

# THE ARMIES OF THE ṢAFFĀRIDS

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## I

It is not too much to describe the Ṣaffārids of Sīstān as an archetypal military dynasty. In the later years of the third/ninth century, their empire covered the greater part of the non-Arab eastern Islamic world. In the west, Ya‘qūb b. al-Laith’s army was only halted at Dair al-Āqūl, 50 miles from Baghdad; in the north, Ya‘qūb and his brother ‘Amr campaigned in the Caspian coastlands against the local ‘Alids, and ‘Amr made serious attempts to extend his power into Khwārazm and Transoxania; in the east, the two brothers pushed forward the frontiers of the *Dār al-Islām* into the pagan borderlands of what are now eastern Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier region of West Pakistan; and in the south, Ṣaffārid authority was acknowledged even across the Persian Gulf in ‘Umān.<sup>1</sup> This impressive achievement was the work of two soldiers of genius, Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr, and lasted for little more than a quarter of a century. It began to crumble when in 287/900 the Sāmānid Amīr Ismā‘il b. Aḥmad defeated and captured ‘Amr b. al-Laith, and 11 years later, the core of the empire, Sīstān itself, was in Sāmānid hands. Yet such was the effect in Sīstān of the Ṣaffārid brothers’ achievement, and the stimulus to local pride and feeling which resulted from it, that the Ṣaffārids returned to power there in a very short time. For several more centuries they endured and survived successive waves of invaders of Sīstān—the Ghaznavids, the Seljūqs, the Mongols—and persisted down to the establishment of the Ṣafavid state in Persia.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the constituting of the empire of the early Ṣaffārids marks a clear break with the preceding history of the Caliphate. Other families, like the Aghlabids in Ifriqiyya and the Tāhirids in Persia, had already established hereditary and virtually autonomous lines in the provinces which they were governing on behalf of the Caliphs. But these governors, and likewise Aḥmad b. Tūlūn a little later, were all careful to respect the constitutional doctrine that their power was only a delegated one, and were assiduous in placing the ‘Abbāsids’ name before their own in the *khuṭba* and on the coinage. Thus it is

<sup>1</sup> This fact is unmentioned in the written sources, but there exists a dirham of 295/907–8 minted in ‘Umān and acknowledging the Amīr Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr; a further dirham, dated 290/903, was mentioned by Markov (R. Vasmer, ‘Über die Münzen der Ṣaffāriden und ihrer Gegner in Fārs und Ḫurāsān’, *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, LXIII, 1930, 152–3, No. 80).

<sup>2</sup> Virtually our only sources for these later Ṣaffārids are a brief section in Jūzjāni’s *Tabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (ed. ‘Abd al-Hayy Ḥabībī, Kabul, 1342–3/1963–4, 1, 275–85, tr. H. G. Raverty, London, 1881–99, 1, 183–202), where he calls them ‘the kings of Nimrūz’, and the *Iḥyā’ al-mulūk* of the Ṣaffārid descendant Shāh Ḥusain b. Malik Ghīyāth al-Dīn (recently edited by Manūchihr Sitūda, Tehran, 1344/1965).

dubious whether we should consider these lines of governors as fully independent dynasties.<sup>3</sup>

Ya'qūb and 'Amr, for their part, had little respect for these constitutional ideas and did not hesitate openly to display their contempt for the Caliphs. They would at times obtain investiture diplomas for their territories, and would send tribute to Iraq, but this was only because it suited their purpose. In 265/879, at the opening of his amirate, 'Amr sought a *manshūr* from al-Mu'tamid in return for an annual tribute of 20,000,000 dirhams; 'Amr knew that Caliphal approval would have a significant moral effect in so strongly orthodox a province as Khurāsān, where the '*ulamā'* were influential and *ghāzī* elements numerous.<sup>4</sup> 'Amr also publicized his campaigns against the 'Alids of Tabaristān and against the pagans of eastern Afghanistan, sending rich and exotic presents from the plunder taken there. Yet Ya'qūb and 'Amr were always aware that it was naked force, and not moral considerations, which underlay their power. In an anecdote given by Nizām al-Mulk, Ya'qūb boasts to the Caliph's envoy of his humble origins and of his achievement of power through his own valour, and not through birth, as had the 'Abbāsids. When in 285/898 'Amr received from al-Mu'tadid's envoy the investiture patent for Transoxania, he exclaimed, 'What am I to do with this? This province can only be wrested from Ismā'il b. Ahmad's hands by the aid of 100,000 drawn swords'.<sup>5</sup> It is also said that 'Amr was the first provincial ruler to place his own name in the *khutba*, until then only read in the name of the Caliph, but the narrative of the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān* and other sources such as Narshakhi show that Ya'qūb placed his own name in the *khutba* of his territories from c. 253/867 onwards.<sup>6</sup> There are, indeed, abundant signs that the Caliphs and the Šaffārids never trusted each other for a moment. The investiture diplomas were swiftly cancelled when Šaffārid fortunes drooped, when there still seemed chances of restoring the dispossessed Tāhirids to Khurāsān, or when the rising power of the orthodox and obedient Sāmānid could be set against the Šaffārids. For his part, Ya'qūb emphatically expressed his mistrust and hatred of the 'Abbāsids: 'He used often to say that the 'Abbāsids had based their rule on wrong-doing and trickery — "Haven't you seen what they did to Abū Salama, Abū Muslim, the Barmakī family, and al-Fadl b. Sahl, despite everything which these men had done on

<sup>3</sup> See the comments regarding the constitutional position of the Tāhirids by E. von Zambaur in his 'Contributions à la numismatique orientale: monnaies inédites ou rares des dynasties musulmanes de la collection de l'auteur', *Wiener Numismatische Zeitschrift*, xxxvii, 1905, 119 ff., and also those of O. Grabar, *The coinage of the Tūlūnids* (American Numismatic Society Notes and Monographs, No. 139), New York, 1957, 51–6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Malik al-Shu'arā' Bahār, Tehran, 1314/1935, 234; cf. Ṭabarī, ed. de Goeje and others, iii, 1932; Ibn al-Athir, ed. Tornberg, vii, 226; Gardizi, *Zain al-akhbār*, ed. M. Nāzim, Berlin, 1928, 14, ed. Sa'id Nafisi, Tehran, 1333/1954, 115.

<sup>5</sup> Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*, ch. iii, ed. H. Darke, Tehran, 1340/1962, 24, tr. *idem*, *The book of government or rules for kings*, London, 1960, 18–19; Gardizi, ed. Nāzim, 18, ed. Nafisi, 118; Ibn Khallikān, tr. de Slane, iv, 326–7.

<sup>6</sup> cf. W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*, London, 1928, 220, citing Ibn Mu'in, *Firdaus al-tawārikh*; and R. Levy, *The social structure of Islam*, Cambridge, 1957, 370.

the dynasty's behalf? Let no one ever trust them!'''<sup>7</sup> It is very likely that the anti-Caliphal attitude of the Ṣaffārid Amīrs, and their unashamed proclamation of the superiority of force over the ethical values which were supposed to underpin the temporal authority delegated by God to man, account for the hostility shown towards them in almost all the Sunnī Muslim sources.<sup>8</sup>

## II

The dominant motive behind Ya'qūb's actions, in addition to this hatred of the 'Abbāsids, seems to have been a sheer love of military conquest. The sources show an unusual interest in Ya'qūb's personal character, indicative of the impression which his military and imperialist ventures made on contemporary Islam. They agree that Ya'qūb's nature was an introspective one, and that he revealed his inner thoughts to no man. He spent most of his time in seclusion from his retainers, and made all decisions without reference to anyone else. Normally, only his brothers and his aide-de-camp (given by Mas'ūdī the title of *al-'Azīz*), who had his tent just behind Ya'qūb's own one, had direct access to his presence. He rarely smiled or laughed, and the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān* specifically comments on an occasion when Ya'qūb was actually moved to merriment. His sole amusement, it was said, lay in watching the training and play (which included such things as mock battles) of his young slaves.<sup>9</sup>

Ya'qūb was therefore an utterly dedicated military commander, whose genius in this field has not been given due acknowledgement.<sup>10</sup> His lowly beginnings as a coppersmith had inured him to a life without luxuries, and he never acquired a taste for these. By his simple way of life, he set an example to the rest of his troops, discouraging the accumulation of impedimenta which would encumber his army on the march and detract from its mobility. He slept on an old saddle-cloth, resting his head on a shield and using a rolled-up banner as his pillow. His food is described as rough-and-ready (*alwān għalīza*), and consisted of the staples of Sīstān diet: barley bread, rice, leeks, onions, asafoetida, and fish. According to Mas'ūdī, 20 sheep were killed in the army camp each day and cooked in five great brass cauldrons. Ya'qūb partook of this mutton, together with *khabīṣa* (a jellied concoction made of grape juice or dates

<sup>7</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 267-8.

<sup>8</sup> The *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*—almost a special history of the Ṣaffārids, since a third of the whole book is devoted to them—is an exception to this rule of hostility. Also, Mas'ūdī's Shi'i sympathies inclined him to give a more balanced picture; it is unfortunate that the fuller account of the careers of Ya'qūb and 'Amr, which he gave in his *Akhbār al-zamān* and *Kitāb al-ausat* (cf. *Murūj al-dhahab*, ed. and tr. Barbier de Meynard, VIII, 55), has not survived.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 50-1; *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 270 (another occasion when Ya'qūb, described as usually 'stern-faced' (*turush-rūy*) smiled, is mentioned by Ibn Funduq, *Ta'rīkh-i Baihaq*, ed. Ahmad Bahmanyār, Tehran, 1317/1938, 152).

<sup>10</sup> Except perhaps by Nöldeke, in his classic essay 'Yakūb the Coppersmith, and his dynasty', in *Sketches from Eastern history*, Edinburgh, 1892, 176-200, at pp. 188-9, where he considers Ya'qūb as an outstanding general and describes briefly the organization of his armies.

and starch) and *falūdhaj* (a dessert of starch and honey), and the rest was divided amongst his personal slaves and retainers.<sup>11</sup>

Ya'qūb maintained a strict discipline within the army. When he was campaigning in Ṭabaristān against the 'Alid *Dā'i al-Kabīr* al-Hasan b. Zaid, Caliphal envoys accompanying Ya'qūb's army were amazed at this discipline, for Ya'qūb was able to prevent his soldiers from plundering anything at all from al-Hasan's camp after the latter had fled in defeat. Mas'ūdī also describes how once when campaigning in Fārs, Ya'qūb gave a sudden order for the beasts to stop pasturing and prepare to move; a man immediately snatched the fodder from his horse's mouth. Furthermore, a high officer came rushing up in an emergency naked except for his armour; he had been bathing his body when the call to arms had sounded. Ya'qūb was fearless in war. A great scar down his cheek was the legacy of a serious wound suffered whilst fighting the Khawārij. The blow cut away part of his face, so that it had to be sewn back and Ya'qūb fed for 20 days through a tube into his mouth; he nevertheless carried on fighting. His opponent in the Caspian provinces, al-Hasan b. Zaid, called him *al-Sandān* 'the Anvil' on account of his fortitude in battle.<sup>12</sup> The ardour of the Saffārid army under his inspired leadership was recognized even by his opponents. The Sāmānid Ibrāhīm b. Ilyās b. Asad, Commander-in-Chief of the army of Khurāsān for Muḥammad b. Tāhir, was expelled from Harāt in 253/867 and then defeated in battle at Pūshang by Ya'qūb. He retreated to Nishāpūr, and advised Muḥammad to conciliate the Saffārid: 'It is pointless trying to fight against this man. He has an army which inspires terror, and the soldiers have no compunction about killing. They fight effortlessly and without regard for anything; they have no other occupation in life but wielding the sword, and one might well say that they have been brought up from very birth for warfare. Moreover, the Khawārij have joined up with Ya'qūb and placed themselves under his command (see below, pp. 541 ff.). The wisest course would be for you to conciliate him, in order to ward off the evil effects of him and his Khārijī troops, for he is a determined man, skilled in the art of leadership, with essentially the outlook of a *ghāzi*'.<sup>13</sup> The capture of the Tāhirid capital Nishāpūr in 259/873 caused an important group of local commanders and soldiers of fortune in Khurāsān—including Aḥmad b. 'Abdullāh al-Khujistānī, later to be the Saffārids' rival for control of Khurāsān—to submit to Ya'qūb, and some of them entered his service permanently.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, 'Amr's military abilities emerge from the history of his campaignings and eventual triumph over a series of rivals for power in Khurāsān.

<sup>11</sup> *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 52–4; *Siyāsat-nāma*, ch. iii, ed. Darke, 24, tr., 18; Ibn Khallikān, tr., IV, 321.

<sup>12</sup> *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 46–7, 51–2; Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 226; Ibn Khallikān, tr., IV, 304.

<sup>13</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 208–9.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 224–5. These men are called here 'the *Sālūkān* of Khurāsān', and the editor Bahār is surely right to see in the Persian *sālūk* an origin from Arabic *su'lūk* 'vagabond, desperado, brigand'; but the inclusion amongst these *sālūkān* making peace with Ya'qūb of the aristocratic Sāmānid Ibrāhīm b. Ilyās b. Asad suggests that the Persian word had a less pejorative meaning than the Arabic term.

Ibn Khallikān, quoting the historian of Khurāsān Sallāmī (whose lost *Ta'rīkh wulāt Khurāsān* was also an important source for Gardizi's information on the Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids), emphasizes 'Amr's administrative and organizational skill in regard to his army, his care that it was regularly paid and that its equipment, mounts, and weapons were always in good fighting trim (see further, below, pp. 549–50).<sup>15</sup>

### III

It is well known that Ya'qūb b. al-Laith first came to prominence initially as a rank-and-file member, and then as a leader, of one of the bands of volunteers or vigilantes which had arisen in Sīstān and Bust to combat the local Khawārij.<sup>16</sup> These are designated in the sources as *muṭṭawwi'a*,<sup>17</sup> or, with a rather more condemnatory shade of meaning, as '*ayyārūn*'.<sup>18</sup> Exactly what was the social composition of these '*ayyārs*', and exactly what was the common purpose or motivation, the '*asabiyah*', which bound them together, are things which we would very much like to know. Though ostensibly standing for law and order, and on the side of Sunnī orthodoxy against the Khārijī sectaries, they were more often than not a turbulent, even a revolutionary element in the social and political structure of Sīstān, above all in such towns as Zarang and Bust. A life of irresponsibility, combined with a little brigandage, would always appeal to the bolder spirits and vagabonds of society; but the ranks of the '*ayyārs*' must also have been swelled by such groups as landless or runaway peasants and by former soldiers and *ghāzīs* (a soldier who had been contemptuously discharged as too old for active service led an '*ayyār*' revolt in Sīstān against the Sāmānid s, see below, p. 539). We need to view the '*iyyāra*' of Sīstān as part of a social phenomenon common to much of the central and eastern part of the medieval Islamic world, above all, to its towns, where social ferment was most marked; the Sīstān '*ayyārs*' must accordingly be linked with the *fityān*, *ahdāth*, *runūd*, *shuttār*, etc. of other towns and regions. Much fascinating material on these

<sup>15</sup> Gardizi, ed. Nāzim, 15–16, ed. Nafisi, 116–17; Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 322.

<sup>16</sup> For the background of the Khārijī activity in Sīstān and eastern Iran, see Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs, from the Islamic conquest to the rise of the Ṣaffārids (30–250/651–864)* (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente. Centro Studi e Scavi Archeologici in Asia. Reports and Memoirs, xi), Rome, 1968, 87 ff.

<sup>17</sup> <*muṭṭawwi'a* 'those who perform a supererogatory or gratuitous act, those who exceed what is obligatory on themselves in fighting'. Cf. Lane, *Arabic-English lexicon*, s.v., and Sam'āni, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, facsimile text, London, 1912, f. 534a, s.v. 'al-Muṭṭawwi'i': 'This *nisba* comes from *al-muṭṭawwi'a*. These are the people who devote themselves to holy warfare and raiding, who station themselves in *ribāṭs* along the frontiers, who assume the duty of raiding and who hurl themselves against the enemies in the lands of disbelief, because they regard all these things as obligatory upon themselves; then they return home'.

<sup>18</sup> '*A'ir* and the frequentative form '*ayyār*' have the basic meaning of 'someone who (or some animal which) goes to and fro or circulates about, briskly and energetically', hence also 'sharp-witted, keen', cf. Lane, s.v. In early Arabic usage it can be used either in an approbatory or a condemnatory manner, but later comes to be applied to rogues, vagabonds, bandits, and those who live by their wits in general, with a depreciatory overtone.

bands has been assembled and analysed by Cl. Cahen,<sup>19</sup> but a great deal about them remains a puzzle.

Ya'qūb entered the service of the leader of the volunteers of Bust, Ṣāliḥ b. al-Nadr (or al-Naṣr) al-Kinānī. According to the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān* (admittedly a source hostile to Ṣāliḥ and partial towards the Ḫaffārids), when Ṣāliḥ was recognized as Amīr of Bust in Muḥarram 238/June–July 852, 'all the strength of his army came from Ya'qūb b. al-Laith and the 'ayyārs of Sīstān'.<sup>20</sup> However, there are indications in the other sources that the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān* inflates Ya'qūb's importance at this time. When in Jumādā II/October 858 Ṣāliḥ lost the amirate of Sīstān, it was not Ya'qūb who succeeded to power there immediately, but another military leader, Dirham b. al-Nadr (or al-Naṣr). Ya'qūb's turn did not come till nearly three years later, when he was hailed as Amīr in Zarang in Muḥarram 247/April 861.<sup>21</sup>

Hence it was the 'ayyārs who formed the backbone of Ya'qūb's personal force when he first came to power. The 'ayyārs had for some time been one of the two dynamic groups in the political life of Sīstān (the other being that of the Khawārij), and were to remain so for at least two centuries to come. In particular, the 'ayyārs were always the spear-head of local resistance in Sīstān against the domination of outside powers. This was seen in the early years of the tenth century, when the Sāmānid s occupied Sīstān in 298/911, deposing and carrying off into captivity the Ḫaffārid princes Muḥammad and Mu'addal b. 'Alī b. al-Laith. In 299/911–12 one Muḥammad b. Hurmuz, called Maulā Ṣandali, raised the 'ayyārs of the villages on the eastern side of the Zirih lake and led a movement for the restoration of the young Ḫaffārid 'Amr b. Ya'qūb b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. al-Laith, apparently the only survivor then in Sīstān of the direct lines of Ya'qūb or 'Amr. The Sāmānid s suppressed the rebellion in 301/913, and the 'ayyār leaders were executed in Samarcand; but less than a year later, the 'ayyārs of this same district killed the deputy of the Caliphal governor al-Faḍl b. Ḥamīd, who at this point had managed for a brief while to restore 'Abbāsid authority in Sīstān. Again, in 304/917 'ayyār support was decisive for the proclamation as Amīr in Zarang of a local commander, Kathīr b. Aḥmad b. Shahfūr, and in the following year, Kathīr's forces defeated an army sent out by the Caliphal governor in Fārs, Badr b. 'Abdullāh al-Hammāmī.<sup>22</sup> When a century later Sīstān came under Ghaznavid rule, the 'ayyārs led local opposition to the alien invaders. Mas'ūd of Ghazna's 'āmil or civil governor in Sīstān, 'Azīz b. Muḥammad Fūshanjī, and the military commander Qaḍā', took draconian measures against them: 'The turbulence caused by the 'ayyārs now decreased because the Ḥajib [Qaḍā'] had several people torn in half. Then 'Azīz arrested the sarhangs and flogged them, and either beheaded their leaders

<sup>19</sup> In his *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge*, Leiden, 1959 (originally in *Arabica*, v–vi, 1958–9).

<sup>20</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 192.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 112–18.

<sup>22</sup> Gardīzī, ed. Nāzīm, 23–4; *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 297–301, 303–4, 306–7; Ibn al-Aṭhīr, viii, 52–3, 77.

(*naqībān*) or had them torn in half. Through these exemplary measures, things were brought under control. He also levied heavy fines and mulcts on the *sarhangs* of the capital (sc. Zarang) and on the prominent men of the country districts (*mihtarān-i rūstā*).<sup>23</sup>

Mention of the *sarhangs* raises a further problem, that of the relation of these *sarhangs* to the '*ayyārs*'. In modern Persian, *sarhang* denotes the military rank of colonel, and one possibility is that these *sarhangs* of Sistān were officers or leaders amongst the general body of '*ayyārs*'. It is certain, from the passage of the *Ta'rīkh-i Sistān* cited above and from other mentions in the sources, that the *sarhangs* had a higher rank or position amongst the military than the mass of '*ayyārs*'. In his section on the early career of Ya'qūb b. al-Laith, Gardīzī says that 'He passed from the trade of coppersmith to being an '*ayyār*', and then became busy with robbery and brigandage on the roads. Then he became a *sarhang* and acquired a body of cavalry, and in this way, gradually attained the position of *amīr*. First of all, he held the position of *sarhang* of Bust under Naṣr b. Ṣalīḥ [read Ṣalīḥ b. Naṣr], and then rose to be *Amīr* of Sistān'.<sup>24</sup> In the account of Ya'qūb's negotiations with the Khawārij of Sistān, the position or rank of *sarhang* appears as one between that of a one-horse trooper and an *amīr*.<sup>25</sup> Among the elements of the army giving allegiance in 311/923 to the *Amīr* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Laith, a descendant in the female line from Ya'qūb and 'Amr b. al-Laith, are enumerated 'the *Mawālī*, the *Sarhangān*, and the *Āzādagān*'. The editor of the text of the *Ta'rīkh-i Sistān*, Malik al-Shu'arā' Bahār, glossed these *sarhangs* as being 'freed slaves, leaders of the mob, and the hardy and brave one-horse troopers',<sup>26</sup> but this seems to be pure conjecture. The supporters of Tāhir b. Khalaf b. Aḥmad, who were besieging the *Amīr* Khalaf himself in the fortress of Tāq near Zarang in 391/1001, are described as 'the army, the *sarhangs*, the '*ayyārs*, and the town mob'.<sup>27</sup> If any conclusion can be drawn from these citations, it would appear that the *sarhangs* were a group separate from the '*ayyārs* in general, but perhaps recruited in part from '*ayyārs* who had shown outstanding leadership qualities or prowess in battle.

#### IV

The *Āzādagān* 'free men' mentioned as a constituent element of the Ḫaffārid forces of the early fourth/tenth century were doubtless free soldiers of good family, the sons of *dihqāns* and landowners, and other adventurous spirits attracted by the rich opportunities for plunder furnished by the early Ḫaffārid

<sup>23</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sistān*, 363; cf. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, their empire in Afghanistan and eastern Iran*, Edinburgh, 1963, 89–90.

<sup>24</sup> Gardīzī, ed. Nāzim, 11, ed. Nafīsī, 112.

<sup>25</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sistān*, 205; the complete passage is given below.

<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 312, n. 1.

<sup>27</sup> ibid., 349.

campaigns. According to Mas'ūdī, Ya'qūb had a fixed procedure for the admission of recruits into his army. When a man presented himself before the Amīr, his skill at handling weapons was tested and he was questioned about his antecedents and previous service with other commanders. If Ya'qūb was satisfied with him, the recruit was required to hand over all his own equipment, his weapons and his mount ; these were sold by an official specially charged with this duty and the resulting sum was credited to the recruit in the *Dīwān*. He then received a completely new set of equipment, clothing, provisions, etc., from the Amīr, and was supplied with mounts and beasts of burden from the Amīr's stable. If he was dismissed or left Ya'qūb's service, he had to return all these, but received back from the *Dīwān* his original wealth deposited there, together with any excess of pay which he had earned.<sup>28</sup>

## V

As was noted above, Ya'qūb's career began as one of the volunteers and 'ayyārs who were combating the Khawārij in Sīstān. In the pre-Saffārid period, leadership in the fight against these sectaries had often devolved on the 'ayyārs by reason of the Arab governors' military ineffectiveness in Sīstān. The leader of the 'ayyārs of Bust, Shālih b. al-Naḍr, came to Zarang in 239/854 protesting to the governor Ibrāhīm b. al-Huḍain al-Qūsī, on behalf of the Tāhirids, and to the orthodox '*ulamā'* and *fugahā'*, that his sole quarrel was with the Khawārij, who had killed his brother Ghassān b. al-Naḍr.<sup>29</sup> When he was himself acclaimed Amīr of Sīstān in 247/861, Ya'qūb immediately plunged into continuous warfare with the Khawārij, who were masters of much of the countryside around Zarang. An attack by the Khārijī commander Asadūya on one of the gates of Zarang, the Dar-i Ta'ām, was driven off by Ya'qūb in 249/863. Two years later, in 251/865, Ya'qūb defeated the leader of the Sīstān Khawārij, 'Ammār b. Yāsir, at Nishak, killing 'Ammār ; after this, 'the Khawārij all became discomfited and fled to the hills of Isfizār and the valley of Hindqānān'.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these onslaughts on the Khawārij, there was a certain ambivalence in Ya'qūb's attitude towards them. Certain of the orthodox Sunnī sources, hostile to the Saffārids, imply that Ya'qūb had himself been a Khārijī in his youth, and it is quite possible that the line between 'ayyār bands and Khārijī bands was not always a completely hard and fast one. Nizām al-Mulk, obsessed as he was by the threat to the fabric of the Great Seljūq empire from the extremist Shi'i Assassins, even makes Ya'qūb a convert to Ismā'īlism.<sup>31</sup> The Khawārij were one of the most vigorous elements in the population of Sīstān, and their traditional martial qualities and their willingness to fight to the death for their exclusivist beliefs, made a total victory over them difficult to achieve.

<sup>28</sup> *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 47-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 195-7.

<sup>30</sup> ibid., 205, 207, cf. also 209.

<sup>31</sup> *Siyāsat-nāma*, ch. iii, ed. Darke, 20, tr., 15.

Ya'qūb was realist enough to see that a policy of conciliation and the diversion of Khārijī energies into external expansion might well be the solution to the problem of the Khawārij in Sīstān. Hence we can discern how, side by side with the suppression of minor Khārijī outbreaks, a programme of conciliation was put into effect.

As soon as he became Amīr of Sīstān, says the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, ‘Ya'qūb sent a messenger to the Khārijī leader ‘Ammār saying, “The burden of leadership which you have taken upon your shoulders was previously borne by Ḥamza b. ‘Abdullāh<sup>32</sup> in such a way that he never made an attack on this city (sc. Zarang) and never harmed any of the people of Sīstān. His quarrel was with the official representatives of the government, whereas you act in an oppressive way. The Sagzī people were perfectly safe from him. The governorship of Sīstān was in the hands of outsiders, but the population of Sīstān was left in peace because of [the governors' pre-occupation with] Ḥamza's rebellion. After this came the time of Bū Ishāq and Bā ‘Auf,<sup>33</sup> and their warriors (reading *ghuzāt-ishān*, as suggested by Bahār) were occupied with warfare in the lands of unbelief. Now things have a different complexion : if you want to bring about peace, put away thoughts of setting yourself up as a Commander of the Faithful [of the Khawārij],<sup>34</sup> and come and link your army with us. For we have striven with a good resolution, that we shall never deliver Sīstān into anyone else's hands again ; and if God Most High grants us His assistance, we shall promote the interests and prosperity of Sīstān as far as we possibly can. If, on the other hand, you reject this proposal, then nevertheless, do not oppress anyone in Sīstān, and follow the example of the earlier generations of Khawārij”. ‘Ammār sent the reply that he would look into the proposal, but meanwhile, he would not harm Ya'qūb or any of his subjects any further’. Ya'qūb's overtures did not, it seems, ultimately commend themselves to ‘Ammar. Ya'qūb had to march against him four years later, and ‘Ammār's head was exposed on the walls of Zarang by the Dar-i Ta'ām and his body suspended upside down at the Dar-i Ākār.<sup>35</sup>

However, Ya'qūb's appeal may not have gone unheeded by others of the Khawārij. In the year following his message to ‘Ammār, sc. in 248/862, Ya'qūb sent letters to the leaders of the Khawārij through the intermediary of his commander Azhar b. Yahyā b. Zuhair b. Farqad. As a result, 1,000 of the

<sup>32</sup> Referring to Ḥamza b. ‘Abdullāh or b. Ādhārak, leader of the great Khārijī rebellion in Sīstān and eastern Iran, which lasted for over 30 years till Ḥamza's own death in 213/828 and which more than anything else weakened severely the Caliphal control of those regions. See G. Scarcia, ‘Lo scambio di lettere tra Hārūn al-Rashid e Ḥamza al-Ḥāriji secondo il “Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān”’, *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, NS, XIV, [2], 1964 (‘Scritti in onore di Laura Vecchia Vagliari, II’), 623–45, and Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 91–104.

<sup>33</sup> sc. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhim b. ‘Umair al-Jāshānī and Abū ‘Auf b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. (?) Bazi', who succeeded Ḥamza as leaders of the Khawārij, see *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 180 ff.

<sup>34</sup> In his correspondence with the ‘Abbāsid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashid, Ḥamza described himself as ‘the Servant of God Ḥamza, Commander of the Faithful’; see Scarcia, art. cit., 635, 641, and Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 98.

<sup>35</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 202–3, 207.

Khawārij came over to Ya‘qūb’s side. He gave their leaders robes of honour, and promised that he would promote those who were *sarhangs* to amīrs and those who were one-horse troopers to *sarhangs*, and would make the infantrymen into cavalry troopers. He also promised favour or promotion for every soldier in whom he noted some special skill or act of valour. The Khawārij, it is narrated, were won over by these promises; a considerable proportion of them stayed with Ya‘qūb and eventually, the greater part of them rallied to Ya‘qūb’s side.<sup>36</sup>

In 259/873 there occurred a serious rebellion in the regions of Bādghīs and Gharchistān, to the north of Harāt, led by one ‘Abd al-Rahīm or ‘Abd al-Rahmān. This ‘Abd al-Rahīm had styled himself ‘Commander of the Faithful’ of the Khawārij, and in imitation of the ‘Abbāsids, had adopted the *laqab* of *al-Mutawakkil ‘alā ’llāh*. His seat of power at Karūkh was still predominantly Khārijī over a century later, according to the geographer Maqdīsī (wrote c. 375/985).<sup>37</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahīm had 10,000 supporters from the Khawārij of Bādghīs and adjacent parts of Khurāsān, but in a battle in the snows of the Paropamisus Mountains, Ya‘qūb defeated him. ‘Abd al-Rahīm surrendered and received *amān*. He was made governor for the Ṣaffārids of the town of Isfīzār and of the Kurds who nomadized in the surrounding steppes, but within a year, the Khawārij had killed him (because of his collaborating with the Ṣaffārids?) and had elected Ibrāhīm b. Akhḍar as their head. Nevertheless, Ibrāhīm in turn submitted and was made governor in ‘Abd al-Rahīm’s stead. He was welcomed into Ya‘qūb’s service, with a promise that he would be made to feel at home: ‘Then Ya‘qūb said, “Be of stout heart, you and your partisans; the greater part of my army and of my commanders are [originally] Khawārij too, and you will not feel strange amongst them”’. Ibrāhīm was urged to bring over more of his followers to Ya‘qūb, who promised to assign them allowances and places on his *Dīwān*. Ya‘qūb stressed the importance of the district of Isfīzār as a *thaghr* or frontier region (it faced the mountainous region of Ghūr in central Afghanistan, which was still pagan in early Ghaznavid times<sup>38</sup>), and said that he needed a reliable person to guard it whilst he was away campaigning outside Sīstān. He also appealed to Ibrāhīm as being a fellow-countryman (*ham-shahrī*) of his, and observed that since so many of Ibrāhīm’s partisans were from Baskar in Sīstān,<sup>39</sup> he would certainly not discriminate against them or oppress them in any way. Ibrāhīm was impressed. He went away and then returned with all his army. Ya‘qūb gave robes of honour to all the leaders, and

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 204–5. Regarding the position of *sarhangs* amongst the Khawārij, there is mentioned under the designation ‘*Sarhang* of the Khawārij’ a certain Ghānim Baskarī, who fought in Fārs during Ya‘qūb’s second expedition to Kirmān and Fārs and who captured Muḥammad b. Wāsil at Sirāf in 262/876 (*ibid.*, 229).

<sup>37</sup> *Ahsan al-taqāṣīm*, ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1906, 323.

<sup>38</sup> See on Ghūr, Bosworth, ‘The early Islamic history of Ghūr’, *Central Asiatic Journal*, vi, 2, 1961, 116–33.

<sup>39</sup> This place is several times mentioned in the *Ta’rīkh-i Sīstān*, but the exact form of the name is uncertain: variants like Baskū and Lashkar also appear.

ordered the head of his Department of Military Affairs, the '*Ārid*', to inscribe the soldiers' names in the *Dīwān-i 'Ard* and assign them stipends according to their rank. Henceforth, they formed a special contingent within the Ṣaffārid forces at large, with the designation of the *Jaish al-Shurāt*<sup>40</sup> and with Ibrāhīm b. Akhḍar as their commanding general.<sup>41</sup>

It is thus clear that the armies of the first Ṣaffārids contained a high proportion of Khārijīs or ex-Khārijīs in their ranks, and it is not at all surprising that some of the sources should view Ya'qūb and 'Amr (whose policies were in general strongly anti-'Abbāsid) as themselves tainted with Khārijism. This utilization of the Khawārij of eastern Iran by the Ṣaffārids channelled off into external warfare much of the sectaries' bellicose energies, and as an active body, the role of the Khawārij in eastern Iran was now finished. Scarcia has rightly noted how mention of the Khawārij henceforth drops out completely from the narrative of the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, whereas for the previous period it is extensively concerned with their activities; this cannot be fortuitous.<sup>42</sup> The Arabic and Persian geographers of the fourth/tenth century continue to mention communities of Khawārij in Sīstān, Kirmān, Bādgīs, and other parts of Khurāsān,<sup>43</sup> but these are obviously *qa'ada*, passive believers and sympathizers, and not activists. By the end of that century, these Khārijī communities can have been little distinguishable from their Sunnī neighbours; according to Yāqūt, citing İstakhrī, the Khawārij of Sīstān were notable for their probity in commercial dealings, for their piety and devotion, and for their distinctive dress (unfortunately, this is not detailed).<sup>44</sup>

## VI

During the course of the third/ninth century, the armies of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs, and following them, the armies of provincial governors and military leaders, were transformed. In earlier times, the Caliphs had depended on the

<sup>40</sup> The Khawārij used the term *Shurāt* 'Sellers' to describe themselves, sc. sellers of their souls to God in return for the promise of Paradise, echoing Qur'anic phraseology in which the believers sell or barter (*sharā*) their share of the present life for the hereafter, cf. Qur'ān II, 203/206, IV, 76/73.

<sup>41</sup> Tabarī, III, 1882 (who is apparently wrong in saying that 'Abd al-Rahīm was killed immediately on Ya'qūb's defeating him in battle); Gardizi, ed. Nāzīm, 12, ed. Nafisi, 113; *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 217–18; 'Aufī, *Jawāmi' al-hikāyat*, partial facsimile text, Tehran, 1335/1956, 143–4, and in M. Nizāmu'd-Dīn, *Introduction to the Jawāmi'u'l-hikāyat of Muhammad al-'Aufī*, London, 1929, no. 718.

<sup>42</sup> 'Due precisazioni sul Ḥāriġismo sistanico', *AIUON*, NS, xv, 1965, 303–4.

<sup>43</sup> cf. Ibn Rusta, *al-A'lāq al-nafīsa*, ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1892, 174, tr. G. Wiet, *Les atours précieux*, Cairo, 1955, 202 (Khawārij at Juwain and Kurunk in Sīstān); İstakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, ed. de Goeje, Leiden, 1927, 166 (Bam), 226–7 (Karūkh and Astarabiyān in Bādgīs); Ibn Hauqal, *Kitāb sūrat al-ard*, ed. Kramers, Leiden, 1938–9, 312, tr. Wiet, *Configuration de la terre*, Paris, [1965], 306 (Bam), 424–5 (Karūkh and Astarabiyān), 439; *Hudūd al-'ālam*, ed. Minorsky, London, 1938, 104 (Isfīzār), 125 (Bam); Maqdisi, 306 (Farah and Bārnawādh in Sīstān), 323 (Sīstān, Karūkh, and Astarabiyān), 469 (Bam).

<sup>44</sup> *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866–73, III, 42; cf. B. Spuler, *Iran in frühr-islamischer Zeit*, Wiesbaden, 1952, 170.

Arab warriors or *muqātila* and then, after the 'Abbāsid Revolution, on their Khurāṣānian guards. But from the Caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim (218–27/833–42) onwards, the core of the Caliphal army was a praetorian guard of slaves (*ghilmān*, *mamālik*). These were mainly Turks from the South Russian and Central Asian steppes, but also included such varied races as the Berbers, Nubians, Armenians, Greeks, and Balkan Slavs.<sup>45</sup> Local commanders and governors, such as the Tāhirids and Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, speedily imitated the Caliphs, believing that a people like the Turks had innate qualities of pugnacity and valour; moreover, since they were unhampered by local ties or vested interests, it was supposed that they could give a more concentrated loyalty than could local troops.

Ya'qūb and 'Amr b. al-Laith had as the nucleus of their army some of the most vital elements from the Iranian peoples of Sīstān and eastern Khurāṣān, including '*ayyārs*, *Khārijīs*, and recruits from the indigenous landed classes. The enthusiasm aroused by the Ṣaffārid brothers' triumphs caused mercenary soldiers to flock to their standard, and Ya'qūb and 'Amr had no problems of finding man-power for the armies which they hurled successively into the field. Accordingly, there was no overriding necessity for replenishing the forces with slaves purchased from outside, and the slave element in the Ṣaffārid armies, at least, until the end of 'Amr's amīrate, was probably a subordinate one.

Nevertheless, slaves were inevitably acquired in the course of warfare, if only from the armies of defeated opponents. 'Amr's rivals for power in Khurāṣān, such as Rāfi' b. Harthama, certainly had their own contingents of *ghulāms*.<sup>46</sup> Also, the Ṣaffārid expeditions into the *Dār al-kufr* of eastern Afghanistan were, like those of the earlier Arab governors of Sīstān, richly productive of captives who were sold as slaves. Such was the origin of the slave commander Sebük-eri (Subkārī), who in the years after 'Amr's capture, aspired to the role of king-maker amongst the Ṣaffārid princes; he became virtually independent ruler of Fārs until his capture and his death in Baghdaḍ in 305/917–18. The conventional version of this man's name is 'Subkārī' (adopted, for instance, by Vasmer, Walker, and Spuler), but it is hard to see any sense in such a rendering. It is more probable that we have here a Turkish name like Sebük-eri 'Beloved man', for the man in question was captured in Zamīndāwar or Zābulistān by Ya'qūb during an expedition of 255–6/869 against the fugitive son of the *Zunbil* or local ruler of these regions; in the course of these operations, an extensive haul of beasts and prisoners was taken from 'the Khalaj and Turks' who herded their flocks on the plateaux and hills between Kabul and Bust.<sup>47</sup> Thus de Slane was unconsciously on the right track when he interpreted the

<sup>45</sup> See Osman S. A. Ismail, 'Mu'taṣim and the Turks', *BSOAS*, xxix, 1, 1966, 12–24, and for this whole process of change, Levy, *The social structure of Islam*, 407 ff., and Sourdel and Bosworth, *EI*, second ed., s.v. *ghulām*.

<sup>46</sup> cf. *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 252–3.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 215.

سبک السبکری of Ibn Khallikān's text (which must either be a dittography or perhaps 'Sebuk al-Šaffārī') as 'Sebuk as-Sebukri'.<sup>48</sup>

From such sources as these, Ya'qūb acquired a body of slaves whom he employed as an élite force and as a personal bodyguard, their role thus corresponding to that of the palace *ghulāms* (*ghulāmān-i sarāy*) of the Sāmānids and Ghaznavids. Ya'qūb's interest in the training of his young slaves is noted by Mas'ūdī (see above, p. 536). The first firm date for the existence of Ya'qūb's *ghulām* guard is 259/873, when Ya'qūb overthrew Muhammad b. Tāhir and entered his capital of Nīshāpūr. The notables and '*ulamā'* of Nīshāpūr regarded Ya'qūb with suspicion because he had no charter from the Caliph to legitimize his rule. He therefore resolved to impress them by his military might, and paraded 2,000 of his *ghulāms* in two ranks before the throne on which he sat to receive the notables of the town; these *ghulāms* were resplendently fitted out with gold and silver shields, swords, and maces captured from the Tāhirid treasury and armoury. This body of *ghulāms* is obviously identical with the élite force of 2,000 troops, hand-picked by Ya'qūb, which Mas'ūdī describes. Half of these had gold maces and the rest silver ones, and they were paraded on ceremonial occasions, such as for festivities or when it was desired to impress enemies. The phrase used here *wa-innamā duribat hādhīh al-a'mida 'uddatān li 'l-nawā'ib* 'these maces were only made so that they could be a source of strength in times of disaster' may imply that the maces were for ceremonial purposes rather than for actual fighting, and could be melted down in times of need.<sup>49</sup>

According to the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 'Amr's grandson Tāhir b. Muḥammad inherited on his succession to the amirate in 287/900 a well-filled treasury and 10,000 palace *ghulāms* 'as well as those employed on outside duties' (*dūn bīrūnī*).<sup>50</sup> This number seems rather high, although it is likely that the proportion of slaves in the Ṣaffārid army increased in the course of the fourth/tenth century, as the Amīrs' dominions shrank to little more than Sīstān itself and the incentives for free recruits to present themselves diminished. As we saw above, the *Mawālī* or slaves were one of the three main constituent elements of Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Laith's army, and it was, indeed, the Amīr's own *ghulāms* who in 352/963 murdered their master.<sup>51</sup> Symptomatic of decreased control over their armies by the Amīrs of this century was the growth of private body-guards around the great commanders and nobles, a practice not mentioned in the times of Ya'qūb and 'Amr. Tāhir b. Abī 'Alī, a descendant of Ya'qūb's and 'Amr's brother 'Alī b. al-Laith and regent in Sīstān during

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 333.

<sup>49</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 226; *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 49–50; cf. Gardizi, ed. Nāzim, 13, ed. Nafisi, 114. The correspondence between the arrangements for this ceremonial levée and those of the Ghaznavids in their palaces at Ghazna and Bust, as known to us from literary sources like Baihaqi and from the murals of the palace at Lashkar-i Bāzār, is striking; see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, 104, 135 ff.

<sup>50</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 257.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, 326.

Khalaf b. Aḥmad's absence between 353/964 and 358/969 on the Pilgrimage, had a *Hājib al-Hujjāb*, who himself had 500 *ghulāms*, all with ornamented belts.<sup>52</sup>

The Saffārid slave troops must have included men of several different nations. In welcoming troops of any ethnic complexion, slave or free, the Amīrs were simply following a trend of the times. The armies of the 'Abbāsids were already multi-racial, and a peak of diversity was reached in such armies as those of the Fātimids, Ghaznavids, and Great Seljūqs.<sup>53</sup> Under Ya'qūb and 'Amr, there was a group of Arabs; their commander Iyās b. 'Abdullāh later left Sīstān for Kirmān in 293/906 in disgust at Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr's neglect of the once-mighty Saffārid empire.<sup>54</sup> There was also an Indian contingent, although as with the Arabs, we know little more about these troops beyond the name of their commander, T.ṛābil.<sup>55</sup> This man had been commander of the Indians in Ya'qūb's time, and in the confused period from 306/919 to 310/923, during which the commanders Kathīr b. Aḥmad b. Shahfūr and Aḥmad b. Qudām were successively raised to power in Sīstān, he and the Indian troops played a significant role. That there were, moreover, black slave troops is likely; Khalaf b. Aḥmad had black eunuchs as harem attendants and two *Zangīs* are mentioned as being amongst the outstanding warriors and champions (*mubārizān*) of his army.<sup>56</sup>

## VII

Like the professional armies of other contemporary Islamic powers, the Saffārid army required a lengthy train of baggage and military stores. Where siege warfare necessitated their presence, such engines of war as *manjanīqs* and *'arrādas* (mangonels and catapults) were also taken along.<sup>57</sup> According to Fakhr-i Mudabbir Mubārakshāh, the kitchen which 'Amr took with him on his campaigns in Khurāsān against Ismā'il b. Ahmad required 1,000 camels to transport it. Mas'ūdī says that Ya'qūb had 5,000 Bactrian camels, and 10,000 asses, greyish in colour and called *Saffārī* after their master; he preferred these

<sup>52</sup> ibid., 332. This *Hājib al-Hujjāb* is specifically distinguished from the *Sipahsälär* or Commander-in-Chief of the army in general; possibly he was commander of the slave troops.

<sup>53</sup> cf. I. Hrbek, 'Die Slawen im Dienste der Fātimiden', *Archiv Orientální*, xxI, 4, 1953, 543–81; Bosworth, 'Ghaznevid military organisation', *Der Islam*, xxxvi, 1–2, 1960, 37–77; *idem*, *EI*, second ed., s.v. *ghulām* (§ ii. Persia).

<sup>54</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 279. Iyās's actual words to Tāhir as he departed were 'We carved out this empire by our swords, but you are endeavouring to hold it by frivolous amusements. Kingly power cannot be retained by sport and play; it can only be maintained through justice, religious sanction, statesmanship, oratory, the whip, and the sword'. This Iyās is apparently identical with the Abū Qābūs who is mentioned by Tabarī as seeking refuge at the Caliphal court; al-Muktaṣī refused Tāhir's request for him to be extradited to Sīstān (Tabarī, III, 2255; Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 377–8).

<sup>55</sup> Professor Sir Harold Bailey tells me that there is no obviously suitable Indian name which would fit this, although the second element could be from *-vīra-* 'hero'.

<sup>56</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 307, 309, 346, 350.

<sup>57</sup> cf. ibid., 283; 'Utbī, *al-Ta'rīkh al-Yamīnī*, with commentary by Manīnī, Cairo, 1286/1869, I, 100–1; and Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 417, where Khalaf b. Aḥmad catapults sacks full of vipers (Sīstān was notorious for the virulence of its snakes) out on to the forces besieging him.

two types of animal to mules as beasts of burden, because unlike mules they could be left to pasture freely when the army halted. When on the march, Ya'qūb made extensive use of spies and patrols.<sup>58</sup>

Since their territories were contiguous with the Indo-Afghan borders, it is not surprising that the Ṣaffārids had some acquaintance with the use of elephants in warfare, although they did not themselves employ them to a significant extent. The full tactical exploitation of elephants in battle was to be a feature of Ghaznavid military practice.<sup>59</sup> When fighting in al-Rukkhaj or Arachosia against the *Zunbil* in 250/864, Ya'qūb encountered elephants in the opposing army, but managed to rout them after a furious attack led by Ya'qūb personally and 50 of his picked warriors. Amongst the plunder gained, Ya'qūb found 'Turkish horses' and elephants. The *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān* relates that he finally rejected the elephants, on the grounds that they were inauspicious beasts, since they were linked in pious minds with the Abyssinian Viceroy Abraha's expedition against Mecca in the so-called 'Year of the Elephant'! Ya'qūb certainly did not have a pious mind and was hardly likely to be swayed by superstitious reverence; the story simply shows that he could envisage no use for them in his own army. The Ṣaffārids of the later fourth/tenth century did, however, use elephants in warfare—this was the period when Sebüktigin was first employing them in eastern Afghanistan—and both Khalaf b. Ahmad and his opponent al-Husain b. Tāhir used them in the course of the succession struggle between them in Sīstān (361/972).<sup>60</sup>

## VIII

The mustering, equipping and organizing of a fighting force such as the Ṣaffārid army required administrative expertise. In the 'Abbāsid Caliphate of the third/ninth century, this administrative backing was centred on the *Dīwān al-Jaish*, a department which had already reached a considerable level of complexity. An important study of this has been made by W. Hoenerbach, drawing on the section of Qudāma b. Ja'far's *Kitāb al-kharāj wa-san'at al-kitāba* concerning the *Dīwāns* of the 'Abbāsid bureaucracy as they were in the Caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–32).<sup>61</sup> The importance of Qudāma's information, as Hoenerbach observes, is that he deals with the practice of this government department, and not simply with the theory, as is the tendency, for instance, in Māwardi's *al-Āhkām al-sultāniyya*. Also, in the historical introduction to his study, Hoenerbach stresses the continuity of the 'Abbāsid *Dīwān* of the Army with earlier institutions of similar function, which may even reach back to Sāsānid times (see also below, p. 550, on the Ṣaffārid '*urd* and its

<sup>58</sup> Fakhr-i Mudabbir, *Ādāb al-mulūk*, India Office MS 647, ff. 103a–b; Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 55; *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 268.

<sup>59</sup> cf. Bosworth, 'Ghaznevid military organisation', 61–4, and *idem*, *EI*, second ed., s.v. *fil* ('As beasts of war').

<sup>60</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 205–6, 336, cf. also 347.

<sup>61</sup> 'Zur Heeresverwaltung der 'Abbāsiden. Studie über Abulfarağ Qudāma: *dīwān al-ġaiš*', *Der Islam*, XXIX, 3, 1950, 257–90.

roots in the past). This 'Abbāsid administrative organ, like the 'Abbāsids' slave guard, was the model for the governors and amīrs who succeeded to the 'Abbāsid heritage in the provinces.

Ya'qūb must have set up an office to deal with military affairs soon after he obtained the amirate of Sīstān and began expanding northwards and eastwards into the adjacent parts of Afghanistan. The Khārijī followers of Ibrāhīm b. Akhḍar, who formed the unit within Ya'qūb's army known as the *Jaish al-Shurāt*, were registered in Ya'qūb's *Dīwan-i 'Ard* and allotted stipends from it (see above, p. 544). Ya'qūb inherited an administrative organization in Zarang when he took over the *Dār al-Imāra* there from the Arab governors who had ruled Sīstān on behalf of the Tāhirids and their predecessors in Khurāsān; the official registers and personnel to keep them would be taken over *en bloc*. In Khurāsān, officials of the former Tāhirid administration passed into Ṣaffārid service; this was the case with the poet of Baihaq, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Mughāthī.<sup>62</sup>

Under 'Amr, the administrative organization of the Ṣaffārid empire was put on a more durable basis, for its sphere of operation was now territorially very extensive. We have noted Sallāmī's praise for 'Amr as an administrator and military organizer.<sup>63</sup> Sallāmī, as quoted by Gardīzī and Ibn Khallikān, further gives an interesting account of 'Amr's financial ability and his care for the timely payment of the troops. According to this information, 'Amr had four treasuries, one of arms and the other three of money, and these always accompanied him on his campaigns. The first of the financial treasuries comprised revenue from the land-tax and other imposts, and was used for the army's salaries. The second comprised revenues from the Amīr's personal properties and estates (the *māl-i khāss*), which was used for court expenses, food, etc. The third comprised revenues from occasional and extraordinary levies (*ahdāt*) and confiscations of the wealth of soldiers who had gone over to the enemy; from these, special rewards were given to outstandingly brave soldiers and payments made to envoys and spies.<sup>64</sup>

The army's pay was normally issued in allotments (*razaqāt*, 'atāyā, *bīstgāmī*) every three months, although extra payments might be made after some conspicuous success; thus in 275/888, after his second occupation of Fārs and a peace settlement with the Caliph, 'Amr distributed 2,000,000 dirhams to his army. The period of three months or 90 days for a *razqa* corresponds to that of the free cavalrymen (*fursān min al-aḥrār*) of top standard (*jayyid*) in the 'Abbāsid armies.<sup>65</sup> The pay was given out by the head of the *Dīwān* of the

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Funduq, *Ta'rīkh-i Baihaq*, 151–4.

<sup>63</sup> Gardīzī, ed. Nāzīm, 15, ed. Nafīsī, 116; Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 322; and see above, p. 538.

<sup>64</sup> Gardīzī, loc. cit.

<sup>65</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 246; Hilāl al-Ṣābi, *Kitāb al-wuzarā'*, cited in Hoenerbach, art. cit., 279. The Sāmānids, successors to the Ṣaffārid heritage in Khurāsān, paid their troops every four months or 120 days, according to Khwārazmī, *Mafātīh al-'ulūm*, ed. G. van Vloten, Leiden, 1895, 65. For Büyid practice here, see Bosworth, 'Military organisation under the Büyids of Persia and Iraq', *Oriens*, XVIII–XIX, 1965–6, [pub.] 1967, 164–6, and for the Ghaznavid one, *idem*, 'Ghaznevid military organisation', 71–4.

Army, the '*Ārid*', at the periodically-held general inspections of the army ('*urūd*, sing. '*ard*'). (The office of *Ra'is-i Lashkar*, mentioned in 358/969 during the amirate of Khalaf b. Ahmad, is probably another designation for the '*Ārid*'s office.)<sup>66</sup>

'Amr b. al-Laith was always careful to be personally present at the '*ard*'. At the Naurūz one, two drums were beaten as a signal for the army to assemble. Then the '*Ārid*' Sahl b. Ḥamdān sat down with a sack of dirhams emptied out before him, and his assistant had the register in which the names of the soldiers and their pay entitlements were written. 'Amr was the first to step forward. In his case, as in everyone else's, physical appearance, arms, equipment, and mount were inspected. The '*Ārid*' then paid out 300 dirhams to 'Amr, who placed the money in a purse down the leg of his boot and exclaimed 'Praise be to God, for the Lord Most High has bestowed on me the privilege of obedience to the Commander of the Faithful and has made me worthy of his favour!'. 'Amr then sat down on a near-by eminence and watched the rest of the army being inspected and paid. Ibn Khallikān compares this procedure with the '*ard*' under the Sāsānid emperor Khusrau Anūshirvān, and Barthold commented that the resemblance between the two procedures could hardly be coincidental.<sup>67</sup> There were also reviews of the army held before important battles.<sup>68</sup>

A close scrutiny of the physical characteristics of the soldiers presenting themselves for inspection (the *hulā al-rijāl*) was an essential part of the '*ard*'. According to Māwardi, 'If the soldier bears a well-known name and is of honourable status, it is unseemly that his physical characteristics and distinguishing features should be recorded when his name is entered on the *Dīwān* register. But if he is one of the underlings, his physical characteristics and distinguishing features are noted, including his age, stature, colour, physiognomy, and anything setting him apart from others, lest there be a coincidence in names; and when he is called forth to be paid, one of his detachment commanders or officers must accompany him and vouch for him'.<sup>69</sup> Qudāma b. Ja'far details extensively the physical points of age, appearance, etc., which should be noted.<sup>70</sup> In Muslim India many centuries later, the Mughal emperor Akbar rigidly enforced the system of detailing physical features, even down to the shape of ears and the presence or absence of moles, in the army rolls (the term used for 'roll' was *chihra*, literally 'face').<sup>71</sup>

All this was necessary to prevent interlopers and substitutes (*dukhaldā*),

<sup>66</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 332.

<sup>67</sup> Gardizi, ed. Nāzim, 16, ed. Nafisi, 117; Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 322-4; Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*, 221. Sahl b. Ḥamdān is not mentioned in the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, but was perhaps a brother of the Muhammad b. Ḥamdān b. 'Abdullāh, governor of Zābulistān and prominent in events at the end of 'Amr's reign, see ibid., 259-60.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 314.

<sup>69</sup> *Al-Akkām al-sultāniyya*, ed. M. Enger, *Constitutiones politicae*, Bonn, 1853, 352, tr. E. Fagnan, *Les statuts gouvernementaux*, Algiers, 1915, 439-40.

<sup>70</sup> Hoenerbach, art. cit., 269-74.

<sup>71</sup> W. Irvine, 'The army of the Indian Moghuls: its organisation and administration', *JRAS*, 1896, 549-50.

*budalā'*) from insinuating themselves on to the pay-rolls ; we possess from Büyid times instances of the lengths to which people were prepared to go in order to achieve this.<sup>72</sup> Whilst Ya'qūb and 'Amr maintained their tight grip over military affairs and administration, there was little scope for abuses to creep in ; but after 'Amr's capture, in the early years of Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr's reign, some reprehensible practices do seem to have arisen. At any event, the slave commander Sebük-eri (Subkārī), who had secured an ascendancy over the new Amir Tāhir and his brother Ya'qūb, managed to play on the fears of the army that an '*ard*' was imminent and that some of the troops would then be struck from the registers and lose their pay entitlements ; in this way he brought about the death of a rival for influence in the state, Muḥammad b. Hamdān b. 'Abdullāh.<sup>73</sup>

The soldiers who flocked to Ya'qūb's and 'Amr's standard were naturally drawn by hopes of plunder, in addition to regular pay allotments. It will suffice to give two or three examples of the vast quantities of booty which fell to the Amīrs as they expanded westwards to Fārs and Ahwāz and eastwards to the borders of India. In 254–5/868–9 Ya'qūb invaded Kirmān and Fārs, defeating the Caliphal governor of Fārs, 'Ali b. al-Husain b. Quraish and his general Ṭauq b. al-Mughallis. He brought back to Sīstān of beasts alone 5,000 camels, 1,000 mules, asses and herds of Arab horses, together with 30,000,000 dirhams, of which 4,000,000 dirhams and 40,000 dīnārs had been extracted from the luckless 'Ali b. al-Husain.<sup>74</sup> Out of the castle of Sa'īdābād at Rāmjjird near Iṣṭakhr, which belonged to the adventurer Muḥammad b. Wāṣil al-Hānzalī,<sup>75</sup> Ya'qūb in 263/876 brought coinage, gold and silver vessels, rich fabrics, etc., the transport of which kept teams of camels and asses busy for 30 days.<sup>76</sup> From raids into the pagan lands of the Kabul river valley and eastern Afghanistan, Ya'qūb in 257/871 sent 50 gold and silver idols to the Caliph al-Mu'tamid for display at Mecca ; and in 283/896 a sensation was caused at Baghdaḍ when there arrived presents from 'Amr captured in Zamīndāwar and the Indian borderlands, including a copper idol in a woman's shape, with four arms and two girdles of silver set with jewels, and with smaller, bejewelled idols before it, the whole being mounted on a trolley suitable for pulling by animals.<sup>77</sup>

It was not therefore surprising that besides such presents as these, the

<sup>72</sup> See Bosworth, 'Military organisation under the Büyids of Persia and Iraq', 163. The prevention of false musters was, of course, equally the reason for the Mughal Akbar's measures, cf. Irvine, art. cit., 547–8.

<sup>73</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 258–60.

<sup>74</sup> ibid., 214 ; Ibn Khallikān, tr., iv, 309–10 ; cf. Tabarī, iii, 1705, and Ibn al-Athīr, vii, 131.

<sup>75</sup> Perhaps the Muḥammad b. Wāṣil who had rebelled in Bust in 224/839 against the Tāhirid governor there, Sayyār b. Naṣr b. Mansūr (*Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 188).

<sup>76</sup> ibid., 226, 230 ; but the figure of 500 camels and 500 asses for the beasts comprising the teams is surely exaggerated. Cf. also Tabarī, iii, 1889, and Ibn al-Athīr, vii, 191, where the figure of 40,000,000 dirhams is given for Muḥammad b. Wāṣil's private fortune, looted by Ya'qūb.

<sup>77</sup> Tabarī, iii, 1841 ; Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-dhahab*, viii, 125–6 ; *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 216 ; cf. J. Marquart, *Erānšahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i* (Abh. der Königl. Gesell. der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Kl., NF, iii, 3), Berlin, 1901, 295–6.

Šaffārid Amīrs were able to undertake to pay to the Caliphs, when relations between the two powers were amicable, tribute on the scale of 20,000,000 dirhams per annum (as in 265/879, by 'Amr on his accession) or 10,000,000 dirhams per annum (as in 275/888, by 'Amr in return for a fresh investiture diploma). Even during the period of decline in Šaffārid fortunes after 'Amr's capture, the general Sebük-eri promised 16,000,000 dirhams per annum in return for his investiture by al-Muqtadir of Fārs, Kirmān, and Sīstān (297/909–10).<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Ya'qūb's generosity is praised by the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, which says that his gifts were never less than 100 dīnārs and might reach up to 100,000 dīnārs. Despite the comparative failure of Ya'qūb's last year or so, he left in the treasury at the time of his death what is variously given as 4,000,000 or 800,000 dīnārs, and 50,000,000 dirhams. On 'Amr's capture in 287/900 by the Sāmānid, his successor Tāhir found in the treasury at Zarang 36,000,000 dirhams, together with a quantity of dīnārs and jewels; Tāhir got through this in a short space of time, and by 293/906 the treasury was completely empty.<sup>79</sup>

At the time of the early Šaffārid conquests, a further system of paying the new and costly professional armies had evolved in Iraq and the adjacent parts of western Iran. This was the system of the *iqtā'* or land grant, or more exactly, of the *iqtā'* *al-istighlāl*, in which the grantee acquired virtually hereditary control over an estate or district, with immunitary rights which enabled him to bar the representatives of the state and appropriate the *kharāj* for himself. Even during the hey-day of the Büyids, in the later fourth/tenth century, *iqtā'* tenure was not necessarily the dominant one over the whole of Iraq and western Iran, but the system was sufficiently widespread to cause major social and tenurial changes in the countryside.<sup>80</sup> The system spread only slowly into eastern Iran, and did not become general there until the Seljūq period. The evidence for the Sāmānid and Ghaznavid periods seems to be that the *iqtā'* system was not entirely unfamiliar, but was not at all widespread.<sup>81</sup> However, with their overrunning of Fārs and Ahwāz, the Šaffārids took control of regions where the *iqtā'* was a well-established institution, and some process of adaptation by the Amīrs seems to have taken place. Thus when Tāhir arrived in Fārs in 289/902, shortly after his accession, he expelled the Caliphal governor who had returned there after 'Amr's capture and then established himself at Shīrāz. There he distributed a large number of *iqtā'*s and generous pay allotments ('*atīyyat-hā*), so that 'the whole of the army became content with these *iqtā'*s and this pay'.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 234, 246, 295, cf. Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 42.

<sup>79</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 257, 263, 280; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, VIII, 46; Ibn Khallikān, tr., IV, 319–20.

<sup>80</sup> See on these changes, Cahen, 'L'évolution de l'iqtā' du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Annales : Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, VIII, 1953, 30 ff.; A. K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and peasant in Persia*, London, 1953, 50–1; Bosworth, 'Military organisation under the Büyids of Persia and Iraq', 159–161.

<sup>81</sup> See a discussion of this problem by *idem*, in *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, III, ch. on 'The Turks in the Islamic lands up to the mid-11th century' (forthcoming).

<sup>82</sup> *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, 274.

## IX

Ya'qūb inspired his troops by his decisive leadership and the plunder which his exploits brought in. When he died, his *waṣīyya* or testament indicated that he wished his brother 'Alī to succeed to the amirate. The sources do not accord to 'Alī a role of much significance under Ya'qūb; he is mentioned as governor of Harāt after Ya'qūb first captured it in 253/867.<sup>83</sup> Although 'Alī enjoyed the greater influence and acceptance within the army, 'Amr had the issue of the succession brought to arbitration, and from these proceedings he emerged victorious and received the *bai'a* or homage of the army. The chagrined 'Alī was later in treacherous communication with 'Amr's rival for control of Khurāsān, Ahmad b. Abdullāh al-Khujistānī, and in 276/890 escaped from captivity to join Rāfi' b. Harthama.<sup>84</sup> On 'Amr's capture, the army took the initiative and chose 'Amr's grandson Tāhir as interim Amīr, but when 'Amr's incarceration looked like being permanent, disputes over the succession arose within the army. There was one group for the *de facto* holder of power, Tāhir b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr, and another for al-Laith b. 'Alī b. al-Laith, as being the son of Ya'qūb's designated successor 'Alī; but the growing influence in the state of Sebük-eri, who hoped to be the real power behind Tāhir's throne, helped Tāhir's cause to prevail.<sup>85</sup>

As the personal prestige and military successfulness of the Amīrs declined, purely financial considerations came to determine exactly where the army would place its support. In 296/908–9 al-Laith b. 'Alī b. al-Laith successfully led an advance from Bust and captured Zarang from Tāhir. He had been governor of Makrān two years previously, and had collected there three years' tribute; he had given a little of this to Tāhir, but had kept the greater part for his own purposes. He could now use these resources to finance an army, whereas Tāhir was in a state of bankruptcy; whilst continuing to spend 5,000 dirhams a day on his household expenses, he was reduced to melting down his gold and silver ornaments and dishes for minting coins with which to pay his troops. Consequently, 'the people's hearts were won over by al-Laith, because he had large quantities of dirhams, dīnārs, and jewels, and he lavished these upon them'. Tāhir was forced to flee to Sebük-eri at Nih on the edge of the Dasht-i Lüt. Al-Laith's military position was further strengthened in 297/909 when his brother Mu'addal returned to Sīstān with extensive revenues from Kabul, Bust, and al-Rukhkhaj, and by means of these he further strengthened his control over the troops.<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, Sebük-eri had won over the Saffārid forces in Fārs from their allegiance to Tāhir and his brother Ya'qūb, adducing their spendthrift and feckless ways and inability to rule. He paid over to the troops a large sum and thereby secured the *bai'a* to himself; Tāhir was deposed from

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, 208.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, 234 (there is an unfortunate lacuna in the text where details of the arbitration are given), 236–7, 247.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, 257–8.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, 280–4, 287.

his amīrate, and he and Ya‘qūb were handed over to the Caliph in Baghdād.<sup>87</sup> However, the financial situation in Sīstān deteriorated after al-Laith’s defeat and capture in Fārs by Sebük-eri (298/910). The last Amīr of the direct line of al-Laith, the brave but inexperienced Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Laith, had in 298/911 to face the invading Sāmānid forces of Aḥmad b. Ismā‘il with an army that included levies of peasants (*hashar-i rūstā’ī*), as well as regular cavalry and infantry. The impressment of an unpaid peasant rabble was an old military practice in the Iranian world and can be traced back at least to the Sāsānids. Their fighting value, other than as mere cannon fodder, was always dubious, and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Laith’s *hashariyān* broke in battle and fled before the Sāmānid general Husain b. ‘Alī al-Marwarrūdhī, leaving behind 3,000 dead.<sup>88</sup>

## X

Finally, with regard to the numerical strength of the Ṣaffārid armies, we can glean only stray items of information from the accounts of campaigns and battles. The armies employed by Ya‘qūb and his opponents within Sīstān, when he was struggling for the control of the province, were modest in size. Ṣāliḥ b. al-Nadr occupied Zarang in 239/854 with a force of 4,000 cavalry and infantry, later augmented by 300 deserters from the force of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Huḍain, son of the dispossessed Tāhirid governor. When Ya‘qūb marched to Bust against Ṣāliḥ in 249/865, he took with him 2,000 cavalrymen.<sup>89</sup> However, once Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr launched out beyond their native province, the armies were organized on a grander scale and substantial numbers were involved, for instance, in the fighting in Fārs and Ahwāz. In the battle of 261/874–5 between Ya‘qūb and Muḥammad b. Wāsil at al-Baiḍā’ near Shīraz, Ya‘qūb had 15,000 cavalry against Muḥammad b. Wāsil’s 30,000, but he managed to defeat the latter by the stratagem of an attack from the rear. At the battle of Dair al-Āqūl in the next year against al-Muwaffaq, Ya‘qūb had over 10,000 cavalrymen. In 297/910 al-Laith b. Alī b. al-Laith took 7,000 cavalry with him to Fārs in order to punish Sebük-eri for his treachery towards the Ṣaffārid princes Tāhir and Ya‘qūb b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr.<sup>90</sup> The numbers of troops used in the fourth/tenth century, when Ṣaffārid power had shrunk, were probably more modest, although Khalaf b. Aḥmad raised a force of 4,000 of his *ghulāms* plus 5,000 local Sagzī troops when in 384/994 he sent his son Tāhir against Kirmān.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> ibid., 285–6, cf. Tabarī, III, 2283, and Ibn al-Athīr, VIII, 42.

<sup>88</sup> *Ta’rikh-i Sīstān*, 290–1.

<sup>89</sup> ibid., 197, 205, cf. Bosworth, *Sīstān under the Arabs*, 119.

<sup>90</sup> *Ta’rikh-i Sīstān*, 227 (cf. Tabarī, III, 1889, and Ibn al-Athīr, VII, 190–1), 288; Ibn Khallikān, tr., IV, 314.

<sup>91</sup> Rūdhrāwārī, *Dhail tajārib al-umam*, in H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth (ed.), *The Eclipse of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate*, Oxford, 1921–2, III, 195, tr., vi, 206.