

# THE GOVERNMENT OF KHURASAN UNDER HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD (A.H. 170-193 / A.D. 786-808)

Oleh:

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## Abstract

*Wilayah Khurasan memainkan peranan yang amat penting sebelum dan selepas pembentukan kerajaan 'Abbāsiyyah. Ia merupakan pusat perkembangan dakwah 'Abbāsiyyah dan tempat bermulanya revolusi menentang pemerintahan Bani Umayyah. Artikel ini akan menganalisis pentadbiran Khurasan semasa pemerintahan 'Abbāsiyyah di bawah khalifah Hārūn al-Rashīd berdasarkan sumber-sumber primer. Ia turut membincangkan secara terperinci perlantikan gabenor-gabenor Khurasan dan polisi al-Rashīd mengenainya.*

## INTRODUCTION

Khurasan, situated on the north-eastern province of Iran was first conquered by the Arabs during the caliphate of 'Umar al-Khattāb (13-23/634-644). On the death of 'Umar, Khurasan revolted and became independent of the Muslims authority. Reconquest of Khurasan took place in 33/654 during the caliphate of 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān led by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amir, the governor of Basra.<sup>1</sup> Khurasan had a sizeable number of Arab settlers because during the Umayyad reign, the Arabs were sent there to avoid overcrowding in Iraq and to help the conquest of the different parts of Khurasan.<sup>2</sup> Integration occurred through intermarriage among the Arabs and the local people. Besides that, a large number of non-Muslim converted to Islam and became *Mawālī*, non-Arab Muslims, in the first century of Islam. Muslims

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Kennedy (1986), *The Prophet and The Age of The Caliphates*, London & New York: Longman, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> M.A. Shaban (1971), *Islamic History: A New Interpretation 1 A.D. 600-750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.114.

in Khurasan were experienced soldiers due to the frontier nature of the province. They had fought the Turkish as well as Persian raiders during the caliphate of al-Rāshidūn and the Umayyad. Due to its importance, Khurasan had been chosen by the 'Abbāsids as the centre of their revolution against the Umayyads.

### **KHURASAN AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE**

The year 132/749-50 witnessed the fall of the Umayyads and the establishment of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in 'Iraq. The 'Abbāsīd revolution began in Khurasan under the leadership of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, a loyal and efficient 'Abbāsīd's agent in Khurasan.<sup>3</sup> He played a vital role in the revolution due to his task in mobilizing the Khurasanis and defeating Naṣr b. Sayyār, the Umayyad's governor of Khurasan. Abū Muslim and the Khurasanis were responsible in declaring Abu'l 'Abbās b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī known as al-Saffāh as the first 'Abbāsīd caliph.<sup>4</sup> The significance of the event is the major role played by the Khurasanis in the revolution. It can be said that the 'Abbāsīd came to power due to the support of the Khurasanis and consequently, Khurasan became the most important province of the 'Abbāsīd. Besides trying to maintain a close relationship between the central government in 'Iraq and Khurasan, the caliphs wanted to have control over the province.

Regarding the policy of the 'Abbāsīd over Khurasan, the early 'Abbāsīd caliphs that were al-Saffāh (132-136/749-753), Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr (136-158/753-774), Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (158-169/774-758) and Musa al-Hādī (169-170/785-6) appointed Khurasanis as governors of Khurasan. It indicates the importance of Khurasan to be ruled by its native that could be the representative of the central government and the local population. As a result, Khurasan was generally in peace and prosperity during the period.

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<sup>3</sup> According to a version of al-Balādhurī, Abū Muslim was a slave man from Herat or Bushanj who had been sold to Ibrāhīm, the 'Abbāsīd Imām. See al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā (1971), *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, p. 119; al-Kūfī claims that Abū Muslim was a slave of 'Isā b. Ma'qil of Banū 'Ijl in Khurasan. See al-Kūfī, Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān (1975), *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, Hyderabad: Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāni, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> R. Frye (1947), 'The Role of Abu Muslim in the 'Abbasid Revolution' in *Muslim World*, vol. 37, pp. 28-38.

### **KHURASAN UNDER HĀRŪN AL-RASHĪD (170-193/786-808)**

In 170/786-7, the oath of allegiance was given to Hārūn b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Abbās, known as al-Rashīd, as the fifth ‘Abbāsīd caliph on the day of al-Hādī’s death.<sup>5</sup> He ruled for twenty-three years and was the longest serving among the early ‘Abbasid caliphs. Despite several disturbances in the provinces, his reign was generally peaceful like those of al-Mahdī and al-Hādī. This is clearly seen as the period of stability in Khurasan for fifteen years of his reign. Given the importance of Khurasan, al-Rashīd appointed the second generation of the Khurasani officers as governors, which was a continuation of the policy of his predecessors. There were ten appointments within twenty-three years of al-Rashīd’s reign compared to four during al-Mahdī. In fact, three governors were nominated in 180/796-7, and one of them was in office for less than a month. The changes of governors show a change in al-Rashīd’s policy over Khurasan. At the beginning, he appointed the second generation of Khurasani officers. However, he decided to make a change by nominating non-Khurasanis as governors, but his experiment failed. Therefore, al-Rashīd returned to his previous policy by appointing ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā, one of the second generation of the Khurasani officers. The changes show that al-Rashīd was searching for a capable and competent governor and this continued till the appointment of ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā. Below is the list of governors of Khurasan under al-Rashīd:

- Abū al-‘Abbās al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Ṭūsī (166-171/782-787)
- Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath b. ‘Uqbah al-Khuzā‘ī (171-173/787-789)
- Al-‘Abbās b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath b. ‘Uqbah al-Khuzā‘ī (173-175/789-791)
- Al-Ghitrīf b. ‘Atā’ al-Kindī (175-176/791-792)
- Hamzah b. Mālīk b. al-Haytham al-Khuzā‘ī (176-177/792-793)
- Abū al-‘Abbās al-Faḍl b. Yahyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak (177-179/793-795)
- Mansūr b. Yazīd al-Ḥimyārī (179-180/795-796)
- Abū al-Faḍl Ja‘far b. Yahyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak (180/796-7)
- ‘Īsā b. Ja‘far b. al-Mansūr (180/796-7)
- ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā b. Māhān (180-191/796-806)
- Harthama b. A‘yan (191-194/806-809)

<sup>5</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr (1964), *Tarīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, I, ed. M.J. Goeje *et al.*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 599; al-Ya‘qūbī, Aḥmad b. Ya‘qūb (1955-1956), *Tarīkh*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, p. 84; al-Azdī, Abū Zakariyā (1967), *Tarīkh al-Mawsil*, ed. A. Habibah, Cairo, p. 261.

**Abū al-‘Abbās al-Faḍl b. Sulaymān al-Tūṣī (166-171/782-787)**

As mentioned above, al-Tūṣī had been governor since the reign of al-Mahdī and remained in office until the beginning of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s caliphate. The stability in Khurasan during his governorship shows his capability as a governor and the confidence of the caliphs in him. In 171/787-8, al-Tūṣī returned to Baghdad and Ja‘far b. Muḥammad al-Ash‘ath was appointed by al-Rashīd as the new governor of Khurasan. There is a general agreement between the sources regarding the arrival of al-Tūṣī in Baghdad but they differ in their opinion regarding the reason for his returning to Iraq. According to Khalīfa, he was dismissed by al-Rashīd and Ja‘far succeeded him.<sup>6</sup> However, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr failed to report whether he was recalled from the office but just mentioned that al-Tūṣī returned to Baghdad and was appointed to the *khatm* (seal of the caliph).<sup>7</sup> On his arrival, Ja‘far b. Muḥammad was in charge of the *khatm* but al-Rashīd took it and gave it to al-Tūṣī.<sup>8</sup> It seems that there was an exchange of position between al-Tūṣī and al-Ja‘far but al-Tūṣī died shortly after that and the *khatm* was given to Yaḥyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak.

It is difficult to accept the fact that al-Tūṣī was dismissed because his governorship was a peaceful one and there is no reason for al-Rashīd to recall him. There is a possibility that al-Tūṣī returned to Iraq because he was old and this fact was confirmed by al-Ṭabarī who mentioned that al-Tūṣī died shortly after his return. Another assumption is that al-Rashīd wanted to make a change in his policy because since the reign of al-Mansūr, the governors of Khurasan were among the Khurasanis who played a major role in the revolution. Therefore, al-Rashīd tried to change it by appointing Ja‘far, the second generation of the Khurasanis. In order to justify his action, al-Rashīd appointed al-Tūṣī to the *khatm* because he had been in charge of it during the period of al-Mansūr.

**Ja‘far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath b. ‘Uqbah al-Khuzā‘ī (171-173/787-789)**

Ja‘far, the first governor of Khurasan appointed by al-Rashīd in 171/787-8, was the son of Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath, the deputy *naqīb* (representative) of the ‘Abbasid

<sup>6</sup> Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, Abū ‘Amr (1967), *Tarīkh*, 2, ed. Akram Diyā al-‘Umari, Najaf: Imprimerie al-Adabe, p. 498.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 605; Ibn al-Athīr, ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī b Muḥammad (1871), *al-Kāmil fī al-Tarīkh*, VI, ed. C.J. Tornberg, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> N.M. Nicol (1979), “Early ‘Abbasid Administration in the Central and Eastern Provinces: 132-218A.H./750-833A.D.” (Ph.D dissertation), Univ. of Washington, p. 180.

*da'wah* (mission).<sup>9</sup> Most of the sources do not state the date of Ja'far's appointment except Ibn al-Athīr who mentioned that it was in 171/787-8. However, it can be considered that Ja'far was nominated in that year due to the arrival of al-Ṭūsī in Baghdad from Khurasan in the same year. Besides being the son of an important personality during the revolution, Ja'far's position as the head of the *khatm* and the *haras* of al-Rashīd and his close relationship with the latter were the reasons of his appointment as the governor of Khurasan.<sup>10</sup> According to al-Jahshiyārī, Muḥammad al-Amīn, the son of al-Rashīd was put under the guardianship of al-Ja'far b. Muḥammad before that of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, an assumption can be made that there was a special relationship between al-Rashīd and al-Ja'far to the extent that al-Amīn was put under al-Ja'far.

Khurasan was in peace during the governorship of Ja'far and his contribution was limited because of his brief tenure. According to al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, Ja'far was recalled from Khurasan in 173/789-10 and his son, al-'Abbās succeeded him. Al-Ya'qūbī claimed that Ja'far was paralysed by a stroke and died.<sup>12</sup> After him, al-'Abbās took the governorship until 174/791-2. From both accounts, it is very probable that Ja'far died because of stroke and his son was appointed by al-Rashīd. As under al-Ṭūsī, Khurasan was quiet under Ja'far and for that reason it was unlikely that he was recalled from his post. Besides that, al-Rashīd would not have entrusted Ja'far's son, al-'Abbās as the new governor of Khurasan if he was not pleased with his performance.

#### **Al-'Abbās b. Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath al-Khuzā'ī (173-175/789-791)**

Al-'Abbās was appointed by al-Rashīd as the governor of Khurasan after the death of his father in 173/789-10. Due to the limited information in the sources, not much is known about his background and contribution to the caliphate. The only information given by al-Athīr is that Ja'far sent al-'Abbās to Kabul upon his appointment in 171/787-8 and he made a successful raid. Besides being the son of Ja'far b. Muḥammad, al-'Abbās's success in Kabul is another reason led to his appointment.

<sup>9</sup> F. Omar (1960), *The 'Abbasid Caliphate: 132/750-170/786*, Baghdad: National Print and Pub. Co., p. 354; P. Crone (1980), *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of The Islamic Polity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup> Khalīfa, *Tārīkh*, 2, p. 502; Nicole, *'Abbasid Administration*, p. 180; Crone, *Slaves*, p. 185.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Jahshiyārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs (1938), *Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa al-Kuttāb*, ed. M. al-Saqqa *et al.*, Cairo, p. 193.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī (1892), *Kitāb al-Buldān*, ed. M.J. Goeje, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 306.

Regarding his brief governorship, the early accounts agreed that it was a period of peace in Khurasan. In 175/791-2, al-'Abbās was dismissed from Khurasan and Ghitrif b. 'Atā', the maternal uncle of al-Rashīd succeeded him.<sup>13</sup> There is a general agreement among the early historians regarding the date of al-'Abbās's dismissal and the appointment of Ghitrif, but they fail to report the reason for his dismissal. As mentioned before, al-Rashīd continued at first to nominate the second generation of the Khurasani officers as governors of Khurasan. However, after al-'Abbās, he decided to change his policy by appointing Ghitrif, a non-Khurasani. It was a kind of experiment which proved a failure shortly after that. Therefore, al-Rashīd's change of policy can be regarded as the reason for al-'Abbās's dismissal.

### Ghitrif b. 'Atā' (175-176/791-792)

In 175/791-2, al-Rashīd appointed Ghitrif, his maternal uncle, as the governor of Khurasan. Al-Ya'qūbī stated that it took place during the caliphate of al-Hādī whereas most of the sources agreed that Ghitrif was nominated during al-Rashīd. In term of his background, Ghitrif was a Yemeni slave who was brought to al-Mahdī from Jurash in Yemen.<sup>14</sup> He had no relationship with Khurasan and did not hold any post before his appointment to Khurasan. Therefore, the reason of his appointment was not known since he was a man of no great importance except his personal relationship with the caliph. As mentioned earlier, the appointment of Ghitrif was an experiment and the outcome will be discussed later.

During Ghitrif's governorship, a revolt broke out in 175/791-2 under the leadership of Ḥuṣayn, a *mawlā* of Qays b. Tha'laba.<sup>15</sup> Information about the revolt is limited because the sources do not mention anything regarding the matter except for Ibn al-Athīr who gives a brief description of the revolt. Therefore, a total reliance on Ibn Athīr's account is impossible since it is not supported by other sources where he claims that Ḥuṣayn was Kharijite. Based on Ibn Athīr's account, Nicole also regarded the revolt as Kharijite.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to determine whether Ḥuṣayn was really a Kharijite due to the absence of information in the sources. Besides that, based on several sources, Omar gives a list of Kharijite revolts under the early

<sup>13</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 612; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 120-122; al-Ya'qūbī, *al-Buldān*, p. 306; Nicole, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> N. Abbot (1946), *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 124.

<sup>16</sup> Nicole, *Abbasid*, p. 181.

‘Abbāsīd caliphs but he does not give any description of the revolt. It is possible that the revolt was a personal one and did not possess any kind of relationship with any sect of that time.

Al-Rashīd ordered ‘Uthmān b. ‘Umāra, the governor of Sijistan, to deal with the revolt.<sup>17</sup> ‘Uthmān sent troops against Ḥuṣayn but were defeated. Ḥuṣayn went to Khurasan to control Badghis, Bushanj and Herat. Since Ghitrīf was the governor of Khurasan at that time, al-Rashīd wrote and ordered him to fight Ḥuṣayn. Ghitrīf sent Dāud b. Yazīd with 20,000 men against the 600 of Ḥuṣayn, and Dāud succeeded in killing most of the enemy. However, Ḥuṣayn managed to escape but was killed in 177/793-4. From the number of Ḥuṣayn’s troop, it shows that the revolt was not of great importance and did not possess a real danger to the caliphate. In fact, it is similar to the local revolts that occurred during the previous governorship of Khurasan, which were easily suppressed by the government.

In 176/792-3, al-Rashīd dismissed Ghitrīf from Khurasan and Hamzah b Mālīk b. al-Haytham became the next governor.<sup>18</sup> Ghitrīf’s dismissal proved the failure in al-Rashīd’s change of policy since he was not pleased with Ghitrīf’s performance in Khurasan. According to al-Ya‘qūbī, Ghitrīf was deposed because he failed to manage and regulate the affairs in Khurasan.<sup>19</sup> It is said that Ghitrīf’s introduction of debased coins contributes to his dismissal from Khurasan. According to Narshakhī, during the governorship of Ghitrīf, the people in Bukhara pleaded him to coin the same silver money which had been introduced by Bukhar-Khudat Kana, the ruler of Bukhara during the caliphate of Abū Bakr al-Siddīq (11-13/ 632-4).<sup>20</sup> The new currency was made from a combination of silver, gold, iron, tin, brass and copper and Ghitrīf’s name was struck on the coinage and, consequently, it was named *ghitrīfis*. The *ghitrīfis* was used by the people to pay taxes and one dirham’s weight of the pure silver was equivalent to six *ghitrīfis*. Later on, the *ghitrīfis* dirham increased in value and became equal with the silver dirham. At that time, the tax of Bukhara was less than 200,000 silver dirhams. However, with the increase of the *ghitrīfis*, the people had to pay six times higher than the normal taxes (1,168,567

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 124; Nicol, *‘Abbasid*, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 498; al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 626; al-Azdī, *Tarīkh*, p. 227; Ibn Kathīr, Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar (1966), *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, VIII, Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma‘arif, pp. 60-61.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ya‘qūbī (1892), *al-Buldān*, p. 304.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Narshakhī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja‘far (1954). Trans. R.Fyre, *The History of Bukhara*, Massachusetts: Medieval Academy of America, pp. 62-65.

*ghitrifis* dirhams).<sup>21</sup> This can be considered the reason of dissatisfaction among the people of Bukhara against Ghitrif. Al-Narshakhi gives a detailed report of the event although it is difficult to put too much reliance on it since most of the sources say nothing about it. Based on al-Narshakhi's account, modern historians like Barthold and Daniel give the same interpretations of the report but they do not decide whether Ghitrif's coinage and the heavy taxes were the reasons of discontent among the people of Bukhara. An assumption can be made that the heavy taxes in Bukhara resulted from the *ghitrifis* coinage could be a minor reason that led to Ghitrif's dismissal by al-Rashid. This is supported by the fact that al-Musayab b. Zuhayr was also dismissed from Khurasan in 166/782-3 because of the same problem relating to that of Ghitrif which has been mentioned before. So, there is a possibility that the people of Khurasan made a protest against Ghitrif due to the increase in taxes and al-Rashid decided to replace him with Hamzah b. Malik b. al-Haytham.

In conclusion, it was the first time under Hārūn al-Rashid that Khurasan was disturbed by a minor revolt, that is, during the governorship of Ghitrif especially when compared to the period of peace under al-Tūsī, Ja'far and al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Ash'ath. However, Khurasan was again restored to peace for the next few years during the governorships of Hamzah b. Malik and al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā.

### **Hamzah b. Malik b. al-Haytham (176-177/ 792-293)**

Hamzah was the son of Malik b. al-Haytham al-Khuzā'i, an original *naqib* of the 'Abbāsid *da'wah* and a prominent figure in the 'Abbāsid revolution.<sup>22</sup> There is general agreement among the early historians regarding the significant role played by the family of Malik b. al-Haytham after the revolution, when they controlled the *shurṭah* (police force) during the reigns of al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī.<sup>23</sup> Hamzah himself played a major role as the head of the *shurṭah* under al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī and was appointed by al-Mahdī as the governor of Sijistan in 159/775-6. Undoubtedly, the contribution of the family and the major role played by Hamzah in the ad-

<sup>21</sup> Al-Narshakhi, *Bukhara*, p. 37; W. Barthold (1968), *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, London: Messrs. Luzac & Company, pp. 204-6; E.L. Daniel (1979), *The Political and Social History of Khurasan Under the Abbasid Rule: 747-820*, Minneapolis & Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica., p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> Crone, *Slaves*, p. 184; Omar, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 354.

<sup>23</sup> Khalifa, *Tarikh*, 2, p. 474; Al-Ya'qubi, *Tarikh*, III, p. 133; Kennedy: *Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 80-1; Crone, *Slaves*, p. 185; Nicol, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 181.



ministration were the main reason that led to his appointment as the governor of Khurasan in 176/792-3, replacing Ghiṭrīf b. 'Atā'. In respect of his brief governorship, the sources agree that it was a period of peace in Khurasan. However, in 177/793-4, Hamzah was dismissed by al-Rashīd, who was later succeeded by al-Faḍl b. Yahyā.<sup>24</sup> The reason of his dismissal is unknown, despite the fact that his governorship was a peaceful one, and there is no information to suggest any reason at all.

### Abū al-'Abbās al-Faḍl b. Yahyā b. Khālīd b. Barmak (177-179/793-79)

Compared to the rest of the governors of Khurasan under al-Rashīd, al-Faḍl's governorship seems to take the highest position among the early historians. Almost all sources indicate his governorship as the most successful one due to his major contribution to the welfare of Khurasan.<sup>25</sup> When compared with other sources, al-Jahshiyari gives the most complete account of the Barmakids and his work is basically devoted to extolling the virtue and the significance of the family. In fact, al-Jahshiyārī and Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī tried to describe the close relationship between al-Rashīd and the Barmakids when they were appointed by al-Rashīd to important posts in the administration (head of *ḥaras*, *hijaba*, *khatm* and *wizārah*) and the princes al-Amin and al-Ma'mūn were put under their guardianship.<sup>26</sup> Regarding al-Faḍl, information given by the sources is particularly rich but most of it seemed to exaggerate his contribution in Khurasan. Al-Faḍl was the grandson of Khālīd b. Barmak, an Iranian who had participated in the 'Abbāsīd revolution and was appointed to different posts by al-Saffāh, al-Mansūr and al-Mahdī.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, al-Faḍl was a descendant of the first generation of Khurasāni revolutionaries and became the fifth governor of Khurasan under al-Rashīd in 177/793-4. Besides Khurasan, Sijistan was also attached to him. In addition, al-Faḍl was also the governor of Jibal, Tabaristan, Dunbawand, Qumis, Armenia and Adherbayjan since 176/7923.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 629; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 140; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidayāh*, p. 171.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tarīkh*, III, p. 17; Al-Ya'qūbī, *al-Buldān*, p. 304; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 63; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 145; Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 191; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ṭabātabā (1966), *Fi al-Ādāb al-Sultāniyyah wa al-Duwal al-Islāmiyyah*, Beirut: Dār Sadir, p. 201; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidayāh*, VIII, p. 171.

<sup>26</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 502; Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Fūṭuh*, p. 243; al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 193.

<sup>27</sup> Khālīd had been in the *Diwan al-Kharāj* during al-Saffāh and the head of the *khatm* under al-Mansūr and al-Mahdī. See Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 475; Crone, *Slaves*, p. 176.

From the number of places mentioned above, it shows that al-Fadl ruled a vast area and was given the opportunity to govern the important frontier provinces of the caliphate: the Caucasus, Tabaristan and Khurasan. This was the first time in the history of the 'Abbāsids that a person was appointed a governor to so many different places simultaneously. The reason for his appointment to Khurasan is quite clearly due to his success in suppressing an 'Alīd uprising under the leadership of Yahyā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ḥasan in Daylam in 176/792-3.<sup>28</sup> However, there is no exact reason for al-Fadl's first nomination as governor because he played a minor role in the administration compared to his father, Yahyā b. Khālid and his brother, Ja'far b. Yahyā who controlled the *khatm* and the *haras*. Besides that, al-Fadl was not the favourite of al-Rashīd compared to his brother. Al-Jahshiyārī claims that Yahyā was in favour of al-Fadl whereas al-Rashīd was inclined towards Ja'far. However, it does not mean that al-Rashīd disliked al-Fadl because there was also a close relationship between both of them although Ja'far was more preferable to the caliph than al-Fadl. Therefore, it can be said that al-Fadl's nomination as the governor of the Caucasus and Tabaristan was due more to his personal relationship with the caliph than his capability as an administrator. Perhaps, it was also due to his father's influence as al-Rashīd's vizier.

Although al-Fadl was appointed to different provinces, he distributed most of them to his commanders because of their large areas.<sup>29</sup> This means that he did not really take part in the administration of the provinces and thus, there was a little chance to show his capability as a governor. Therefore, his appointment to Khurasan can be considered a great opportunity to show his ability as a governor as well as to please the caliph. This is clearly shown from the sources that described him as the most responsible governor of Khurasan. There is a general agreement among the early accounts on al-Fadl's contribution in Khurasan. According to the sources, the first thing done by al-Fadl was building mosques and *ribatāt* (hospices) as well as making a raid into Transoxania.<sup>30</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī states that the king of Ushusana in Transoxania surrendered to al-Fadl

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 612; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 125 & 140; Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Fadl appointed al-Muthana b. al-Hajjāj b. Qutayba b. Muslim as his deputy in Tabaristan and 'Alī b. al-Hajjāj al-Khuzā'ī in Sistan. See Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 613.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tarīkh*, III, p. 11; Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 30; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 631; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 145; Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 191; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidayāh*, p. 173; Daniel, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 169.

and this fact is supported by Ibn al-Athīr.<sup>31</sup> Modern historians like Barthold, Daniel and Kennedy give the same interpretation that al-Faḍl made a successful raid into Transoxania and the king of Ushusana had submitted to him.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, it can be said that al-Faḍl succeeded in making a raid into Transoxania.

A confusion occurs among the sources regarding the raid on Kabul by Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl, al-Faḍl's commander of the *shurtah* and the *haras*.<sup>33</sup> According to al-Ṭabarī and al-Jahshiyārī, Ibrāhīm captured Kabul and obtained a lot of wealth. Consequently, Ibrāhīm was appointed by al-Faḍl to Sijistan. Al-Ya'qūbī has a different report in which he stated that al-Faḍl launched a military campaign to Tukharistan and Kabul and he captured a number of districts in both places.<sup>34</sup> Although al-Ya'qūbī mentioned al-Faḍl as the leader of the raid, he actually referred to Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl. It is clear from al-Ya'qūbī's account that Ibrāhīm did not conquer the whole Tukharistan and Kabul but only a few places of the regions. There is a possibility that al-Ṭabarī and al-Jahshiyārī referred to the capture of several districts in Kabul by Ibrāhīm b. Jibrīl as the conquest of Kabul. Similar to the raid of Transoxania, al-Balādhūrī claimed that it was under al-Ma'mūn that the Muslims managed to conquer Kabul.<sup>35</sup> Based on al-Ya'qūbī's account, Kennedy mentions that al-Faḍl attacked Kabul with the assistance of the princes and *dihqāns* (Persian term for landowners in Iran and Iraq) of Tukharistan, but he does not explain the result of the campaign.<sup>36</sup> Hence, it is not clear whether or not al-Faḍl managed to take Kabul. Barthold gives a clear information that before the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn in 196/811, al-Ma'mūn complained to his vizier, Faḍl b. Sahl that the king of Kabul was preparing to invade the districts of Khurasan.<sup>37</sup> This shows that Kabul had not been conquered by al-Faḍl and perhaps that the king would like to recover his districts that were captured by al-Faḍl. Therefore, al-Ma'mūn was advised to send gifts to the king of Kabul and make peace with him, since al-Ma'mūn would not have the ability to fight the king due to the critical moment of his struggle with al-Amīn. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that

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<sup>31</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 631

<sup>32</sup> Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 202; Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 169; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History*, London & Sydney, 1981, p. 181,

<sup>33</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 634; Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 192.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 306.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Balādhūrī, *Fūṭuh*, p. 527.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, pp. 289-90; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181.

<sup>37</sup> Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 202.

Kabul was conquered by al-Ma'mūn after the civil war. A conclusion can be taken that al-Faḍl did attack Kabul but succeeded only in capturing a few districts, and that the conquest of Kabul was indeed took place under al-Ma'mūn after the civil war.

Another contribution of al-Faḍl in Khurasan was the recruitment of a new army from the local population, which he named as 'the partisans of the 'Abbāsids' (*al-'Abbāsiyya*). According to al-Ṭabarī, the troops were about 500,000 men and 20,000 of them were sent to Baghdad.<sup>38</sup> The rest remained in Khurasan and their names were listed in the register and they were given the salaries. However, it is hard to believe that al-Faḍl recruited half a million men within his brief governorship. Modern historians seem to disagree with the figure. Barthold assumes that number has been exaggerated while Kennedy considers it to be 50,000 instead of 500,000.<sup>39</sup> But both of them agree that 20,000 were sent to Baghdad. It can be said that new troops were recruited in Khurasan but the number was less than it was claimed. The purpose of raising the army was not clear. Perhaps al-Faḍl wanted to demonstrate that he was independent of the central government. In other words, he intended to show not only his ability as a governor but also the ability of the Barmakids in general and their influence among the natives of Khurasan, to the extent that he could easily gather their support. Another possibility is that the troops were intended for military expeditions both in the east and the west. The evidence is in al-Faḍl's expedition to Tukharistan and Kabul, and al-Ya'qūbī confirmed that the princes and *dihqān* had assisted al-Faḍl in his campaign to Kabul. However, the clear implication of the report is that the army was prepared for al-Ma'mūn for use in the future civil war in 196/811 between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn. This is clear from the number of troops that was left behind in Khurasan compared to those who were sent to Baghdad. Modern writers have the same opinion regarding the connection between the troops and al-Ma'mūn. From the sources, Daniel makes an assumption of the important role played by the army in the future civil war.<sup>40</sup> Kennedy also says that a big number of them joined al-Ma'mūn's forces during the civil war. However, it is quite strange that al-Faḍl made preparations for al-Ma'mūn's confrontation with al-Amīn when he himself was the tutor of the latter. In fact, according to al-Ṭabarī, in 175/791-2, Muḥammad al-Amīn was proclaimed

<sup>38</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 631; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181; M.A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation 2, A.D. 750-1055*, Cambridge, 1976, II, pp. 31,36,43.

<sup>39</sup> Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 203; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 169; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181.

the heir apparent at an early age due to the efforts made by al-Faḍl. In addition to that, al-Ṭabarī and al-Jahshiyārī mentioned that al-Faḍl took the *bay'ah* (Oath of allegiance) for al-Amin in Khurasan during his governorship.<sup>41</sup> This indicates his interest in making al-Amin the future caliph, since he was going to benefit from that. However, his contribution and achievement in Khurasan were to benefit al-Ma'mūn rather than al-Amin.

In 179/795-6, al-Faḍl returned to Baghdad and Mansūr b. Yazīd succeeded him in Khurasan.<sup>42</sup> Like his predecessors, he was in office for only a short period. It is not clear from the sources whether or not al-Faḍl was dismissed from Khurasan because most of the sources simply mentioned that he returned from Khurasan and appointed 'Amr b. Shurahbil as his deputy. Besides that, al-Jahshiyārī mentioned that al-Rashīd and the people gathered to welcome al-Faḍl, and poets were ordered to make poems in honour of him. However, al-Ya'qūbī did say that al-Faḍl was dismissed from Khurasan.<sup>43</sup> Modern writers differ in their opinion regarding the reason for al-Faḍl's departure to Baghdad. Based on al-Ya'qūbī's account, Daniel agrees that al-Faḍl was recalled from Khurasan and that Mansūr became the new governor.<sup>44</sup> Kennedy describes the departure of al-Faḍl from Khurasan but does not clarify the cause of it.<sup>45</sup> Based on the sources, a conclusion can be drawn that al-Faḍl was not dismissed from Khurasan since he appointed 'Amr as his deputy. If we look carefully at al-Ṭabarī's report, he said that 'in this year (179/795), al-Rashīd appointed Mansūr b. Yazīd as the governor of Khurasan'. Therefore, it seems that Mansūr was not appointed before the return of al-Faḍl to Iraq but later in the same year. It suggests that al-Faḍl was still the governor of Khurasan at the time of his returning to Baghdad. Al-Faḍl's case is supported by the same event in the caliphate of al-Mansūr, whose son, al-Mahdī, had been the governor of Khurasan since 141/758-9, returned to Baghdad in 151/768-9 leaving a deputy known as Usayd b. 'Abd Allāh. As with al-Faḍl, the sources do not state that al-Mahdī was dismissed by al-Mansūr.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the conclusion is that al-Faḍl was not dismissed from the office, but it was later found that al-Rashīd replaced his deputy with Mansūr b. Yazīd.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 61; al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 193.

<sup>42</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, pp. 498-9; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 637; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, p. 146; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidayāh*, p. 17; Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 169.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 306.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 169.

<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 364.

### **Manṣūr b. Yazīd al-Himyārī (179-180/795-796)**

Manṣūr was a relative of al-Rashīd and the sources agree that he was appointed by al-Rashīd as the governor of Khurasan in 179/795-6.<sup>47</sup> There is no clear reason of his appointment except his relationship with the caliph. His nomination can be considered as al-Rashīd's experiment because the caliph was still searching for the right governor. Manṣūr's governorship lasted only for a few months and he was dismissed in the following year due to a Kharijite revolt in Khurasan led by Hamzah b. Atrāk al-Sijistani.<sup>48</sup> The revolt was not serious during Manṣūr's governorship but it became widespread during the governorship of 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān. Manṣūr's inability to crush the uprising led to his dismissal in 180/796. Therefore, al-Rashīd's experiment was short-lived and the changes in his next appointments showed al-Rashīd's uncertainty of his policy.

### **Abū al-Faḍl Ja'far b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmak**

There is a disagreement among the sources regarding the appointment of Ja'far b. Yaḥyā as the governor of Khurasan. According to Khalīfa, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, Ja'far was appointed to Khurasan and Sijistan in 180/796-7 replacing Manṣūr b. Yazīd.<sup>49</sup> In return, Ja'far appointed Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba as his deputy in both provinces. However, al-Ya'qūbī stated that it was 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān who succeeded Manṣūr.<sup>50</sup> Modern writers mentioned that Manṣūr was replaced by Ja'far al-Barmaki.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps al-Ya'qūbī did not include Ja'far in the governorship of Khurasan because he was in office for only 20 nights. 'Īsā b. Ja'far b. Yaḥyā, was also excluded by al-Ya'qūbī probably due to his very short tenure. Ja'far was the son of Yaḥyā b. Khālid b. Barmak and the brother of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, who played a major role in the administration during the reign of al-Rashīd. There is no exact reason for his appointment by al-Rashīd although he was in charge of the *khatm* under al-Rashīd, and he had been appointed to the west from al-Anbār to Ifriqiya in 176/792-3.<sup>52</sup> However, al-Rashīd was not pleased with

<sup>47</sup> Manṣūr was the son of Yazīd b. Manṣūr al-Himyārī, the governor of Yemen during the caliphate of al-Saffāh and al-Manṣūr.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 637; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 147-150; 'Umar, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 306; Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 169.

<sup>49</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 499; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 644; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 152.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 306.

<sup>51</sup> Nicol, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 182; Daniel, *Khurasan*, 1, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 502; al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 191.

his performance and he was dismissed from Egypt in 177/793-4.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Ja'far's previous experience could not be the main reason of his appointment to Khurasan. Assumption can be made that his nomination was due to his close relationship with al-Rashīd since the very beginning, as al-Jahshiyārī stated that al-Rashīd was in favour of Ja'far more than al-Faḍl, and emphasised his influence over al-Rashīd.<sup>54</sup> Compared to al-Faḍl, Ja'far did not make any contribution while in Khurasan because of his extremely brief governorship. According to al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, Ja'far was dismissed 20 days after his appointment and 'Īsā b. Ja'far succeeded him.<sup>55</sup> In return, Ja'far was given the responsibility as the head of the *ḥaras*, replacing Harthama b. A'yan. Like his appointment, the reason for his dismissal is also not known but it points to the notion that al-Rashīd was experimenting with his policy.

### 'Īsā b. Ja'far b. Abī Ja'far al-Manṣūr (180/796-7)

'Isa, the grandson of al-Manṣūr and a cousin of al-Rashīd, was appointed as the governor of Khurasan in 180/796-7 after Ja'far b. Yahyā. There is limited information about 'Īsā because of his minor role in the caliphate. Khalīfa mentioned that 'Īsā was twice the governor of Basra during the reign of al-Rashīd.<sup>56</sup> Apart from his minor experience as the governor of Basra, his relation with the caliph was probably the reason that led to his appointment in Khurasan. However, like his two predecessors, he was in office for a very short period of time and 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān became the next governor in the same year.<sup>57</sup> The sources do not mention whether 'Īsā was dismissed from Khurasan but rather replaced like the previous governors.

### 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān (180-191/796-806)

The appointment of 'Alī b. 'Īsā as the governor in 180/796-7 puts an end to the changes of governors in Khurasan. Al-Rashīd returned to his earliest policy of appointing the second generation of Khurasani officers. Like Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath and Hamzah b. Mālik b. al-Haytham, 'Alī was the son of a leading figure in the 'Abbāsīd revolution. Like his father, 'Alī played a major role in the administration, in which he had been the head of the *ḥaras* under al-Mahdī, al-Hādī

<sup>53</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 629; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p. 189.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 644; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 152.

<sup>56</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, pp. 497-8.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 645; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 150.

and al-Rashīd.<sup>58</sup> Besides that, ‘Alī was one of the prominent military leaders in Baghdad whose role in the appointment of al-Mahdī as caliph after the death of al-Mansūr was important.<sup>59</sup> Al-Ṭabarī confirmed a close relationship between al-Ma’mūn and ‘Alī. In 182/798-9, the oath of allegiance was given to al-Ma’mūn as the heir apparent after al-Amin, and al-Rashīd appointed him as the governor of Khurasan and the East. The significant point is that ‘Alī was with al-Ma’mūn in Baghdad when the *bay’ah* was given to the latter.<sup>60</sup> It means that ‘Ali came to ‘Iraq from Khurasan for the sake of being with al-Ma’mūn. Although al-Ma’mūn was given the governorship of Khurasan, it was ‘Alī who now governed the province as his representative. It can be said that it was al-Rashīd’s arrangement to create this close relationship between al-Ma’mūn and ‘Alī and that he hoped that ‘Alī would be the main support for al-Ma’mūn. From the above, it is possible that ‘Alī’s background and his close relationship with al-Ma’mūn were the reasons for his nomination to Khurasan.

Khurasan was peaceful for only four years of the ten years of ‘Alī’s rule. In contrast to al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā, who is portrayed as the most capable governor, the majority of the sources is hostile towards ‘Alī. There is a general agreement among the sources that the people of Khurasan were oppressed during ‘Alī’s governorship. According to al-Ṭabarī, ‘Alī oppressed the leaders of the community, the nobles and the general public. Al-Jahshiyārī stated that ‘Alī killed the prominent men of Khurasan and gathered a lot of wealth.<sup>61</sup> Interpretations of modern writers on the subject are heavily based on these sources, except for Kennedy who mentions that ‘Alī’s governorship is difficult to assess due to the hostile accounts. Barthold and Daniel accept the hostile reports uncritically and conclude that ‘Alī is an example of a corrupt and incompetent governor.<sup>62</sup> However, there is a possibility that ‘Alī was innocent from some of the accusation made against him. There is a possibility that the people of Khurasan were oppressed without ‘Alī’s knowledge.

Several uprisings occurred during ‘Alī’s governorship. These were the revolt

<sup>58</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 480; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, pp. 456-548.

<sup>59</sup> According to al-Ṭabarī, on the day of al-Mansūr’s death, it was ‘Alī who forced ‘Isā b. Mūsā to give the *bay’ah* to al-Mahdī. See al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 455.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, pp. 647-702.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā*, p. 228.

<sup>62</sup> Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 181; Barthold, *Turkestan*, p. 20; Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 170.



of al-Muhammira, Abū al-Khasīb, Abū 'Amr, Hamzah b. Atrāk and Rāfi' b. Layth. Al-Muhammira revolted in Jurjan in 180/796-7 led by a man called 'Amr b. Muḥammad al-'Amraki.<sup>63</sup> According to al-Ṭabarī, 'Alī wrote to al-Rashīd that 'Amr had revolted against him, but he did not say why. Most of the early accounts do not mention anything about the revolt. According to al-Ṭabarī, 'Alī told al-Rashīd that 'Amr was a *zindīq* and al-Rashīd ordered him to be executed and he was killed at Mery. It is difficult to ensure whether or not 'Amr was really a *zindīq* because the other sources do not mention this at all. However, the revolt can be considered insignificant as it did not pose a real threat to the authorities and was easily suppressed shortly after that.

In 183/799-800, another revolt broke out at Nasa in Khurasan under the leadership of Abū al-Khasīb Wuhayb b. 'Abd al-Nasā'i, a *mawla* of al-Harish.<sup>64</sup> The information given by the sources about the revolt is basically similar and limited. Among modern historians, Daniel is the only writer who gives a description of the revolt and his interpretation is in accordance with the sources. The purpose of the revolt is not known but there is a possibility that it was against 'Alī, like that of al-Muhammira. This revolt lasted for three years (183-186/799-802) and Abū al-Khasīb revolted twice within that period, the first time in 184/780-1 and the second in the next year, 185/781-2. At last 'Alī succeeded in killing him in 186/802-3 and consequently, Khurasan witnessed a period of peace for a few years before the revolt of Rāfi' b. Layth in 190/805-6. Based on the sources, a general conclusion can be drawn that Abū al-Khasīb's revolt posed a significant threat to the authorities, especially to the governor because the early accounts agreed that Abū al-Khasīb took control over several places like Nasa, Tus, Sarakhs, Abiward and others. However, the sources do not give any information regarding the number of Abū al-Khasīb's followers or those who were killed in the revolt. Al-Ṭabarī remarked that when Abū al-Khasīb was finally defeated, that Khurasan came back to order.

A Kharijite uprising broke out in Badghis in 185/801-2 led by Hamzah b. Atrāk.<sup>65</sup> As mentioned before, Hamzah started his activities during the governorship of Mansūr b. Yazīd. There is a disagreement regarding the commander sent against Hamzah. Al-Ya'qūbī claimed that 'Alī himself marched to fight Hamzah but al-

<sup>63</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 645; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 152.

<sup>64</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 306; al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, pp. 649-651; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 163-4; al-Azdi, *Tarīkh*, p. 303; Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 171; Nicol, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 183.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 306; al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 650; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 168; Nicol, *Abbasid Administration*, pp. 184-5; Omar, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 306-7.

Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr stated that ‘Alī sent his son, ‘Īsā. Perhaps, there is a mistake in al-Ya’qūbī’s account since other sources agree that ‘Īsā b. ‘Alī was entrusted to fight Hamzah. ‘Īsā killed 10,000 of Hamzah’s followers and marched as far as Kabul. The number is incredible as it is difficult to accept that ‘Īsā’s troops managed to kill 10,000 men at once. Probably the number is exaggerated. Besides that, there is a disagreement regarding to defeat of Hamzah. Al-Ya’qūbī stated that ‘Alī managed to kill Hamzah in Kabul, whereas al-Ṭabarī just mentioned the success of ‘Īsā b. ‘Alī in defeating Hamzah’s partisans. Probably, there is a mistake in al-Ya’qūbī’s report because Hamzah continued his uprising until the caliphate of al-Ma’mūn. Based on several sources, Omar mentioned that Hamzah’s revolt was crushed by the efforts of Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn during the reign of al-Ma’mūn, whereas Nicol stated that Hamzah was killed in 213/828-9. From the above, it is clear that the uprising was not continuous although it lasted for about 24 years (179-213/795-828). A conclusion can be drawn that the revolt was a minor threat to the governor.

Khurasan witnessed a period of peace for a few years after the revolt of Hamzah, but in 190/ 805-6, a new uprising began in Samarqand led by Rāfi’ b. Layth. According to al-Ya’qūbī, Rāfi’ was one of the commanders sent by al-Rashīd to accompany ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā to Khurasan, and later was appointed to Samarqand.<sup>66</sup> However, it is difficult to be sure of the fact because the rest of the sources do not mention it. This revolt is reported by most of the sources and can be considered as the major interest of the early historians, since they regarded it as the main reason for the fall of ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā in 191/806-7. Basically, there is an agreement in the sources regarding the revolt.<sup>67</sup> They reported that Rāfi’ revolted in 190/805-6 and that ‘Alī sent his son, ‘Īsā against him. In the next year, ‘Īsā was killed in an attack by Rāfi’ and that Harthama was sent to Khurasan by al-Rashīd with the purpose of arresting ‘Alī and succeeding him as the new governor. However, there are two versions with regard to the reason for the revolt. Al-Ṭabarī combines different versions in his report. He tells a long story of how Rāfi’ was involved in adultery and al-Rashīd ordered him to be flogged according to the law. Consequently, he renounced his allegiance to the caliph and raised a revolt. The next version, as agreed by most of the sources is that Rāfi’ revolted against the governorship of ‘Alī b. ‘Īsā. This is clear from the accounts of al-Ṭabarī. Ibn A’tḥam and al-Azdī men-

<sup>66</sup> Al-Ya’qūbī, *Tarīkh*, III, p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 494; Al-Ya’qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 305; Ibn A’tḥam al-Kūfī, *Futūh*, p. 278-80; Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr stated that ‘Alī sent his son, ‘Īsā. Perhaps, there is a mistake in al-Ya’qūbī, VI, p. 195; Al-Azdī, *Tarīkh*, pp. 308- 311.

tioned that Rāfi' wrote to al-Rashīd that he did not oppose him and the 'Abbāsids, but was dissatisfied with the oppressive rule of 'Alī b. 'Isā.<sup>68</sup> Although most of the sources agree that the second version was the main reason for the dismissal of 'Alī, it is difficult to put a total reliance on them because they are hostile towards 'Alī. In fact, there is a possibility to accept the different report by al-Ṭabarī that Rāfi' rebelled against the caliph and not the governor of Khurasan. The reason is that Rāfi' continued his revolt after the dismissal of 'Alī in 191/806-7. Therefore, it appears that Rāfi' was opposing the caliph due to the punishment imposed on him. Other evidence is that al-Rashīd had ordered Rāfi's brother to be executed in 193/808-9 when the latter was taken captive.<sup>69</sup>

Based on the sources, a conclusion can be drawn that Rāfi's revolt was a serious threat to 'Alī, to the extent that his son was killed in the battle. This is supported by reports in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn A'tham that Rāfi' gained the support of the people in Transoxania and Khurasan.<sup>70</sup> However, al-Ṭabarī tends to exaggerate the fact when he mentioned that all the people of Transoxania assisted Rāfi' against 'Alī. Beside that, Ibn A'tham went further by saying that the people in Khurasan and Transoxania were on the side of Rāfi'. However, 'Alī did not manage to defeat Rāfi' and the revolt continued till the caliphate of al-Ma'mūn.

In 191/806-7, 'Alī was dismissed from Khurasan and Harthama b. A'yan was appointed by al-Rashīd after 'Alī. Although the sources agree that the revolt of Rāfi' was the reason for 'Alī's dismissal, but the real reason may be that al-Rashīd felt that 'Alī had been in office for a very long time and it was time to replace him with another governor. In that case, the revolt of Rāfi' was not the reason which led to 'Alī's dismissal.

### Harthama b. A'yan (191-194/806-809)

Harthama a Khurasani officer in al-Rashīd's army, was appointed as the governor of Khurasan in 191/806-7 after the dismissal of 'Alī b. 'Isā.<sup>71</sup> Information given by the sources about the governorship of Harthama is consistent. With regard to his background, there is very limited information about him. His first appearance in

<sup>68</sup> Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūh*, P. 278; Al-Azdī, *Tarīkh*, p. 311.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 734; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 210.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn A'tham al-Kūfī, *Futūh*, p. 279; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 708.

<sup>71</sup> Khalīfa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 499; Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 305; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 713; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 203-4; al-Azdī, *Tarīkh*, p. 311; Nicol, *Abbasid Administration*, p. 185; Crone, *Slaves*, p. 177; Kennedy, *Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 183.

Baghdad was in 153/770-8 when he was brought from Khurasan in chains because of his support for 'Īsā b. Mūsā, al-Manṣūr's heir apparent after al-Mahdī.<sup>72</sup> Later, he was appointed by al-Rashīd to a different governorship and also as the head of the *haras*.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, it can be said that Harthama's experience in the administration was the reason that led to his appointment to Khurasan. Another possible reason is that Harthama's support for al-Rashīd since the very beginning. According to al-Ṭabarī, it was Harthama who brought al-Rashīd out of prison on the death of al-Hādī and he played a significant role in the appointment of al-Rashīd as a caliph.<sup>74</sup> Considering that, al-Rashīd decided to nominate him as the governor of Khurasan. Besides that, there is a close relationship between the caliph and Harthama to the extent that al-Rashīd entrusted him with the task of arresting 'Alī b. 'Īsā. It is quite clear that Harthama was the most trusted man of al-Rashīd.

The revolt of Rāfi' b. Layth continued during the governorship of Harthama and till al-Ma'mūn's arrival in Khurasan. There is an agreement in the sources regarding the departure of al-Rashīd to Khurasan with al-Ma'mūn in 193/808-809 and his death in Tūs.<sup>75</sup> The sources mentioned that al-Rashīd appointed al-Amīn as his deputy in Baghdad and al-Ma'mūn was sent ahead to Merv together with a few commanders. According to al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ma'mūn settled in Merv as the governor of Khurasan. The reason for al-Rashīd's departure to Khurasan is not clear. According to al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr, al-Rashīd went to Khurasan in order to fight Rāfi', but al-Ya'qūbī does not state the reason.<sup>76</sup> Although most of the sources agree that the main reason was to fight Rāfi', there is a possibility that al-Rashīd intended to promote and to strengthen al-Ma'mūn's position in the East. Most of the sources agree that al-Rashīd was ill before his departure to Khurasan but he decided to go on to Khurasan with al-Ma'mūn. There must be a strong reason to justify his action. Al-Rashīd could have realized that he was going to die and he knew the possibility of a civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn as the result of his succession arrangements. The reports of the arrangements clearly show that al-Rashīd was in favour of al-Ma'mūn to be his successor. Since Khurasan and the East were given to al-Ma'mūn, al-Rashīd would like to ensure that al-Ma'mūn had

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 371.

<sup>73</sup> Khalifa, *Tarīkh*, 2, p. 502; Crone, *Slaves*, p. 177.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, I, p. 599.

<sup>75</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 305; Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, pp. 233-4; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 212; Al-Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarā'*, p.273.

<sup>76</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, pp. 434-6 &730; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, pp. 207-210.

a strong support in the East so that he could win the civil war. So, it is possible that al-Rashīd went to Khurasan to accompany al-Ma'mūn to the East since al-Amin had been left in Baghdad. Concerning the revolt of Rāfi', al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr claimed that Harthama launched an attack on Rāfi's followers in Bukhara and managed to capture Bashīr b. Layth, Rāfi's brother at the beginning of 193/808-9. Bashīr was sent to al-Rashīd at Tūs, and the caliph abused him and ordered him to be brutally executed. It shows the feeling of anger in al-Rashīd towards Rāfi' that he executed Bashīr in this way. Al-Rashīd died a few days after that and was buried in Tūs while al-Amin became the next caliph in the same year. At the end of 193/808-9, Harthama captured Samarqand. Rāfi' tried to get the help of Turks but the Turks moved away due to the presence of Harthama leaving Rāfi' hopeless. Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr state that at the beginning of 194/809-10, Rāfi' sought amnesty from al-Ma'mūn when he heard of his just rule, and it was granted.<sup>77</sup> However, al-Ya'qūbī claimed that Harthama captured Rāfi' and brought him to al-Ma'mūn and the latter sent him to al-Amin.<sup>78</sup> It is not clear from al-Ya'qūbī's account what was the fate of Rāfi'. Based on al-Ya'qūbī's account, Daniel described that Harthama attacked Samarqand and captured or killed Rāfi'.<sup>79</sup> From these versions, it is difficult to determine the fate of Rāfi' but it is clear that the revolt was suppressed by the effort of Harthama. Shortly after that, Harthama sought permission to see al-Ma'mūn and the latter appointed him to the *ḥaras*.<sup>80</sup> The sources do not mention the dismissal of Harthama but it is clear that by 1194/809-10, Harthama was already in the *ḥaras*.

## CONCLUSION

After the establishment of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, Khurasan was ruled by the majority of Khurasani officers who played a major role in the revolution. During the caliphate of al-Rashīd, the first generation of the revolutionary armies were no longer exist and he appointed the second generation who settled in Baghdad. The policy of the early 'Abbāsid caliphs in appointing Khurasanis as the governor of Khurasan shows the importance of Khurasan to be ruled by its native that could become the representative of the central government and the local population. Al-

<sup>77</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 777; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 229.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān*, p. 305.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Ya'qūbī, *Tarīkh*, III, pp. 137-8.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh*, II, p. 777; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, VI, p. 229.

though the sources and some of modern historians described the revolts that broke out during the early 'Abbāsīd caliphate, it does not mean that Khurasan was not in order and the people were against the central government. In fact, Khurasan was generally in peace and prosperity during the early 'Abbāsīd caliph. In that sense, it shows that the 'Abbāsīd's policy over Khurasan was successful one and it is clear that the people of Khurasan preferred Khurasanis to govern Khurasan on behalf of the caliph.