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Caliphal imperialism and Ḥijāzī elites in the second/eighth century

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In 129/747, during the reign of the last Umayyad caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad (r. 127–132/744–749), a Kharijite rebel called Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār b. ʿAwf advanced on Mecca during the hajj season. The Umayyad governor, ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Sulaymān, abandoned both the town and the pilgrims. In Medina, the governor of the Ḥijāz, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh, managed to cobble together an army drawn from locals and set out to confront the rebels. They met at a location near the Red Sea called Qudayd in 130/747 and Abū Ḥamza's force was victorious; the Medinan army was massacred.[1] That the Medinans lost this particular fight is not necessarily surprising; what is surprising is the identity of many of those killed there fighting on behalf of the Umayyad caliphs. This is a time when Umayyad rule was under threat on many different fronts. Abū Ḥamza's revolt against their caliphate was by no means the only one. A descendant of Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib, ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiya, rebelled in Kufa in 127/744 and controlled much of Iran before his final defeat in 130/747–748.[2] Abū Muslim famously raised the black banners in revolt in Merv in 130/747, signalling the start of what has come to be known as the ʿAbbāsid revolution and the overthrow of Marwān b. Muḥammad, the last of the Umayyad caliphs in the Middle East. Yet many of the Medinans who died fighting on the side of the Umayyads at Qudayd came from families—especially the Zubayrids—who had not very long before presented their own serious challenges to the Umayyads' monopoly of the caliphal office. What might have inspired this seemingly new-found loyalty?

This question, of course, invites further discussion of the dynamics in the relationships between the imperial centres of Umayyad Damascus and ʿAbbāsid Baghdad, on the one

[1] The principal sources for this battle are Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿĀnī, 1387/1967), pp. 391–5; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. Maḥmūd Firdaws al-ʿAẓm (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-ʿArabiyya, 1997–2004, 25 volumes), VII: 629–34; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, ed. M.Th. Houtsma, *Ibn-Wādhih qui dicitur al-Jaʿqubī Historiae* (Leiden: Brill, 1883, 2 volumes), II: 406; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, eds. M.J. de Goeje *et al.*, *Annales quos scripsit Abu Djafar Mohammed ibn Djarir at-Tabari* (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901, 3 parts in 15 volumes), II: 2006–15; al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*, ed. ʿAlī Ḥabība (Cairo: al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya, 1387/1967), pp. 108–10.

[2] Teresa Bernheimer, "The Revolt of ʿAbdallāh b. Muʿāwiya, AH 127–130: A Reconsideration through the Coinage", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69/3 (2006): 381–93.

hand, and the empire's provincial elites on the other. For whatever else they may have been, the Umayyad—at least in the Marwānid period—and early ʿAbbāsid caliphs—before things began to go wrong from the late third/ninth century—were rulers of an empire, "the geopolitical manifestation of relationships of control imposed by a state on the sovereignty of others". It is, therefore, useful to view such relationships between the caliphs and provincial elites as a manifestation of imperialism, "both the process and attitudes by which an empire is established and maintained".[3] A number of modern studies have made great headway in this effort.[4] Yet we are still someway from a critical mass of scholarship on the early Islamic "imperial rationale", the continual processes of negotiation defining the respective duties, responsibilities and rights of the central imperial/caliphal administrations and the provincial elites. This article will focus on how one region's elites interacted with the caliphal administrations over the second/eighth century to see what that can add to our understanding of the nature, and success or otherwise, of Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid imperialism.

The Ḥijāzī elites are an important group to study in this respect. They were, for the most part, descendants of the original founders of the Islamic empire, whose ancestors had first established the Muslim community in western Arabia and then overseen its spectacular expansion out of the peninsula. Their history after the first, or sometimes the second, *fitna* has often been unfairly relegated in modern scholarship to political insignificance, but

[3] The definitions come from David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 6.

[4] For some examples of wide-ranging studies, see Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Hugh Kennedy, "Central Government and Provincial Élites in the Early ʿAbbāsid Caliphate", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44/1 (1981): 26–38; *idem*, "The Decline and Fall of the First Muslim Empire", *Der Islam* 81/1 (2004): 3–30. There are also some particularly interesting thoughts in Chris Wickham, "Tributary Empires: Late Rome and the Arab Caliphate", in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, eds. Peter Fibiger Bang and Christopher A. Bayly (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 205–13. For interesting works with a specific regional focus, see Paul M. Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in ʿAbbāsid Syria, 750-880* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001); Elton Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under Abbasid Rule, 747-820* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979); Hugh Kennedy, "Egypt as a Province in the Islamic Caliphate, 641–868", in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume One: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62–85; Jacob Lassner, "Provincial Administration under the Early ʿAbbāsids: Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr and the Governors of the *Ḥaramayn*", *Studia Islamica* 49 (1979): 39–54; *idem*, "Provincial Administration under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Ruling Family and the *Amṣār* of Iraq", *Studia Islamica* 50 (1979): 21–35; Chase F. Robinson, "al-ʿAṭṭāf b. Sufyān and Abbasid Imperialism", in *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, eds. Alireza Korangy, Wheeler M. Thackston, Roy P. Mottahedeh and William Granara (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming [2016]); *idem*, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

there is plenty of room to resist this interpretation.[5] They were members of families with good early Islamic credentials which had provided and continued to provide alternative claimants to the caliphate, and so the history of their interaction with the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid rulers during a century in which rebellions against their claims to the caliphate were frequent is a very important part of the story of early Islamic caliphal imperialism. In a relatively recent book, based primarily on the study of genealogical works, Asad Ahmed has done fantastic work in examining the political fortunes of five Ḥijāzī elite families over the first/seventh to third/ninth centuries, demonstrating in particular how they made use of marriage alliances to further their positions and increase their access to patronage.[6] In this article I want to take a slightly different approach and focus more directly upon the actions of these elite families when violent revolts offered them an opportunity to express more directly their grievances with the central caliphal regimes. Taking a perspective across the second/eighth century also allows us to compare the relative effectiveness of late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid policies aimed at ensuring the loyalty of provincial elites.

The "imperial rationale" and provincial elites

All imperial administrations, of course, make demands on their provincial subjects. For the most part, these demands are not particularly complicated. The most obvious demand that Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs made of their subjects was the payment of taxes, either in kind or in coin, or sometimes a mixture of the two. The tax burden was certainly not shared equally among all the empire's subjects—the burden was usually heavier on non-Muslims and there were also distinctions between Muslims as well—but, broadly speaking, there are two particularly commonly encountered types of regular taxation: poll taxes and land taxes. There was also a variety of each of these types; land taxes, for example, were collected in both coin and in kind, and different rates applied to the produce of different categories of land.[7] Taxes were also collected at least occasionally from (semi-)nomadic

[5] For a more thorough justification of my thoughts on this issue, see Harry Munt, *The Holy City of Medina: Sacred Space in Early Islamic Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 151–9.

[6] Asad Q. Ahmed, *The Religious Elite of the Early Islamic Hijaz: Five Prosopographical Case Studies* (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research, Linacre College, 2011). The families studied are the descendants of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. *ca.* 55/674–675), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf (d. *ca.* 31/651–652), Ṭalḥa b. ʿUbayd Allāh (d. 36/656), ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d. 35/656) and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661).

[7] For two recent discussions of the complicated early history these taxes, based on rather different sources, see Marie A.L. Legendre and Khaled Younes, "The Use of Terms ǧizya and ḫarāǧ in the First 200 Years of Hiǧra in Egypt", http://hum.leiden.edu/lias/formation-of-islam/topics-state/study.html [2012; accessed 25 April 2014]; Michele Campopiano, "L'administration des impôts en Irak et Iran de la fin de l'époque Sassanide

groups, but how regularly and on what basis are not often clear. We hear anecdotally, for example, that one Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Sabra (d. 162/778–779) was in charge of collecting taxes (variously referred to in Arabic as *ṣadaqa*, *jibāya* and *masʿāh*) from the Arabian tribes of Asad and Ṭayyiʾ.[8] Alongside taxation, the caliphal administrations would often require levies of soldiers and labourers from among their provincial subjects, the former more commonly were Muslims and the latter non-Muslims. Papyri from Umayyad Egypt, for example, refer to demands of forced labour and service for a range of projects from the maintenance of local irrigation canals, to service in the fleet, to the construction of imperial monuments in Syria.[9] Military recruitment for the caliphal armies varied from time to time and place to place, but local ad hoc levies were not unheard of; when the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105–125/724–743) visited Medina in 106/725, he levied four thousand men for military service.[10]

The final essential demand made by caliphs on provincial subjects was that the latter acknowledge their sovereignty, authority and right to dispense justice. This is quite a vague demand, but in practice it generally entailed accepting the governors and other officials they appointed as well as these appointees' decisions and arbitration. If local elites had a problem with an official's actions they were to seek redress through the appropriate channels. Local elites' refusal to accept the caliph's appointments to governorships and other posts could be the source or symptom of serious rupture and, occasionally, of violent retribution.[11] In practice, caliphs and their officials had to act more through processes of negotiations, alliances and compromises with the provincial elites than through absolutist rule by diktat, but a direct challenge against the office of a caliphal official could easily be taken as a challenge against the caliph himself.[12]

à la crise du califat Abbaside (VI^e^–X^e^ siècles)", in *Lo que vino de Oriente: horizontes, praxis y dimensión material de los sistemas de dominación fiscal en al-Andalus (ss. VII–IX)*, eds. Xavier Ballestin and Ernesto Pastor (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), pp. 17–27.

[8] Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī, *Kitāb Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1953), pp. 428–9; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, volume 2, ed. Wilferd Madelung (Beirut: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003), p. 524; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 265, 268.

[9] For example, within H.I. Bell, "Translations of the Greek Aphrodito Papyri in the British Museum", *Der Islam* 2 (1911): 269–83, 372–84; 3 (1912): 132–40, 369–73; 4 (1913): 87–96; 17 (1928): 4–8; Clive Foss, "Egypt under Muʿāwiya, Part I: Flavius Papas and Upper Egypt", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72/1 (2009): 1–24, p. 16.

[10] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 1472.

[11] Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, pp. 136, 162.

[12] Cobb, *White Banners*, pp. 11, 14–19; Kennedy, "Central Government and Provincial Élites"; Mathieu Tillier, "Legal Knowledge and Local Practices under the Early ʿAbbāsids", in *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, ed. Philip Wood (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 187–204.

In return for these demands and exactions, the imperial administration itself had to offer something.[13] Perhaps the most obvious benefits that imperial rule conferred upon provincial elites were ensuring the stability of vital social, economic and cultural institutions (including the minting of coins), dispensing justice equitably and offering defence and protection against violent threats. In a recent article, Chase Robinson has actually suggested that the latter—defence and protection (Ar. *ḥimāya*)—was perceived by provincial elites as the most important benefit that caliphal imperialism offered them. When that caliphal *ḥimāya* was no longer perceived to be functioning, the imperial rationale began to be challenged.[14] Robinson cites a rather telling passage taken from al-Azdī's (d. 334/946) history of Mosul, under the year 195/810–811:

> When caliphal authority (*al-sulṭān*) weakened, and the protection (*al-ḥimāya*) [it afforded] diminished, the people of Mosul rallied around ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (a local chieftain) so that he would take control of the region and protect its sub-districts. From this time until the passing of the Banū al-Ḥasan, they would let enter [into the city] a caliphally appointed governor (*al-wālī min wulāt al-sulṭān*) only if they found him satisfactory, their being in effective control all the while.[15]

At least from al-Azdī's early-to-mid fourth-/tenth-century perspective, the matter is clear: the caliphs could no longer guarantee security for Mosul's elites, so they no longer felt obliged to acknowledge the authority of their appointed officials. Caliphs understandably, therefore, were interested in having the prestige of their *ḥimāya* extolled for all to hear. The poet Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa (d. *ca.* 181/797–798), for example, in the middle of a panegyric for the ʿAbbāsid caliph Muḥammad al-Mahdī (r. 158–169/775–785), proclaimed that:

> He protects (*aḥmā*) the lands of the Muslims against [their enemies],
>
> the lowlands and mountains of whose territory he opens up for plunder.[16]

[13] For a good general discussion of this issue, see John F. Haldon, 'Pre-Industrial States and the Distribution of Resources: The Nature of the Problem', in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, III: States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), pp. 1–25.

[14] Robinson, "al-ʿAṭṭāf ibn Sufyān".

[15] The translation is Robinson's; for the text, see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*, p. 324.

[16] Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa, *Dīwān Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa*, ed. Ashraf Aḥmad ʿAdra (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1414/1993), p. 107 (no. 61, line 29).

Many other panegyrics for Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs make the same point, sometimes at length, as in the famous 'victory odes' of al-Akhṭal (d. before 92/710–711) for ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) and Abū Tammām (d. *ca.* 231/845–846) for Abū Isḥāq al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 218–227/833–842).[17]

So protection and the maintenance of social stability was a key service provincial elites expected imperial officials to provide in return for their loyalty and meeting the tax and conscription demands. A second provincial expectation would seem to have been that the caliphal government fund and carry out vital local infrastructural projects, including investment in roads, congregational mosques, irrigation works and the such. Closely linked to this, of course, was the hope of many local notables that as much as possible of the tax revenues raised in their province would actually be spent within the province. There was an acknowledgement—particularly in the richer provinces—of the necessity of some local revenues being redistributed to the caliphal centre, but for many the caliphal administration in the provinces was seen as an effective way of organising the collection and *local* expenditure of provincial revenues. This expectation—that as much revenue as possible stay within the province—was presumably helped by the practical difficulties for caliphs and their administrators that regularly transporting enormous quantities of coin from one province to the capital would have presented.[18] Revenues from the Jazīra and the Sawād would have been easy enough to bring to ʿAbbāsid Baghdad via the Euphrates and the Tigris, but how much Transoxanian or Khurasanian revenue actually made its way to Iraq seems, with the current state of research, to be anyone's guess.[19]

Some local elites would, naturally enough, have seen in the imperial administration an opportunity to improve their own status and lot in life; the caliphal government did make demands, but at the same time it offered an opportunity for some for advantageous

[17] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 80–109, 144–79. For some further discussion of the poetic trope of caliphal protection, see Rajaa Nadler, "Die Umayyadenkalifen im Spiegel ihrer zeitgenössischen Dichter", Inaugural-Dissertation, Friedrich-Alexander Universität, Erlangen-Nürnberg (1990), esp. pp. 16–17, 171–9.

[18] For some discussion of this question—the extent to which provincial tax revenues were actually redistributed to the imperial centre—with regards to the Roman empire, see Fergus Millar, "Cash Distributions in Rome and Imperial Minting", in his *Rome, the Greek World, and the East, Volume 2: Government, Society, and Culture in the Roman Empire*, eds. Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 89–104.

[19] For anecdotal evidence that in the mid-third/ninth century caravans did transport revenues from Egypt to Iraq via Palestine, see Cobb, *White Banners*, pp. 12, 39.

employment and closer access to power. Just as a poet such as the aforementioned Marwān b. Abī Ḥafṣa could use the caliphal court to move on from an early life of relative obscurity in al-Yamāma, so too did the Umayyad and, especially, the ʿAbbāsid bureaucracies—both in Damascus/Baghdad and the provincial capitals—offer educated notables from across the caliphate an opportunity to advance their social standing and increase their wealth.[20] This also brings us to the obvious point that those provincials who did join the administration and the caliphal army expected the imperial centre to ensure that they were paid in a timely fashion and rewarded, when appropriate, with land grants.[21]

Finally, caliphal courtiers and certain theorists of political thought made the case that caliphs, as the *imām*s of the Muslim community, were necessary for the prosperity of that community as well as the salvation of each and every member of it.[22] It was God's caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, according to poets such as al-Akhṭal, "through whom men pray for rain".[23] It is impossible to work out how many provincial Muslims of the first–third/seventh–ninth centuries gave any practical credence to these claims, but we should assume that some did at least. We can end this summary of the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid imperial rationale by noting that there are some explicit acknowledgements of its existence in the sources of the period. The early ʿAbbāsid Iraqi historian Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/773–774), for example, had the caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (r. 35–40/656–661) exhort his followers:

> There are duties (*ḥaqq*) that you owe me and duties that I owe you. The duties that I owe you are counsel for as long as I am with you; multiplying for you your revenues (*fayʾ*), teaching you so you are no longer ignorant and educating you so that you can learn. The duties that you owe me are honest adherence to the oath of allegiance (*al-wafāʾ bi-l-bayʿa*), private and public counsel, responding when I summon you and obedience when I issue commands to you.[24]

The above discussion has undoubtedly given too synchronic a picture of the early Islamic imperial rationale. It should be obvious enough that there were actually a number of important developments over the period under discussion. There was continual fluctuation in which elite groups and families had access to caliphal patronage. There was also

[20] On the life of Ibn Abī Ḥafṣa, see, Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1397/1977, 8 volumes), v: 189–93.

[21] On the payment of the military in the early Islamic centuries, see Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 59–95.

[22] Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 21–3.

[23] Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, pp. 91/294.

[24] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I: 3387.

significant chronological and geographical variation in levels of taxation and the efficiency with which it was collected, whether it was to be collected in coin or in kind, and the extent to which revenues were spent locally or redistributed elsewhere. The early ʿAbbāsid period comes across in the sources as an era in which caliphal exactions came to be perceived by Muslims as well as non-Muslims as particularly harsh and modern scholars have indicated that this is because early ʿAbbāsid caliphs did indeed try harder than their Umayyad predecessors to take more revenue in coin from more people and to redistribute more of it to Iraq.[25] Provincial elites' concerns in this period are encapsulated in a well-known and somewhat melodramatic section from the late second-/eighth-century Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* about the "years of affliction" that accompanied the governorship in the Jazīra of Mūsā b. Muṣʿab in the years 1084 AG/772–773 CE and 1085 AG/773–774 CE.[26] In general, however, in spite of these developments, over the second/eighth century we see an empire demanding taxes and loyalty/obedience alongside provincial elites hoping for protection and opportunities to further enhance their social authority and economic security.

The identity of the provincial elites is another category that could vary considerably from place to place and time to time. Even in the same place at the same time, provincial elites were hardly a homogenous group. There were military and civilian elites, Muslim and non-Muslim elites, tribal and non-tribal elites, and more besides. Even within these more specific groups, experiences and fortunes could differ dramatically.[27] The Ḥijāzī elites who will be the focus of this article were Muslim and urban, mostly resident in Medina, the principal administrative and economic centre of the second-/eighth-century Ḥijāz. There were non-Muslim communities in the northern Ḥijāz in this period, as well of course as non-urban elites among the (semi-)nomadic populations of western Arabia, but they will not feature much in this discussion. The Muslim, urban elites who will be the focus of what follows, were broadly split into two categories. On the one hand, there were the descendants of the early Meccan converts to Islam (the *muhājirūn*) and the great Meccan families who reportedly dominated the town socially and politically before it fell to Muḥammad in 8/630. On the other, there were the descendants of the Medinans (the *anṣār*)

[25] Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, p. 157; Wickham, "Tributary empires", pp. 210–13.

[26] *Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, volume 2, ed. J.-B. Chabot, *Incerti auctoris Chronicon pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum*, II (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1933), pp. 289–373; trans. Amir Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn, Parts III and IV: A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), pp. 253–316.

[27] For just one example, the varying fortunes of the caliphate's Christian elites in the transition from Umayyad to ʿAbbāsid rule, see Philip Wood, "Christian Authority under the Early Abbasids: The *Life of Timothy of Kakushta*", *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 61 (2011): 258–74.

who offered Muḥammad protection and support at the time of the *hijra* in 1/622. Although the discussion will centre around elites living in Medina, it is actually the originally Meccan families who were more successful than their Medinan counterparts in acquiring the quantities of land and wealth that sustained membership of the local elite.

The revolts

There were four noteworthy revolts in the second-/eighth-century Ḥijāz, all telescoped into a forty-year period in the middle of the century. After the Umayyads finally defeated and killed the rival caliphal claimant ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr in Mecca in 73/692, the Ḥijāz was a relatively stable province for over half a century. The next serious threat to Umayyad rule in the Ḥijāz was actually caused by an external invasion, but since the Ḥijāzī elites' reaction to this threat is so interesting it is worth considering here. This invasion of the Ḥijāz, which resulted in the brief conquest of Mecca and Medina in 129–130/747, was led by Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār b. ʿAwf al-Khazrajī. Abū Ḥamza was apparently a regular anti-Marwānid preacher in Mecca during the hajj season, but met with very little success there before the Ḥaḍramī Kharijite rebel ʿAbd Allāh b. Yaḥyā, known as Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq, "Seeker of Truth", heard him and, recognising a kindred spirit, invited Abū Ḥamza to accompany him back to Ḥaḍramawt in 128/745–746. There, Abū Ḥamza gave allegiance to ʿAbd Allāh b. Yaḥyā as *imām* and swiftly led an army against Mecca, which he took without a fight during the hajj season of 129–130/747.[28]

As Abū Ḥamza then led his army towards Medina, the governor of the Ḥijāz in that town, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān, raised a local army to meet the threat. As mentioned at the start of the article, this Medinan army was then massacred by Abū Ḥamza's in a battle at Qudayd.[29] Various lists of those Medinans killed in this battle are offered by the sources and it is extremely interesting that a large number of those killed belonged to Ḥijāzī elite families, notably Zubayrids, who at other times fiercely opposed the Umayyad family's domination of the caliphal office.[30] We should not underestimate the fear that news of the approach of the Kharijite army no doubt instilled in Medina's inhabitants,

[28] For an account of the story so far, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 1942–3, 1981–4.

[29] The principal sources for this battle are given in n. 1.

[30] There is still much useful information on the Zubayrid family in Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, "Die Familie el-Zubeir", *Abhandlungen der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, Hist.-Phil. Classe, 23 (1878): 3–112.

but nor should we ignore the fact that, at this time of threat to the Umayyads' control over the Ḥijāz by a rival claimant to the caliphal office, the elites of Medina rallied behind the reigning caliph's cause. They did not decide to use Abū Ḥamza's threat as a pretext or opportunity to throw off the Umayyad yoke, nor did they merely sit aside to see how it played out.

A decade and a half after the successful conclusion of the ʿAbbāsid revolution, the second serious revolt broke out in Medina. In 145/762 a local Ḥasanid (one of the two main branches of the ʿAlid family), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan, who carried the messianic titles of *al-mahdī* and *al-nafs al-zakiyya*, "the Pure Soul", was openly declared as caliph in the town.[31] In spite of the relative ease with which it was defeated militarily by ʿĪsā b. Mūsā, a nephew of the reigning caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775), this revolt—together with that of Muḥammad's brother, Ibrāhīm, in Basra—was a very serious challenge to the still young ʿAbbāsid dynasty. Two points are worth highlighting about this revolt. Firstly, it is very clear that Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh had universal caliphal ambitions. He may have attempted to rally the inhabitants of the Ḥijāz to his cause in part by picking up on perceived ʿAbbāsid slights against the status of the Kaʿba,[32] but his other public pronouncements—including the sermon he delivered in Medina upon the declaration of his revolt as well as his correspondence with his ʿAbbāsid rival, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr—make it very clear that he saw himself as the rightful *imām* of all the Muslims, not just one group of them.[33] The coinage struck by his brother Ibrāhīm in Basra also makes similarly universal claims to authority.[34] When ʿĪsā b. Mūsā's army was advancing upon Medina, there was actually serious debate among Muḥammad and his supporters about whether or not to stay in Medina or beat a strategic retreat to somewhere else; Egypt was a

[31] The major sources for this revolt are al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, pp. 507–26; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 444–5, 450–3; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 143–265; Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī li-l-Maṭbūʿāt, 1427/2006, 4th edition), pp. 206–62. Important secondary discussions include Tilman Nagel, "Ein früher Bericht über den Aufstand von Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh im Jahre 145h", *Der Islam* 46 (1970): 227–62; Amikam Elad, "The Rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan (Known as al-Nafs al-Zakīya) in 145/762", in *ʿAbbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies, Cambridge, 6-10 July 2002*, ed. James Montgomery (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), pp. 147–98; Najam Haider, *The Origins of the Shīʿa: Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 201–4; Teresa Bernheimer, *The ʿAlids: The First Family of Islam, 750-1200* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 4–6.

[32] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 197.

[33] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, p. 508; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 197, 206, 208–15.

[34] Luke Treadwell, "Qurʾanic Inscriptions on the Coins of the *ahl al-bayt* from the Second to Fourth Century AH", *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 14/2 (2012): 47–71, pp. 58–9.

popular alternative.[35] Muḥammad, who is generally presented in the accounts as a fairly poor military strategist, elected against wiser advice to remain in Medina and dig a defensive trench to keep the ʿAbbāsids out, as his ancestor, the Prophet Muḥammad, had done to keep the Meccan polytheists out of the town. This choice aside, however, there is no evidence that he planned to make Medina or Mecca the seat of his caliphate had he succeeded in overthrowing the ʿAbbāsids.

Secondly, in spite of these ambitions far broader than merely catering to the desires of Ḥijāzī elites, his revolt did pick up serious support from among them.[36] At first glance, it is actually the lack of support from some significant quarters that comes across as notable: one of the foremost Medinan members of the Ḥusaynid branch of the ʿAlid family, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), refused to support Muḥammad's uprising. Some other Qurashī families were also divided between support for Muḥammad and refusal to join his rebellion. In spite of those who showed themselves reluctant to join in, however, Muḥammad's uprising found generally widespread support amongst the Ḥijāz's elite families. Al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956) includes a report claiming that Muḥammad's followers could be found among "the descendants of ʿAlī, Jaʿfar, ʿAqīl, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, together with the rest of Quraysh and the descendants of the *anṣār*".[37] Such a sweeping assertion is, as we have seen, incorrect, but in its exaggeration it reminds us how unusual the widespread support for a Ḥasanid revolt from other Qurashī families appeared to later historians. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq may have been a Ḥusaynid who sat this one out, but many of his relatives joined Muḥammad enthusiastically. The most widespread support came from the Zubayrid family and the descendants of the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–644). Amikam Elad even noted that, "The Zubayrids constituted the main military and administrative backbone of the rebellion".[38] One Zubayrid in particular, Ibrāhīm b.

[35] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 227–8.

[36] The fundamental study so far is Elad, "Rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh", pp. 179–85, from which the following details are taken unless otherwise noted. A far more thorough investigation by Amikam Elad on this revolt has recently been published, but unfortunately I had no access to it before submitting this article: *The Rebellion of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762: Ṭālibīs and Early ʿAbbāsīs in Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[37] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut: L'Université Libanaise, 1966–1979, 7 volumes), IV: 145–6 (§2401).

[38] Elad, "Rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh", p. 182.

Muṣʿab, known as Ibn Khuḍayr, was singled out in several sources for his especially enthusiastic dedication to Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's cause.[39]

Just as the Zubayrids' involvement in the fighting against Abū Ḥamza's invasion of the Ḥijāz on behalf of their Umayyad rivals was particularly noteworthy, so too was their even more enthusiastic support of this revolt led by one of their great rivals. Hostility between the Zubayrids and various branches of the ʿAlid family is clear after the failure of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's revolt. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) noted that the Zubayrid Bakkār b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 195/810–811) "really loathed the family of Abū Ṭālib [which included the ʿAlids] and used to inform on them to Hārūn [al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809)], making what they did seem as bad as possible".[40] Ibn al-Nadīm (wr. *ca.* 377/987–988) labelled Bakkār's father, ʿAbd Allāh b. Muṣʿab (d. 184/800), who actually seems to have participated in Muḥammad's revolt, as one of the most evil of men because he was prejudiced against and maltreated ʿAlī's descendants.[41] That Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's Ḥasanid revolt had attracted serious support from such families as the Zubayrids in itself makes it a notable episode in early Islamic history.

No sooner had Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh been killed and his rebellion crushed than Medina was afflicted by violent uprising again. This revolt, known in the sources as the "uprising of the blacks" (*wuthūb al-sūdān*), comes across a bit peculiarly in the extant narratives. It is not discussed as frequently or in nearly as much detail as the other rebellions, but there are two principal versions: that of Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī (d. 236/851) and al-Balādhurī (d. *ca.* 279/892–893)—for whom Muṣʿab was one of the main sources—and that of al-Ṭabarī, whose principal source was ʿUmar b. Shabba (d. 262/876).[42] There are important differences in the details provided across these extant accounts, but the general story is the same. The uprising occurred as a direct result of Medina being garrisoned for more-or-less the first time, as a consequence of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's revolt, by a significant military

[39] Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh wa-akhbārihā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Riyadh: Dār al-Yamāma, 1419/1999, 2nd edition, 2 volumes), I: 354; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, p. 515; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 241–6, 260.

[40] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 616.

[41] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (London: Muʾassasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1430/2009, 2 parts in 4 volumes), I/ii: 340. On ʿAbd Allāh b. Muṣʿab's participation in the revolt, see Abū l-Faraj, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, p. 251. He was particularly known for the composition of an elegy for Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh, for which see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 255–6; al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*, pp. 191–2.

[42] Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, pp. 429–30; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, pp. 525–6; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 265–71.

contingent under the command of the new governor, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Rabīʿ. These ʿAbbāsid soldiers made a serious nuisance of themselves by mistreating the town's inhabitants; to compound the problem, they were being provisioned with seaborne supplies from Syria and Egypt at a time when the rest of the Ḥijāz's inhabitants were under an official import embargo, again a result of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's failed uprising.[43] According to al-Ṭabarī's more detailed version, in the midst of one dispute, a Medinan trader killed an ʿAbbāsid soldier and—this is where the narrative takes a strange turn—the slaves in Medina, led by one Wathīq,[44] revolted on behalf of their put-upon masters: "By God, we have only risen up out of scorn at what has been done to you. We stand by you and are at your disposal".[45] According to al-Balādhurī's version, the rebels even entitled their leader *amīr al-muʾminīn*, "Commander of the Faithful", the standard title in formal protocol for the caliph.[46] Medina's elite families were somewhat alarmed by their slaves' actions, even if the latter had claimed to be acting on their behalf, and tried to urge restraint, fearing further ʿAbbāsid reprisals against the town and their families. Among those figures noted as having urged loyalty to the ʿAbbāsid caliph and his governor were the Ṭalḥid Muḥammad b. ʿImrān b. Ibrāhīm, the ʿAwfid Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿUmar, and even an Umayyad, al-Aṣbagh b. Sufyān b. ʿĀṣim b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān. Eventually, these wiser heads managed to prevail upon the rebels, ʿAbbāsid authority was restored relatively peacefully and the leaders of the revolt were imprisoned.

As I said, this narrative as it stands is slightly strange. The background narrative given to explain the outbreak of the revolt focuses exclusively upon the interaction of the local Medinan free population and the ʿAbbāsid caliphal administration. The Medinans had two particular concerns: the poor behaviour of the military garrison and the conduct of Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr's appointment as governor of the Ḥijāz, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Rabīʿ al-Ḥārithī. Yet those Ḥijāzī elites who felt affronted by this ʿAbbāsid heavy-handedness were not the ones to revolt; it was the region's slaves who did so instead. There is, however, some faint trace of a suggestion that the Medinans may have tried to use this revolt to their advantage to get the caliph to replace Ibn al-Rabīʿ as governor with one of their own, Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd

[43] On this embargo, see Harry Munt, "Trends in the Economic History of the Early Islamic Ḥijāz: Medina during the Second/Eighth Century", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015): 201–47, pp. 209–10.

[44] The principal leader of the slaves is named Wathīq in both al-Ṭabarī's and Muṣʿab al-Zubayrī's versions, but as Ūtiyū in al-Balādhurī's, the latter presumably being a later corruption of the former.

[45] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 268.

[46] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, p. 525.

Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī Sabra (d. 162/778–779), a respected scholar whose ancestor Abū Sabra was one of the first Meccan emigrants to Medina.[47] The ʿAbbāsid caliphs frequently took local elites' refusal to acquiesce to their appointees as an instance of serious rebellion.[48] With this in mind, and coupled with the Medinans' own recent experiences of the backlash following the failure of a local revolt against al-Manṣūr's rule, it would not be surprising if the local elites, had they had in mind an attempt to force a replacement governor, acted cautiously in doing so. Nor would it be surprising that, in the aftermath of their inability to get their man recognised as governor, they quickly attempted to alter the record by making the revolt appear simply as a slave rebellion that was restrained by the local elites' calming influence.

The final revolt we will deal with was another Ḥasanid rebellion in the Ḥijāz, a quarter of a century after Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's. In 169/786, al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan was proclaimed as caliph and *imām* in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.[49] This again was a rebellion whose participants were aiming for far more than local significance, although al-Ḥusayn played heavily upon his geographical location in a sermon in the mosque: "I am the son of the Messenger of God, in the *ḥaram* of the Messenger of God, in the mosque of the Messenger of God, atop the *minbar* of the Prophet of God". It is quite clear, however, that al-Ḥusayn received virtually no support from the Ḥijāz's local elites, although he did apparently convince some of the pilgrims from other regions to follow his cause.[50] He was forced to leave Medina for Mecca to try to find further support there among the hajj pilgrims, but was easily defeated by an ʿAbbāsid army at a place called Fakhkh, three miles outside Mecca, on the first day of the pilgrimage season, 8 Dhū l-Ḥijja 169/11 June 786.

[47] On Ibn Abī Sabra, see Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā: al-qism al-mutammim li-tābiʿī ahl al-Madīna wa-man baʿdahum (min rubʿ al-ṭabaqa al-thālitha ilā muntaṣaf al-ṭabaqa al-sādisa)*, ed. Ziyād Muḥammad Manṣūr (Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-al-Ḥikam, 1408/1987), pp. 458–9; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. al-ʿAẓm, IX: 269; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1402–1413/1982–1992, 35 volumes), XXXIII: 102–8.

[48] For two examples concerning Mosul, see n. 11.

[49] Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 445; Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt (qism)*, pp. 384–5; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* 2, p. 540; al-Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Maʿrifa wa-l-taʾrīkh*, ed. Akram Ḍiyāʾ al-ʿUmarī (Medina: Maktabat al-Dār, 1410/1989-1990, 3rd edition, 4 volumes), I: 159; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 448; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 551–68; Abū l-Faraj, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, pp. 364–85; al-Rāzī, *Akhbār Fakhkh wa-khabar Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd Allāh wa-akhīhi Idrīs b. ʿAbd Allāh*, ed. Maher Jarrar (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1995), pp. 132–62; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 109–10, 205–7; Ahmed, *Religious Elite*, pp. 162–3; Haider, *Origins of the Shīʿa*, pp. 207–10.

[50] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 564; see also Abū l-Faraj, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, pp. 376–7.

In his account of Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's proclamation as caliph in the Ḥijāz, which came in 200/815 following the death of Abū l-Sarāyā, the leader of an ʿAlid revolt in Kufa, Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967) does suggest that both his claim and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's thirty-one years earlier had received general local acceptance in Medina:

> During these days, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad made his claim public (*ẓahara*) in Medina and called [for allegiance] to himself. The Medinans gave him the oath of allegiance as Commander of the Faithful. After al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the Medinans gave the oath of allegiance to no one other than Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad.[51]

We should bear in mind, however, that Abū al-Faraj was a partisan author writing an apologetic and polemical history on behalf of ʿAlid rebels against Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid rule, and other sources suggest that al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī received nothing like widespread acceptance as caliph among the Medinans.

ʿAlid revolts continued in the Ḥijāz throughout the third/ninth century, but they increasingly took on the appearance of banditry and were certainly not locally popular, becoming almost indistinguishable in some ways from the increasing tribal insurrections of this period, the illustrious ancestry of their leaders being all that gave them a semblance of gravity. In 251/865, for example, the Ḥasanid Ismāʿīl b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm rebelled in Mecca, but his rebellion consisted of little more than looting the city, including the Kaʿba, robbing pilgrims, killing people, seizing local wealth and then replicating these actions in Medina and Jedda.[52] Increasingly, the ʿAlids (or, perhaps better, the Ṭālibids) of the Ḥijāz started to turn violently against one another.[53] In 271/884, two Ḥusaynids—Muḥammad and ʿAlī, sons of al-Ḥusayn b. Jaʿfar b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq—raided Medina, killed people and extorted money from the locals. They seem to have occupied the Prophet's Mosque, meaning that no prayer took place there, for about four weeks; a poet, perhaps called al-Faḍl b. al-ʿAbbās al-ʿAlawī (his name changes from one source to the next), recited a lament for the destruction

[51] Abū al-Faraj, *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyīn*, p. 438. According to al-Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh*, III: 989–90), Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq actually received the oath of allegiance in Mecca. On Abū l-Sarāyā's revolt, see Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 152–4, 207–11.

[52] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 1644–5.

[53] See the accounts of the strife between various Ṭālibid families in 266/879–880 and 269/882–883 in al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 1941, 2039.

this raid inflicted on the town's holy sites.[54] As might be expected, there is no evidence that any of these rebels' actions endeared them or their causes to the local elites.[55]

Patterns and analysis

The first important trend that can be seen clearly in the history of Ḥijāzī revolts in the second/eighth century is that they increase in frequency in the ʿAbbāsid period. This conforms well with patterns of revolt in other provinces of the caliphate, including Egypt, Syria, the Jazīra, Iran and central Asia.[56] To infer from this newfound frequency of rebellions that the ʿAbbāsid revolution had ushered in profound changes to the imperial rationale would certainly be a plausible suggestion. As Patricia Crone has noted, "Some of the provincial troubles, of course, were of the type liable to accompany any major transfer of power… Others clearly reflect the shift from a loose conquest society to an integrated state".[57] The Umayyad caliphs, at least after the second *fitna*, may actually have done a better job of convincing provincial elites in some regions of the benefits of the imperial rationale than their early ʿAbbāsid successors. In support of this suggestion, it is worth remembering that the one revolt discussed here which fell in the Umayyad period, that led by Abū Ḥamza al-Khārijī in 129–130/747, was actively fought against by the Medinan elites.

The second important point is that in spite of the increased frequency of revolts in the early ʿAbbāsid Ḥijāz, only one of these, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's in 145/762, received any meaningful support from local elites; al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's of 169/786 seems to have found no significant levels of support at all, and the other—the slave revolt of 145/762—is murky, although I suggested that the local elites did try to use that revolt for their own ends before backtracking quickly when it became obvious it was going nowhere. In any case, in the extant record, that revolt received virtually no local elite support. Why then did

[54] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 2105–6; al-Marzubānī, *Muʿjam al-shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Fārūq Aḥmad Asalīm (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir1425/2005), pp. 226–7; Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, p. 122.

[55] The question of who exactly supported these new generations of ʿAlid bandits is an intriguing one. Clearly Ismāʿīl b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm and the two Ḥusaynids, Muḥammad and ʿAlī, could not have carried out their raids without some armed support. Evidence is virtually absent on this question, but it could be suggested that their support would have come from the (semi-)nomadic tribes of the region, themselves becoming much more restive in this period; on this, see Munt, "Trends in the Economic History", pp. 228–9.

[56] For some examples, see Cobb, *White Banners*; Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Yaacov Lev, "Coptic Rebellions and the Islamization of Medieval Egypt (8th–10th Century): Medieval and Modern Perceptions", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 39 (2012): 303–44, pp. 312–20; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, pp. 127–64.

[57] Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, p. 71.

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's revolt receive considerable support when others did not, and what can the possible answers to that question tell us about the attitudes of the second-/eighth-century Ḥijāzī elites to late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid imperialism?

Amikam Elad suggested that widespread non-ʿAlid support for Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's revolt was inspired by harsh ʿAbbāsid economic policies in the region—especially the confiscation of estates—against a backdrop of general economic decline in the Ḥijāz.[58] Although such policies would no doubt cause widespread resentment and could bring elites in danger of losing out to revolt, it is less clear that they can account for this instance of widespread elite participation in a Ḥijāzī rebellion. For one thing, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs before 145/762 do not seem to have appropriated land around Medina any more effectively than had the Umayyads in the preceding half century.[59] Secondly, it is not particularly clear that the northern Ḥijāz in general underwent a period of relative economic decline over the second/eighth century. Plenty of evidence suggests instead that meaningful economic decline only set in from the second half of the third/ninth century, before accelerating over the fourth/tenth century.[60] The mid-second/eighth century may actually have been a relatively prosperous time economically for many of Medina's elites.

Asad Ahmed, on the other hand, convincingly argued for two developments that can help us to understand the peak of support for this one rebellion in 145/762.[61] The first of these relates to marriage patterns: Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's Ḥasanid family had intermarried regularly with other Medinan elite families before 145/762, but did so increasingly infrequently after the failed revolt.[62] This meant that by the time al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī revolted in 169/786 the other Medinan families had fewer interests in common with their Ḥasanid neighbours. The second development concerns ʿAbbāsid reconciliation policies. As might be expected, immediately following ʿĪsā b. Mūsā's defeat of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh there was a period of heavy repression aimed at those who had supported the rebellion. The Zubayrid family historian and genealogist, al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (d. 256/870), reported that Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr ordered his cousin and new governor of Medina, Jaʿfar b. Sulaymān b. ʿAlī, to

[58] Elad, "Rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh", p. 185.
[59] Harry Munt, "Caliphal Estates and Properties around Medina in the Umayyad Period", in *Authority and Control in the Countryside: Continuity and Change in the Mediterranean, 6th–10th Centuries*, eds. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre and Petra M. Sijpesteijn (forthcoming).
[60] Munt, "Trends in the Economic History".
[61] Ahmed, *Religious Elite*, pp. 165–7.
[62] For ʿAlid marriage patterns, see also Bernheimer, *ʿAlids*, pp. 32–50.

"Seek out those Qurashīs who rebelled with Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh and imprison them. Flay the Arabs who rebelled with him and cut the hands off the *mawālī* who rebelled".[63]

This era of repression, however, was eventually tempered by more reconciliatory policies as the ʿAbbāsid caliphs started to buy off many members of Medina's elite—especially Zubayrids and the descendants of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—by offering them governorships and judgeships in various provinces. As we have seen, the Zubayrid ʿAbd Allāh b. Muṣʿab—grandfather of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār—participated in Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh's revolt, but was then later appointed governor of al-Yamāma by Muḥammad al-Mahdī and of Medina and Yemen by Hārūn al-Rashīd. His son, Bakkār, was also one of Hārūn's governors of Medina. Mūsā l-Hādī's (r. 169–170/785–786) governor of Medina at the time of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's rebellion was ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh, a descendant of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr even appointed a Ḥasanid, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, governor of Medina from 150/767–768 to 155/771–772.[64] Incorporating local elite families into the ruling regime in this way was presumably calculated to demonstrate to them the benefits of the ʿAbbāsids' imperial rationale and so to stop them joining any future revolts; it seems to have been quite successful.

Najam Haider has suggested that with al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī's revolt of 169/786, we can see a more distinctly Shīʿī side to the rebels programme, which coincided with diminishing support for ʿAlid rebels from non-ʿAlid elites.[65] It is not absolutely clear whether one of these two developments was the cause of the other, but if the more distinctly Shīʿī side to the rebels' programme came first that may have had the effect of discouraging members of other elite families from joining the movement. This may explain why as a last throw of the dice on the verge of defeat al-Ḥusayn tried to appeal to the support of Mecca's slaves (*ʿabīd*); if hopes of gaining any local elite support had been sacrificed in return for promoting a more radically Shīʿī message, then agitating for social revolution was a plausible if somewhat last ditch alternative.[66] This does not, however, particularly help us to explain why the earlier revolt of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh had picked up such a considerable array of support from the non-ʿAlid Medinan families.

[63] Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *al-Akhbār al-muwaffaqiyyāt*, ed. Sāmī Makkī al-ʿĀnī (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1416/1996, 2nd edition), p. 163; Elad, "Rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh", p. 184.
[64] For further details and references, see Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, pp. 155–6.
[65] Haider, *Origins of the Shīʿa*, p. 209.
[66] Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 556; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 206.

In large part, then, it seems as though increasingly endogenous Ḥasanid marriage patterns and the ʿAbbāsid caliphs' targeted conciliatory moves in the aftermath of the revolt of 145/762 may have made a considerable part of the difference. If we look at the history of rebellions in the Ḥijāz across the whole second/eighth century, however, then we can also discern one other important element. There is virtually no evidence of any tradition of political regionalism among the Ḥijāz's elite families in the late Umayyad or early ʿAbbāsid period. These elites seem to have been totally committed to the ideal of a unified Islamic empire. They may have disapproved of individual caliphal office holders, but they did not disapprove of caliphal imperialism as a whole. It was, so they asserted of course, their own ancestors who had created this empire and both their wealth and concurrent status as elites were predicated to a large degree on this assertion; it would have been self-defeating in so many ways to respond to Umayyad or ʿAbbāsid imperialism by seeking to break away.

The elites of the Ḥijāz also presumably recognised that they had in many ways a significantly better deal in the imperial rationale than the leading families in other provinces. In general, the notables of Mecca and Medina seem to have expected much the same of the caliphal administration as their counterparts in other provinces. When it came to caliphal demands on the region, however, there were important differences. The legal theory most commonly had it that Ḥijāzī land could not be taxed at the higher rates applicable to much of the agricultural land in other provinces, but rather would pay only the lower *ʿushr* rate.[67] This is part of the reason, alongside the relative paucity of good agricultural land in the region, why recorded revenues from the Ḥijāz were much lower than those of many other provinces.[68] Given this fairly low rate of taxation, we might also consider it extremely unlikely that a noticeable portion of the revenues raised from direct

[67] The earliest extant exposition of this theory is perhaps in Abū Yūsuf's (d. 182/798) *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mīriyya, 1302/1884–1885), p. 33.

[68] For a revenue lists from Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate, see al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarāʾ wa-l-kuttāb*, eds. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ Shalabī (Cairo: Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1357/1938), pp. 281–8; Ṣāleḥ Aḥmad el-ʿAlī, "A New Version of Ibn al-Muṭarrif's List of Revenues in the Early Times of Hārūn al-Rashīd", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14/3 (1971): 303–10. For another list, see Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *al-Kharāj wa-ṣināʿat al-kitāba*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Zubaydī (Baghdad: Dār al-Rashīd, 1981), pp. 159–84 (with a convenient summary at 182–4); also cited in al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1906, 2nd edition), p. 105. Qudāma states that the figure for the revenues from Khurāsān in his list relates specifically to the year 221/835–836; see further Paul Heck, *The Construction of Knowledge in Islamic Civilization: Qudāma b. Jaʿfar and His* Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣināʿat al-Kitāba (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 119–23.

taxation of the Ḥijāzī elites was sent to the caliphal centre.[69] It was not a province that had to support a long-term military presence, but the infrastructural demands of the region's sacred sites and pilgrim routes—which caliphs from the Marwānid period onwards generally liked to be seen to be patronising[70]—were reasonably intensive and would have been an obvious use for the locally-raised revenue.

Ḥijāzī elites realised they actually had quite a good deal out of the Islamic empire and so their opposition to individual caliphs did not lead to provincialism, a desire to break away from the empire to form a distinct political entity. Actions similar to those followed by al-Andalus's elites under the leadership of the Umayyad *amīr* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (I) b. Muʿāwiya (r. 138–172/756–788) after the ʿAbbāsid revolution did not appeal to most of the Ḥijāz's important families. Their opposition to particular caliphs and dynasties, however, could be channelled into supporting an alternative candidate who looked like he might actually have a chance of successfully overthrowing the reigning caliph and taking control of the whole empire.

The one best chance at this came with the rebellion of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya" in 145/762. This revolt came only twelve years after the conclusion of the ʿAbbāsid revolution, before the new dynasty was securely established. This was a time when Muslim elites across the Islamic world had far from unanimously accepted ʿAbbāsid governance as necessarily given, and the opportunity for garnering widespread, trans-regional support for an alternative candidate from the Prophet's family would have appeared likely.[71] Again, it is worth reiterating that the fact that the revolt was easily suppressed ultimately should not detract from its seriousness at the time, especially in conjunction with the uprising of Muḥammad's brother, Ibrāhīm, in Basra. Many members of Medina's top families were

[69] From its establishment in 170/785 until the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil, the province of al-ʿAwāṣim on the Byzantine frontier also paid only *ʿushr* and this tithe revenue went towards the upkeep of local infrastructure and military alone; see Cobb, *White Banners*, p. 14.

[70] M.E. McMillan, *The Meaning of Mecca: The Politics of Pilgrimage in Early Islam* (London: Saqi, 2011); Munt, *Holy City of Medina*, pp. 103–20, 161–72. The activities of Hārūn al-Rashīd in spending money on projects in the Ḥijāz became particularly famous; see, for example, William G. Millward, "The Adaptation of Men to Their Times: An Historical Essay by al-Yaʿqūbī", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84/4 (1964): 329–44, p. 339.

[71] Jacob Lassner, *The Shaping of ʿAbbāsid Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), remains a fundamental study on the insecurity of ʿAbbāsid rule in the early years after their revolution. On the competition for legitimacy at this time specifically between ʿAbbāsids, Ḥusaynids and Ḥasanids, see further Amikam Elad, "The Struggle for the Legitimacy of Authority as Reflected in the Ḥadīth of al-Mahdī", in *ʿAbbasid Studies II: Occasional Papers of the School of ʿAbbasid Studies*, ed. John Nawas (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 39–96.

willing to take the risk of supporting a local candidate for the caliphate, one who they presumably expected to be more sympathetic to their concerns when in office, when they thought there was a chance he could succeed. They were not, however, willing to take that risk with the other rebels—Abū Ḥamza al-Khārijī and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī in particular—who had far less chance of capturing the caliphate but presented a significant risk that the Ḥijāz might be broken away from the empire within which their prosperity and power were based. Individual caliphs and caliphal families may have been loathed in the towns of the Ḥijāz, but on the whole their rule benefitted the local elites far more than increasing provincial independence would have done.

In general, the project of caliphal imperialism was a great success in the Ḥijāz, perhaps more so than in many other provinces of the caliphate. It has long been recognised by modern historians that, after some difficulties in the early years of their rule, the ʿAbbāsids were relatively quick to realise the importance of viewing their relationships with provincial elites across the caliphate as one of negotiation rather than imposition.[72] This certainly seems to have been the case in the Ḥijāz from shortly after 145/762. The history of Ḥijāzī revolts over the second/eighth century also suggests, however, that after the defeat of Ibn al-Zubayr in 73/692 the Umayyads were no less successful in convincing the elites of that province of the benefits of their imperialism. There were no locally inspired rebellions in the Ḥijāz against Umayyad rule in the half century between the second *fitna* and the ʿAbbāsid revolution—which is quite remarkable when you compare that to the relatively frequent episodes of opposition they encountered in some other provinces—and, when an external revolt did come to Mecca and Medina, their inhabitants actively fought with the Umayyad ruling authorities against it. This may have been a Kharijite revolt and one originating in another province, but it is noteworthy that in this case the local elites of the Ḥijāz were convinced that the deal they had with the Umayyads was one so much better that it was worth fighting and, ultimately for many of them, dying to defend. In the history of the Ḥijāz, as with several other provinces, it was actually the onset of ʿAbbāsid rule that ushered in an era of relative instability.

[72] Kennedy, "Central Government and Provincial Élites"; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, pp. 170–1.