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The Khārijites in Iran**II****The Achievement of Political Goals**

The last stage in the history of Khārijitism as a political movement was the Ḥamza insurrection¹. We know in detail of the course of this insurrection from the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, a chronicle which glorifies the figure of Ḥamza and overrates the role that he played in the history of the caliphate and of Islam². While not wishing to belittle the merits of this heresiarch, we ought to state that the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* extends without justification the scope of the insurrection led by Ḥamza. It is of course incontrovertible that the Ḥamziyya insurrection seriously shook eastern Iran in the 9th century. Proof of this can be found in the legend of Ḥamza which puts him in the group of great Islamic heroes. It is not impossible that it was Ḥamza's followers themselves who began the hagiographic activity around his person, and already in his lifetime began to turn him into a figure with supernatural powers, going back for this purpose—probably to obtain better literary effects—even to the middle Persian tradition³. The Khārijite movement under Ḥamza was an unparalleled event in the history of poor, provincial Sīstān. And it was almost certainly this which gave rise to the tendency to exaggerate the Ḥamziyya insurrection and transform it from a local episode to an event on the scale of the whole caliphate. However, despite the claims of the Sīstān legend about Ḥamza, his movement did not basically spread outside Sīstān: it was only at times that it affected certain areas of Khurāsān and Kirmān, when Ḥamza made raids there, or fled there from his native Sīstān when the enemy proved stronger. Ibn Funduq considered that the followers of Ḥamza who appeared in the Baihaq district were common robbers⁴.

¹ Cf. a bibliography in my *Chronology of the Khārijites Insurrection of Ḥamziyya in Sīstān*, RO XLI, Z. 1, 1979, p. 99, n. 1.

² Cf. the 1st part of this article in RO XLIX, Z. 1, 1981, pp. 67–94.

³ *Qeṣṣe-ye Ḥamze*, ed. Ja'far Sho'ān, Tehrān 1347; *Ḥamza b. 'Abdallāh* in EI2.

⁴ Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Baihaq*, p. 44.

We may therefore conclude that they were not in power there. Kirmān was ruled by Khārijites of the Khalaf branch, who were relentlessly opposed to the Ḥamziyya⁵. Therefore we cannot include these areas among the territories controlled by Ḥamza.

At the time when there was total mobilization, when the Ḥamziyya declared that they were going to fight against the caliph, Hārūn ar-Rashīd, Ḥamza managed to assemble 30 000 soldiers⁶. With an army of this size he would not have been able to control such extensive territories as Sīstān and the neighbouring provinces of Kirmān and Khurāsān. Moreover, it is very unlikely that with an army of 30 000 — taking into account the fact that he had this at his disposal only at an exceptional time — he would have been able to defeat the Arab armies from the three provinces of Khurāsān, Kirmān and Fārs, not counting the Khārijites who opposed him and other sects. We should thus look to other chronicles, whose authors state that the Ḥamza insurrection was an event of national significance only in the first stage. At that stage, the events in Sīstān worried Baghdād but after the first victories of the Arab armies over the insurgents, Ḥamza's revolt was reduced to the rank of a local incident. Ṭ a b a r ī and Y a ' q ū b ī, because at a certain point Ḥamza was no longer spoken of widely, claimed a premature date for his death and stated that his insurrection collapsed at the same time⁷.

The teaching of Ḥamza, and especially the point about the combatting of the 'Abbāsīd residents, indicates a growing anti-caliphate mood in Sīstān. At the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, when Ḥamza was at the height of his power, the majority of the Ḥamziyya were Arabs. Khārijite political poetry written in Arabic provides evidence of this. However, in pace with the progress of the Iranianization of the Sīstān Khārijites, anti-caliphate slogans are replaced by anti-Arab slogans⁸.

As well as their enmity to their surroundings which was a basic characteristic of Khārijitism resulting from the fundamental doctrine of the sect, the rebellious attitude of the Ḥamziyya was to no lesser an extent influenced by the fiscal policy of the caliphate. It was mistakes which the Arabs had made many years earlier which caused the successful assassination by the Khārijites of the lieutenant-governor of Sīstān, Ma'n⁹. Hārūn ar-Rashīd made basic changes in his eastern policy, returning to earlier practices. According to the account of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, the lieutenant-governor of Sīstān under the caliph al-Hādī, Kathīr b. Sālim (786), was good to the people of Sīstān¹⁰. This probably means that as the ruler of these territories he neglected to exact taxes, and lacking the means, fell into arrears with payments to the army. Therefore part of the Sīstān garrison mutinied. I assume that only part

⁵ Gh. S a d i g h, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens au II^e et au III^e siècle de l'hégire*, Paris 1939, p. 54.

⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 168.

⁷ *Chronology of the Khārijites Insurrection*, p. 103.

⁸ *Powstanie charydżyckie Ḥamzy al-Hāriḡi w Sistanie*, PO 1, 1960, pp. 30–31.

⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 144–147; B a l ā d h u r ī, *K. futūḥ al-buldān*, p. 401; Y a ' q ū b ī, *K. al-buldān*, p. 280; *Powstanie charydżyckie Ḥamzy al-Hāriḡi*, p. 28, n. 17.

¹⁰ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 151.

of the garrison mutinied because Kathīr managed to escape with his life; some small detachment remained loyal, and without it Kathīr would certainly have been killed by the mutinied soldiery. The caliphate, disturbed by the helplessness of the local authorities, changed its attitude immediately after these events. In 787 the first *‘āmil* who was a direct representative of the caliph himself arrived in Sīstān. Both he, and his successor were nominated by the caliph¹¹. As we can see, the situation had changed diametrically, for previously the lieutenant-governor of Sīstān had been nominated by the governor of Khurāsān and had been completely subordinate to him. It is therefore possible to speak of the assumption of direct control over Sīstān by Baghdād, even though shortly afterwards—in 795—Sīstān was restored to the governors of Khurāsān. This reversion however took place under different conditions, for now the most illustrious persons became governors of eastern Persia: great politicians who were influential and energetic—even sometimes excessively so. Hārūn’s foster brother, Faḍl b. Yaḥyā of the Barmak tribe, and the ruthless and corrupt ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān, who was a figure of the first rank in the caliphate even if not a man of spotless integrity, were successive governors of Khurāsān 793–796 and 796–811 respectively. These nominations are evidence that Hārūn had adopted a severe policy towards Persia and did not underestimate the seriousness of the problem.

The representative of Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl, who arrived in Sīstān in 795, had to take part in some skirmishes with the Turks and the ruler of Kābūl (Zunbīl?). We know that he used Ghāzī mercenaries. We also have earlier mentions of the use of these groups—of whose social composition we know nothing and whose goals have not been established. Sadaqa b. ‘Uthmān also made use of them. The Khārijites made armed attacks on both Sadaqa and Ibrāhīm. The source materials indicate that in this period fighting against the Khārijites did not mean pogroms. Sadaqa, who condemned the Khārijites, was “just to the people”¹². This phrase, not to be taken literally, indicates, that a bifurcation of Sīstān society had taken place, in that the Khārijites had been isolated from the plebeian strata, despite the fact that they had originated from these strata and had in their interests proclaimed the slogan of equality.

Both the lieutenant-governors of Sīstān mentioned above had serious problems on the eastern borders. War with Kābūl and the Turks must have destroyed the Sīstān province even if the actual fighting took place outside its frontiers. For a war waged at the expense of the Sīstān lieutenant-governors must have had an impact on the general situation in Sīstān. The local provincial authorities must, in mustering their forces to fight with the Turks and Kābūl, have deprived Sīstān of armies and weakened the garrisons. In this way they ceased to control the country. If these assumptions are correct, and the war and weakening of the authorities led to a radicalization of the atmosphere in Sīstān, and made it possible for opposition activity

¹¹ ‘Abdallāh b. Hamīd and ‘Uthmān b. ‘Umar b. Khuzaima al-Muzanī, (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 152).

¹² *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 152.

to develop, it would mean that in the last decade of the 7th century the Khārijites were a significant force because of their social programme and not because of their religious teachings. Of course, their programme could not have been at the beginning initiated in response to a growth of radical attitudes originating outside their own circle, but from a viewpoint so far distant as ours, the causes of this intermingle and it is impossible to establish any kind of sequence.

After the defeat of the Barmakids, Hārūn nominated 'Alī b. 'Īsā governor of Khurāsān. 'Alī had a wide reputation in the caliphate for corruption, and his rule resulted in lawlessness, plunder and the confiscation of the property of Iranian landowners. 'Alī went back to the methods employed by Ma'n. He followed the same policies. In the territories he ruled over he brought lawlessness, and plundered or confiscated the estates of the Persian aristocracy, accusing his victims of atheism or a hostile attitude to Islam etc¹³. The caliph was pleased with the presents he was sent, which aroused admiration even in Baghdād. However, the constant unrest and complaints from the people about 'Alī led the caliph to investigate his government¹⁴.

The first references to Ḥamza's rebellion can be traced to the year 796¹⁵. It was in that year that he carried out his successful coup against the 'āmil, who wanted to wipe out Ḥamza, probably for his teaching and also his appeals for insubordination towards the authorities and refusal to pay taxes. The 'āmil, who was the official responsible for the finances of the province, had in his official capacity to oppose this kind of anarchic slogan. The 'āmil was killed, but Ḥamza was forced to flee and go into hiding. This incident in Ḥamza's activities coincided in time with 'Umar b. Marwān's uprising, a Khārijite rebellion which ended in complete defeat¹⁶. It is not impossible that it was this disaster which compelled Ḥamza to flee. We should take into consideration the fact that the chronicler gives the information about Ḥamza's flight in the context of the return of the lieutenant-governor of Sīstān from a successful campaign against the Khārijites led by 'Umar. The Khārijite forces, which were probably still not united, were not in a position to face the Arab armies nor to rule over any area for a longer period of time. Ḥamza's behaviour—the assassination of 'āmil and flight—suggest partisan-type activity, perhaps even carried out underground.

In southern Persia, Khārijitism was split, and although there were no serious differences between the sects that were active in the region, like for example the Ḥamziyya and Khalafiyya, apart from differing opinions on the question of free will and the attributes which a leader should possess, yet they fought furiously among themselves. The Khalafiyya defended the position that they might forfeit to the Ḥamza Khārijites. The latter were recruited from at least three schools of doctrine: of Qaṭarī (how to wage war), Maimūn and Khalaf. Ḥamza had brought the first

¹³ Ṭ a b a r ī, III, p. 714.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 702.

¹⁵ *Chronology of the Khārijites Insurrection*, p. 102.

¹⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 154–155.

from Kirmān but he himself stemmed from the second group. The third group had been active in Sīstān before the Ḥamziyya¹⁷.

The pupils of Ḥamza were tolerant towards other religions or other factions within Islam, as long as they remained loyal to the rest of the oppressed population. They introduced a very strict class division into the oppressed and the tyrants, together with their supporters. The Ḥamziyya considered it permissible to kill a tyrannical ruler. But someone who did not believe in their doctrines was not to be harmed, unless he said uncomplimentary things about Khārijism, or belonged to the princely court. For collaboration with despotism in any form, even if only passive support, was a crime in the eyes of the Khārijites. Maimūn differentiated between two independent and mutually hostile forces: Good and Evil. Considering the area in which they operated, we may accept that Iranian dualism influenced Khārijite dogma in eastern Persia. Like the ancient Iranian religions, the Maimūniyya believed in the primacy of good over evil. The highest entity—God is of nature good, while there is no chief prince of evil, corresponding to God. God leaves the freeing of mankind from evil to human activity, and does not restrict man's behaviour by the divine will. The basis of the fate of human beings is therefore their own actions, unrestricted by any other will and human behaviour is a causative factor, creating something new. But actions are dependent, however, on certain undefined conditions, named opportunities.

This proposition is also found in the teachings of Mazdak—that the liberation of man from the rule of the powers of darkness is possible through the will of the man himself only in favourable circumstances, which are the result of accidental activities and confluence of forces.

According to the Maimūniyya, the marriage laws limit unions only to the second generation: that is, the prohibition extends to daughters, and daughters of brothers and sisters, but does not cover the third generation. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, extends this prohibition for five generations. The restriction of this prohibition of Islam was carried out under the influence of Iranian law which did not stipulate exact limitations, and even encouraged marriage with daughters and between siblings¹⁸.

In his attempt to concentrate the leadership of the uprising in his own hands, Ḥamza fought very energetically against the mutually opposed Khārijite sects of the Khalafiyya and Baihasiyya¹⁹. The source materials available do not permit us to draw any conclusions about his attitude to the Abū Muslim current. It is true that Ḥamza calls on his name, but this may only have been exploitation of the name of Abū Muslim for propaganda purposes, since he was an immeasurably popular hero in the east after his tragic death²⁰.

¹⁷ See above n. 5.

¹⁸ Shahrastānī, *Milal*, pp. 143–145; A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, Copenhagen 1936, p. 318.

¹⁹ Gh. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux*, p. 54.

²⁰ B. Składanek, *Doktryny i ruchy społeczno-polityczne „wieków milczenia”*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 162–163.

At the time of Ḥamza's return from exile, part of the Khārijites belonged to the Khalafiyya, and part to the 5000-strong grouping led by Ḥudain. Ḥamza, who returned at the head of the remainder of Qaṭarī's group from Kirmān, took over also the leadership of Ḥudain's followers. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* reports that Ḥamza at this point took up his teaching in Bashkar (?)²¹. The chronicle is exceptionally laconic here. Ḥamza could have taken over the leadership of Ḥudain's grouping if, 1) he had brought with him larger forces than those which Ḥudain commanded, or 2) if he had been a well-known figure in the Khārijite world, enjoying great authority as a teacher, master or prophet. He may, of course, have fulfilled simultaneously all three conditions. It is doubtful whether an unknown Sīstān assassin and refugee would have been able, in a completely foreign environment and among the followers of the famous Qaṭarī, to gain respect and persuade people to follow him to Sīstān to an uncertain fate. Ḥudain's followers, in their turn, submitted to Ḥamza's authority without a struggle, which also lends weight to the assumption that he was an important figure. Almost certainly, Ḥamza did not begin to proclaim his teaching absolutely for the first time in Bashkar—which is the impression that might be gained from the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*—but for the first time in public and before a wider audience.

From this first uniting of the Khārijite forces to the end of 798, Ḥamza became the main opponent of the Arab administration in Sīstān. The lieutenant-governor of Sīstān, 'Isā b. 'Alī, the son of the governor of Khurāsān, began a military campaign against him. He himself led his forces in the field, leaving Ḥafṣ b. 'Umar b. Tarka in the capital with a garrison. When 'Isā withdrew together with his staff to Khurāsān after his defeat by Ḥamza, Tarka, as the only representative of the caliphate, found himself surrounded in Zarang. They did not however attack towns held by the Arabs, in order, "not to draw the sword against a town which prays so"²². Ḥamza did take any town whose population was loyal to the caliph, for the people would have been bound to suffer and thus be turned against him. He thus withdrew to Khalafābād, and his messenger sent to the Arab commander was supposed to say that "I will not fight against ordinary people. Say to the caliph's lieutenant: 'Come out and let us fight'"²³. We may of course doubt whether the author of the chronicle gave the words of the order exactly, but nonetheless behaviour of this kind by Ḥamza would coincide entirely with his policies towards the masses who did not take part in the uprising. In an attempt to gain as much popularity as possible, he not only tried to ensure that his military activity brought no losses but even proclaimed the future introduction of far-reaching relief.

He expressed this policy in his appeal to the inhabitants of Sīstān in which he forbade the payment of taxes to the state, kharāj, or other monetary contributions, because the state was unable to guarantee them protection. In the same proclamation, he freed the people of all taxes and declared that he himself was going to move about

²¹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 156.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

from place to place but that he would not exact any contributions from the population to cover the expenses entailed. This appeal was taken up with alacrity by the population and in some towns they ceased to pay taxes, only keeping up nominal loyalty to the caliph and using his name in Friday prayers²⁴.

When Ḥamza withdrew from beneath the city walls, Tarka slipped out of the town and hid somewhere on his country estates²⁵. This means that he was connected, with this area; he was a local resident. It does not mean that he was an Iranian, although this cannot be discounted altogether. But if he had been a stranger to Sīstān, he would probably have fled to Khurāsān after 'Īsā b. 'Alī. His successor, on arrival in Sīstān, arrested Tarka and sentenced him to death by torture as a traitor. The only visible evidence of treason is perhaps the way that he abandoned the capital without confronting Ḥamza. But Ḥamza never took Zarang, and as an Arab dignitary, Tarka's flight would have been an act of rashness, for he would have been safest within the walls of the city. But he left the city and sought safety in the countryside, where the Khārijites could easily reach him. However, the Khārijites left him alone and met his death at the hands of the Arabs. In the light of later events connected with Muḥammad al-Qūsī, Tarka's behaviour indicates that he tried to solve the great dilemma of the Sistanian upper classes—to support the Arabs or go against them — by adopting a third course: that is, by putting their own interests in first place. This upper class now began to appear as an independent political force, entering into alliances with either the plebeian class or the Arabs as best suited its own needs. In this situation, the pogroms and punitive expeditions carried out by the Arabs against Sīstān become quite understandable.

In this period (803 or 804), 'Abdallāh b. al-'Abbās and 'Īsā b. 'Alī carried out pacification of the territories which had been in the hands of the insurgents, reaching Lashkar and collecting the kharāj in the regions of Lashkar, Farāh and Auq; they also brought back the whole administration to this area and nominated 'āmil. Ḥamza, in an attempt to undermine this restoration of the authorities, made a raid on Lashkar and killed the 'āmil who had just been nominated there. On being attacked by 'Īsā b. 'Alī with superior forces, Ḥamza was forced to withdraw to Khurāsān where at Nīshāpūr a decisive battle was fought, in which 'Īsā b. 'Alī was defeated and forced to retreat. After the retreat and flight of 'Īsā b. 'Alī's army there was no major unit of the Arab armies in Sīstān which was capable of taking a stand against Khārijites, and in this situation Ḥamza was able to rule over the province²⁶.

Because of the adverse escalation of events, 'Alī b. 'Īsā informed Hārūn ar-Rashīd about the Khārijite uprising in Sīstān and of the attacks they had made on Khurāsān and Kirmān. According to the report, the insurgents had killed 'āmil in these regions and the number of supporters of the Khārijites had risen so greatly that taxes of any sort, in either kind or money, had ceased to be collected there²⁷.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 158.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 157.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 159.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 160.

For this reason and because of rumour that 'Alī intended to revolt, the caliph decided to go personally to Khurāsān, but on his way there, news reached him at Ray, that war had broken out with Byzantium and he had to return to Baghdād. The caliph had an appointment at Ray with his governor who, by gifts, was persuading the caliph to remain him at the post²⁸.

We know that in 804, in reply to increased severity in Arab policy, Ḥamza tried to disorganize the fiscal apparatus in Lashkar by killing the 'āmils that were sent there. But as he still had inadequate forces at his disposal, he was forced to withdraw in the direction of Khurāsān. At this stage in the war with the Khārijites, the attitude of the administration underwent a change. People connected with Sīstān began to reach positions of influence. The new lieutenant-governor of Sīstān, nominated in 804, was Ḥudāin b. Muḥammad al-Qūsī, who for the past two years had been plenipotentiary for Khārijite affairs, and who was a landowner from the Qūs district in Sīstān, where the news of his nomination reached him. He immediately ordered his son, Muḥammad, to take the capital, and when this was accomplished there was peace and order in the town. It is true that the word peace can also be used to describe the state of affairs after a total pacification, but in this case it meant the introduction of fair government, for on the death of Ḥudāin disturbances broke out and the people stopped paying taxes²⁹. This probably resulted from the repressive policies of the governor of Khurāsān, whose activities had previously been moderated by Ḥudāin. Then the uprisings which continued to break out at different points in the east forced ar-Rashīd to dismiss 'Alī, and confiscated his property valued at about 80 million drachmas³⁰. The source of this property was well known. Lawlessness and the robbing of the people by exacting excessive taxation had been a feature of life in Sīstān much earlier³¹. Y a'q ū b ī states that after the death of M a'n the kharāj collected in Sīstān was 10 million drachmas, which was used for the upkeep of army and the security forces³². Under the 'Abbāsids, this lawlessness was connected with the system of taxation. The norm of the kharāj could under this system be raised at will by the tax collector according to his own estimate, and this surplus he was able to keep for his own purposes. The central authorities were concerned only with the amount paid in by the collectors and were not interested in the level of taxation laid upon the population. The inhabitants were forced, sometimes even by torture, to pay illegally raised contributions³³.

'Alī's fiscal policy had an unfavourable influence on the economic situation of the country. The Khārijite rebellions which were constantly breaking out among the lower social strata and the smaller gentry were a protest against lawlessness. The chronicles hold him directly responsible for the outbreak of the Ḥamza's rebellion

²⁸ *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. IV, Cambridge 1975, p. 71.

²⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 160.

³⁰ Ṭ a b a r ī, III, p. 713.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

³² Y a'q ū b ī, *K. al-buldān*, p. 286.

³³ A b ū Y ū s u f, *K. al-kharāj*, Cairo 1346, p. 126.

in Sīstān and Rāfi' b. Laith's insurrection in Khurāsān in 805–6³⁴. Of all the uprisings, which were usually short-lived and over a restricted area, only these two were distinguished by strength and organization. It is true that Ṭabarī suggests that 'Alī paid Hārūn to extend his nomination, but we are prepared to believe that it was not the bribe which the caliph received was a factor of decisive influence in determining his attitude. It would probably be nearer the truth to say that Hārūn was really concerned to keep 'Alī as governor because he wanted to use him to stifle the growing aspirations of the Persians to independence, aspirations which despite his efforts were to lead a dozen or so years later to the formation of the Ṭāhirids emirate. Hārūn, like many politicians today, believed that terror and pauperization delay the process of the political emancipation of defeated nations. But contrary to anticipations, this policy did not prevent the liberation of Iran.

Saif-i 'Uthmān was then made the lieutenant-governor for the second time. We know that he owned a manor in Lashkar. But he was unable to take over the office of vice-governor for Ḥudain's son Muḥammad still held the capital. The urban patrician population took up stand against Saif. However, the urban plebeian population took his part, together with the rural poor (landless peasants?), the ghau-ghā and 'ayyārs, who served in his forces. And as well as the patricians of the capital and perhaps of other cities, the Khārijites also proved to be his opponents. The Khārijites, who were unable to rule over any particular territory for a long period, were trying to disorganize the fiscal apparatus. Muḥammad, who wanted to conform to their programme — which was so popular with the people — also had to neglect to collect taxes. It is not surprising in this situation that the governor managed to come to some agreement with the rebellious feudal lord, and decided that the most important task which confronted them was the fight against Khārijitism. In this context, the question of the khuṭba (the legality of the authority of one of them) fell into second place. The forces thus united attacked Khārijites, but nonetheless were defeated. Muḥammad al-Ḥudain, who wanted to maintain his position in Sīstān, moved over to Ḥamza's camp and in the following years had very good relations with him³⁵.

These incidents, although perhaps of marginal significance in the context of the whole course of the uprising, indicate how important was Ḥamza's fiscal programme in determining the strength and popularity of his movement. We must bear in mind that the greatest grievance of the population of Sīstān was excessive taxation. Tax relief of any kind was greeted with great delight, and popularity and support was guaranteed to anyone who introduced these changes, no matter who he was. For these reasons, al-Ḥudain made a political mistake in concluding an alliance with the caliph's lieutenant-governor. This signified that he had switched to a camp carrying out a fiscal policy which was the opposite of that of the Khārijites. It lost him followers, since no-one could doubt that al-Ḥudain, as the weaker partner in the alliance would have to fall in with the policy of his allies.

³⁴ Ṭabarī, III, p. 702.

³⁵ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 161–162.

Because of the military defeats, the caliph himself took up the matter of the uprising, and tried to achieve by diplomatic means what his commanders in the field had failed to do. The situation was still tense. For as well as the uprisings in eastern Iran, a civil war was in progress to decide the succession after Hārūn. It is therefore possible that the governors of Khurāsān and Sīstān did not have sufficient forces at their disposal to put down the Khārijite revolt and the local rebellions of the Sīstān feudal lords, and that they exercised only nominal rule. It was in these circumstances that Hārūn took the field against Rāfi' b. Laith. When he reached Ṭūs, he died and his death put an end to the campaign, the Arab armies returning to Baghdād. Ḥamza was making preparations for war against the caliph. Many Khārijites made their wills, paid their wives their *kabin* (marriage portion) and wrapped in shrouds rode off to meet their death. There were about 30 000 of them. When the insurgent army reached Nishāpūr, the news of the death of the caliph and the retreat of his army was heard. It seems that Ḥamza came into contact with this army, or perhaps only with one wing, and lost the major part of his own forces. He had only about 5000 men left. These he divided into small, 500-strong units and sent them in all directions, while he himself escaped from Sīstān for a considerable period. This was a return to partisan fighting in small units³⁶.

The tales of the wanderings of Ḥamza to far distant countries have so far resisted all attempts to construe them logically. Perhaps when he fled Sīstān, Ḥamza counted on the swift collapse of the caliph's army and a civil war among the Arabs³⁷. Sīstān became a battle ground for many years, with restless elements from both towns and countryside taking part in the disturbances. Under Ma'mūn, when Muḥammad b. Ash'ath was lieutenant-governor of Sīstān, followed by his son, Ash'ath b. Muḥammad, an uprising led by Ḥarb b. 'Ubaida broke out; the latter was probably one of the local feudal lords, who attracted a following among the people. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* describes the Ḥarb uprising as a form of self-defence organized by the Sīstān landowners against the Khārijites, in view of the total helplessness of the caliphate administration in the province³⁸. Ḥarb, whose strength was superior to that of other rebel groups operating in the province, managed to gain control of Sīstān and force other great landowners to recognize his supremacy. The main target of attack by his forces with the support of the towns were the Khārijites, who apparently typified landowners or the lessees of estates. All unstable element — for example the landless peasantry — took the other side. Ḥarb's strong forces were probably loose collections of untrained soldiery. A detachment which was only several hundred strong defeated his whole army of about 3000. His position was exceptionally difficult, for in taking upon himself the burden of struggle against the radical Khārijite factions, and in addition probably the burden of struggle against mass movements, he had removed these problems from the shoulders of the Arab administration. And the Arab administration, instead of feeling gratitude to the Sīstān landowners,

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 162, 168, 169.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 173.

treated them as rebels, even when they reached agreement with them. The next lieutenant governor of Sīstān, Laith b. Faḍl, who arrived in Sīstān in 816, invited Ḥamza to fight together with him against Ḥarb. The letter which Laith sent to Ḥamza and also Ḥamza's reply, are so significant that we will cite them in full. Faḍl's message ran as follows: "You have carried out a great and holy war, so that we should like to make an alliance with you, so that we also may be rewarded for it. The rebel who is known as Ḥarb b. 'Ubaida says:—I rose up to fight against Ḥamza and everything I have done has been only for this. You [then] were not [in Sīstān]. We now ask for your help, in order that we may together fend off the evil from Muslims. Ḥarb is well armed and his strength is great". Ḥamza is supposed to have replied as follows: "It is not worth worrying about this. If the Almighty wills, then it will be. We understand your alarm. Our people and our comrades in arms have praised you very highly"³⁹.

Laith, as a representative of the caliphate, admits to helplessness. One thing which is striking in his appeal to Ḥamza is that he turns to him as a defender of Muslims against rebels. This epithet is a trace left by the apocryphal activities of the Khārijites and is a sign of the serious changes taking place in Sīstānian society that are suggested by the sequence of events.

When Ḥamza began to make war he killed 12 000 of Ḥarb's men, according to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*⁴⁰. This is not impossible, but if we accept that Ḥarb did suffer such losses, then Ḥamza's forces would have had to be of similar strength. If this had been the case, he would have been able to take control of the whole of Sīstān without the help of Laith — whose letter in fact it was which seems to have brought Ḥamza out of hiding or asylum. The chronicle records that Ḥamza at that time returned from Makrān and Ḥarb challenged him to fight. It is clear that Ḥamza accepted the *status quo ante*, and this would have been rather improbable if we assume that he had forces which were able by themselves to put to rout forces 12 or more thousand strong. At one time, Ḥarb's army had been militarily rather ineffective, and Laith had on one occasion previously defeated him with a force ten times smaller than his. But if, however, after this defeat Ḥarb still remained in the field as a significant opponent, he must by this time have had better forces at his disposal. For it is difficult to believe that he could have rampaged around Sīstān for years, causing trouble to many, without good soldiers. In our opinion, the forces of Ḥarb, about 12 000 strong were not defeated by Ḥamza alone as the chronicle would have us believe, but by the joint forces of Ḥamza and Laith. In this way we remove some of the glory surrounding the name of Ḥamza, but we may then evaluate him more correctly.

At this point we must attempt to define the position of Laith in the context of the contemporary situation in Sīstān. Laith almost certainly had far-reaching aims. He attracted the 'ayyārs to his side and had good relations with the Khārijites, who

³⁹ Ibid., p. 175.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

came to him even to the town⁴¹. The Khārijites doctrinal principles did not run counter to this, for Laith had taken up a position alongside the rebel forces in the field. As a consequence of this policy Laith was able to grow rich. His successor, 'Amr b. al-Haitham, who came to Sīstān incognito, did not manage to arrest him, for Laith went into hiding on his estates. However, when 'Amr showed his patent, he was able to take over the office without any obstruction on the part of Laith⁴². This incident illustrates the unusual circumstances operating at that time in Sīstān. The accord between the Khārijites and a feudal lord who was the ex-governor, against another feudal lord, was strange, as the Khārijites had at that stage not yet abandoned their radical programme and were still paralysing all activities of the Arab fiscal administration. While organizing attacks on neighbouring countries, they did not harm the inhabitants of Sīstān. In 821 the only place from which the administration was still able to collect taxes was the Ṭa'am Gate leading north from Zarang⁴³. It is possible that the governor of Sīstān drew revenue only from tolls charged at this very busy gate? It would appear that already at this point the Khārijites were making alliances as occasion offered, without trying to find profound doctrinal justification for them. Among the Ḥamziyya we can observe a change: they made attacks on neighbouring countries. It is true that they spared their fellow-countrymen⁴⁴ but a faction which advocated plunder and banditry had gained control. At the same time, the administration of Sīstān became independent, due to the ceaseless unrest in Sīstān and growing tendencies in Persia to free itself from the caliphate. One of the consecutive Ilyās b. Asad of the Sāmān house, after resigning from office in 823 moved to the manor—or perhaps rather, the landen estate—of al-Ḥārith b. al-Muthannā, a Sīstānian landowner, and from there stirred up the population against his successor, the brother of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥudain who has been mentioned above, Mu'addal b. al-Ḥudain al-Qūsī. We are now dealing with a closed social circle from which higher officials were recruited. "The people" took the side of Ilyās, while Muḥammad allied himself with Ḥamza's Khārijites. On previous form, the capital, Zarang, should have taken the side of Ilyās against the Ḥamziyya. And this is in fact what happened. When he proved unable to take Zarang, Muḥammad, who appears to have been the *spiritus movens* behind the whole undertaking, withdrew to his country estates where the Khārijites were to be found, and from there, using it as headquarters, he controlled the whole area around the capital. It is understandable that the Khārijites were not popular in the towns, but the information found in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* that the people supported Ilyās is rather surprising. For this would mean that the Khārijites did not completely control the countryside, unless the concept of "people" means the 'ayyārs and ghaughā'. Between 825 and 828 the Khārijites were so strong outside the walls of the capital that they were able in 828 to keep the nominated lieutenant-governor out of the city and thus

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 176.

⁴² Ibid., p. 176.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 176.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 177.

prevent him taking office. In 825 and 826 there were uprisings of the 'ayyārs and plebeians in which the Khārijites did not join. We can only therefore maintain our earlier statement, that groups which were unstabilized in terms of property were liable to yield to pecuniary arguments, which the rebellious feudal lords almost certainly bandied about.

This structure of the spheres of influence in Sīstān continued until the death of Ḥamza in 828. After this, the Ḥamziyya swiftly disintegrated. Some members left the organization because they disagreed with the ever more widely practiced banditry. What had been only smouldering under Ḥamza at this point burst into full flame. "Pragmatists" came into power, for whom Ḥamza's teachings became dispensable balast. The Khārijites, once they were deprived of his leadership, rejected the teachings of Ḥamza and in this way lost the support of the people. They existed as an isolated group a little longer, up to the time of the appearance of Ya'qūb b. Laith, who eliminated them from the political stage in Iran. After the death in 832 of the last Khārijite leader who can be numbered among the Ḥamziyya, this sect died out.

The Khārijites became the terror of the inhabitants. The appearance of their white banners brought panic in the towns⁴⁵. The war which Ya'qūb b. Laith waged against them, both by political means and on the battle field, led to the internal disintegration of the sect. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* indicates that the Khārijites went over to the side of Ya'qūb⁴⁶. In Kirmān the Khārijites were active for a little longer⁴⁷. The last great uprising in which the Khārijites took part, led by 'Abd ar-Rahīm in 872, ended in the death of the leader as a result of betrayal by Khārijites. The final collapse of Khārijitism as a political movement can be dated in Sīstān in 878⁴⁸. This does not mean that they died out as a sect, for remnants of the sect survived into the 19th century.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 197.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 199, 203, 205, 207, 209.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 213.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 217, 225.