also had a special unit called *Shākiriyya*. Ṭāhir writes to al-Ma'mūn describing how he plans to trap al-Amīn, who wanted to go over to Harthama b. A'yan's camp:

...and I turned with the choicest of the faithful (*khāṣṣat thiqāṭi*) and I relied on them and trusted that they would be brave and determined, and would be unsullied faithful advisors, and I already prepared war ships (*ḥarrāqāt*)¹⁶¹ and (regular) ships (*sufun*)....And I went down to them with a group that rode with me from among my faithful and my *Shākiriyya*.

and the *jund* is on p. 36); see also De La Vaissière 2007, 157 (according to 'Awwād 1964): with a different interpretation.

159 See Gordon 2001, index (*jund* and *Shākiriyya*), esp. 40–42.

160 Ibn Bābuyh al-Qummī, *Uyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* (al-Najaf ed.), 2, 148 (Beirut ed., 1, 161); al-Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 49, 134: ودعا المأمون القواد والقضاة والشاكرية وولد العباس...إنما أريد أن يرسخ في قلوب العامة والجنود والشاكرية هذا الأمر؛ والشاكرية هذا الأمر 87, 360: the second part of the tradition, from al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣalt.

161 Warships with installations for throwing fire at the enemy whilst at sea or on large rivers (sometimes described as a warship that contains sailors and fighters, see Elad 1986, 68, note 53).

And I sent a group of them (some of them) riding and some of them on foot between the Gate of Khurāsān and al-Mashra‘a [the watering place in the river], and along the banks of the river (*al-shaṭṭ*).¹⁶²

What is mentioned in this tradition is not the *jund*, the regular army, but the *Shākiriyya*. The *Shākiriyya* is mentioned together with Ṭāhir’s closest and most loyal adherents, and it is possible that the intent here is to a kind of personal select guard, perhaps (though we have no proof of this) connected by ties of *walā’* or even servitude to Ṭāhir. Almost nothing is given regarding their origin.¹⁶³

C/14) [31]: MC

The fourth tradition in which the *Shākiriyya* is mentioned is from the year 214 H/ 829–830 CE. A number of military missions are defeated by a Khāriji rebel, Bilāl al-Ḍabābī al-Shārī in al-Jazīra. In the end, al-Ma‘mūn himself leaves Baghdad, reaches al-Jazīra, camps in the village of al-‘Alath, and afterwards sends the commanders and al-*Shākirdiyya* after Bilāl al-Shārī.¹⁶⁴ From this tradition, it appears that the commanders are at the head of an army which is separate from the special military unit, called *Shākirdiyya* and not *Shākiriyya*. *Shākird* is rendered as a scholar, student, *apprentice, a disciple; a boy servant, groom*.¹⁶⁵ I do not know what the difference (if any) is between the two words.

C/15) [32]: MC? SE?

Another senior commander of al-Ma‘mūn, ‘Alī b. Hishām (d. 217 H/832 CE), had a *Shākiriyya*. We learn this from the tradition relating how he sent the poet ‘Umāra

162 Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 928: فنزلتها في عدة ممن ركب معي من خاصة ثقاتي وشاكريتي وصيرت عدة منهم فرسانا؛ ورجالة بين باب خراسان والمشرعة وعلى الشط De La Vaissière 2007, 157.

163 Cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 157, for a different interpretation of this evidence. We know that some of these soldiers spoke Persian and were also of non-Arabic origin, but it is hard to prove that they indeed comprised the *Shākiriyya* contingents. On Ṭāhir’s army, see Elad 2010, esp. 37–40, 53–54, 61, 67f.; Elad 2013, esp. 246–264.

164 Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (ed. Hyderabad), 7, 331: mentioned in a note by Shaban 1976, 2: 65, as proof that *al-Shākiriyya* were the *mawālī* of the ruler. There is no confirmation for this in the sources quoted by him; on the revolt, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 1101–1102 (no mention of *al-Shākirdiyya*, though). Al-‘Alath is on the border of al-Jazīra-al-‘Irāq, see Yāqūt, *Mu‘jam* (Beirut ed.), 4, 145–146.

165 Steingass 1963, 724; see also Haim 1953, 486.

b. ‘Aqīl to Tamīm b. Khuzayma [b. Khāzim] al-Nahshalī al-Tamīmī¹⁶⁶ and then to the house of Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad al-Shaybānī (Rabī‘a)¹⁶⁷ escorted by a *Shākiri* from his *Shākiriyya*.

Al-Jāhīz’s Opinion on *al-Shākiriyya*

The *Shākiriyya*’s closeness to the regime and to the ruler is also emphasized by al-Jāhīz. As part of his discussion of the various components of the army of the caliphate he tries to diminish contradictions and differences as much as possible, and to stress what is equal and similar. As an example of this he compares *al-Shākiriyya* and the army (*al-jund*):

People think that since there is a difference in the form of the script and the pronunciation of the names of the (different) types of human race, that their character in reality and their (internal) meaning is also different in the same way. However, things are not like they think. For you will see that even if the name *al-Shākiriyya* is different in form and in pronunciation from (the word) *al-jund*, the internal meaning (*al-ma‘nā*) respecting both is close to each other, for both stem from one meaning (one source) and one action...obedience to the caliphs and support of the regime.¹⁶⁸

Al-Jāhīz knows, of course, the *Shākiriyya*’s character; therefore he does not bother to explain it precisely to us. All he wants is to bridge the difference between this unit and the army. Through this explanation, we nevertheless understand that there is a difference and that this unit is not identical to the regular army regiments.

In another place al-Jāhīz mentions *al-Shākiriyya*, evidently in the period of al-Mu‘taṣim or al-Wāthiq, but here too he does not clarify the character of this military unit.¹⁶⁹ Relying on this text and on the previous text cited, ‘Abd al-

166 The son of one of the most prominent commanders of *al-Abnā’*. On his father and grandfather, see Crone 1980, 180ff. Tamīm is not mentioned by Crone.

167 Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdad*, 286–289; al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 20, 186–187; *فبعثت معي شاكريا من شاكريته حتى وقف بي على باب تميم*; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 2, 344f.; on Khālid b. Yazīd b. Mazyad, see Crone 1980, 170, to which the three sources quoted should be added.

168 Al-Jāhīz, *Manāqib al-Turk*, 30.

169 Al-Jāhīz, *al-Ḥayawān*, 2, 130; al-Jāhīz describes a dog that used to attack the hoofs of the horses of *al-Shākiriyya* which apparently accompanied Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Abān b. Ḥamza, known as Ibn al-Zayyāt. When this occurred is not said, but Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik was a *wazīr*, first of al-Mu‘taṣim between 219–220 H/834–835 CE, then of al-Wāthiq (r. 227 H/842 CE–232 H/847 CE), and even for a short period in the first year of al-Mutawakkil’s reign (233 H/847 CE), at the end of which he was executed. See Sourdel, “Ibn al-Zayyāt”, *EF*, 3, 974. Although

Salām Hārūn claims that the term means a mercenary army and that al-al-Jāhīz uses the word to denote an army.

Conclusion

The Importance of the Study of the *Shākiriyya*

In Islamic studies, controversies have emerged over the relation between the *Shākiriyya* institution and the *Mamlūk* system, the dominant military mode in medieval Islam. It has been the dominant view that the *Shākiriyya* system is uniquely Islamic and indigenous to Islamic civilization (see the references here to Ayalon, Pipes, Crone, Bosworth and most recently Gordon, and the detailed discussion above). In the last few years a group of scholars has started to test the prevailing views on the origin of the system. Noteworthy is Shaban, who as early as 1976 argued that the *chākar* system stemmed from the Persian tradition. Other scholars (Beckwith, Yonggyu, De La Vaissière) argue for the Central Asian (Soghdian) origin of the institution of *al-Shākiriyya*.

Both Shaban and Beckwith, when referring to the Samarran period from al-Mu‘taṣim’s rule on, identify the *Shākiriyya* regiments with the Turkish *Shākiriyya* units. De La Vaissière argues that the *Shākiriyya* was a distinct institution in the Soghdian army that made its way from Samarqand to Sāmarrā’.¹⁷⁰ Accepting Shaban’s main argument (although arguing for a Central Asian origin and not a Sāsānian one as suggested by Shaban), De La Vaissière dedicates a long and exhaustive discussion in his book to the view that al-Mu‘taṣim organized his new army units according to the Central Asian pattern. Gordon strongly refuted this argument:

The arguments of Shaban and Beckwith [De La Vaissière’s book was not yet published], which identify the Samarran Turkish guard with Iranian (Shaban) or Central Asian (Beckwith) use of the *chākar* institution, are to be rejected...the Turks and *Shākiriyya* of Samarra remained as entirely separate forces.¹⁷¹ [See the discussion above.]

it was not specifically stated that *al-Shākiriyya* rode immediately after or in front of the *wazīr* Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Malik, it is possible that they constituted a kind of special personal guard.

¹⁷⁰ De La Vaissière 2007, 59.

¹⁷¹ Gordon 2001, 40.

Yonggyu and De La Vaissière argue that the Inner Asian and the 'Abbāsī institutions of the personal guard, as well as that of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE), show similarities with the *Shākiriyya*. Their systems were based on a process geared to generate loyalty to the ruler within the personally attached servitor group. Thus, each system stressed the special individual relationship between the ruler and his personal servitors and guards.

As my limited study has shown, it is a difficult if not impossible task to judge where these similarities came from. Do the correlations stem from origin, or are they (as Yonggyu argued¹⁷²) an indication that peoples of different regions happened to share similar political needs and consequently had similar institutions that evolved separately and indigenously? Even if the Turkish/Central Asian tradition was an influence, due to the different socio-cultural contexts we can expect that each region's system developed in a way uniquely compatible and acceptable to the pre-existing cultural norms of the host society. When we gauge the degree of possible influence coming from the steppe tradition of personal guards, it is also important to inquire to what extent and in what ways the institutions Turks carried from their life in the steppe interacted with pre-existing social norms.

I started this research when I came upon the evidence of *al-Shākiriyya* units in al-Ma'mūn's army, hoping to gain a better understanding of this term or institution. It seems that the relatively large amount of evidence available from the Umawī and the early 'Abbāsī periods are still too limited to fully demonstrate that a) the *Shākiriyya* units denote Turks and b) that these allegedly Turkish units performed their service for the 'Abbāsī caliphs according to concepts and practices from the Central Asian steppe.

As already stated above, from the little on the *Shākiriyya* in the Arabic sources we can discern a distinct military character. Its other characteristics are difficult to understand. A number of army commanders in the Umawī period are known to have had *Shākiriyya*. All of them (except two, B/1 and B/6), took part in the Transoxanian campaigns, and the *Shākiriyya* units that are mentioned are thus connected to Central Asia. We do not know the size of these units and whether they were incorporated within the Umawī army in al-'Irāq. In some cases, when the term *Shākiri* appears in the sources it does not seem to have a military connection or connotation. Sometimes it can be rendered as a loyal adherent or even a servant (B/6 and B/16); in other cases it is equivocal (B/12, B/14 and B/17).

172 Yonggyu 2004, 34.

During the early ‘Abbāsī period (the reigns of al-Saffāḥ until al-Ma’mūn), except for two cases in which the term unequivocally denotes a military unit, the few other texts are ambiguous and equivocal (C/1, C/3, C/4, C/5 and C/6); in several cases a servant or non-military person or unit is alluded to (C/3, C/7, C/9 and C/10). As to the military units (C/2 and C/8), the last piece of evidence (C/ 8) is unique: the long and detailed description of the clothes, fine objects, weapons and so forth found in Hārūn al-Rashīd’s store houses (الخزائن) upon al-Amīn’s ascendance to the caliphate. Among the weapons he mentions “50,000 swords of (for?) the *Shākiriyya* and the slaves (الغلمان)”.

This brings us to al-Ma’mūn’s reign. From the few pieces of evidence at our disposal, it is clear that al-Ma’mūn already had military units in Khurāsān named *al-Shākiriyya*. This *Shākiriyya* had a high status in al-Ma’mūn’s court. It is most plausible that this unit consisted of non-Arabs. It seems that this caliph’s army also included *Shākiriyya* units in al-‘Irāq. The size of these *Shākiriyya* units is not attested by the sources. At least in Khurāsān, it seems that the size of this unit was not big.

Two of al-Ma’mūn’s senior commanders, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn and his relative ‘Alī b. Hishām, had *Shākiriyya* military units. Ṭāhir’s *Shākiriyya* is mentioned together with his closest and most loyal adherents, and it is possible that the intent here is to describe a kind of personal select guard, perhaps—though there is no proof of this—connected by ties of *walā’* or even servitude to Ṭāhir. The closeness of the *Shākiriyya* to the regime and its ruler is also emphasized by al-Jāḥiẓ, but even he does not provide any information regarding their ethnicity and origin. The sources checked provide no information on the ethnic composition, mobilization or military training of the *Shākiriyya*, or the possible ties between the commander/master and his *Shākīr*.

In later periods, we find *al-Shākiriyya* mentioned more frequently from 227 H/842 CE (the period of al-Wāthiq’s rule) and particularly during al-Mutawakkil’s reign (232 H/247 847 CE–861 CE) and onwards (dozens of times), until the year 266 H/880 CE (the reign of al-Mu’tamid ‘alā Allāh, d. 279 H/892 CE), when this unit is no longer mentioned by al-Ṭabarī. *Al-Shākiriyya* in this period is beyond the scope of this article. No comprehensive study has yet been made of the ‘Abbāsī army after the period of al-Ma’mūn’s reign.¹⁷³

173 The most up-to-date study, mainly based on the Arabic sources, is Gordon’s; useful comments with historical insight are rendered by Kennedy 1981; *Shākiriyya* are also mentioned (without analysis) by Amabe 1995, 141, 147, 155–161, 255; for the term *Shākiriyya* in the Sāmarrān period one should consult several volumes of al-Ṭabarī’s *History* in translation, esp. vols. 34–36 (indexes), which will enable thorough checking of the Arabic text. However, in order to conduct a broad study of the term and institution, all the possible Arabic sources must be examined. This

In my previous articles¹⁷⁴ I argued against the accepted view in research which claims that from its foundation, the ‘Abbāsī caliphate is distinguished by the decisive influence of non-Arab elements, and that this influence increases rapidly and is already obvious at the time of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158 H/775 CE–169 H/785 CE).¹⁷⁵ Al-Ma’mūn’s reign (198 H/813 CE–218 H/833 CE) is considered by all scholars to be the peak of the non-Arab (mainly Iranian) penetration of the caliphate, especially in the army. Students of the period of al-Ma’mūn’s reign are united in the opinion that the major part of his army was composed of non-Arab Khurāsānīs, mainly of Iranian origin.¹⁷⁶ However,

[s]crutiny of the political and social background in Khurāsān under al-Ma’mūn’s rule reveals... that this description of al-Ma’mūn’s armies and commanders is imprecise and one-dimensional. An examination of this army, its mobilization, consolidation and battles, from al-Ma’mūn’s arrival in Marw in 193/809 until his death in 218/833, provokes interesting conclusions that transform the accepted picture of al-Ma’mūn’s activity in Khurāsān and of the characteristics of the armies he raised in this province.¹⁷⁷...In all probability, al-Ma’mūn’s army included non-Arab units, called ‘*Ajam* or ‘*Ajam Ahl Khurāsān*, but references to them are very few. We have not found evidence of *massive* mobilization of non-Arab soldiers from Khurāsān or beyond it, in Transoxania.¹⁷⁸

Two pieces of evidence bear witness to relatively large non-Arab units in al-Ma’mūn’s army. The first refers to the non-Arab units in Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn’s army, units of Turks, Bukhārīs and Khwārizmīs.¹⁷⁹ From the second we learn of units

is possible to a large extent due to the extensive repository of Arabic literature recorded on compact discs (such as the *al-Turāth* CDs, *Ahl al-Bayt* and *al-Maktaba al-Shāmīla*), containing many thousands of books from different genres of Arabic literature (*ḥadīth*, *adab*, *fatāwā*, *fiqh*, *sīra*, *Qur’ān*, *tafsīr*, geography, biography, poetry and more) now at our disposal for the first time.
174 Elad 1995; Elad 2005, esp. 317–320.

175 Ayalon 1994, 2–4, 35–36 and the important information in the addenda; Crone 1980, 68 and esp. 74; Kennedy 1981, 102–103; Elad 1995, 118–119.

176 For a discussion and bibliography, see Elad 2005, 317, n. 151; Elad 2013, 279, nn. 272, 273; add De La Vaissière 2007, 151ff.

177 Elad 2005; the quotation is from 317; and see also Elad 2010 and 2013; see De La Vaissière 2007, 150ff. for a different interpretation; for two more examples cf. Elad, 2005, 295–316 (the long text in al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 773–774: al-Ma’mūn’s appeal to the Arab tribes in Khurāsān) and Elad 2010, 49–50 (in regard to the recruitment of non-Arab contingents by al-Ma’mūn), mainly according to al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 430–431 (de Goeje’s ed.; ed. al-Ṭabbā’, 606): to De La Vaissière’s analysis and arguments in De La Vaissière 2007, 152.

178 Elad 2005, the quotation is from 318; and cf. De La Vaissière 2007, 152.

179 Turks: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 799; Khwārizmīs: *ibid.*, 801: at least 700 soldiers [!]; al-Mas’ūdī, *Murūj*, 4, 263; al-Bukhāriyya: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, 3, 800, 802; the important and unique tradition in al-Ṭabarī is related from Aḥmad b. Hishām, who was most probably the cousin of Ṭāhir b. al-

of slave soldiers (*ghulām; atrāk*), most of whom were already purchased by al-Mu'taṣim already during his brother's reign. They numbered between 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers.¹⁸⁰ In 213 H/828 CE a slave regiment of 4,000 soldiers is mentioned in al-Mu'taṣim's army in Egypt. This is the first time that a slave military unit on such a large scale is mentioned.¹⁸¹ The *Shākiriyya* units in al-Ma'mūn's army mentioned above most probably bear witness to additional non-Arab recruits from Khurāsān (Transoxania?).

What is the reason for this far-reaching research pattern regarding the non-Arab makeup of al-Ma'mūn's army? It seems the mere fact that al-Ma'mūn lived in Khurāsān and chose it as the centre for his governorship, was sufficient for scholars to argue in favour of this thesis. It is possible that this view developed, at least in the case of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, given the fact that the army he fielded against 'Alī b. 'Īsā included non-Arab units (this is, as noted above, a rare evidence).

Nonetheless, none of al-Ma'mūn's senior commanders can be considered as belonging to a new non-Arab Khurāsānī army. It is clear that *al-Abnā'* forces and their commanders who joined al-Ma'mūn's army cannot be included in the new non-Arab Khurāsānī army.¹⁸² The picture is not one-dimensional. But the many reports that Arab political and military power had not completely disappeared in various regions of the caliphate; that al-Ma'mūn was required to take them into consideration and to use them as a military force which he mobilized for battle in the different parts of the caliphate; and that the tribal make-up of this or that area often dictated the caliph's policy¹⁸³ all cannot hide the clear

Ḥusayn (see Elad 2010, 39); he was *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* of Ṭāhir's camp (see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḫ*, 3, 799–802; according to al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 4, 263–265, he is one of the senior commanders (*min wujūh al-quwwād*)); he is also mentioned as one of the commanders of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim (Elad 2010, 39).

180 Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, 256: زهاء ثلاثة آلاف غلام; al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 212: في أربعة آلاف من أتراكه; Ayalon 1994, 26; Ismā'il 1996, 14; Pipes 1981, 146–147; Lassner 1980, 113; Kennedy 1981, 167; Elad 2005, 318; De La Vaissière 2007, 155; but esp. Gordon 2001, 16ff.

181 Al-Kindī, *Wulāt*, 212 (I follow the accepted rendering of the word *atrāk* as slaves); Pipes 1981, 51; Lassner 1980, 113; Kennedy 1981, 167; but cf. the careful rendering of Gordon 2001, 16: Turks.

182 Elad 2005, 283ff. (*al-Abnā'*), but especially Elad 2010 and 2013.

183 For examples, see 1) al-Jazīra: al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 326–327: year 196 H/811–812 CE; *ibid.*, 332–333; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 300–301: year 198 H/808–809 CE; al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 332, the same year: Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's leniency and favourism towards the southern tribes in Mosul; *ibid.*, 336–337; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 317: year 199 H; al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 343–348; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 349: year 202 H/817–818 CE; *ibid.*, 350: in the same year al-Ma'mūn bluntly interferes in the tribal feuds in Mosul; for other examples for tribal feuds in Mosul during al-Ma'mūn's reign, see al-Azdī, *Ta'riḫ al-Mawṣil*, 359–360: year 206 H/821–822

waning of Arab power in the ‘Abbāsī caliphate, which reached its highest point in the days of al-Mu‘taṣim.¹⁸⁴ They do, however, show that this process was a slow and complex one.

Appendix

The Term *Shākiri* in the Meaning of Servant/Attendant from the Middle to the End of the 9th Century.

- A. Two of the *imāms* of the Shī‘a (*al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyya*), are described as having a *Shākiri*. The first is Mūsā (al-Kāzīm) b. Ja‘far al-Šādiq (d. 183 H/799 CE), who is described as riding escorted by a *Shākiri* (راكب ومعه شاكري). The second is al-Ḥasan (al-‘Askari) b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Jawwād (d. 260 H/874 CE). A *Shākiri* of his (شاكري لمولانا أبي محمد الحسن بن علي), called Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad *al-Shākiri*, relates some anecdotes about his master (*ustādhi*).¹⁸⁵

CE; 365–366: year 208 H/823–824 CE; 371: year 210/825–826; 373: year 211 H/826–827 CE; 422–423: year 219 H/834–835 CE (al-Mu‘taṣim’s reign); 378, 380–382, 386–394 (years 212–213 H/827–829 CE): the army and Arab commanders of Muḥammad b. Ḥumayd b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamid, see discussion in Elad 2013, 272–275); Diyār Bakr and the surroundings of al-Raḡqa (the rebellion of Naṣr b. Shabath), see Kennedy 1981, 169–170; al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 540; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 303–304: year 198 H/813 CE; Armenia and Ādharbayjān: al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 566; al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 384: year 212 H/827–828 CE; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1112: year 212 H/827–828 CE; 2) al-‘Irāq: al-Daskara’s vicinity (50 miles north of Baghdād): al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 364; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 6, 385; al-Kūfa and its vicinity: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 956, 977; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḫh*, 12, 413; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1019, 1022: year 202 H/817–818 CE [= Crone 1980, 110–111]; al-Baṣra: for the Muḥallabī family in the city, see Crone 1980, 135; add al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 17, 46 (Būlāq ed.) [Dār al-Kutub ed., 18, 24] to her bibliography; correct Crone 1980, 135, Dāwūd b. Bishr to Dāwūd b. Yazid; see also, al-Ya‘qūbī, *Ta’riḫh*, 2, 557–558: Muḥammad b. ‘Abbād al-Muḥallabī, who is defined as: وكان سيد أهل البصرة في زمانه; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 369: وكان سيدا; add him to Crone’s biographies of the family; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 19–20, 60 [=Dār al-Kutub ed., 20, 99–101; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 369, 370: the poet Ibn Abī ‘Uyayna al-Muḥallabī and his strong satire against the northern tribes; Ibn Khayyāt, *Ta’riḫh*, 384; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫh*, 3, 1144–1145: Banū Tamīm in al-Baṣra; Baghdād: al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (Būlāq ed.), 18, 29, 51, 53, 54, 60 [=Dār al-Kutub ed., 20, 120, 166–167, 170, 172, 186]; al-Azdī, *Ta’riḫh al-Mawṣil*, 239, 354; Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *Kitāb Baghdād*, 286–289; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* (ed. Būlāq), 18, 186–187; for socio-cultural examples of the period, e.g. the Arab socio-cultural supremacy and Arabism that continued well into the early ‘Abbāsī caliphate with an emphasis on al-Ma’mūn’s reign, see Elad 2005, 118–127.

184 Ayalon 1994, 21–22; Kennedy 1981, 165; Pipes 1981, 150.

185 Mūsā al-Kāzīm: al-Ṭūsī, *Ikhtiyār*, 2, 735–736; al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharā‘ij*, 2, 327; al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, 3, 43: وخلفه شاكري; al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī: al-Ṭabarī (*al-Imāmi*), *Dalā’il al-Imāma*, 429–430.

- B. In his epistle “An Answer against the Christians,” al-Jāḥiẓ remarks:
We have known them (the Christians) to possess hackneys of mixed breed and excellent swift horses; they congregate in big crowds and play with the curved sticks [while on horseback]; and they feign [to be dignified Arabs] by donning *al-Madīnī* dress [وتحذفوا المدنيي] and are dressed in [clothes made of the kind of cloth called] *mulḥam* and in clothes inlaid with precious stones (*muṭabbaqa*); and they possess *al-Shākiriyya*, and they call themselves al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and al-‘Abbās, Faḍl and ‘Alī...¹⁸⁶

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186 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Radd ‘alā l-Naṣārā*, 3, 317: فقد علمنا أنهم اتخذوا البراذين الشهيرة، والخيل العتاق، واتخذوا الجوقات، ووضربوا بالصوالات، وتحذفوا المدنيي، ولبسوا الملحم والمطبعة، واتخذوا الشاكرية، وتسموا بالحسن والحسين، والعباس وفضل وعلي

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