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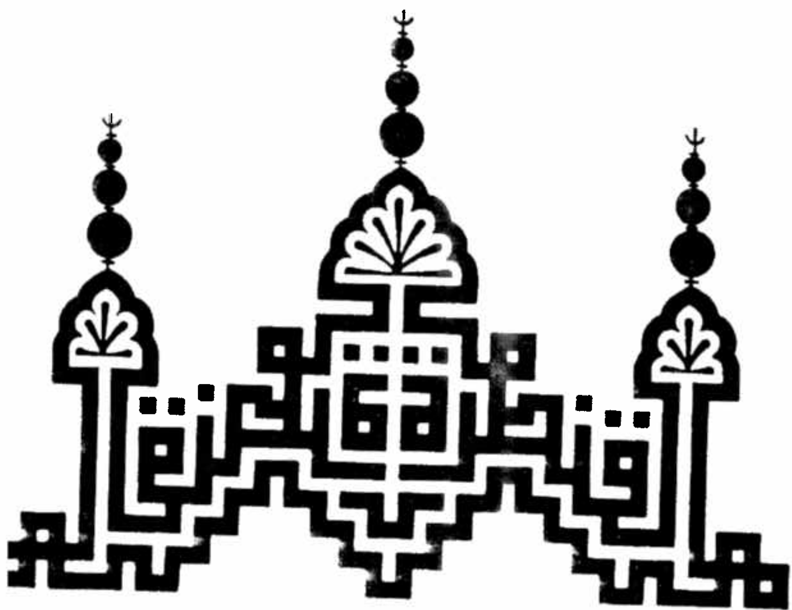

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SECCIÓN MONOGRÁFICA:

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THE GROWTH OF MILITARY INSTITUTIONS IN THE EARLY CALIPHATE AND THEIR RELATION TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITY

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It is often difficult to disentangle military from civilian aspects of the Islamic state in its early years. This is partly because both the military and the civilian functions of the first Islamic state had their beginnings in the Prophet's original religious community in the west-Arabian town of Medina (Yathrib), in which all aspects of the community's life were directed by the Prophet himself. Moreover, some individuals in that early community took part not only in rudimentary administrative activities, but in defense and raiding as well. As one scholar has put it, «In the age of the Prophet there was no distinction between society and army, since the Islamic society in Medina in its entirety was considered a fighting unit, all members of which were obligated to participate, in one way or another, in *jihād*...,»[1] (literally, «striving [in God's way]»; in particular, fighting in the Muslim armies).

One reason why the military was so prominent in the early Islamic state was because the Muslim community was engaged almost continuously in fighting external enemies from an early date—beginning shortly after the prophet's arrival in Medina. This situation continued after the Prophet's death with even greater intensity as the community embarked on the conquest and unification of Arabia (the so-called *ridda* wars), followed immediately by the early phases of the Islamic conquests outside Arabia, and the turmoil of the first and second civil

[1] Najda Khammash, *Al-Shām fī ṣadr al-islām* (Damascus, 1987), 341.

wars.[2] This meant that during its first few decades, the pressure of military necessity forced military institutions to develop rapidly, whereas other aspects of administration evolved more slowly. By the time of the early Islamic conquests and the first civil war (ca. 634-660 C.E./14-40 A.H.), the Islamic state appears in our sources essentially as a huge army accompanied by the most rudimentary civil bureaucracy. It is widely accepted, for example, that during the first few decades of Islamic rule, the conquerors co-opted the administrative cadres of the vanquished states in former Sasanian and Byzantine territories in order to staff their own tax administrations;[3] whereas the Muslim armies in this period were new creations, manned and officered almost entirely by people of Arabian origin.[4]

The rapid development of the army had some positive practical consequences for the Islamic state. To some extent, the cohesion of military institutions helped the early Islamic state weather some crises that might, otherwise, have caused it to fall apart, such as the two civil wars that raged between 656-61 and 680-92 C.E.[5] It thus behooves

[2] On the *ridda*, see Elias Shoufani, *Al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia* (Toronto, 1972), and Rajab Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Al-Ridda fī ḍaw' mafhūm jadīd* (Cairo?, 1985). On the early conquests see Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), and John W. Jandora, *The March from Medina. A Revisionist Study of the Arab Conquests* (Clifton, N. J., 1990). On the first civil war, see the relevant sections of Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* I (Chicago, 1974), Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London and New York, 1986), and G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1987). On the second civil war see especially the excellent study by Gernot Rotter, *Die Umayyaden und der zweite Bürgerkrieg (680-692)* (Wiesbaden:, 1982) [= *Abhandlungen fur die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Band XLV.3].

[3] On administrative continuity, see Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, 1984), part I (pp. 27-164), esp. 97-98; Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, *Studies in the Genesis and Early Development of the Caliphal Taxation System* (Copenhagen, 1988).

[4] On the composition of the early conquest armies, see Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 147-148, 219-220, and Appendices. The contingents of non-Arabs in the armies of the conquest era—the Iranian *asāwira*, for example, who had served in the Sasanian armies before joining the Muslims—seem to have been decidedly the minority. On them see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests* 257; Khalil Athamina, «The Private Militias during the Umayyad Period,» in Averil Cameron (ed.), *Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Late Antiquity to Early Islamic Project: States, Resources, and Armies* (Princeton, forthcoming).

[5] Ideological factors, such as a commitment to a notion of a united, indivisible Muslim government, were also very important in sustaining this cohesion. These ideological factors are discussed briefly below.

us to consider more closely the question of how the Muslim armies were able to coalesce so quickly—if, indeed, they did—and what their relation to the civil authorities of the state were.

The precise evolution of military institutions in the early Islamic state is not easy to trace, however. Given the almost complete absence of truly documentary sources for the earliest chapters of Islamic history, we are forced to turn for information mainly to retrospective narrative accounts found in chronicles of later date, and these give us precious little detail about actual military organization. Moreover, when these later sources do say things about military organization, we must be wary of anachronistic detail drawn from military institutions of later times that are projected back into the earliest Islamic period by later authors.[6] Nonetheless, these sources do convey the general impression that the Muslim armies developed very rapidly and displayed from the beginning a highly centralized organization. If we try to dispose of the difficulty posed by this apparently rapid evolution by assuming that the narrative sources exaggerate the pace and scale of the development of military institutions, we must confront an even more vexing riddle: how did the Muslims manage to carry out such extensive conquests against two great empires in the short space of a few decades while their armies were still in the early phases of formation? Do not the very scale and success of the conquests themselves stand as evidence in favor of the traditional view that the Muslim armies coalesced rapidly?[7] For this reason, it seems more plausible to assume that somehow the Muslim armies did evolve with astonishing rapidity from the small, *ad hoc* raiding parties of the prophet's day to the larger, well-organized armies described for

[6] The main historiographical study of the conquest accounts is Albrecht Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischen Geschichtsüberlieferung* (Bonn, 1967). An enlarged English edition of this work is in press: Albrecht Noth and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition. A Source-Critical Study*. Translated by Michael Bonner (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993). Even an author as dedicated to examining the tactical and organizational aspects of early Islamic military institutions as Jandora is forced to admit the serious limitations imposed by our sources: cf. *The March from Medina*, chapter 5, esp. pp. 113-120.

[7] For reasons that I have set forth elsewhere, I find unconvincing the view that considers the conquests not to have been a coordinated or conscious movement—what I term the «accidental thesis.» See «Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests,» in Averil Cameron (ed.), *Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Late Antiquity to Early Islamic Project: States, Resources, and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin Press, forthcoming).

Umayyad times, if not already for the conquests. If we wish to accept this general picture, however, we must address the question of how this rapid development could have taken place in a relatively unpromising environment.[8] In particular, we must try to answer two questions: (1) In what ways did the Muslim armies differ from pre-Islamic Arabian raiding parties? (2) Why did the military coalition forged by Muḥammad and his successors, the caliphs, not disintegrate along tribal or other lines, as previous Arabian coalitions seem to have done?[9]

To do this, we must step back briefly into the society of pre-Islamic north Arabia, into which the Islamic community was born. In pre-Islamic north Arabia, most military action consisted of tribal raids, launched by a tribe or clan to exact vengeance against another tribe, or in the hope of enriching the participants and their tribe by securing plunder or extorting tribute. Tribes sometimes formed an alliance with another tribe or tribes, and the confederates sometimes undertook joint military ventures. Characteristic features of such joint tribal campaigns were their relatively short duration, their concentration on limited and well-defined objectives that could be supported by all tribes in the confederation (such as conquest of a certain town, or securing booty), and their organization, which combined discrete contingents from each confederate group, led by its own commanders, but did not integrate the warriors from different tribes into coherent units.[10] Moreover, after the initial objective had been attained, the

[8] By «unpromising», I refer to the generally low level of political integration in western Arabia on the eve of Islam—which meant that there were few, if any, local traditions of administration, statecraft, or state ideology on which to draw. See Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, chapter 1.

[9] I wish to thank Dr. Michael Whitby of the University of St. Andrews, who made the fruitful suggestion that I consider parallels with the evolution of the armies of the early Roman republic. In doing so, I found the following readings especially suggestive: Dieter Timpe, «Das Kriegsmonopol des römischen Staates,» in Walter Eder (ed.), *Staat und Staatlichkeit in der frühen römischen Republik* (Stuttgart, 1990), 368-387; William V. Harris, «Roman Warfare in the Economic and Social Context of the Fourth Century B.C.,» in Eder, *Staat und Staatlichkeit...*, 495-510; Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army. From Republic to Empire* (Totowa, N. J., 1984); Arthur M. Eckstein, *Senate and General. Individual Decision Making and Roman Foreign Relations, 264-194 B.C.* (Berkeley, 1987).

[10] On warfare and power relationships in pre-Islamic north Arabia, see Donner, 28-49; Jandora, 7-31. Georg Jacob, *Altarabisches Beduinenleben* (Berlin, 1897; reprinted Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967), 121-136, gives an overview of bedouin warfare drawn mainly from old poetry, but it is important to remember that this picture does not

coalition usually dissolved, each tribe pursuing its own interests. The Meccans' siege of Yathrib (Medina) in their effort to chastise the prophet Muḥammad, leading to the battle of the ditch (al-Khandaq), is a typical example of this kind of military undertaking.[11]

Most of the early military campaigns of the prophet Muḥammad do not appear to have differed much in organization from these traditional patterns of Arabian warfare; generally, they were small raids against specific objectives, comparable to those of single tribes or clans of the past.[12] It is true that the participants in these raids were often men drawn from different tribes who had embraced Islam and taken up residence in Medina, but we might gloss over their diverse tribal origins by considering the new Muslim community a kind of tribe in its own right, «separate from other people» (*dūna l-nās*), in the famous phrase of the document said to be the charter for Muḥammad's new community.[13]

The Prophet's larger campaigns—for example, the expedition resulting in the conquest of Mecca in 629 A.D./8 A.H.—show many traditional features, but also show some interesting new ones. These new features make the Muslim operations look a bit more like those of the army of a state, and a bit less like a congeries of «private» forces led by individual tribal chiefs in pursuit of private (or narrowly tribal) interests.[14] Like earlier large military expeditions in north Arabia, the campaign against Mecca was based on an alliance concluded for a well-defined, limited objective, and it was composed of discrete contingents from the several tribes party to the alliance, who

represent the more developed approach to warfare found in some of the settled oases of north Arabia. The more elaborate military technology of South Arabia, which was probably known in part in the Ḥijāz towns, is described in A. F. L. Beeston, *Warfare in Ancient South Arabia (2nd-3rd Centuries A.D.)* (London, 1976).

[11] Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat rasūl Allāh (Das Leben Muhammed's)* ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1858-1860), 670, provides a list of the tribal contingents in the Meccan alliance and their commanders.

[12] On these see Ella Landau-Tasseron, «Features of the Pre-Conquest Muslim Armies: the Time of Muḥammad,» in Averil Cameron (ed.), *Proceedings of the Third Workshop of the Late Antiquity to Early Islamic Project: States, Resources, and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin Press, forthcoming).

[13] Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 341.

[14] The question of «private» warfare in early Rome, led by the various *gentes* or patrician families, and of how these private forces evolved into, or were slowly absorbed into, the «public» army of the Roman republic, has been much debated by Roman historians. A stimulating discussion is provided by Timpe, «Das Kriegsmonopol des römischen Staates.»

joined the Muslims from Medina in besieging Mecca.[15] But unlike earlier alliances, we find here the tribal contingents commanded by men of a single, dominant group—the Muslim ruling elite. Thus Khālid ibn al-Walīd—a Qurayshite tribesman of the Makhzūm clan who had converted a few years earlier and, because of his ability as a commander, had been favored with important posts by the Prophet—is reported to have commanded the right wing of the army with Aslam, Sulaym, Ghifār, Muzayna, Juhayna, and some of the bedouin tribes.[16]

It is clear from the description of the confederation assembled by the Prophet to attack Mecca that it still included discrete tribal contingents, presumably led by their tribal chiefs, but in this case each such tribal unit appears to have been closely supervised by the Muslim «high command.»

Ideological factors may also have contributed to the Prophet's ability to contruct larger, more cohesive armies than those found in pre-Islamic Arabia, such as his force sent against Mecca. First, of course, was personal commitment to the cause of Islam—a factor that we must assume to have been present and effective among some (perhaps the majority) in the army, even if it is, for both historical and psychological reasons, impossible to measure it more closely. Second, the Prophet's campaigns were distinguished from earlier tribal alliances by his claim to divinely-sanctioned authority and by the Qur'anic injunction upon believers not to kill another Muslim. The Prophet's claim to divine legitimation put him in a unique position to curb «private» inter-tribal warfare (at least among those tribes which had allied themselves to the Muslim community, or whose leadership had embraced Islam). Similarly, the Muslim duty to refrain from killing another Muslim[17] (and its counterpart, the legitimation by the Qur'an only of struggle directed outward, against non-Muslims, in order to spread the community) put in the Prophet's hands a justification for his efforts to limit inter-tribal strife. This presumably had some effect in limiting the ability of tribal chieftains

[15] Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 810 (<al-Zuhrī) and 828 lists the main tribal contingents and the numbers in each.

[16] Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, 817. The final phrase is *qabā'il min qabā'il al-'arab*. Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford, 1955), 549, translates «and other Arab tribes.»

[17] *Qur'ān* 4:92.

to engage in what were essentially «private» or tribal wars.[18] Even in cases where a tribal leader directed raids against non-Muslim groups, an effort may have made to ensure that the activities had the approval of the caliph, although the evidence on this point is often less than clear.[19] Related to this was the religious duty of every Muslim to support *jihād*, or «striving in God's way», particularly (but not only) by taking up arms to spread the faith.[20]

These ideological factors contributed not only to the cohesion of the Prophet's community and its armies, but also to the cohesion of the armies after the Prophet's death. The Prophet's claim to divine authority could not be transferred to others automatically, of course, but eventually his successors as leaders of the community, the caliphs, did claim to have similar authority at least in part.[21] It was this claim that ultimately lay at the root of what appears to be the early Muslims' deep-rooted commitment to the notion of political unity. This notion of a united Muslim government is most clearly visible during the civil wars; the contenders did not aim to set up independent domains, which they could easily have done, but rather insisted on and fought for the right to be the sole ruler of a united empire.[22] The duty of *jihād* and the injunction not to kill other Muslims could operate under the caliphs as readily as under the Prophet.

[18] The case of al-Fujā'a al-Sulamī, who during the *ridda* wars used arms given him by the caliph Abū Bakr to attack all and sundry, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, seems to be an exceptional instance where these ideological factors were unsuccessful in restraining a tribal chief who wished to raid for his own gain; the episode occasioned horrified comment in the chronicles, e.g., Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa l-mulūk* (ed. M. J. De Goeje et al., Leiden, 1879-1901) I, 1903-1904.

[19] The case of the raids by various tribes of Bakr b. Wā'il on lower Iraq—including the raids of Shaybān, led by al-Muthannā b. Ḥāritha—is complicated by conflicting reports, but suggest that the caliph either ordered the raids, or was concerned about such activity undertaken without his approval.

[20] The concept of *jihād* is well-known. For some recent essays on aspects of *jihād*, see James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay (eds.) *Cross, Crescent, and Sword* (New York, 1990), and John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson (eds.), *Just War and Jihad* (New York, 1991).

[21] The most recent extended treatment of this theme is Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge, 1987).

[22] On this see F. M. Donner, «The Formation of the Islamic State,» *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), 295. The only instance in which the political unity of the community seems to have been conceptually challenged in the early Islamic period was the so-called Saqīfa episode upon the death of the Prophet that resulted in the election of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. Once the community had decided at the Saqīfa in favor of political unity, it seems never to have reconsidered this decision, at least for well over a century.

The wars of the *ridda* or «apostasy» of Arab tribes against the Muslim regime in Medina (A.D. 632-33/11-12 A.H.) may have served as the crucial turning point in the institutional evolution of the early Islamic armies—the critical transition between the embryonic armies of the Prophet and what appear to be the full-fledged armies of the conquest era. The armies sent out by the caliph Abū Bakr to quell the *ridda* do not appear to have been much larger than the force the Prophet sent against Medina, but they are distinguished from that campaign and from earlier tribal raiding by their significantly more distant objectives and longer duration. Although the size of various forces dispatched by Abū Bakr during the *ridda* is uncertain, the Muslims clearly started out with a small core of loyal troops (mostly men of Medina, Mecca, and environs), and gathered additional recruits as they defeated successive opponents. Often these recruits were drawn from groups that had «ridden the fence» to see who would prevail when the Muslims entered their area. By the time the climatic battle of the *ridda* took place at ʿAqrabāʾ (near modern Riyāḍ), the Muslim armies had been in the field almost a year, had marched probably a thousand kilometers or more, and appear to have encompassed tribesmen from a number of different tribal groups, although the narrative sources are reticent on exactly which tribes were involved.[23] Although in absolute size and composite makeup we might view the later *ridda* campaigns as not much different from the coalition the Prophet had assembled to conquer Mecca, both the fact that an assemblage of this size was operating so far from its base of operations and the fact that it was doing so almost a year after its initial departure suggest that a new level of cohesion and integration may have been reached. These observations apply all the more strongly to the armies of the conquests in Syria and Iraq—although in the latter case, at least, the Muslim armies are not credibly described as having been much larger than the Prophet's coalition against Mecca.[24]

[23] Nomadic and settled groups are mentioned (e.g., Ṭab. I, 1946-1947), and we can assume that some were drawn from tribes in the Najd through whose territory the Muslims had marched on their way to ʿAqrabāʾ, such as Asad, Ṭayyiʾ, and Tamīm, in addition to tribesmen from Medina and its surroundings in the Ḥijāz. But these are guesses; we get no firm details.

[24] On size of the armies in the first conquest of Iraq and Syria, see Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 221.

One factor that may have contributed to the greater cohesion of the Islamic armies during and after the *ridda* campaigns was the greater availability of battlefield booty. The attraction of gaining booty had always been one of the main inducements for warriors to join tribal raids in pre-Islamic times, of course, and no doubt served also to draw some recruits into the early Islamic armies; but as the scale of the *ridda* campaigns far outstripped the scale of the usual tribal raids, warriors realized that they could do far better in the service of Medina than they could by private freebooting or in petty tribal raids. This may have given the Muslim leadership in Medina an edge in attracting warriors to, and holding them in, the Islamic armies.[25]

Another material incentive that drew soldiers into the Muslim armies rather than into private or tribal forces may have been the distribution of tracts of conquered land among the soldiers, which was to become a frequent phenomenon during the conquest era. Land grants are hardly mentioned in the accounts of the *ridda* campaigns, but the fact that in the Umayyad period some parties clearly held tracts of lands that had been seized from their former owners during the *ridda* suggests that such distributions may have begun in this period.[26]

Less tangibly, the *ridda* campaigns are portrayed as having an open-ended quality that is very different from earlier tribal raiding, with its highly specific and limited objectives. It is, of course, unclear whether this open-endedness was present from the outset of the *ridda* campaigns, or evolved gradually as each Muslim victory created an incentive to carry the campaigning against the next adversary, rather than to go back home. Indeed, it seems unlikely that the Muslims foresaw at the outset of the *ridda* that their campaigns would last an entire year or more and carry them the length and breadth of Arabia

[25] See here the parallel with Roman armies discussed by Timpe, 385.

[26] The best-known case is that of the lands in al-Yamāma that came to be the property of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān of the Umayyad clan. The presumption is that the Umayyads purchased these lands from the tribesmen who had originally been given them as part of the booty. The information is found in al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* XI (ed. W. Ahlwardt, Greifswald, 1883) [«Anonymische arabische Chronik»], 126-127. Cf. Ṭabarī II, 2554: Anṣārīs receive conquered lands in exchange for relinquishing to the state their lands in the Ḥijāz, thus enabling the Umayyads to consolidate their holdings there. Cf. the comments on the importance of colonization in Roman expansion made by Harris, 502-503.

and, ultimately, beyond. More probably, they set out initially with the specific objective of putting down the opposition movements nearest Medina; but it is not clear that they assumed they would return home once the immediate objective had been accomplished. The primordial Islamic concept of *jihād* or communal struggle against the enemies of Islam[27] may have been a crucial factor in creating a mentality of open-endedness among the Muslims embarking on the *ridda* campaigns. For, if one is committed to fighting the unbeliever until he submits, one's duty is to continue fighting until all unbelievers submit and from the point of view of the believers the world, of course, was full of them. Even the *ridda* campaigns still had a clear-cut objective, however, both politically and geographically (or ethnically): subjection by the state in Medina of all Arab tribes, including those of the Iraqi and Syrian fringes of Arabia. With the *futūḥ* or conquest campaigns, on the other hand, the Muslims seeem to have moved to a truly open-ended military venture. The ultimate war aims now had a less clear horizon or limit than was the case during the *ridda* wars, which at least enjoyed a definite ethnic boundary. We can now see the Muslims as having a definite goal only in the general sense of a commitment by the rulers to continue extending the conquests as long as it seemed prudent to do so. This is not to say that the rulers foresaw, or dreamed of, the infinite extension of Islamic rule or the eventual conquest of some particular distant region—only that they remained open to further expansion as opportunities permitted.

In terms of battlefield organization, it is tempting to assume that the *ridda* marked also the shift from less formal arrangements to a more highly structured army. The sources provide us with only the sketchiest information on military organization during the *ridda*, however, so such assumptions must remain conjectural. The descriptions of the Muslim armies during the conquests of Syria and Iraq begin to suggest the existence of an established military organization that transceded tribal lines, but it is difficult to be certain of this.[28]

[27] By «primordial» I mean that *jihād* (and *qitāl* or fighting against such enemies), both of which are amply attested in the Qur'ān, formed part of the earliest phases of the Islamic tradition. I do not share the opinion of some recent authors who wish to see the Qur'ān as a text that coalesced only slowly during the first two Islamic centuries, and I assume here that the Qur'ān is a document dating more or less to the time of the Prophet.

[28] See Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 223-226; Jandora, 113-117.

The existence of essentially tribal units—that is, groups of soldiers drawn from a single tribe—continued to be a feature of the Muslim armies long after the early conquest era, however, as accounts from the second civil war make clear.[29] The survival of such tribal contingents is hardly surprising; since personal identity in Arabian society was based primarily on identification with tribal groups, complete eradication of tribal ties was impossible, so that cohesive units could most easily be built by exploiting the tribal bond. Tribal notables are commonly described as significant figures in the early campaign forces. Men like Jarīr ibn 'Abdullāh of Bajīla, al-Muthannā ibn Ḥāritha of Shaybān, or even the notorious former rebels al-Ash'ath ibn Qays of Kinda and Ṭulayḥa ibn Khuwaylid of Asad are mentioned as leaders in their tribal groups in the armies, but their real role in the army is not clear. The conquest narratives also provide descriptions of tribal chiefs or heroes engaging in single combat against the leader of an enemy contingent. The frequency of such descriptions suggests that tribal leaders were still strongly motivated by a competitive desire for martial glory. This may imply that during the early Islamic conquests the tribal contingents were still quite intact under their leaders. They may have been merely coordinated with one another by the Muslim high command, rather than integrated into a unified army with a non-tribal structure.[30]

On the other hand, from an early date—the caliphate of 'Umar (634-644 C.E./A.H. 13-23) they see the inception of the *dīwān*, and with it, the beginnings or regular pay (*'aṭā'*) to the army. The institution of regular army pay must be considered a decisive indicator of an increasingly professional military force, one over which the state had significant control.[31]

The fact that the armies of the first Islamic state conquered vast new territories meant that for many people their first, and perhaps only, contact with that state was with the army. Moreover, the rapid pace of expansion meant that vital organizational, policing, and

[29] See Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 223; also the poem in Ṭabarī II, 493-494 (relating to A. H. 64).

[30] For a parallel from republican Rome, see Harris, 506.

[31] On the *dīwāns* and regular army pay, see Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, *Der Dīwān von 'Umar ibn al-Haṭṭāb. Ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte* (diss. Bonn, 1970), and Morony, 55-64. The inception of regular pay seems to have occurred rather late in the Roman republic: cf. Harris, 507.

tax-collecting functions in many areas, especially newly-conquered ones, were juxtaposed onto, or even an integral part of, the military units stationed in those areas—to the extent that those functions were not left in the hands of indigenous populations and bureaucrats «inherited» from the displaced regimes, who were simply supervised by a Muslim overseer. For this reason, civil and military power were in many cases inextricably intertwined, particularly from the viewpoint of the governed. The centers of Muslim rule in the conquered territories were the *amṣār* (sing. *miṣr*), which were, as their name implies, the garrison-towns of the Muslim armies.[32] But, they were also small colonies of Muslims in a sea of non-Muslim conquered peoples, islands from which radiated not only military control over the surrounding region, but also all aspects of administration and the teachings of Islam itself. Hence we can read of an *amīr al-jizya* («commander of tax») in Kufa during the second civil war,[33] or find a description of the main *amṣār* as those places to which official copies of the Qur'ān (*maṣāḥif*) were sent[34]—highlighting, in each case, the role of the *miṣr* as a center of administration and of the Islamic ethos, respectively. It seems probable, then, that most subjects of the early Islamic state, even when dealing with officials who were involved in aspects of civil administration such as tax collection, would have perceived the Muslim administration as overwhelmingly military. Indeed, the provincial governors themselves—who were, in the first instance, the commanders of the conquering armies, or their successors as head of the local garrison—seem at times to have been involved directly in some aspects of civil administration, such as the settlement of civil disputes.[35] We may even wish to see this fundamental militarization of the early

[32] See Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic. Sabaean Dialect* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 431; A. F. L. Beeston, M. A. Ghul, W. W. Müller, and J. Ryckmans, *Sabaic Dictionary* (Louvain-la-Neuve and Beirut, 1982), p. 147. On the continuing military and administrative character of the *amṣār* through the first century A.H., see Najda Khammāsh, *Al-Idāra*, 32-35. On administration in Iraq, including such arrangements as the *'irāfa*, see Morony, 51-68; Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 237-238.

[33] Ṭabarī II, 512.

[34] Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* I (ed. S. Munajjid, Damascus: Al-Majma' al-'ilmī al-'arabī, 1951), 190; in this case, the list of *amṣār* includes Mecca, Medina, Baḥrayn [=Ḥajr?], Yemen [=Ṣan'ā'?], Kufa, Basra, and Syria [=Ḥimṣ?]. Other accounts give different lists of *amṣār*: Ibn 'Asākir I, 189-191; Ṭabarī I, 2798.

[35] See Donner, «The Formation of the Islamic State», 288-289. Note that no early documentary references to an independent *qāḍī* (judge) occurs; cf. note 38 below.

Islamic state reflected in the very title given to the state's leaders, who as early as Mu'āwiya, if not before, were styled *amīr al-mu'minīn*, «commander [in the military sense] of the faithful.»[36] The very title might be taken to suggest the degree to which the whole state was conceived as a quasi-military organization.

By comparison with this rapid development of the military, the institutions of civil administration were still very small in the early decades of the Islamic state, at least if we can trust our information.[37] It is only under the caliph Mu'āwiya (661-680 C.E./41-60 A.H.) that we read for the first time of such discrete administrative bureaus as the chancery (*dīwān al-rasā'il*), office of the official seal (*dīwān al-khātam*), and taxation department (*dīwān al-kharāj*) as being distinct from the department of the army (*dīwān al-jund*).[38] Prior to this time—during the early conquest era, in other words—these administrative functions may well have been bundled together with the army, and *dīwān* for the conquest period seems to mean[39] the pay-register for troops in various provinces of the empire: hence we read simply of *dīwān al-Kūfa*, etc.

In sum, early Islamic government was one that had, for many, a decidedly military character. The first contact of many conquered peoples with Muslims, and in many cases their contact for a long period following their initial subjugation, was with the army or its agents. The army was, as we have seen, the largest component of the early state, far outnumbering through the Umayyad period the civil bureaucratic departments.

Despite the prominence and rapid growth of the army in the early Islamic state, it seems that this army was, ironically, at least partially under the control or supervision of civil administrators, and that in many crucial ways the military was not in control of the government

[36] That Mu'āwiya was so styled is documented in a dated inscription: see George Miles, «Early Islamic Inscriptions near Ṭā'if in the Ḥijāz,» *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7 (1948), 236-242. In the narrative sources for the early period, this title is routinely applied to all early caliphs.

[37] The main source used her is al-Jahshiyārī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa l-kuttāb* (ed. M. al-Saqqā', I. al-Ibyārī, and 'A. Shalabī, Cairo, 1938). Cf. Morony, 51-54 (tax administration), 64-66 (chancery), 66-68 (seal).

[38] Jahshiyārī, 21-23. It is noteworthy that al-Jahshiyārī makes no mention of a separate «judicial branch» (*qaḍā'*), from which we can perhaps deduce that judicial functions were carried out by the *amīr*. Cf. note 35 above.

[39] At least for Jahshiyārī.

at all, even from the outset. The first bureaucratic organization of the Islamic state of which we have mention in traditional sources—the *dīwān* in Medina—was originally created not for military purposes, but to manage the distribution of booty wealth to various categories of recipients. That is, it was a device for fiscal administration. It is true that the overwhelming bulk of monies allocated by the *dīwān* went to soldiers serving in the Muslim armies, and because most of the original *dīwān*'s activity was focused on the army, the *dīwān* has often been associated almost exclusively with the army. But, essentially the *dīwān* was part of the treasury administration; to the extent that it was involved in the affairs of the army, therefore, it represented a kind of civilian control over, or management of the military. The regional or provincial *dīwāns* were also designed to manage the military.[40]

Another indication that the military was not in control of the government of the early Islamic state is the fact that the path to the caliphate was not always, or even usually, by way of military commands.[41] Caliphs were not usually former generals; and in the early Islamic period, at least, most generals simply left office and retired. The criteria for accession to the caliphate seem to have been defined for most Muslims fairly early, along genealogical lines that excluded all but members of the Quraysh.[42] In the early Islamic state, leading the army and leading the state were not part of the same political circuit. Viceroys were powerful in some provinces, to be sure; a governor such as al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, who in his day controlled the whole eastern half of the empire with an iron hand, was certainly a military and political figure of great power—but never presented himself as, or was presented as, a contender for the caliphate. As a member of the tribe of Thaqīf, he was simply ineligible.

Another indicator of the ultimate civil control over the army in the early Islamic state is the fact that taxation and military functions were usually put in the hands of different individuals by the govern-

[40] See Morony, 55-64; Puin.

[41] In this respect, the early Islamic state was quite different from the early Roman state; under the republic, successful military leaders often became consuls, a pattern that became more pronounced, if anything, under the empire. See Eckstein, *Senate and General*, 323-324.

[42] There were, of course, dissenters from this view, notably the Khawārij, who claimed that the caliphate should be in the hands of the most pious Muslim regardless of family or social status.

ment. Even as early as the caliphate of ʿUthmān (644-656 C.E.), the caliph could order the conqueror of Egypt, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, to relinquish the administration of taxes to another official.[43] In other provinces, the normal arrangement from the time of the conquest on seems to have been that one person was appointed to administer taxes, another to command the Muslim armies there, whose duties included both keeping local order and, in appropriate provinces, organizing military campaigns to expand the borders of the empire.

The continued survival of essentially «tribal» units in the army, which we noted above, may be taken to imply that the army was less strictly «centralized» than the chronicles, with their idealizing and centralizing view, would have us believe. But the crucial fact here is not the survival of tribally-recruited or tribally-organized units, but whether these units were subordinated to some higher command. The conquest narratives always present the armies as having been under the command of a general or governor, often from Quraysh or one of the groups closely allied with it in the ruling elite of the new state. Even during the collapse of unified central authority that marked the first civil war, we do not find independent «tribal» armies emerging to fight one another. The armies that fought in that conflict were regional forces (e.g., Iraqi vs. Syrian), each following a particular claimant to the caliphate (ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya, respectively), and composed of many tribes, a good number of which were represented on both sides.

Despite the undeniable prominence of the army in the early Islamic state in the administration of its newly-won territories, then, it appears that the uppermost echelons of power remained firmly in civilian hands. In other words, the early Islamic state was in most ways a military regime, but one under civilian control.

ABSTRACT

The historical conditions under which the early Islamic community crystallized into a state resulted in the rapid development of military institutions. The article reviews factors that contributed to the rapid coalescence of

[43] ʿAmr refused to retain only the military half of the administration and resigned from his governorship. On this point see Donner, «Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy.»

military institutions, and indicators of greater integration of these military institutions when compared with pre-Islamic raiding parties. The *ridda* wars are seen as a crucial stage in this development. Although the evidence provided by the Arabic narrative sources is tenuous, it suggests that military institutions developed more rapidly than civilian institutions (e.g. tax administration, judicial administration, etc.), and at times even performed certain functions in the place of civilian institutions during the early caliphate. Ironically, these military institutions appear to have been rather firmly controlled by a civilian elite in the early Islamic state.

RESUMEN

Las condiciones históricas bajo las cuales la comunidad islámica temprana cristalizó en un estado resultaron en el rápido desarrollo de sus instituciones militares. Este artículo revisa los factores que contribuyeron a este desarrollo y los indicadores de una mayor integración de estas instituciones militares cuando se comparan con las expediciones pre-islámicas. Las guerras de *ridda* son cruciales en este proceso. Aunque la evidencia proporcionada por las fuentes narrativas árabes es tenue, sugiere que las instituciones militares se desarrollaron más rápidamente que las civiles (administración fiscal o judicial, etcétera) y que incluso en ocasiones desempeñaron funciones correspondientes a las instituciones civiles en los primeros tiempos del califato. Sin embargo, estas instituciones militares parecen haber estado firmemente controladas por una elite civil.