

Abstract

Title of Thesis: THE DELINEATION BETWEEN BELIEVER, REBEL, AND HERETIC: ISLAMIC HETERODOXY IN THE LATE UMAYYAD PERIOD

Valerie Lynn Novak, Master of Arts, 2012

Thesis Directed by: Assistant Professor, Antoine Borrut
Department of History

This research explores the concept of orthodoxy and heresy in an Islamic context during the late Umayyad period, by investigating two early Islamic heretics, al-Harith ibn Surayj and Jahm ibn Safwan. The goal is to demonstrate the heterodoxical nature of Islam in the early Umayyad period, in contrast to Western Christian model, which more easily delineates between heretic and believer. The role of the caliphate and decline of the Umayyad administration inform the circumstances of the heretics and their condemnation in this period. The case studies are informed by al-Tabari's *Tārīkh* and al-Baladhuri's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, and illuminate the difficult circumstances of a growing Islamic heterodoxy, with the slow codification of Islamic orthodoxy.

THE DELINEATION BETWEEN BELIEVER, REBEL, AND HERETIC: ISLAMIC
HETERODOXY IN THE LATE Umayyad PERIOD

by

Valerie Lynn Novak

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree
Master of Arts
2012

Advisory Committee:

Professor Antoine Borrut, Chair

Professor Peter Wien

Professor Madeline Zilfi

© Copyright by
Valerie Lynn Novak
2012

Foreward

The topic of this thesis is heresy and heterodoxy in the late Umayyad period (112-122/730-740s), and it argues that early Islam was a heterodoxical system, wherein there were multiple forms of Islam that were permissible, encompassing multiple forms of belief and practice. Al-Harith ibn Surayj (d.127/745) and Jahm ibn Safwan (d.127/745 or 134/751, depending on the source) are two accused heretics, active within Khurasan, who when taken with relevant theories on heresy, demonstrate the heterodoxical nature of Islam in this early period.

This study covers the late Umayyad period through the third fitna (ca. 125-133/743-750), which began after the Caliph Hisham's long and stable reign from 723-743. Judd asserts that Hisham's stable and efficient administration is demonstrated by his ability to put forth a religious agenda, through the persecution and execution of heretics. The third *fitna* began when Hisham's successor, Walid II (r. 125-126/743-744), was assassinated. Attempts to restore the stability of the caliphate occurred under Yazid III (r. 126/744), Ibrahim (r. 126/744), and especially Marwan II (r. 126-133/744-750), but the Abbasid revolutionaries were able to take advantage of the Umayyad Empire's weaknesses and end the first Islamic dynasty.

First, I would like to say a few words about why and how I came to choose this topic. I have always been interested in the theological aspects of Islam and the issues of religious doctrine. One of my papers as an undergraduate focused on the Mu'tazila, a religious movement during the Abbasid Empire, whose adherents believed in utilizing human reason to understand God and the createdness of the Qur'an. At the University of Maryland, I have encountered a number of related topics, which ultimately led me to discuss heresy. In my first semester, I encountered the topic of the Qadariyya, a group that believed in free will as opposed to predestination. I began to get interested exploring their similarities and differences with the Mu'tazila and other religious groups. Later that same class I read Fred Donner's book *Muhammad and the Believers*, which was about the slow crystallization of Muslim identity in the course of the second fitna (ca. 61-73/680-692), best exemplified by the erection of the Dome of the Rock by 'Abd al-Malik. I eventually decided to focus on the much-neglected period of the third fitna (ca. 126-133/743-750), and slowly the topic of religious identity and heresy during the third fitna began to develop.

My research began with the theory chapter, which is now chapter two, in which I first researched the concept of heresy within the Western Christian tradition. Then, I collected and analyzed different theories on Islamic heresy,

as well as compiled a list of Arabic terms, expressing the concept of heresy, as it is traditionally understood in the Christian context. The terms I focused on in this study were *nāfiq*, *mubtada'* and *kāfir*. I collected these terms from Bernard Lewis' article on heresy and Amir-Moezzi's *Encyclopedia of Qur'an* entry on heresy. For theories of heresy, I utilized Bernard Lewis and John Wansbrough's theories as starting points. Lewis' theory was too relativistic to be useful, as it claimed that heresies occur in the face of every variety of Islamic caliphate. Wansbrough's theory claimed two sects battled for legitimacy and the position of orthodoxy, but I did not find this theory to be relevant in this case study. Ultimately, I found Josef van Ess' most recent theory concerning the criteria of a Muslim/heretic to be superior. It also coincided nicely with Donner's theory of Islamic identity, which can also be interpreted as a claim for Umayyad orthodoxy.

Chapter 3 discusses my primary resources, which developed over time, as my case studies were slowly emerging and evolving. This thesis begins with a discussion and contextualization of the sources available during this period, and inevitably with a discussion of al-Tabari's (d. 311/923) chronicle. The fact that he wrote more than 150 years after the third fitna, suggests that his accounts reflect an Abbasid memory of early Islam, rather than a contemporary reflection of Umayyad events. Knowing that al-Tabari would

give me a lot of information, I also knew that he could not be taken as the sole primary source. I knew his recollection of events should be confronted by another historian of his time or other primary sources. It became clear I should utilize al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892) after reading Judd's unpublished dissertation on the third fitna, because al-Baladhuri focuses on the religious while al-Tabari emphasizes the tribal dimensions of the period. Now while al-Tabari is ordered chronologically, al-Baladhuri's work is organized by person, which makes it a difficult source to navigate. This made comparing al-Baladhuri and al-Tabari difficult, as relevant passages could still be hidden somewhere within *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. The other primary sources became important when I finally focused on my case study. These include the letter of Marwan II's secretary by 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib (d.132/750), who was a major player in the third fitna; a narrative source in Persian focusing on the Eastern part of the Empire and thus directly relevant for the events of Khurasan, the *Fihrist* (a bio-bibliography composed by Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Nadim in 987-988, which offers rich material on heresiography); and non-Muslim sources that provide different perspectives on the late Umayyad period. Among these sources, 'Abd al-Hamid's letter was extremely helpful in demonstrating the perspective of the Umayyad administration, and the caliphs knowledge and opinions on al-Harith and his heresy/rebellion. In this case al-

Harith is considered a heretic (*kāfir*), despite the caliph's confusion concerning the events in Khurasan.

The first chapter was also written concurrently with the case studies as important specifics concerning al-Harith and Jahm became relevant to their study and needed specific contextualization. The establishment of an orthodoxy, which is also covered in the second chapter, is also significant as it contextualizes the atmosphere of a heterodoxical Islamic system, such as 'Abd al-Malik's (r. 65-86/685-705) acceptance of Hasan al-Basri's (d. 109/728) divergent beliefs. The organization of the tribal system, an overview of the third *fitna*, and a brief overview of some religious movements during that period add much-needed context to the case studies, found in chapter 4.

Therefore, after accumulating the Arabic terms for heretic, I began rereading the primary source material, with an eye for someone considered to be a heretic. I wanted to try to find a heretic who was not part of the Shi'a or Khawārij, because I felt it would be difficult to separate the doctrinal knowledge from later works, once religious identities solidified around a canonical body of texts. Instead, I hoped to find an isolated individual with his own distinct religious program. When I found al-Harith, a rebel from the Tamīmī tribe living in Khurasan, I was uncertain at first about whether his rebellion was purely political, but after finding textual evidence of accusations

that he was a heretic and his own religious rhetoric, I became convinced he was a perfect case study to understand who typified a heretic during this time. Incidentally, Jahm ibn Safwan, the secretary of al-Harith and student of renowned heretic Ja'd ibn Dirham (d.118/736), was mentioned during al-Tabari's narrative, and while initially I was only planning on mentioning him briefly, he became my second case study. Had time permitted, a case study on him and his religious beliefs would have comprised a fifth chapter. I would have liked to have been more detailed about his religious beliefs and have included a separate appendix with a translated excerpt from al-Baladhuri about Jahm.

When examining both al-Harith and Jahm, I first noticed that both were labeled heretics, albeit by different authors. Associated with that, they were also heretics for very different reasons, especially when one looks at the different terminology used for them. Al-Tabari had labeled al-Harith a hypocrite and an associationist, as exemplified by the last lines of the poem found in the appendix. Al-Baladhuri labeled Jahm an innovator (*mubtada*). Both of these men were considered heretics by later historians. However, since it is not unheard of to use these slurs to defame an enemy, these claims needed to be investigated further. In an effort to investigate further, I looked at what made these men, these heretics, religiously different from those

condemning them. The reasons provided by al-Tabari concerning al-Harith seemed incidental, with associations with non-believers and his rebellion. The reference to al-Harith's religious program provided no details. But Jahm's religious beliefs are much more documented. His belief that knowledge of God could not be known (completely opposite the beliefs of the Mu'tazila) as well as the createdness of the Qur'an, logically makes him open to logical questions regarding his belief in Muhammad as the seal of the prophets and the formation of the Qur'an.

When utilizing the case studies and the theories on heresy together, I determined that van Ess' theory making the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad the two criteria of a Muslim, a satisfactory approach. Van Ess provided real and practical criteria, particularly for this period to the question, by which to determine those of the Islamic religion and those who rejected, or manipulated it. Al-Harith and Jahm did represent an opposition to the ruling authority or orthodoxy, but al-Harith's difference in religious program seems similar enough to the orthodoxy and ruling authority that he represents a heterodoxical sect of Islam. Meanwhile, in order to determine if Jahm was a heretic within the Islamic heterodoxical system, Jahm's religious program requires more study to understand whether he rejects the position of the Prophet Muhammad or the tenet of the Qur'an's coexistence with God.

Ultimately, I see my research being a synthesis of Judd's dissertation, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History" his article on Ghaylan al-Dimashqi (d. 104/723) and van Ess' most recent works on heterodoxy and heresy. I have expanded on the work of Judd by researching the life of a heretic (specifically one found on the periphery of the Umayyad Empire, as opposed to Syria), instead of simply his interaction with the Umayyad administration, particularly one found in the periphery of the Umayyad Empire, as opposed to those in Syria. I also feel that my study of al-Harith fits with Judd's article on Ghaylan al-Dimashqi (d. 104/723) and Sean Anthony's work on al-Harith ibn Sa'id al-Kadhhab (d. 78/698). With regard to my case studies, my work also speaks to the work of al-Qadi, who has published numerous works about the circumstances of al-Harith's rebellion, though not focusing on al-Harith himself.

With more time, I think this thesis could be expanded by more research on the tribal system and tribal interactions in Khurasan, a peripheral region of the Umayyad Empire. This could better contextualize al-Harith's revolt and his supporters, thereby providing information on their goals and belief system. Consequently, this kind of contextualization could further support al-Qadi's assertion that 'Abd al-Hamid's letter references al-Harith and his rebellion, not Abu Muslim and the Abbasid Revolution. Lastly and most importantly, I feel

that an expanded study could benefit from detailed discussions of specific religious doctrines, such as *qadar* (free will) and *jabr*, (predestination), and their association with different religious movements and groups. First steps in such a direction could be a formal translation of portions of al-Baladhuri's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*.

Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	xii
List of Maps.....	xiii
List of Abbreviations.....	xiv
Chapter 1: Historical Contextualization.....	1-27
Chapter 2: Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Heterodoxy.....	27-59
Chapter 3: Primary Resources.....	60-89
Chapter 4: Case Study: Harith ibn Surayj & Jahm ibn Safwan.....	90-133
Conclusion.....	134-139
Appendix A: Poem of al-Harith ibn Surayj- Arabic.....	140-141
Appendix B: Poem of al-Harith ibn Surayj- English.....	142-144
Glossary	145-146
Bibliography.....	147-150

List of Tables

List of Umayyad Caliphs- Marwanid Branch.....3

List of Maps

Map of the Region: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Transoxania.....14

List of Abbreviations

This thesis relies on al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, both the second Cairo edition and the English translated edition published by State University of New York Press. To distinguish between the two editions within the footnotes and bibliography, "al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O," refers to the original second Cairo edition of *Tārīkh*, while "al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T," refers to the English translated volumes of *Tārīkh*, of which there are four: I, XXV, XXVI, and XXVII. The volume utilized is specified within each footnote and the bibliography. The portion of the second Cairo edition of *Tārīkh* used in this paper is the seventh volume, ranging from the years 104- 146 *hijrī* and was found with the complete second Cairo edition and downloaded from www.archives.gov. This site was last accessed on March 20th, 2012.

The following are abbreviations used in this paper:

<i>IJMES</i>	International Journal of Middle East Studies
AH	Anno Hijrī
CE	Common Era
sc.	Scilicet, meaning <i>it is evident, clear, or plain</i>

This paper follows the transliteration system of the *IJMES* with some exceptions. Keeping with the *IJMES* transliteration guide, all technical terms and quoted passages shall be italicized and transliterated with diacritical marks; personal names and place names shall not be italicized nor will their transliterations include diacritics. This paper also is keeping in accordance with the *IJMES* Word List. However, names of political and religious parties will include diacritics, but will not be italicized. Titles of works within the paper shall be italicized and transliterated with diacritics. Lastly, any works and authors that appear in a foreign language shall be transliterated with diacritics in the footnotes and the bibliography, while diacritics shall be retained in English works if their authors have included them in titles or author names.

Chapter 1: Historical Contextualization

In the year 68/688, four banners (alwīyah) stood at 'Arafāt: Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah with his companions (aṣḥāb) stood with the banner...; Ibn al-Zubayr stood with a banner at the present standing place of the Imām; then Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah led his companions forward so that they stood opposite Ibn al-Zubayr; behind these two was Najdah the Ḥarūrī (Khārijī), and the banner of the Banū Umayyah was to the left of the two. The first banner to return from 'Arafāt was that of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah; he was followed by Najdah, then by the banner of the Banū Umayyah, and then by the banner of Ibn al-Zubayr, with the people (al-nās) following it.¹

This excerpted passage describes the Hajj in Mecca in 68/688, where each of the major oppositional groups asserted religious and political legitimacy from the Muslim community, through their attendance and performance of the Hajj. The Umayyads, the Zubayrids, the Khawārij and the proto-Shi'a, are also demonstrating the variation in religious beliefs and practices within the Islamic community, which were present in the second *fitna* (63-73/683-692). This example demonstrates the issue of multiple

¹ This is excerpted from al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*. M.E. McMillan, *The Meaning of Mecca The Politics of Pilgrimage in Early Islam* (London: Saqi Books, 2011), 75–76.

religious beliefs and practices affirmed in the name of Islam, therefore requiring a discussion on the heterodoxical nature of Islam or an examination regarding which groups represent heretical beliefs and practices.

Judd is one of the few modern scholars who has analyzed the concept of heresy within the context of the third *fitna* (743-750), in his 1997 dissertation titled “The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History.”² His dissertation outlines and analyzes the development and rise of heretical factions during the late Umayyad period, due to the lessening of caliphal tolerance toward divergent religious beliefs, beginning with the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malak (r. 66-86/685-705) and continuing through the third *fitna*.³ Judd’s dissertation outlines heresy and rebellion in the late Umayyad period solely from the perspective of how the Umayyad administration treated them in order to suppress religious divergence and promote unity, as the power of the caliph grew in relation to the caliph’s authority over doctrine and as the caliph’s tolerance for disagreement in these matters lessened.⁴ However, this thesis concentrates wholly on the

² Stephen Clark Judd, “The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History” (Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1997).

³ See Table 1 on page 3 for the list of Umayyad Caliphs in the Marwanid branch. *Ibid.*, 227.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 227, 282.

narratives of two individuals accused of heresy and rebellion, to include their interactions with the Umayyad administration, when relevant.

Table 1:Umayyad Caliphs – Marwanid Branch

Caliph Name	Reign Dates in AH	Reign Dates in CE
Marwan I	64-65	684-685
'Abd al-Malik	65-86	685-705
Walid I	86-96	705-715
Sulayman	96-98	715-717
'Umar II	98-102	717-720
Yazid II	102-106	720-724
Hisham	106-125	723-743
Walid II	125-126	743-744
Yazid III	126	744
Ibrahim	126	744
Marwan II	126-133	744-750

This thesis is an examination and analysis of divergent Islamic thought and practice in the early Islamic period, specifically during the late Umayyad period, encompassing the third *fitna*. Islamic beliefs and practices have developed throughout history, producing several differing beliefs and practices under the name “Islam.” This fact is generally conceded today. However, Islam is sometimes referred to as a monolithic block during the early Islamic period. Evidence of differing beliefs and practices is demonstrated through nascent factions, such as the Shi'a and the Khawārij, who were developing theological beliefs and practices that were considered divergent at best, and heretical at worst. Since early Islam is sometimes

viewed as a period of religious unity, there is a need to interrogate the unifying nature of the Islamic community in relation to those nascent groups that disagreed on particular religious thought and practices. The goal of this thesis is to characterize and clarify the concept of heresy as a framework within the Islamic community, and to contextualize a case study, in order to determine the religious and political nature of Islam at a time of civil and religious discord.

This thesis is organized into four chapters, with this first chapter describing and analyzing the historical context of the late Umayyad period, including the third *fitna*. It will summarize the late Umayyad period, the third *fitna* up to the Abbasid revolution, in addition to factionalism and the religious movements occurring during that period. Early religious movements, such as the Murji'a⁵, a group that insisted that judgment be deferred to God, and the Qadariyya⁶, a group that believed in free will, play significant roles within the

⁵ The Murji'a will be discussed later in this chapter and also in chapter four; it was a religious movement that insisted on the accountability of caliphs and the deferment of judgment to God. W. Madelung, "Murjī'a," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Brill Online, 2012).

⁶ The Qadariyya was a religious movement that asserted the free will of people, thereby making the caliphs accountable to their subjects. The *Qadariyya* are discussed later in this chapter and also in chapter four. J. van Ess, "Qadariyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill, 2012), <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kadariyya-COM_0409>.

case study of one specific heretic, found in chapter four: al-Harith (d.128/745), with his rebellion in Khurasan. In addition, the tribalism or factionalism occurring during this period greatly affects the historian, al-Tabari's (d. 311/923) perspective of the events. These factors, among others discussed later in this chapter, inform the background of the case studies and the Islamic framework on the whole.

The term "heresy" and related topics, such as orthodoxy, will be defined and examined within the Islamic context in the second chapter. Since the word "heresy" is derived from the Greek and adopted by Christianity, a necessary overview of its meaning in this context will also be discussed. Following its definition and origin, several theories developed regarding religious orthodoxy, heresy and heterodoxy, will be outlined and discussed. Each theory provides greater insight as to the extensive religious and historical context. These theories will provide a much needed structure and strength to the analysis of the case studies. Among the theorists included in this chapter are Lewis, Wansbrough, Asad, Van Ess and MacEoin.

The third chapter will outline and describe the primary resources used in this paper. It analyzes and reviews al-Tabari (d. 311/923), al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892), 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib (d.132/750), Gardizi (d. ca. 442/1050?) and some non-Muslim sources' agendas, perspectives, and biases on the topic of

religious authority and political legitimacy in early Islam. The purpose of this chapter is also to explain the transmission and authenticity of these sources in light of the gap in sources during this period. For each primary source there will be a description and discussion of the transmission and preservation process, as well as their sources of the information, when provided, in order to address any question of forgery or false information. The information provided in the primary sources concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj and his secretary, Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/746), another heretic described and analyzed in chapter four, will serve as the foundation for the study of their heresies and the general concept of heresy within Islam.

The heart of the study lies in the fourth chapter, which analyzes the rebellion of al-Harith ibn Surayj and his secretary and theologian, Jahm ibn Safwan. The political and religious programs are described in the context of the late Umayyad period and third *fitna*. Both of these men were referred to as heretics in the primary sources, al-Harith within al-Tabari's *Tārīkh* and Jahm within al-Baladhuri's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. The case study will describe the two men's very different heresies, which will shed light on the label of "heretic," in general.

The conclusion of this paper will draw from all chapters, thereby establishing the heretical status of al-Harith and Jahm in their rebellion in

Khurasan, as well as apply their beliefs and actions to the theories of heresy and heterodoxy found in chapter one. By applying the theories of religious heresy to the case study, a proper and appropriate framework for Islamic heresy or heterodoxy can be selected to best describe the historical and religious context of the late Umayyad period and possibly beyond.

The importance of such a study lies in the issue of who is really a Muslim and who is an unbeliever. Who has the authority to decide and what are the qualifications for such a judgment? In the pre-modern era, these judgments usually fall under the authority of the political power. However, during the late Umayyad period there was a brief period when there was the eruption of multiple political (and religious) authorities in the Islamic world. This study is significant because it will preliminarily determine how best to categorize and classify the differing religious practices and thoughts relative to each other within the Islamic world. In addition, since the issue of religious and political unity continues, this study may provide a beneficial yet dated outline for religious divergences found within the Islamic world today. This paper represents one opinion in the discussion of different and opposing religious groups and heresy within a larger discussion of Islam in the early period.

Historical Contextualization

The caliphate was the only establishment with the religious and political authority to enforce any religious dogmas or practices; therefore, the third *fitna* and late Umayyad period, a time of weakening political and religious authority of the Umayyad Empire and political turmoil, present an interesting situation to view the concept of heresy and heterodoxy. Obviously the level that the caliphs were able to enforce these dogmas and practices lessened as the third *fitna* began and as political revolts increased. However, previous to this the Umayyad caliphs and administration had persecuted heretics; this will be described later in this chapter and briefly in the fourth chapter, along with a discussion of religious revolts throughout the empire. This chapter will provide an overview of the establishment of the Umayyad orthodoxy, the dynasty's previous persecution of heretics associated with the development of several religious movements, the progression of tribal conflicts and rivalry at the culmination of the third *fitna* and Abbasid revolution. This historical contextualization will not only shed light on the case study concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj and Jahm ibn Safwan in the fourth chapter, but also examine the meaning of heresy in an Umayyad religious and political context.

Political Orthodoxy & Religious Development

As it will be discussed in chapter two, the debate concerning religious orthodoxy is pertinent to the discussion of who is a heretic and leads different scholars to different conclusions based on the nature of their own studies.

Among the numerous scholars proposing theories concerning religious heresy, Bernard Lewis, Fred Donner, and Josef van Ess propose their own timelines for the establishment of orthodoxy. Lewis places orthodoxy at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, basically arguing that Muhammad and his successors or *rāshidūn* represented a legitimate ruling authority. The orthodoxy was lost under the Umayyads, following the Islamic tradition portraying them as secular kings, and then reestablished under the Abbasids as the “religion of the theologians.”⁷ This theory does not fit the case study, as the Umayyads did hold religious authority and were able to exercise accordingly in regards to heretics.⁸ Meanwhile, van Ess places the first orthodoxy under the Abbasids with the Mu‘tazila, due to the extension of their religious doctrines to multiple localities, but later concedes that a united

⁷ Bernard Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 1 (1953): 48.

⁸ Steven C. Judd, “Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 1999): 161–184.

religious practice of prayer and appreciation of the Qur'an occurred under 'Abd al-Malik.⁹

Donner's theory of religious orthodoxy suits the case study very well, without entering into the debate of heresy and heterodoxy. His theory of the crystallization of Islamic identity occurring under the rule of 'Abd al-Malik demonstrates the Umayyads' religious and political legitimation, which has been concealed in Abbasid literary sources, but perhaps religious orthodoxy had not yet solidified. Donner argues for the religious and political legitimacy of the Umayyads through 'Abd al-Malik's emphasis on Muhammad and the Qur'an, through the double *shahada*, proclaiming the position of Muhammad in the religion, building of the Dome of the Rock, including Qur'anic passages, and his coinage reform, which also contains religious rhetoric.¹⁰ To this end, the crystallization of an Islamic identity, developed by the Umayyads, made it possible for those who disagreed with the Umayyads to voice their displeasure in religious language.¹¹ An example of this would be Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728) who was able to use the rhetoric and religious

⁹ Josef Van Ess, "The Origins of Islam: A Conversation with the German Islamic Scholar Josef Van Ess," trans. Charlotte Collins, November 2011.

¹⁰ Fred. M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 199–200, 205, 208–209 .

¹¹ Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.

crystallization to voice his critiques of the Umayyads and his own expression of Islamic identity.¹²

Crone and Hinds also argue for the religious and political legitimacy of the Umayyads, although they do not mention whether the Umayyads represent the first of any kind of orthodoxy. Crone and Hinds' argument is based on the usage of the title *khalīfat Allāh*, but also includes evidence of the Umayyad caliphs' involvement in religious affairs.¹³ Therefore, despite the Islamic tradition's bias against the Umayyads, which will be explained and rejected in chapter three, their rule represents one of religious and political orthodoxy, which provides the ability to label and execute heretics (though not in the same manner or to the same extent as occurs in Western Christian orthodoxy). Now that the argument regarding orthodoxy within the Umayyad Empire has been established, the historical context surrounding the tribal rivalries that led to the eruption of the third civil war will be examined.

Tribal Factionalism in the Marwanid era

Tribal factionalism and rivalries represent a significant, yet very complicated part leading up to the third *fitna* and within the case study. Tribal

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11–13, 46–47.

structure was a significant part of the Islamic, and pre-Islamic world, because it represented kinship, and along with that, political ties and alliances. Non-Arab converts participated in this tribal structure through the *mawālī* system, or clientage. Since the *mawālī* were not Arab and did not belong to an Arab tribe, they became associated with a tribe through a patron, which gained them some access to political power.

While descent often dictated political alliances between the sub-tribes, there is some debate concerning whether in the years leading up to the third civil war they represented political parties, adhering to distinct political programs.¹⁴ Crone rejects this thesis, by demonstrating that adherence to a tribal confederation was mainly based on descent, not political viewpoint and that the Qays and the Yamanī tribal confederations never strictly adhered to the political programs that Shaban hypothesized.¹⁵ The nature of these tribes and the reasoning for their polarization exacerbated the problems in Khurasan, the region intersecting modern day Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan,

¹⁴ According to Shaban, the Qays tribal confederation represented the political policy of expansion and the political power reserved to the Arabs. While the Yamanī confederation represents the political policy of ending expansion and the incorporation of non-Arab Muslims into positions of power. M.A. Shaban, *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

¹⁵ Patricia Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 1–57.

Turkmenistan and Tajikistan,¹⁶ causing the third *fitna*. Under the Sufyanids (41-61/661-680), the first ruling family branch of the Umayyads, the Qays held a particularly high position within the Umayyad administration, giving them access to political and financial power.¹⁷ This position afforded the Qays tribe, and those allied with them, the ability to affect the decisions of the caliph as well as receive stipends of 2000 dinars a year.¹⁸ A shift in tribal alliances occurred during the second *fitna* (61-73/680-692), wherein the Qays fought on the side of Ibn al-Zubayr, son of a companion of the Prophet who attempted to become the caliph after the Caliph Yazid's death in 64/683¹⁹, and what is now known as the Yamanī fought for the Marwanids. With the emergence of the Marwanids (65-133/684-750) after the second civil war, the Qays had permanently fallen from this lucrative position.²⁰

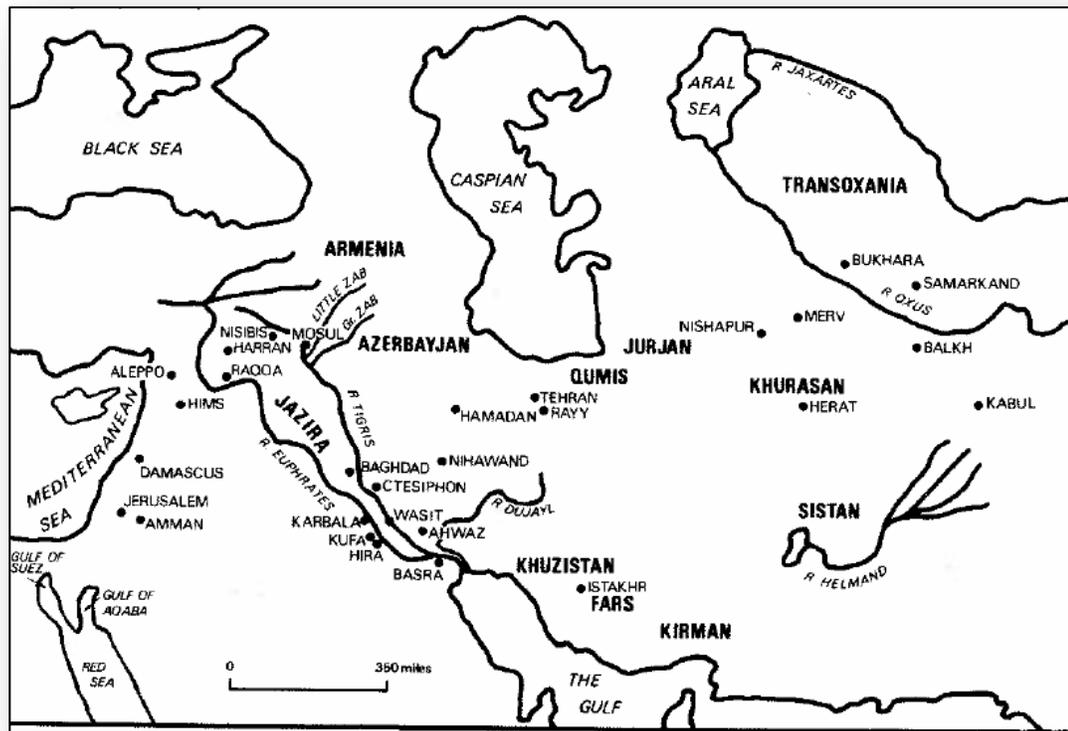
¹⁶ See the map on page 14 of this thesis. G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, Second. (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1986), xiii.

¹⁷ Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," 44.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 47.

²⁰ Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," 48, 50.

Map of the Region: Syria, Iraq, Iran and Transoxania²¹

The modernization of the military system under Caliph 'Abd al-Malik added its own pressures to the cooling feud between the two tribal confederations. With the professionalization of the military and the selection of qualified generals, rather than tribal affiliations to the caliph, stirring the selection of governors, the tribal rivalries begin to intensify.²² Generals were then allowed to choose sub-governors and candidates for other positions, for which they relied on their tribal affiliations. The polarization of the tribal confederations can therefore be demonstrated by the tribal identification of

²¹ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, xiii.

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

the positions beneath the appointed governor. Therefore, despite the neutrality of the caliphs in their appointment of governors, the polarization of the tribes within the provinces was growing dire. The dismissal of Qaysī and Yamanī governors also had dire consequences, since the position was highly valued for its power and financial gain. When they were dismissed from their office the money that was provided to them, through salary, but mostly through taxation and corruption was taken from them, usually accompanied by torture.²³

The tribal confederations and their feud played a significant role in the third *fitna*, which will be discussed in greater detail below. The Marwanids usually selected Qaysī governors to govern in Khurasan, because the inhabitants there were primarily Qaysī. Through unwise actions of Walid II (r. 125-127/743-744) towards the Yamanīs, combined with their lack of administrative power in Khurasan, the Yamanīs, allied with Yazid III (r. 127/744) assassinated Walid II and executed a military coup.²⁴ The one-time combination of Yazid III's religious program, which will be explained later in the chapter, with the tribal rivalry of the Qays and Yamanī produced at least part of the impetus for the third *fitna*.

²³ Ibid., 53–54.

²⁴ Ibid., 55.

Brief Overview of the Third Fitna (125-133 AH/743-750 CE)

The traditional storyline of the third *fitna* includes the struggle for power among Marwanid princes after the death of the Caliph Hisham (r. 106-125/724-743) in addition to the numerous revolts that complicate matters further. Often the third civil war is confused and conflated with the Abbasid revolution, which began during this same period. This paper will focus on the civil war leading up to and including portions of the Abbasid revolution, as it pertains to revolutions in Khurasan and the case study of al-Harith in particular.

Upon the Caliph Hisham's death, the caliphate was inherited by al-Walid II ibn Yazid (r. 125-126/743-744), his nephew, despite Hisham's efforts to change the succession order and appoint his own son as caliph.²⁵ Al-Walid II's reign was short, roughly one year, and was riddled with impious behavior and political actions that garnered the ire and jealousy of other Marwanid princes as well as the heirs of Khalid al-Qasri (d. 126/743), whom al-Walid II tortured and killed.²⁶ In addition to the political tensions between al-Walid and his kin, al-Walid II continued the policy of religious persecution of the Qadariyya, a religious group that believed in free will, a cause that was taken

²⁵ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 90–91.

²⁶ Stephen Judd, "Reinterpreting al-Walid B. Yazīd," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008): 454–455.

up by Yazid III as a source of legitimization and support.²⁷ Using the same rallying cry as the rebels in Khurasan for his revolt, Yazid III called for the accountability of the caliph to the people by calling the government to rule “according to the Qur’an and the sunna of the Prophet.”²⁸ The Yamanīs supported Yazid and the plot to kill al-Walid II came to fruition in 744. Yazid III imprisoned the would be successors, al-Walid II’s adolescent sons and one other claimant to the throne, securing his position of caliph and the Yamanīs’ position over the Qays.²⁹ Yazid III followed to the religious program of the Qadariyya for a short period before he reverted to the ideology of absolute authority of the caliph.³⁰ However, he died less than a year later, after appointing his brother Ibrahim (r. 126/744) to inherit the caliphate. Marwan II ibn Muhammad (r. 126-132/744-750), formerly the distinguished governor of Armenia, had accepted the governorship of Mesopotamia under Yazid III. However, after his death he refused to support Ibrahim as caliph.³¹ Utilizing

²⁷ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 92; Judd, “Reinterpreting al-Walid B. Yazīd,” 455.

²⁸ Judd, “Reinterpreting al-Walid B. Yazīd,” 455; Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, trans. Khalid Yahya Blankinship, vol. XXV (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 105.

²⁹ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 94, 96.

³⁰ Judd, “Reinterpreting al-Walid B. Yazīd,” 456.

³¹ Interestingly enough, Yazid and his brother Ibrahim were not considered caliphs in the primary literature, instead they were known as *emīrs*. It isn’t

the support from the Qays, Marwan II was victorious against Sulayman ibn Hisham (fl. 114-129/732-747), another claimant to the caliphate supported by the Yamanī tribal confederation, only after Sulayman had killed al-Walid's sons. Marwan II entered Damascus and became caliph in 126/744, with Qaysī support.³²

Marwan II's rule then continued the anti-Qadarī policies of previous caliphs and favored the Qays confederation for their support, with his transfer of the Umayyad capital to Harran, the center of Qays military power.³³ The transfer of the capital further exacerbated the tribal rivalry and power balance between the Qays and Yamanī. This left Marwan II to contend with the numerous revolts, from the rebellions in Syria, to winning over support in Iraq, in addition to groups such as the 'Alids and Khawārij.³⁴ Despite the many disparate factions in Iraq (sometimes allying together), his efforts, with the help of his governors, to win Iraq were largely successful by 129/747.³⁵ However, the troubles and rebellions in Khurasan, as explained by the governor Nasr ibn Sayyar (d. 130/748), remained. By the time Marwan II had finished putting down the rebellions in Syria and Iraq, the situation in

until Marwan II that there is another acknowledged caliph. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 94–97.

³² Ibid., 97–98.

³³ Ibid., 98.

³⁴ Ibid., 98–99.

³⁵ Ibid., 101.

Khurasan had advanced too far for him to solve.³⁶ Abu Muslim (d. 137/755), an agent for the Abbasids, had arrived in Khurasan, spreading Abbasid propaganda in 128/745-46 and began his rebellion in 129/747.³⁷ The debate regarding the ethnicity and factions associated with Abu Muslim's rebellion generally belongs to the analysis of the Abbasid revolution. However, some aspects of this are relevant to the case study. Abu Muslim seems to have attracted the support of Arab tribes and their *mawālī* alike, from both the Yamanī and Qays confederations.³⁸ In addition, Crone concludes that this movement included many groups advocating for a ruler from *ahl al-bayt*, meaning descendants of the Prophet such as the 'Alids, elected by *shūrā*, which the Abbasids bypassed to eventually appoint themselves as rulers of this popular movement.³⁹ These are the circumstances that allowed the Abbasids to seize political and religious legitimacy.

There are many theories as to the cause of the third *fitna* and eventually the rise of the Abbasids. The tribal and political aspects of the era

³⁶ Ibid., 101–102.

³⁷ Patricia Crone, "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā," in *The Islamic World From Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1989), 105; R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History*, Revised ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 118, 124.

³⁸ Amikan Elad, "The Ethnic Composition of the Abbasid Revolution: A Reevaluation of Some Recent Research," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000): 275.

³⁹ Crone, "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā," 103–105.

definitely played a large role in the Umayyads instability and slow decline. Other theories on the third *fitna* involve these aspects, but add other factors, which could have contributed to the political and tribal conflicts. Welhausen developed the first basic theory of the third *fitna*, contending that the manipulative and power-hungry Umayyad princes caused discord among the tribes through alliances aimed at obtaining the caliphate. As Judd points out, Welhausen's theory is typical of Umayyad history in general, emphasizing the secular kingship nature of the Umayyads, by focusing wholly on the narrative of the ruthless Marwanid princes.⁴⁰ Shaban's theory of political programs in the place of tribal alliance tried, but failed, to demonstrate that the tribes were actually accurate and consistent political parties, which caused the rivalry that led to the Umayyads' collapse.⁴¹ Blankinship then theorized that the political program of expansion that had been pursued since the rise of Islam caused a financial and material strain on the caliphate, as well as the military's dissatisfaction, which led to the unrest of the military structures and the re-eruption of tribal rivalries.⁴² Hawting and Crone place the extra strain more

⁴⁰ Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History," 6–7.

⁴¹ Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?" 1-5.

⁴² Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State The Reign of Hisham Ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 7–9.

broadly on the administrative changes made within the Marwanid era, likely referring to the restructuring of the military and its impacts on the tribal confederations.⁴³ Hawting's, Crone's and Blankinship's theories adequately supplement the traditional theory of political and tribal rivalries, lending greater understanding of the precarious situation of the Umayyads.

As will be discussed in the third chapter of the paper, the historian al-Tabari's (d. 311/923) approach and agenda in his *Tārīkh* reflected his contemporary atmosphere of political and religious fragmentation, thereby his depiction of the third *fitna* echoes his political reality, political fragmentation. Since the Umayyads were no longer in power, he had no need to integrate their perspectives into his writing; instead, he was able to utilize their history to demonstrate the ills that were affecting his contemporary society. As part of this agenda, al-Tabari identifies the groups struggling for power by their tribe and political claims, as opposed to any theological disputes among them.⁴⁴

Al-Baladhuri, on the other hand, places religious movements at the forefront of his narrative. This is demonstrated in chapter four below, through his focus on the theological discussion of Jahm ibn Safwan's religious beliefs

⁴³ Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 102; Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," 50–53.

⁴⁴ Steven Judd, "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads," in *Umayyad Legacies*, ed. Antoine Borrut and Paul M. Cobb (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 91.

and brief related narrative of al-Harith's revolt. This next portion of the present chapter will describe and analyze the religious movements of the period, how they interacted with the factors of the third *fitna* and also how they related to the Umayyads' labeling and execution of heretics.

Religious Movements during the Third Fitna

While al-Tabari's narration largely neglects religious movements, as explained previously, religious movements did play a role in the third *fitna*. Therefore, it becomes necessary to describe and analyze some of the religious doctrines that were developing and gaining traction at the time. Traditionally these religious sects have been conflated to political parties and used simply to denote group organization and mutual interests. Van Ess posits that the conflation of religion and politics is due to the fact that religion could be seen as a source of validity for political views, whereby theology has been treated as an offshoot of politics, though still significant in relation to tribal and political rivalries.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Kennedy introduces an interesting, but very brief, claim that a lack of religious authority on the part of the Umayyads led to their downfall. Unfortunately he does not attempt to support

⁴⁵ Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History," 23–24.

this claim.⁴⁶ The following is a brief description and overview of other religious beliefs and some of their infamous followers, in order to gauge the developing religious opposition that the Umayyads faced.

There are several religious sects that were developing during the Umayyad Empire, which attempted to usurp the political and religious legitimacy of the Umayyads through the development of religious doctrines that attempted to discredit their religious authority or advocated other theological and political programs within the Umayyad administration. Among the several burgeoning religious doctrines and sects, the Qadariyya and Murji'a will be outlined briefly as these religious movements appear in the case studies, found in chapter four.

The Qadariyya are predecessors to the Mu'tazila, who later gained power under the Abbasids during the reign of al-Ma'mun (r.197-218/813-833). The Qadariyya believed in human beings' free will, as opposed to predestination, along with the createdness of the Qur'an and using reason to understand God. Since the Qadariyya were advocates of free will, it follows that the actions of the caliph are the result of free will and thereby accountable to the people and to God. The concept of accountability to God stands in stark contrast to previous theologies concerning the caliph, in which

⁴⁶ Ibid., 13.

the caliph represents God's predestined choice for absolute authority and therefore cannot be guilty of injustice or opposing God's will.⁴⁷

The importance of the Qadariyya during the third *fitna* becomes clear when Yazid III adopted it as an ideology in his rebellion against al-Walid II. Using the religious legitimacy of the Qadariyya, as well as the military support for the Yamanī, his coup against al-Walid II was completed. His explanation for rebellion against the absolute authority of al-Walid II "ordained by God" was that al-Walid was not abiding by the Book of God or the sunna of the Prophet and also that he was guilty of "innovation" or *bid'a*. Yazid III explained that one should only be obedient to God and that disobedience "to a human ruler cannot entail disobedience to God."⁴⁸ Therefore, Yazid's explanation for his coup rested on the reasoning of the Qadariyya; meanwhile in order to justify his own theology, he accused al-Walid of innovation or heresy.⁴⁹ After taking the caliphate, however, his theology slowly reverted to al-Walid's theological justification for absolute rule of the caliph, God's divine will.⁵⁰ Therefore the relationship of Yazid to Qadarī theology should be regarded as simply an oppositional strategy, rather than true adherence.

⁴⁷ Judd, "Reinterpreting al-Walid B. Yazīd," 442.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 455.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 456.

The Murji'a are another large and diverse theological group developing and solidifying around the time of the third *fitna*. Their main unifying belief is the theological doctrine of suspending judgment for God, which refers back to the first fitna, when the community split.⁵¹ By suspending judgment for God, Muslims could rest assured that Islam and people who had fallen on either side of the first fitna had not strayed from God's path. For that reason Murji'a were known as quietists, those who believed in the *umma* or unity of Islamic community. The Murji'a were also known advocates for the non-Arab converts to Islam.⁵² A later term associated with the root for the Arabic word Murji'a is *irjā*, meaning to defer judgment to God and therefore to abide by the consensus of the Islamic community, in order to keep on the religious path.⁵³ Another quality of the Murji'a, found within the *Sīrat Sālim* (ca. 75/695), is an "attitude toward the 'kings of their people,' i.e. the contemporary rulers."⁵⁴ Basically the Murji'a did not approve of Mu'awiya's rule. Cook reveals further that the author of the *sīrah* points to a sub-group of the Murji'a that believes the caliphs are unbelievers, as opposed to the general Murji'a belief that the

⁵¹ Cook posits that while the dating and authenticity of the *Kitab al-irjā'* are in question, the doctrine of *irjā'* can still be a doctrine that was applied to the first civil war, albeit likely adopted later than the first civil war. Madelung, "Murdji'a"; Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 69.

⁵² Madelung, "Murdji'a."

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 6–7.

rulers are sinful believers.⁵⁵ Though Madelung believes that while they were concerned with the unity of the community, they also believed they could revolt, which describes the sub-group within the Murji'a and al-Harith himself, though this is greatly debated.⁵⁶

While the Murji'a subscribe to different values than the Qadariyya, these two groups may overlap in beliefs. One heretic, Ghaylan al-Dimashqi, is accused of being both a Qadarite and Murji'ite. Meanwhile, al-Harith and his secretary, Jahm⁵⁷, to be discussed more in depth in chapter four, are labeled as Murji'ites.⁵⁸

The difficulty and complexity of the religious and theological factions at this time are indicative of the fractured nature of the Islamic world and while

⁵⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁶ Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History," 23; Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 172; Madelung, "Murdji'a."

⁵⁷ While there are overlaps in the case of Gaylan between the label of Murji'ite and Qadarite, Jahm cannot be labeled a Qadarite in any regard, since his religious doctrines are those of predestination and not free will. However, Cook writes about a group called the Jahmite Qadaris, found in Ibn Hanbal's *Masā'il*, which describes a group that believed in the createdness of the Qur'an, and that God created good, but not evil. Cook does not mention whether this group believed in predestination or free will. Judd, "Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," 172–173; Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 205.

⁵⁸ Cook doubts the likelihood that al-Harith and Jahm were actually Murji'ites, despite the acknowledgment by the primary sources; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:113; Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, ed. Tamtassah Ḥimsīr Ibn Saba', vol. 25 (Dimashq: Maktibah al-Yaqḏah al-'Arabiyyah, 2004), 54; Judd, "Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," 173; Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 33.

not as elucidative in the explanation of the third *fitna* as the tribal and political rivalries, religious difference still represents a significant aspect of the historical context. The overview of the Qadariyya and Murji'a demonstrates the complicated and tangled religious theological doctrines that were utilized politically in their struggle against the religious orthodoxy.

Chapter 2: Orthodoxy, Heresy & Heterodoxy

What is Heresy? What is Orthodoxy?

“Heresy” is a term derived from the Greek *hairesis*, which meant “choice.”¹ Originally devoid of negative connotation, the Christian Church adopted the Greek word and used it to condemn groups that embraced doctrinal differences, thereby imbuing it with negative implications.² So, quite simply, the definition of heresy is beliefs or practices that challenge or subvert the orthodoxy, or mainstream beliefs and practices.³ The term “heresy” requires three factors: the assumption that there is an established orthodoxy or a set of correct religious beliefs and/or practices, which is accepted widely among the populace. It also requires a structure or institution within the orthodoxy that will condemn a particular group or faction for practicing the religion with certain deviations, which the orthodoxy determines run counter to it and/or its authority and dogmas or doctrines that elucidate the line between the orthodoxy and those which the orthodoxy rejects. Finally, it requires those who believe or practice differently enough to be considered apostates.

¹ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 11.

² Ibid.

³ Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” 62.

In fact, heresy, as demonstrated by the Christian Church's understanding, is a phenomenon restricted to monotheistic religions, as Fowden argues in his book *Empire to Commonwealth*. He explains that for better or worse monotheism gained the political legitimation previously afforded to the secular authority.⁴ Assman adds to Fowden's conception of monotheism when he asserts that polytheism is tolerant and monotheism intolerant.⁵ Fowden continues that although monotheism has the advantage of strengthening its political authority, it also faces numerous and overwhelming differences between the central authority and those areas only loosely under its control, which is the case within Khurasan where the case study takes place. Whereas in polytheism the numerous theological practices and beliefs could be interwoven with each other to support the "emperor cult," monotheisms express a more rigid belief system that requires general conformity and are actually "sustained by their negative energy, their power of negation and exclusion."⁶ With the geographical and cultural differences, there were obvious differences between the central authority and the periphery, who were portrayed as "heretical groups," but who considered

⁴ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 108.

⁵ Assman, *The Price of Monotheism*, 14.

⁶ Ibid.; Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 108.

themselves as the orthodox.⁷ Theological and practical differences between varieties of religious beliefs under polytheism were not socially or politically significant, but under monotheism these differences became enforceable by a central religious and political authority that had a monopoly on the Truth.⁸

The issue of heresy within monotheistic religions is quite vast, considering the different religions and how differences in doctrine and practice are treated. The specific question of heresy in Islam is also a difficult one, due to numerous factors. The first of these is that the terminology associated with “heresy” is historically Christian and therefore definitions are imbued with Christian history. It will be beneficial then to first explore these terms within the framework of the Christian Church, and explicate the significant differences between these two religions. Historically, heresy within the Christian Church was/is a transgression against a Christian’s covenant with God and thus apostasy.⁹ The Christian Church was best equipped to define an apostate and heretical derivations of Christianity due to its process of establishing dogmas, such as the Nicene Creed in 325 CE.¹⁰ However, even with this dogma in place it took some time before the Papal authority

⁷ Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 108.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12; Freeman, *A.D. 381 Heretics, Pagans, and the Dawn of the Monotheistic State*, xix.

chose and/or was able to enforce a single Christian sect as the orthodox. Freeman argues that it was not until 381 CE that the Christian Roman emperor Theodosius was responsible for an edict that allowed the condemnation of “heretical” Christian beliefs.¹¹ The hierarchy of the Church facilitated the development and implementation of these dogmas and therefore its “orthodoxy” since it created and disseminated legitimized symbols to the masses, in the form of oral recitation.¹² But more importantly, the Christian Church also possessed the ability to excommunicate or deny someone a place within the Church, with the underlying penalty of forfeiting spiritual redemption in the afterlife.¹³ In 612/1215, the Church expanded its power in this respect to take secular action against a heretic, by coercing the secular state to pursue heretics criminally.¹⁴

The Islamic system differs considerably from this model and therefore the term “heresy” must be explored in depth within the Islamic paradigm. First, the Muslim faith lacks the centralized infrastructure of the Christian Church; there is no body or hierarchy of individuals who are tasked with assisting Muslims in their practicing their religion or obtaining salvation.

¹¹ Freeman, *A.D. 381 Heretics, Pagans, and the Dawn of the Monotheistic State*, 1.

¹² Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 12.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

Muslims are considered laypersons.¹⁵ Therefore the sacramentally positioned covenant that Muslims have with God is direct, not via clergy. Theologians did create oral dogmas for recitation, but there was no compulsion in them and they were only applicable for certain times or particular places.¹⁶ The introduction of the *madrasa*, which appeared under the Seljuks in the 11th century, is the only Islamic institution that some scholars consider slightly similar to the church-like structure, which would allow for establishing the orthodox sect and the heretical, but its late arrival and absent political power make it ineffective in this regard.¹⁷ Second, the Islamic religion lacks the concept of original sin that is found in Christianity. Muslims, as adherents to the Islamic faith, do not need to be redeemed, but rather refrain from sin by simply following the model of Muhammad and the laws put forth in the Qur'an. This clearly does not require the hierarchy that developed in the church to obtain forgiveness.

The last and most important difference between the Christian and the Islamic model, closely related to the first point, is the fluidity of religious legitimation as opposed to the rigid authority structure of the Christian Church. This is evidenced by the Buyid dynasty (934-1055/322-447), which,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 49.

despite its Shi'a tendencies preserved the Sunni Arab caliphate and also the utilization of consensus within jurisprudence and dogmatism.¹⁸ The religious legitimation in the first instance can be argued to legitimize both sects of Islam, without condemnation of either as heretical. Consensus, which slowly developed over the first Islamic two centuries as a technique to reconcile multiple jurists' opinions,¹⁹ provided boundless occasions for one particular group to agree that something is permissible and for another to condemn it as heresy.²⁰ However, Hallaq argues that *ijmā'*, or consensus, began as a part of the *sunna*, because legal experts upheld the *sunna* in agreement. Yet, Hallaq does not mention who these legal experts are, how they became legal experts and whether this precludes or includes members of burgeoning or proto-sectarian groups. Slowly, *ijmā'* became more developed in its application towards hadith.²¹ Two traditions demonstrate the position of *ijmā'* on the topic of heresy and sectarianism within the society. One tradition states that there are/will be 72 or 73 sects of Islam and only one will be saved.²² The other tradition states that the "community will never agree on

¹⁸ Ibid., 45–46, 58.

¹⁹ Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, 110.

²⁰ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 57–58.

²¹ Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*, 110.

²² Amir-Moezzi, "Heresy," 421.

error.”²³ These traditions were likely established to explain the divisions in the early Islamic community and to emphasize the importance and position *ijmāʿ* plays in Islamic law and society. Van Ess cautions, *ijmāʿ* operated after the fact, once society had already assessed the issue and/or group.²⁴ It was only after this that the legal jurists employed *ijmāʿ* to confirm the decision. For this reason various Islamic authorities were able to tout Islamic orthodoxy, but there was no early or widespread organization dedicated to the protection of orthodoxy and the detection of heresy, as there was in the Christian Church.

By viewing heresy and how it interacts differently within the Christian Church and within the Islamic religion, it is possible to comprehend that this complex issue may rest on two spheres within religion itself: dogma and practice.²⁵ Within Christianity, heresy refers mainly to belief in different dogmas, i.e., Jesus has one nature, divine and human in Monophysitism but in Nestorianism he has two loosely united natures. However, in Islam, with no clergy or Church-like organizational structure, the concern over dogmas in the Christian Church turned into the daily concern about religious practice for Muslims. Therefore in Islam there is also a great emphasis on jurisprudence

²³ Ibid., 421.

²⁴ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 34.

²⁵ Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” 43.

and practices.²⁶ The assertion made by Van Ess that Islamic dogmatism grew out of Islamic jurisprudence may suggest that the two are linked/related and equally important in regards to heresy in Islam.²⁷

Islamic Framework for "Heresy/Heterodoxy"

After reviewing heresy in the Christian Church, it seems that it does not fit seamlessly into the Islamic framework. It can be argued that the Islamic context has levels of belief, ranging from believer to heretic, with an intermediary stage that lends the early Islamic model more to heterodoxy than heresy. The difference between heterodoxy and heresy is the general acceptance of different sectarian groups in the former, with different beliefs and practices, as Muslims in name and in spirit, while the model for heresy flatly rejects the claim that groups with different beliefs and practices can be accepted as Muslims.²⁸ The terminology applied to "heretical" groups in Islam is all clearly negative, but the majority of heresiographers still indicate that the accuser still considers them Muslims, "a contributor within Islamic history."²⁹

As evidence towards this fact, the early Islamic heresiographer, al-Baghdādī

²⁶ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 54.

²⁹ Taylor, "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām," 199.

(d. 428/1037), ranks Muslim sects over non-Muslim traditions in the damage they have caused Islam.³⁰ The terminology associated with heresy and heterodoxy will be explored in depth below.

The term used in the Qur'an for the followers of Muhammad is *mū'minīn*, believers, while one who is not is considered a *kāfir*, an apostate or unbeliever.³¹ Jews and Christians are considered *ahl al-kitāb* or People of the Book, who embody a position somewhere between a heretic and a *muslim* (a believer). Related to a separate issue, Fred Donner argues that Islam began as an ecumenical movement of Jews, Christians and Muslims, but slowly crystallized into a distinctly Islamic identity around the time of 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705), an issue that this thesis will return to in this chapter.³²

Arabic terms like *bid'a*, *ghul'at*, *nafaqa*, *takfir*, *ilhād* and *zandaqa*, found in the Qur'an or other early Islamic texts, appear in various contexts related to heresy.³³ Of those terms, four of the words' roots have been found in the Qur'an: *l-h-d*, *b-d-ʿ* and *n-f-q*.³⁴ The first root refers to blasphemy, either

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Taylor, "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām."

³² Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, xiii.

³³ Amir-Moezzi, "Heresy," 421.

³⁴ There is one additional word used for "heretic" in the Qur'an, which is *bughāt*, which means thugs or terrorists. According to Amir-Moezzi, it means disobedience and was usually used in terms of the Khawārij, who were thought to be rebellious and extreme. Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 31; Amir-Moezzi, "Heresy," 421.

disbelief or the use of God's name incorrectly. *Bid'a* refers to innovation in the religion caused by deviation, which the Twelver Shi'a were usually accused of.³⁵ *N-f-q* means hypocrisy. *Ghul'at* or exaggerators are those who are excessively in disagreement in any particular doctrine or practice; this is seen as a type of heretical action, though it does not apply to all Shi'a or Khawārij, who are still considered Muslims. Instead it only refers to those among those groups whose views are so extreme that their beliefs run counter to monotheism or other major doctrines in Islam.³⁶ *Zandaqa* is not found in the Qur'an, and is likely Persian;³⁷ it means "free thought" or "heresy," but was used extensively in reference to the Manicheans or those professing Islam with some dualist beliefs as well.³⁸ Later, it became an administrative term referring to a person posing a political or societal threat as well as holding unorthodox beliefs.³⁹ *Mulhid*, from the Qur'anic root, *l-h-d* refers to the "deviator," the original non-believer, the rationalist, materialist or atheist.

Though it was used by classical theologians, it eventually replaced the term

³⁵ Along with the term "Rafidi" meaning to refuse. The history behind this term is that a Zaydi Shi'ite accused the Twelver Shi'ite of refusal because they did not back the Zaydi revolt in Kūfa. This was later extended to all Shi'ites, used by non-Shi'ites.

³⁶ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 54.

³⁷ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 27.

³⁸ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 55.

³⁹ Ibid.

zandaqa during the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ Some terms related to heresy and orthodoxy were imported straight from Christian writings, such as the term heresy itself transformed into *hawā* in the Arabic, known also in the plural as *āhwā*.⁴¹ Another term is *hartaqa* or heresy from the Syriac.⁴² These are terms used in association with disbelief or wrong belief in reference to Islamic thought and practice.

The term *kufr* or *kāfir* are the two closest terms for heresy and heretic that can be found in Arabic. According to Lewis, this term “is adequate to express the full force of the Christian concept of heresy.”⁴³ While the other terms may be somewhat inclusive of different sects, this term refers to nonbelievers, not Muslims who have sinned and can be redeemed. However, Lewis’ claim neglects the importance of the Christian context that is incorporated into the term; and this context is clearly missing from early Islamic history. Their status as nonbelievers also impacts their legal status in the community, i.e., nonbelievers’ ability to marry, testify, etc.⁴⁴ The term

⁴⁰ Ibid., 56.

⁴¹ Cowan, *Arabic- English Dictionary The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 1219.

⁴² Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” 51.

⁴³ Taylor, “An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām,” 198.

⁴⁴ Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” 59.

takfir indicates that the common practice of calling out heretics, since it means, “charge of unbelief; or seduction to infidelity.”⁴⁵ The first group to utilize accusations of heresy was the Khawārij, thereby claiming to be the only true Muslims, while others were actually living in a state of apostasy and unbelief. Van Ess believes that this charge of disbelief on others was primarily political and used to distance themselves from non-Khawārij.⁴⁶ Lewis asserts while religious debate over theological doctrines and practices were taken very seriously and kept at a theological level, the charges of *takfir* were largely polemical and did not affect the legal status of those accused.⁴⁷ Therefore due to the difficulty in drawing permanent and distinct criteria regarding the status of belief, the denunciation and condemnation of nonbelievers is largely useless in indicating theological orthodoxy.⁴⁸

Medieval Islamic scholars, ranging from al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) to Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) have struggled to determine the criteria of being a Muslim. At its minimum standards, a Muslim would testify to the unity of God and Muhammad as his prophet. Others require the physical rituals to be performed as minimal evidence towards his belief. Ibn Taymiyya takes a more

⁴⁵ Cowan, *Arabic- English Dictionary The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 975.

⁴⁶ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 30.

⁴⁷ Lewis, “Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam,” 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

extreme standpoint and requires excessive proof of a person's belief.⁴⁹

Regardless, the use of force against perceived heretics existed in early Islam despite the inability to fully define who is a believer and what exactly is the orthodoxy in Islam. This is well balanced by evidence of tolerance of religious differences across sects at all different levels of society.

Taylor argues that this dichotomy of tolerance and orthodoxy produces a unique current that permits differences within the religion, but still carries social pressure for those outliers to conform and reform their religious beliefs to the "orthodox."⁵⁰ He rejects the concept that heresy or heterodoxy best describes the phenomenon in early Islam, but argues that a mixture of both produced an atmosphere that was compatible with multiple sects, but did not embody the rationalism and liberalism necessary for true heterodoxy or a truly inclusive Islamic *umma*.⁵¹

Theories of Heresy & Heterodoxy in Historical Contexts and their Application

There have been several theories dedicated to the understanding of heresy, heterodoxy, and orthodoxy in historical and anthropological fields of study. Hence, there is a major debate regarding how orthodoxy is

⁴⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁰ Taylor, "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām," 199.

⁵¹ Ibid., 202–203.

established, the purpose and place of heterodoxy and how and why heterodoxy and heresy arise in different historical contexts. Due to its broad nature and wide applicability across several fields of study, this chapter will concentrate on heresy and heterodoxy in the medieval contexts, both Islamic and Christian and also in the contemporary Islamic fields, in the case of the Baha'i.

First, Lewis develops a flexible theory on orthodoxy and Islam as continually in flux, changing based on perspective and ruling party. He views the sectarianism in Islam as heresies with the two first and major heresies being the Shi'a and the Khawārij, since orthodoxy was established under the Prophet.⁵² Lewis continues in this vein and claims that orthodoxy was reestablished for a second time under the Abbasids, when embraced the "religion of the theologians."⁵³ This cyclical and relative approach to understanding orthodoxy affords the field of Islamic history enormous flexibility when interpreting and analyzing religious norms and values, as evidenced by the Fatimid dynasty that embraced the Ismā'īlī derivation of Shi'a Islam, which could be considered the orthodoxy, since it was the ruling

⁵² Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 46–47.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 48.

religion.⁵⁴ With the appearance and domination of the Seljuks, *madrasas* were created to further educate the Seljuks in the practice and beliefs of Sunni Islam, and guard against the heresy of the Ismā'īlīs, still prevalent in the region.⁵⁵ While this theory encompasses the enormous amount of complexity in the Islamic system, it is too vague and lacks any structure that could be used to further analyze this issue of heresy or sectarianism within Islam.

On the other hand, van Ess' theory on Islamic orthodoxy insists that orthodoxy is established when a single faction or belief system "extends beyond one locality," even if this position in society is a temporary one.⁵⁶ Therefore heresy occurs after the establishment of orthodoxy, but its presence in society is well documented prior to the establishment of the orthodoxy. Therefore it is his assertion that orthodoxy was originally established when Mu'tazila theology spread from Basra to Baghdad and assumedly throughout the empire. While it expanded geographically it did not weaken or lose any part of its philosophy. Instead Mu'tazila theology as a philosophy and orthodoxy was able to equalize between several local understandings.⁵⁷ Van Ess' theory, while initially compelling, becomes more complicated when extended into later historical contexts, when there are

⁵⁴ Ibid., 48–49.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁶ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 6–8, 15.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 6.

multiple locations for different sects, such as the Ibādīs in the Mzab and present day Oman.

Amir-Moezzi echoes this portion of van Ess' theory, by also asserting that heresy relies on orthodoxy, which he dates to the reign of Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 197-218/813-833).⁵⁸ The simplicity of this premise, as was an issue with van Ess' theory above, lacks the complexity to handle multiple Islamic empires at one time. Luckily, van Ess has continued to develop his theory on the conception of heresy in early Islam, providing a more universal and acceptable criterion for heretical belief and action.

In van Ess' 2011 interview with the Goethe Institut's *Fikrun wa Fann*, he further clarifies and expands his theory on heresy, portraying an Islamic system that is more similar to heterodoxy than heresy. He asserts that Islam was accepting of differences in practice, with the exception of prayer, because Islam differed based on each garrison city.⁵⁹ Van Ess believes the importance of the Qur'an may not have been as significant as once believed and it was only later that the practice of prayer and the Qur'an came to unite the cities together, which van Ess claims occurred during 'Abd al-Malik's reign

⁵⁸ Amir-Moezzi, "Heresy," 421.

⁵⁹ Van Ess, "The Origins of Islam: A Conversation with the German Islamic Scholar Josef Van Ess."

and the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 72/692.⁶⁰ Despite the unity that van Ess claims at this time, he does not mention whether he still considers the establishment of an orthodoxy to remain during the time of the Muʿtazila or whether he moves it back to the Marwanid period. Furthermore, van Ess limits the description of heretics within the Islamic model to those that question “Muhammad’s prophethood or person,” not those who question the constitutionality of Islamic law and the Qur’an from which it originates.⁶¹ Therefore, it is not the Shi’a or the Khawārij that are considered heretics, but the ‘Alawites and other such groups.⁶² The ‘Alawites have in the twentieth century gained some religious legitimacy and some acceptance within the Islamic community since their rise in the Syrian military or the ceasing of rebellious activities.⁶³ Van Ess’ elaborate theory on the diverse origins and traditions of Islam prior to the establishment of an orthodoxy lends credence to the heterodoxical nature of Islam, as opposed to the Christian model as well as provides the most important criteria for heretical groups in Islam: the questioning of Muhammad’s prophethood and position within Islam.

Wansbrough’s theory on heresy stems from his background in biblical studies and overlaps with Van Ess’ theory regarding the development of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

different beliefs and practice prior to a confirmed orthodoxy. He theorizes that heresies do not develop after an orthodox version of theology is established, but concurrently.⁶⁴ These different and emerging Islamic theologies grew alongside one another, struggling for legitimation from the community. Therefore, heretic groups such as the Khawārij or Shi‘a were not officially considered as heretics until an orthodox vision of Islam was established and their vision officially lost its claim of legitimation for the entire Islamic community.⁶⁵ It is unclear when Wansbrough asserts that Sunni Islam became the established orthodoxy and when the Khawārij fully lost legitimation within the community.

MacEoin’s analysis of the branching of orthodox Shi’i Islam into the heterodox factions of Shaykhism and Babism and finally into the heresy or orthodoxy of the Bahai, demonstrates his theory about the concepts orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Borrowing from Max Weber, MacEoin views the eruption of heresies or different sects a result of “the breakthrough of fresh charisma.”⁶⁶ Therefore the cycle begins with a religion being formed that addresses the spiritual needs of the people, but over time it becomes more of

⁶⁴ Judd, “The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History,” 33–34.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ MacEoin, “Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi‘ism: The Cases of Shaykhism and Babism,” 323.

this world. Therefore there becomes the need for redefinition of society or a new interpretation of religious expression. In accordance with Taylor, he suggests that the Islamic model contains a mix of heresy and heterodoxy, in that a certain amount of distance from the orthodoxy is permitted and acceptable at times.⁶⁷ Different heterodoxies become unacceptable when the orthodox “feels the need to define itself, to set limits of the sacred universe,” and will persecute heretics.⁶⁸ At the same time, this period when the orthodoxy feels the need to define itself represents a moment of vulnerability when sectarian groups may choose to “challenge authority.”⁶⁹ Therefore, instability and uncertainty within or of the orthodoxy represents a dangerous time for sectarian movements. It is important to note that this vulnerability may also be political, but more importantly the instability concerns theological identity and expression of society. In accordance with Wansbrough’s theory about concurrent development, MacEoin states that the orthodoxy can then use these “heterodoxical” sects to define itself, making it an “other” and continuing to develop.⁷⁰

Therefore, MacEoin traces the origins of the Baha’i faith as a sect of Islam, demonstrating the evolutionary process from orthodoxy to heterodoxy

⁶⁷ Ibid., 323–324.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 324.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

and finally to complete heresy/discrete and separate orthodoxy. MacEoin's theory of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy while rooted and applied to the nineteenth century, fits nicely with van Ess' most recent theory on Islamic heresy and seems relevant for application in a medieval context, despite the fact it has not yet been used in a pre-modern context. In addition, the tolerance of heterodoxy combined with the persecution of heresies speaks to Taylor's assertion of a combination between these concepts. MacEoin's theory is a practical and applicable model for the analysis of orthodoxies and heterodoxies because it speaks to the reasoning and explanation for both stances by Islamic authorities at different times. In short, MacEoin's theory attributes religious divergences to their political and social contexts, which is a useful interpretation for the theological issues during the 3rd *fitna* (ca. 743-750).

Finally, Talal Asad reviews medieval heresy from an anthropological perspective and writes in response to Janet Nelson's article on the origins of heresy in the medieval Christian context. Nelson's theory is somewhat similar to MacEoin's model. However unlike MacEoin's analysis, she describes a "stable society served by a coherent ideology (religious beliefs and rituals)" as a starting point.⁷¹ With economic and political developments this belief

⁷¹ Asad, "Medieval Heresy: An Anthropological View," 346.

system suffers due to its lack of flexibility and adaptability to the new circumstances, not in a social-psychological way, but due to theodicy: “when a religion fails logically to explain human suffering or fortune in terms of its system of beliefs.”⁷² The theodicy is caused by disorientation, best illustrated by the increase in mobility, both vertically in the social hierarchy and geographically.⁷³ Thus, she is attempting to explain why some people are drawn to developing heretical movements. The marginalized people of society suffer a crisis of faith, due to their poor fortunes. Their crisis of faith results in renewed fervor of religious traditions, but eventually concludes in the “rigidity” of religious institutions, or stricter and reinforced traditions and dogmas, which assert religious orthodoxy.⁷⁴ This “rigidity” within the religious sphere produces two types of heretical movements, those looking for communion with the divine through ascetism and evangelism and those that desire to purify the sect from the corruption of the orthodoxy.⁷⁵ These two options in heretical movements demonstrate that Nelson views heresy as a problem of logic, and both heretical solutions resolve the theodicy by “eliminating the

⁷² The major issue of theodicy within Islam concerns whether God created all things, and therefore evil, or whether humans have free will, which therefore frees God from creating evil. *Ibid.*, 348.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

contradiction between beliefs.”⁷⁶ She proceeds to argue that the presence of a strong political leader hinders heretical outbreaks, because a strong political leader is able to steadily control the social and economic changes over time, so as to lessen the impact on the population.⁷⁷

Nelson’s model is quite detailed and clearly based on a Christian model. However it has a lot in common with MacEoin’s theory, in that it is attempting to understand and explain the creation of heresies in general. Nelson contributes to MacEoin’s theory by providing socio-psychological factors that contribute to the development of religious heresies, roughly a thousand years after the establishment of an Islamic orthodoxy. Within the Islamic framework the debate over heresies and heterodoxies is positioned a lot closer to the origin of Islam in time. However, this does not mean her theory does not apply. First, the theological “pressure” that the Church employs, which she refers to as an effect of change and theodicy and the cause of heretical movements, can be likened to MacEoin’s redefinition of the orthodoxy, which presents itself as a hardline approach against dissenters, but also as an opportunity for them to challenge authority. Second, Nelson’s possible socio-psychological cause for people to search for religious divergence should not be disregarded completely yet either. Therefore her

⁷⁶ Ibid., 348.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 353.

approach to medieval Christian heresy presents the intriguing questions that should be adapted and analyzed in the medieval Islamic context; specifically does change and theodicy lie at the roots of heretical movements?

Talal Asad reviews Nelson's approach to medieval Christian heresy and presents more intriguing questions of his own regarding how to study Christian heresy or heresy in general. He presents two other alternatives to a logical resolution of theodicy: the moral resolution (reorganizing suffering or seeking to eliminate it) or "a periodic social-psychological" resolution (replacing old outdated world views with ones that are better suited toward contemporaneous experiences).⁷⁸ Asad flatly rejects the periodic social-psychological issue without explanation, but continues approaching heresy as a moral dilemma and not a logical one. Perhaps he would reconsider this rejection if he were concerned with the early Islamic context. He comes to similar conclusions as Nelson, but from a different direction. First, he agrees that the strong political authority does stave off religious heresy in the Christian context, not because it controls the social conditions that lead to change, but because its defense of the Church was one way of defending its political power.⁷⁹ As evidence for this point, the smaller regions were prone to

⁷⁸ Ibid., 348.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 353.

bouts of heresies, due to the lack of a strong Church presence.⁸⁰ This leads Asad to suggest an approach on heresy that is contingent on Church condemnation and centers of power as opposed to the analysis of “heretical psychology.”⁸¹

Asad’s reasoning for this approach is due the fact that heretical groups are all different, arising from different social, political and economic conditions, and most importantly the only common factor between them is the label of “heresy,” which the Church ascribed to them because each represented a threat to the authority of the Church and the “Truth.”⁸² He is therefore suggesting an analysis of these groups in relation to the danger they pose to the Church’s authority, and specifically why the Church chooses to “seek out” this danger instead of “responding” to it.⁸³ This is a thoughtful and productive approach; unfortunately, Asad admits that Islam lacks the centralized institutional techniques for condemning heresy, as has been previously discussed. This complicates any prospective adaptation of his approach to the Islamic model considerably. But more importantly Asad suggests that the origins and conditions in which heresy arise are not important in the broader view of heresy. This is a debatable point. The

⁸⁰ Ibid., 354.

⁸¹ Ibid., 356.

⁸² Ibid., 355.

⁸³ Ibid., 357.

differences between the Christian model and the Islamic models are significant, but the methods and concepts should be able to be adapted to provide fruitful analysis on the issue of heresy and heterodoxy, institutional authorities, what leads the authority to confront rather than respond to dissenters, and finally the effect of theodicy, caused by a logical/emotional disorientation.

The majority of theorists on the subject of heresy and heterodoxy concur that, within Islam, heresy and differing religious practices and beliefs do not appear on the heels of the founding of the orthodoxy, but develop concurrently. The orthodoxy is selected from one of these strands of Islam as the orthodoxy or orthodoxies develop in response to the religious, doctrinal and practical issues that are raised by “proto-heretical” groups. A definition of the orthodoxy and when it was founded must be explicitly analyzed and determined, in order to determine how and which “proto-heretical” groups influenced the forthcoming orthodoxy.

Islamic Orthodoxy

One of the first conclusions one can come to about Islamic orthodoxy is that it is established with the revelation of the Qur’an and the sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. However, accepting this claim does nothing to further

the study of which faction is the orthodox or heretical or why this has come to be; instead by asserting that Islam has not changed since the death of the Prophet, this claim rejects all analysis and investigation on this topic. Rather by using only the Qur'an and the sunna, the investigation is limited to heresy in reference to the prophet Muhammad's original message, which was usually in relation to the Abrahamic religions that had "distorted God's true message." Many scholars put the estimated arrival of an Islamic orthodoxy under the rule of al-Ma'mun (r. 197-208/813-833), due to his participation in the *mihna* or trials against Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the doctrines against the uncreatedness of the Qur'an.⁸⁴ This Mu'tazila orthodoxy clearly does not mean that all the people of the empire, from Spain to China practiced or understood Islam in this particular manner. Rather it simply means that religious and political leaders constructed an intellectual orthodoxy that represented the position and power of the empire.

However, Orientalist literature places the establishment of heresies at the development of the two major heretical sects in early Islam: the Shi'a and the Khawārij.⁸⁵ In his recent book, Najam Haider places the establishment of a united Shi'a sect in the 2nd/8th century, prior to Van Ess' estimation of an

⁸⁴ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 5.

⁸⁵ Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 46–47.

established orthodoxy. This united Shi'a faction fulfills Van Ess' criteria of extending beyond one locality, from Kufa to Khurasan (Iran) as a part of the Abbasid Revolution or *da'wa*.⁸⁶ Therefore, even if an established "mainstream" cannot be proven, an established religious movement with an allegiance to the descendants of 'Ali that stands clearly in the minority and separate from "others" may be sufficient to demonstrate orthodox and heretical movements or heterodoxy. Haider approaches the narratives of the Shi'a community by tracking the transmitters of hadith and heresiography to determine the date they were first transmitted and therefore the reliability of their content. He utilizes this method to determine that distinct religious practices, such as the gathering at shrines and some different theological views, emerged to form a distinct Imāmī Shi'a community and identity by the 2nd/8th century.⁸⁷

Haider's book also is compatible with Van Ess' assertion that jurisprudence impacted/affected theological doctrine and not the other way around. Haider bases his claim on Sunni acceptance of innovative legal figures, such as al-A'mash (d. 148/765), who followed normative religious

⁸⁶ Haider, *The Origins of the Shi'a Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfah*, 13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 189–190.

ritual, but was responsible for infusing intercession and 'Ali's superior position vis-a-vis the Prophet's companions within Shi'i theological doctrine.⁸⁸

If one is convinced by the thesis of Donner's most recent book *Muhammad and the Believers*, then a strong claim can be made that Islamic orthodoxy developed under the Marwanids, during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. While his book makes no such claim, his time line of events places the origin of Islam, a new discrete and distinct religion, at a time when the administration of the empire had reached a level to develop and disseminate the symbols of legitimation of Islam. Prior to this, Islam was an ecumenical movement, comprised of Muslims, Jews and Christians, and the Dome of the Rock and the second part of the *shahada* are indications that Islam evolved as a distinct religion, independent from the other Abrahamic religions. But are distinction from other religions and the capability to propagate Islam throughout the empire enough to indicate orthodoxy? Donner's placement of a distinct Islam during 'Abd al-Malik's reign postdates the first and second *fitnas* (35-41/656-661 and 63-73/683-692 respectively), which indicates that the 'Alids, Khawārij, and the Zubayrids must be considered heretics developing at the same time as the orthodoxy and challenging the developing

⁸⁸ Ibid., 229.

orthodoxy for legitimacy, lending credence to Wansbrough's theory on heresy discussed above.

In her book *God's Caliph*, Patricia Crone's argument for the religious authority of the Umayyads also supports the concept that Islamic orthodoxy was formed under the Umayyads, if not prior to them. Her analysis of the term *khalīfat Allah* (deputy of God), without the intermediary *rasūl* (prophet), indicates that the religious power from God was initially appropriated without the need to rest on the Prophet Muhammad.⁸⁹ The religious legitimacy that Crone attributes to the Sufyanids and later to the Marwanids, is based on their titles, and caliphal law within the documentary evidence.⁹⁰

In *God's Rule*, Crone elaborates on Islamic orthodoxy by analyzing political thought and development in medieval Islam. She concludes that the development of society, government/administration and Islam began as one in Muhammad's Medina, but slowly *sharī'a* became less significant in presiding over the government, while it remained an essential part of society.⁹¹ This slow evolution of political thought and separation of the religious from the political demonstrates a developing and evolving political

⁸⁹ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, 24.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24–25,44.

⁹¹ Crone, *God's Rule*, 396.

orthodoxy.⁹² Crone asserts this slow development occurred after Muhammad's death and this stage of evolution was finished around 232/847, when it was clear that the *miḥna* (218-232/833-847) had failed.⁹³ The religious orthodoxy, therefore, was established after the *miḥna*, when the religious authority was in the hands of the religious scholars and certain theological limits were set. While the Abbasids had come to power with the precedence of religious authority, their failed attempt to exert it during the *miḥna* resulted in the loss of religious authority, which then was dispersed among the religious scholars.⁹⁴ Van Ess declares that the *miḥna* indicates the first Islamic orthodoxy, whereas Crone specifies the end of the *miḥna* indicates the separation of religious and political authority for the Abbasids. The next section of this chapter will discuss the distinction between religious and political orthodoxy and the development of both.

Political Orthodoxy vs. Religious Orthodoxy

After reviewing the literature on heresy or heterodoxy in Islam, it seems that there are two major foci concerning orthodoxy, both in time and variety. First, a large number of scholars seemed focused on the Umayyad

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 128–131.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 131–132.

period, including Donner, Judd, and Crone as a period of orthodoxy, while the second group firmly roots their conception of Islamic orthodoxy with the *miḥna*. While Donner makes an excellent argument concerning the solidification of an Islamic identity during 'Abd al-Malik's reign, he is essentially arguing for the establishment of an Islamic political orthodoxy and the definition of a discrete Muslim identity. The religious orthodoxy, a comprehensive and enforceable set of theological dogmas and practices, is established during or after the *miḥna*, as a developing strand of Islam, proto-Sunnism, is selected and legitimized as the religion of the empire.

Conclusion

The analysis of literature on heresy in general and within several specific fields has produced a broad perspective on the concept of heresy and heterodoxy within the field of Islam. The hierarchy of approval, begrudging acceptance, and flat out rejection of particular religious groups demonstrates a heterodoxical religious system in early Islam. This is due to the presence of multiple types of Islam prior to the establishment of the orthodoxy as purported by Wansbrough, or the denial of a single orthodoxy even ever existing, as suggested by van Ess. The absence of a religious/political institutions that police and enforce religious orthodoxy also

lend credence to this thesis, suggested by Lewis and van Ess. However, the dismissal of very specific groups seems to support van Ess' theory that rejection or questioning of Muhammad's place in Islam as the seal of the prophets is the sole criterion for those groups guilty of apostasy.⁹⁵ Despite this strict criterion and the limited information regarding its circumstances, van Ess identifies numerous people considered heretics, including Jahm ibn Safwan who will be discussed in chapter four.⁹⁶ He admits himself that the trials of these particular heretics seem political in nature and that essential information is missing; yet there is an important distinction between these larger heterodoxical groups that have slowly been accepted through time, and those that were rejected and "put down," such as Ghaylan al-Dimashqi (d. 105/723) and Ja'd ibn Dirham (d. 118/736). This thesis will concentrate on the late Umayyad period and determine whether those smaller heretical groups represent heretics or heterodoxical groups, the difference between them and whether they questioned the position of the Prophet Muhammad's role in Islam.

⁹⁵ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

Chapter 3: Primary Sources

The analysis of heretical or heterodoxical movements in early Islamic history begins with the selection of the primary source material. However, documentary sources contemporary with the events in question are rare for the first two centuries of Islam.¹ Instead scholars focusing on early Islamic history must rely on chronicles written at a later date, which claim to preserve earlier written work and historical knowledge. In order to demonstrate the veracity of these claims, modern scholars supplement the information from these chronicles with alternative sources. Scholars utilize non-traditional sources, such as non-documentary sources, coins and archeology, as well as contemporary documentary sources from non-Muslim writers and communities. These alternative methods are an important supplement to the Muslim chronicles, which detail the events of the Muslim community from the creation of the World to the Abbasid Empire. Muslim scholars in the Abbasid Empire wrote and compiled oral and written records of events nearly two centuries after the rise of Islam. This raises a large debate concerning the accuracy and quality of the information transmitted during that time. This

¹ The exception to this is inscriptions and papyri, which tend to describe the slow formation of the Muslim identity as opposed to chronicling specific Islamic events and people. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, 99, 234–235.

portion of the paper will quickly outline this debate and then focus on contextualizing the primary sources utilized in this study.

Problem of the Sources

Despite the famous quote by Ernest Renan that Islam was born in the full light of history, early Islamic history largely lacks documentary sources contemporary with historical events. This current dearth of contemporary documentary evidence from Islamic society for historical events does not mean that early Islamic society did not accurately record historical events.

The method of recording historical events within Islamic society relied on the mixture of oral transmission with assistance from written materials, memorizing knowledge and passing it down from generation to generation.²

The reasoning behind the prevalence of oral transmission of knowledge lies in the climate, which hindered the preservation of paper, the lack of writing materials, and illiteracy.³

The critique of oral transmission is that the information can get distorted and changed over time, so much so that this invalidates the use of oral transmission and the information gathered from it due to inaccuracy.

John Wansbrough is a prime example of a modern scholar who has taken this

² Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

position to the extreme; his scholarship questions the very basic framework of the traditional Muslim narrative, by doubting the rise of Islam took place in the Hijaz.⁴ The skepticism on the reliability of all major Islamic narrative sources on this early period results in a serious dilemma: how can a modern scholar trust the extant information collected and written in chronicles about events that took place two centuries earlier? The answer is, one must proceed with caution. Efforts have been made to contest this overwhelming skepticism with relevant scholarship combating the major critique that oral transmission is ultimately unreliable. This scholarship credits the reliability of the human memory,⁵ and the usage of some textual transmission alongside the oral.⁶

This scholarship restores some confidence in the reliability of the sources, but a healthy dose of skepticism remains. The modern scholar is then left with large quantities of information from Islamic scholars who comment on the early centuries of Islam, for which there is little direct evidence available to the modern scholar. This in turn must be vetted through what Fred Donner terms, “the Tradition-Critical Approach.”⁷ This approach

⁴ Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writings*, 20.

⁵ Kennedy, “From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy.”

⁶ Schoeler, “Writing and Publishing on the Use and Function of Writing in the First Centuries of Islam.”

⁷ Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writings*, 13.

asserts that a “kernel of historical fact” can be deciphered through the analysis of the chain of transmitters, as well as the summary of events. Therefore, the numerous historical chronicles and other writings that were produced in the Abbasid era contain valuable and reliable knowledge on the first two centuries of Islam.⁸

There are several authors who compiled and edited earlier accounts of significant events in early Islam within their chronicles. Each of these sources faces similar charges of agenda, which may have impacted the authors’ reading and interpretation of events that they themselves did not live through. In the face of this criticism, al-Tabari’s chronicle represents the ideal resource that acts as a baseline for this particular study. The specific reasoning for its use in this study follows.

Al-Tabari: The Baseline/Framework Contextualized

The study of Islamic history, particularly during the late Umayyad period largely relies on one of the most prolific writers in early Islam, Abu Ja’far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923). He was a *muḥaddith* and an Islamic jurist who founded his somewhat ephemeral own school of law, but he is most renowned for his contribution to Islamic history, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa*

⁸ Ibid., 15.

al-Mulūk, completed around 302/915, which is a lengthy and detailed universal history starting with the creation of the world.

As stated above, al-Tabari was not the only Muslim scholar who wrote compilations of historical information, therefore it is important to explain why al-Tabari's work will be at the center of this study and also what its position is in the field of Islamic history. The central reason al-Tabari's chronicle is chosen is because it contains a detailed summary of events prior to and during the third *fitna* from a tribal/political perspective. He attributes the fall of the Umayyad Empire to tribal conflicts and political discord, whereas al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892), another Islamic author, uses a religious framework to explain the failure of the Umayyad Empire.⁹ Although the paper makes selective use of al-Baladhuri's narrative of the late Umayyad period, the extensive details within al-Tabari's chronicle, combined with a politically driven narrative framework, allows a more complete and subtle picture of the period to develop. Therefore, al-Tabari's narrative, which runs counter to the examination of heresy and heretical movements made during that same time, provides an excellent source to interpret religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

⁹ Judd, "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads," 91.

Despite his religious training and the fact that history was for someone like him a religious science,¹⁰ al-Tabari is not particularly interested in matters related to Islam and religious norms; his comments on these subjects are scarce, and therefore they occur these comments become contextually important and especially significant to this study. According to Shoshan, al-Tabari was concerned with “making doctrinally correct statements,” as opposed to flowing narrative. In this regard, al-Tabari’s perspective on the third *fitna* seems very much involved with the successors to the Prophet and the sociopolitical order that he established. Al-Tabari places the blame on humanity without engaging in a discussion about divergences in religious practices or beliefs.¹¹ Taking into account that al-Tabari’s focus in the chronicle is the unity of Islamic society, one could speculate that al-Tabari focuses on the tribal and political in order to keep from discussing the religious fracturing in the community and because he does not want to insinuate or associate divergences in the Islamic community with religious thought and practice. It is far more comfortable and healthy for the Islamic community for al-Tabari to speak about political and tribal conflicts causing discord within the community, rather than religious thought dividing the

¹⁰ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī’s History*, 87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

community.¹² However, due to the fact that religious material is found within his sources, intermixed with the political occurrences, al-Tabari must then confront his agenda of Islamic unity with the information available and is included in his chronicle. As a consequence, al-Tabari's commentary on this subject is found within the language of the political and within political events. Al-Tabari's political focus is in contrast to summaries or explanations of religious beliefs and practices that can be found in heresiographical sources, which also present heavy biases. The agenda that al-Tabari utilized, combined with his coverage of events, highlights the conception of heresy and religious divergence within a political turbulent period, making it an ideal outline for this study.¹³

The formation of Islamic history and how modern scholars interpret it is largely defined by al-Tabari's work *Tārīkh al-Rasul wa al-Mulūk*, since the work runs fifteen volumes starting from creation and ending at 302/915.¹⁴ The extant version of this text is actually a shortened version of his complete work

¹² Ibid., 85.

¹³ Crone theory explains how the religious community is one with the political and social community, however al-Tabari writes at a later period, which as Crone explains is slowly moving away from the intersecting spheres of life. Therefore, al-Tabari may be narrating using his own cultural and historical bias in trying to separate the political from the religious. Crone, *God's Rule*, 396.

¹⁴ Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 35.

by the same title.¹⁵ For this reason, his *Tārīkh* is easily and often taken as an authority on Islamic history,¹⁶ making it all the more important to question his influence and analyze his methodology and agenda and their implications on his writing, especially with regards to heretics during the later Umayyad times.

His chronicle, among numerous other periods of Islamic history, details the slow and complicated breakdown of the Umayyad Empire, with particular emphasis on the political and tribal actors in the conflicts leading up to the Abbasid revolution in 132/750. Due to al-Tabari's background, writing during the disintegration of the Abbasid Empire, he focuses more closely on the events in Iraq and Khurasan throughout his accounts, whereas events of North Africa and Egypt are largely missing or underrepresented in his works.¹⁷ While it stands to reason that heresy would thrive more on the fringes of the empires, as the Ibādīs exemplify in Mzab, Algeria and Oman, the issue of heresy and heterodoxy also presents itself in Iraq and Syria.¹⁸

Al-Tabari's chronicle, although an authoritative narrative of the early Islamic society, embodies the historiographical issues discussed earlier in this chapter. Since he wrote during the late 800s to early 900s CE about the

¹⁵ de Blois, "Ta'rīkh."

¹⁶ al-Ṭabarī and Rosenthal, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, 1:140.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bierschenk, "Religion and Political Structure: Remarks on Ibadism in Oman and the Mzab (Algeria)."

events of the early to mid-700s CE. This results in an almost 200-year gap between al-Tabari's writing and the events themselves. The discrepancy in time periods presents multiple issues. The most obvious of these is that his perspective is imbued with historical biases. It is likely that al-Tabari may have unconsciously transferred or borrowed information, understandings, and concepts about political and religious institutions and events from his time, such as the fourth *fitna* and the *miḥna*, and applied them to the past.¹⁹ Therefore there is a need to confront al-Tabari and his agenda with other sources on this study of heresy and heterodoxy. First, al-Tabari's agenda and intentions will be described and analyzed and later in the chapter other narratives that will be used in the study to compare against al-Tabari's narrative.

A latent issue related to al-Tabari's biases, particularly in the earliest part of the chronicle, is based on his source selection in two ways. The first way the accounts are influenced by his historical circumstances is that al-Tabari only has access to a finite number of stories and sources. There have been several studies concerning the analysis of al-Tabari's sources,

¹⁹ There may also be some conscious borrowing of Abbasid cultural and political agenda and perspective, as Shoshan theorizes. Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 144; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, 13.

authorities, and colleagues, a brief discussion of which follows below.²⁰ Conversely, accounts get lost, forgotten, and lose significance, all of which limits the number and variety of accounts that al-Tabari receives. This is natural in any environment and to the many other contemporary commentators during this period. While this impacts the information that reaches scholars today, efforts have been made to resurrect accounts that have been thought to be lost and also to retrace the chains of transmission in order to gain greater insight into al-Tabari's narrative process. Al-Tabari's sources for his chronicle are known to be both written and oral, based on his contacts with colleagues and associates.²¹

The discussion of al-Tabari's sources within his *Tārīkh* demonstrates a wide range of sources for al-Tabari. His studies put him in contact with many scholars, including Ibn Humayd (d. 248/862).²² Ibn Humayd is one of al-Tabari's most frequently cited sources and al-Tabari also transmitted material from Ibn Ishaq (d. 144/761).²³ Despite the fact that Ibn Ishaq lived during the period in question, the scholar's major contribution was a biography of

²⁰ al-Ṭabaṛī and Rosenthal, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, 1:6.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 1:17.

²³ This fact is complicated by the accusation of plagiarism by Ibn Humayd by another scholar who asserted that the information came through him before originating with Ibn Ishaq. Ibid., 1:17–18.

Muhammad, which was later edited by Ibn Hisham (d. 220/835).²⁴ Some of the historians whose reports were included into the *Tārīkh* were ‘Awana (d. 147/764), Abu Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), Sayf ibn ‘Umar (d. 180/796), al-Mada’ini (d.215-236/830-850), and Waqidi (d. 208/823).²⁵ Their *akhbār*, formerly in books and collections of their own concerning pre-Islamic Arabia up into the early Abbasid era, were transmitted through a chain of transmitters, which eventually reached al-Tabari, who selected and reorganized their reports for their inclusion into his *Tārīkh*. Al-Mada’ini wrote one such collection titled “The Shortened Book on the Khawārij,” which likely informs al-Tabari’s chronicle concerning the events and personages involved in the Khawārij rebellions.²⁶ To further inform al-Tabari’s agenda, it is important to note that some of these transmitters, such as Ibn Ishaq, received and relied on Abbasid patronage, which was meant to further establish and extend Abbasid authority.²⁷

The second way the chronicle is biased is that al-Tabari has selected which reports to include and exclude; this has a great effect on how one reads al-Tabari as a source, as well as other contemporary commentators.

The structure of his chronicle demonstrates that while he includes several

²⁴ Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 25–26.

²⁵ Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*, 76; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, xiv; Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī’s History*, 110.

²⁶ Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

reports on each event, the choice in which reports to include and in what order demonstrates the presence of al-Tabari's subtle and possibly conscious agenda.

Al-Tabari's motivations and agenda within his historical work were to compile and incorporate several political and religious perspectives into one work that could be celebrated and respected by all as a unified Islamic history, particularly as he was writing in a time when the unity of the caliphate was collapsing.²⁸ It is difficult to confirm his agenda absolutely since al-Tabari rarely comments or inserts his explicit voice/opinion into the text.²⁹ Instead, al-Tabari lets his sources speak for themselves, while al-Tabari implicitly speaks through his selection of reports and its organization. He organized his text annalistically and included multiple reports on the same event from different perspectives, usually presenting "the impression of final authority" but also allowing him to "suggest two contradictory conclusions at once."³⁰ The fact that al-Tabari lacked a patron hints that he had the freedom to advance his own agenda within his writing and embrace viewpoints that were unpopular.³¹

²⁸ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 112; Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, 128.

²⁹ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 111.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 110–111.

³¹ al-Ṭabarī and Rosenthal, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, 1:16.

However, Shoshan challenges this claim, arguing that al-Tabari's historical work demonstrates an adherence to Abbasid principles and agendas, unlike his exegetical works.³² While this may be partially due to the reports themselves, al-Tabari's specific selection of material demonstrates his inclusion and exclusion of information based on his agenda and bias.

With regard to al-Tabari's selection of reports, one method of discerning his choices is to compare his work with other historians, such as al-Baladhuri, in relation to their common sources and the information they both were aware of, but diverged in utilizing. The content of the reports, their diversity, and inclusion indicate that al-Tabari had a preoccupation with reconciling the perspectives of different factions within the Islamic community, possibly to please his audience or to produce an acceptable unified Islamic history. He illustrates this with his defense of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph and the first Imam according to the Shi'a. This example of compromise between Sunni and Shi'a perspectives can be corroborated within his Qur'anic exegesis as well.³³ And while he was accused of having Shi'a sympathies for his defense of the Shi'a minority, these claims are unsubstantiated. With respect to al-Tabari's choices of reports, he seems to

³² Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 144.

³³ al-Ṭabarī and Rosenthal, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, 1:56.

neglect sources that look favorably towards the Umayyads and Zubayrids and uses sources that favor the Abbasids and 'Alids.³⁴ Al-Tabari's distaste for the Umayyads and Zubayrids is paralleled by the Abbasid Empires efforts to "make terms" with the Shi'a community, politically and religiously.³⁵ Evidence of al-Tabari's "compromise" between communities can be demonstrated by comparing al-Tabari to al-Baladhuri and noticing that al-Tabari had access to some reports about the allegiance and succession of Yazid I, but chose not to include them in his book so as to keep a favorable perspective on a Shi'a imam and his legitimacy as opposed to Umayyad legitimacy.³⁶

Perhaps the most convincing argument for al-Tabari finding the middle ground between the multiple communities is the possible motivation al-Tabari would have for drawing such conclusions. During his lifetime God's most perfect community was experiencing political and theological fragmentation, because of the *mihna* or inquisition of al-Mu'tasim (r. 218-228/833-842), where he persecuted the Mu'tazila for their doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an.³⁷ At the same time, the Abbasid caliphate was also politically

³⁴ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 144.

³⁵ Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, 109.

³⁶ Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*, 144.

³⁷ El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, 13.

declining given the caliphs' lack of religious power and the eruption of the fourth *fitna*. The political tensions between the Abbasids and the Shi'a, from whom the Abbasids had stolen the revolution, also represented a split in the community.³⁸ His writing could be an effort to unify the community historically, by emphasizing the concept of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, including the fourth caliph and first Shi'a Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and by providing numerous perspectives so each sect could respect the chronicle as work depicting their views. As the history becomes more recent to al-Tabari's own time, he likely used the history of Umayyads, specifically their downfall, as a commentary on the political and theological fragmentation taking place under during the Abbasids.

The Umayyads' reputation as impious, secular rulers, within al-Tabari's history and the Islamic sources in general, may also represent Abbasid propaganda, rather than just an objective explanation for the Abbasids' rise to power. Their irreligious reputation likely stems from their ancestors' late acceptance of Islam and possibly even due to 'Uthman b. 'Affan's (r. 23-35/644-656)³⁹ poor political policies and assassination, which sparked the first

³⁸ Ibid., 4–5.

³⁹ The first member of the Umayyad branch/tribe to hold the position of caliph, but not considered part of the Umayyad caliphate, due to his close relation with the Prophet Muhammad. He was chosen as caliph because of this

fitna.⁴⁰ This poor reputation of the Umayyads continues in the portrayal of the Umayyad princes' lifestyles as luxurious, with opulent architecture and art, as well as corruption and secular kingship.⁴¹ The un-Islamic behavior attributed to al-Walid ibn Yazid (r. 125-26/743-44), such as excessive drinking, whore-mongering, and excessive spending, was behavior that began prior to his reign, including drinking wine during the Hajj. The third *fitna* began at the end of his reign.⁴² While the individual actions of some Umayyad caliphs confirm the general claim of impiety and raucous behavior,⁴³ the accusation of secular kingship, or religious non-engagement, by the Umayyad caliphs refers to the entirety of the Umayyad Empire. Crone and Hinds refute this claim in their book, *God's Caliph*, whereby they demonstrate the Umayyad Caliphs' usage of Islam within each of their reigns.⁴⁴ Therefore, while impiety and raucous behavior among individual caliphs is likely genuine, the accusations of secular

status, whereas the Umayyad caliphs later inherited the caliphate. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*, 26.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, 78–79.

⁴² al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:88.

⁴³ Some caliphs during the Umayyad Empire escaped this reputation. Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 104-125/723-743) is one Umayyad caliph known within al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*, for his wisdom and piety. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, 222.

⁴⁴ Crone and Hinds demonstrate the Islamic nature of the Umayyads through their titles and Islamic laws. Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*.

kingship was probably Abbasid propaganda in order to supplant Umayyad legitimacy with their own.

Al-Tabari's agenda to continually utilize the sources in order to provide a narrative of a singular Islamic community likely suppressed information regarding divergences within the religious community, with regard to its beliefs and practices. However, in his efforts to weave a narrative about a singular Islamic community, al-Tabari is simultaneously highlighting particular communities and rebels who are to blame for any political or religious divergence. Consequently, individuals who may be labeled "heretics" are seen more clearly in contrast to al-Tabari's vision of a singular Islamic community. In addition, al-Tabari's agenda confirms part of Judd's assertion referenced earlier, that al-Tabari focuses more on tribal and factional divisions in society in order to preserve the image of the religious unity of the *umma*.⁴⁵ This allows al-Tabari to blame certain political or tribal parties for the fragmentation of the *umma* as opposed to any weakness inherent in Islam. Also, al-Tabari's strategy of including detailed and exhaustive accounts of rebellions against the Umayyads as well as their "secular" rule, serves to explain and legitimize their downfall in contrast to the Abbasid rise to power.

⁴⁵ Judd, "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads," 15.

The complexity of al-Tabari's work produces many difficulties in analyzing and interpreting the text. By containing numerous versions and numerous perspectives, modern scholars must read even more closely to interpret al-Tabari's subtle and implicit commentary of the reports and to discern his specific motivations towards each event reported. His motivation to compromise the contemporary political and theological schisms means that he wrote and interpreted the community of Islam in the early days to appear as a cohesive group, despite their many *fitnas*. Therefore, the study of heresy and heterodoxy is both complicated and elucidated by al-Tabari's desires to demonstrate a singular Islamic community. Meanwhile, other contemporary commentators may carry different biases and agendas and may have interpreted the events differently. These accounts and agendas should be compared, in order to obtain an essential understanding of the events, their causes, and effects.

Methodology I: Comparison to Other Contemporary Historians

The most basic and easiest methodology to employ in the interpretation of al-Tabari is the comparison of his specific accounts with other Muslim authors. Not only does this shed light on the differing interpretations

between the two historians and their agendas, but it also can provide additional information, missing from either account.

The missing or additional information or accounts provides insight not only into the chroniclers' agendas, as demonstrated above, but also who had access to which transmitters and what information through the *asānīd* (chains of authorities) attached to the *akhbār* or transmitted accounts. There are numerous Islamic authors to choose from, all of whom focus on different geographic regions and have access to slightly different reports through different transmitters.

For this study, the Islamic narrative author al-Baladhuri (d. 279/892) and his history, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, will be utilized to enhance the discussion and analysis of heresy and heterodoxy in the Umayyad era. Despite his slightly earlier death date, his history represents similar problems to al-Tabari, in that he is also not contemporary with the events that he is reporting. The accounts that he collected and organized for *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, as the title suggests, focus on the notables from Muhammad to the Umayyad caliphs, ending with some of the Abbasid caliphs. Despite the breadth of his work, he focuses the majority of his work on the Umayyad caliphs and only the first two Abbasid caliphs in their entirety.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ al-Balādhurī, *The Ansāb al-Ashrāf of al-Balādhurī*, 5:12.

The agenda of al-Baladhuri differs from al-Tabari's. First of all, unlike al-Tabari, al-Baladhuri had a patron who paid him for his work. As the historian at the Abbasid court, he was a tutor for al-Mutawakkil (r. 232-246/847-861) and he wrote for al-Mu'tasim (r. 227-232/842-847). There is some uncertainty as to the extent this affects the organization and agenda of his chronicle, especially when his history contains reports on Umayyad legitimacy and succession, which al-Tabari chose to ignore. Al-Baladhuri used reports from many of the same sources as al-Tabari, such as 'Awana, and al-Mada'ini.⁴⁷ More importantly, al-Baladhuri also includes reports from al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*.⁴⁸ The specific sections of al-Baladhuri that will be analyzed and compared to al-Tabari are coming from al-Safadi (d. 147/764) and al-Kalbi (d. 146/763).⁴⁹

Next, al-Baladhuri seems to have structured his narrative of the downfall of the Umayyads in terms of religious sects, which affects how one will interpret the entire episode.⁵⁰ This point makes al-Baladhuri an important chronicle for comparison purposes. Including information regarding religious sects or factions associated in ways other than tribal will act to guide further

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:57.

⁴⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:144; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:54,57, 58.

⁵⁰ Judd, "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads," 91.

reinterpretation of the events that both contemporary commentators reference. Al-Baladhuri's work will be compared to al-Tabari's narrative concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj, and a particular focus of comparison will concern the course of events and their terminology, based on their structures and agendas.

Three additional primary resources also utilized in this paper are the *Fihrist*, *The Ornaments of Histories of the Eastern Islamic Lands*, and a letter from a collection of letters written by 'Abd al-Hamid al-Katib (d. 132/750).⁵¹ These sources are included in the case study and discussed separately as supplements to the two main narratives.

'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya al-Katib was the secretary to Marwan ibn Muhammad (r. 126-132/744-750), the last Umayyad Caliph.⁵² 'Abd al-Hamid's letters range from personal letters to his friends and family to official letters concerning rebellions and pilgrimage.⁵³ The letters from 'Abd al-Hamid raise certain issues of authenticity and range broadly in scope. 'Abd al-Hamid's letters have been preserved in later sources, sometimes in as late as seventh/fourteenth century without a chain of transmission, which raises the

⁵¹ ibn Ishāq, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*.

⁵² al-Qāḍī, "Early Islamic State Letters: The Question of Authenticity," 22.

⁵³ Ibid., 228, 230.

issue of authenticity.⁵⁴ The letter concerning the “seditious activities in Khurasan” written to Nasr ibn Sayyar and analyzed here surfaced in the seventh/thirteenth century preserved in al-Balawi’s (d. 657/1258) *Al-‘Aṭā’ al-jazīl fī kashf ghaṭā’ al-tarsīl*.⁵⁵ Despite the length of time between ‘Abd al-Hamid’s death and the letters’ preservation within extant sources, the likelihood of authenticity is quite high. First, the political views found within the letters represent an Umayyad perspective. The letter refers to revolutionaries in Khurasan, possibly al-Harith, but traditionally thought of as the Abbasids. Therefore, if the letter is interpreted to mean the Abbasids, the letter is accusing them of impious and heretic behavior.⁵⁶ It is also demonstrated by Wadad al-Qadi that it is highly likely ‘Abd al-Hamid’s letters were preserved by his descendants and Abbasid secretaries, who highly respected ‘Abd al-Hamid professionally and studied his work. One of his sons, Isma‘il, became a secretary for the Abbasids⁵⁷ and many more descendants studied as

⁵⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 233–234.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁷ This tends to disprove the traditional interpretation that the letter concerning sedition in Khurasan refers to the Abbasids, in addition to the fact that it never explicitly states the Abbasids. Instead, the survival of a letter claiming the Abbasids are impious and heretics probably wouldn’t survive if the Abbasid secretaries and authorities were responsible for the letters’ preservation. Ibid., 236; Elad, “The Ethnic Composition of the Abbasid Revolution: A Reevaluation of Some Recent Research.”

secretaries, carrying down to his great-great-grandsons during the Tulunid Empire.⁵⁸

The agenda present in the letter concerning seditious activity in Khurasan is also analyzed by al-Qadi, who determined that since ‘Abd al-Hamid represents the Caliph Marwan II during this specific letter, it takes an official tone, which produces a disconnected and reserved attitude towards the rebels. The caliph looked down upon the rebels and disguised his fear, through his condescension toward the rebels.⁵⁹ Due to this contempt and fear, the contents of the letter stay focused on the wickedness of the rebels and their origins as non-Arab converts, and less on their beliefs and goals.⁶⁰ ‘Abd al-Hamid’s letter represents the only contemporary source in the present study, with the exception of non-Muslim sources, with a purely Umayyad perspective on the events.

Al-Nadim’s (d. 385/995) *Fihrist*, which is an extensive medieval compilation of titles and authors, organizes by topic a large list of medieval Islamic books and treatise, most of which are no longer extant.⁶¹ This catalog provides an understanding, several decades after al-Tabari, of the

⁵⁸ al-Qāḍī, “Early Islamic State Letters: The Question of Authenticity,” 235–236.

⁵⁹ al-Qadi, “The Earliest ‘Nabita’ and the Paradigmatic ‘Nawabit’,” 47–49.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 45–48.

⁶¹ ibn Ishāq, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*.

categorization of Islamic and non-Islamic groups, including heretical and heterodoxical groups in Islam.⁶² *The Fihrist* includes information about these books, most of which have been lost and cannot be analyzed first hand, therefore this work contextualizes authors, their associates, and most importantly the content of their works. This resource demonstrates how particular Islamic groups have been classified and understood by historians and the educated in the 10th century CE. While al-Nadim's *Fihrist* does not include references to al-Harith ibn Surayj, it does contain information regarding some of his associates and rebels like him. This information will be discussed in the context of the case study.

Al-Nadim's *Fihrist* categorizes Islamic society in the fifth chapter of his work, entitled *mutakallamūn* or theologians of different Islamic sects. In this chapter he includes a section about the Mu'tazila and the Murji'a, and a discrete section on the Shi'a, Imāmīyah, the Zaydīyah and others. There is a third section devoted to the Mujbirah and the al-Ḥashawīyah. The fourth section includes the Khawārij and its types, and finally the ascetics.⁶³ Al-Nadim is clearly categorizing religious divergences based on different doctrinal beliefs mainly, with some regard to religious practices. Most

⁶² Ibid., 1:380–492; ibn Ishāq, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, 2:745–825.

⁶³ ibn Ishāq, *Kitāb al-Fihrist al-Nadīm*, 4.

importantly, in order to be included into his work, a movement must be well known enough to have numerous scholars write for that school of thought against other major schools and sects.⁶⁴ Because of the later date of al-Nadim's work, he is labeling and categorizing religious movements that were just forming and crystallizing during the late Umayyad period.

Lastly, the *Ornament of Histories* written by Abu Sa'id 'Abd al-Hayy ibn al-Dahhak ibn Mahmud Gardizi is used, because it too draws on previous historians' work and incorporates some information concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj and his rebellion against the Umayyad Empire. The dates of Gardizi's life are unknown. However, he wrote during the early Ghaznavid Empire under the reign of his patron Sultan 'Abd al-Rashid ibn Mahmud (r. ?440-43/?1049-52).⁶⁵ His chronicle begins with the *Rāshidūn* and ends slightly prior to his own patron's reign.⁶⁶ The similarity of his earlier reports to Ibn al-Athir's history also indicates that the earlier information, particularly the period in question, may have been diffused through the lost work of Abu 'Ali al-Husayn al-Sallami, *Tārīkh Wulāt Khurasan*.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ ibn Ishāq, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, 1:380–381.

⁶⁵ Gardīzī, *The Ornament of Histories A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041 The Original Text of Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy Gardīzī*, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

The agenda of Gardizi's work is similar to that of al-Tabari's, yet Gardizi's brevity on the early eras presents a calmer, more neutral *Rāshidūn* period.⁶⁸ Gardizi, like al-Tabari, presents the Abbasids in a positive way, while remaining respectful of the 'Alid factions. Meanwhile, the Umayyad rulers are referred to as *wilāyah* (sovereign leader) and *mulk* (secular king), but never *khalīfah* (deputy of God⁶⁹) like the Abbasids and *Rāshidūn*.⁷⁰ Therefore, his work, which recounts an outline of events during the reign of rulers and governors chronologically, portrays Umayyad governors as equally lacking in religious and political legitimacy and authority, and faced with tribal and conflicts that lead to the religious and stable rule of the Abbasids.⁷¹

Due to the later date of many of these sources, with the exception of 'Abd al-Hamid's letter if its authenticity is to be trusted, non-Muslim sources will be utilized to understand how this period and events were viewed generally in comparison to the Islamic perspective on the events. The following non-Muslim sources, in addition to the Islamic sources, also demonstrate the circulation of historical knowledge throughout the region and between historiographers.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁹ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, 4.

⁷⁰ Gardīzī, *The Ornament of Histories A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041 The Original Text of Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy Gardīzī*, 3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Methodology II: Comparison to Non-Muslim Sources

In addition to the Islamic narratives, the accounts found in the case study will be compared with sources whose date is more contemporary to the events themselves, by comparing the accounts found in al-Tabari with non-Muslim sources that describe those same events, people, and movements. This approach allows for more and different information about the events to be known, while also providing broader perspectives, possibly portraying the information as larger and more detached audiences may have viewed it.

The issues that arise from relying on the information from these sources are different from relying solely on al-Tabari; these authors too have their own agenda and biases, along with difference concerning the transmission of information. Most importantly, as expected, sole reliance on non-Muslim sources is impossible due to their including fewer details concerning the topic of Islamic heresy during the late Umayyad period. Some non-Muslim sources at this time, while more contemporary with the events, will demonstrate different political and religious viewpoints, such as Byzantine Christian perspectives on the same events, people, and movements. Since there are both geographical and cultural differences, their interpretations will

vary based on how they collected the information and their personal agendas, such as patronage.

Non-Muslim accounts of particular Islamic accounts of heresy will be used from Theophilus of Edessa's *Chronicle*.⁷² Theophilus (d. 168/785) was a Syriac Christian who lived in Edessa and Baghdad. His activities in the Abbasid court as a scholar make him culturally and religiously reliable in reporting on Muslim events and personages.⁷³ He was also alive during the period of the third *fitna*, about which his accounts, extant through Michael the Syrian and others, demonstrate his access to reports, even stating that he was a witness to "these wars."⁷⁴ According to Hoyland, the concise accounts and abridgment of events during the period of 106-25/724-43 hint that Theophilus was relying on oral reports or more limited source material, while

⁷² Theophilus' work is reconstructed using multiple sources who quoted Theophilus' work. Therefore, the account concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj is essentially the same since *Michael the Syrian* and the *Chronicle of 1234* used Theophilus as a common reference. In addition, because the material dealt with the East or Muslim ruled lands, both authors did not revise or add material to this account. Michael the Syrian, Agapius of Manbij, and Theophanes, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 57:34–35; Michel Le Syrien, *Chronique De Michel Le Syrien*.

⁷³ Michael the Syrian, Agapius of Manbij, and Theophanes, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 57:34.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 57:29.

the accounts during the period of 125-37/743-54 are longer with a narrative.⁷⁵ Since his work is no longer extant, his works will be accessed through the translations of other non-Muslim chroniclers who incorporated and revised his reports into their own works. Among two of the extant sources being analyzed is *Michael the Syrian* and the *Chronicle of 1234*, which derive their information from the common source of *Dionysius I*, a closer descendant of Theophilus.⁷⁶

These sources will provide additional information regarding al-Harith ibn Surayj to be incorporated into the case study. However, since the information contained in these reports is limited, it will be more pertinent in the study of heresy and heterodoxy in Islam during the period of the third *fitna* from the perspective of non-Muslim sources.

Conclusion

The numerous and diverse primary sources that will be referenced throughout the study will ensure a wide range of perspectives from Umayyad to Ghaznavid and information regarding particular heretical movements, people, and events. These several sources will be compared and synthesized into a viable reinterpretation that attempts to strip the chroniclers of their

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 57:37.

agendas and access as much information on the topic as possible. With a clear perception of the political and religious events and movements of the late Umayyad era, this thesis will clarify the Islamic framework of heresy/heterodoxy, by analyzing the categories and labels used by the different sources.

Chapter 4: Case Study: al-Harith ibn Surayj & Jahm ibn Safwan, heretics in the late Umayyad Era

Al-Tabari's chronicles comprise numerous accounts recounting rebellions, descriptions about governors and caliphs, apocalyptic signs and much more. This chapter will focus on one individual who was designated as a heretic in al-Tabari's chronicle, specifically being labeled a hypocrite and unbeliever, "munāfiq" and "takfir."¹ This chapter, relying mainly on al-Tabari's account, will describe and analyze al-Harith ibn Surayj (d.128/746), a rebel and heretic from Khurasan of the tribe Tamīm, who rebelled against the Umayyad Caliph Hisham (r.104-125/723-43) and his governors in the region beginning in 117/735. This chapter will also describe and analyze Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128 or 134/746 or 751), al-Harith's secretary and head of the Jahmiyya school, who was considered a heretic (*mubtada'*) according to al-Baladhuri's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. After analyzing the material within al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*, the information will be confronted by al-Baladhuri's account of the period, in addition to other Muslim and non-Muslim sources, as well as secondary literature. After comparing the account and analyzing al-Harith within the course of events during the late Umayyad period, this paper will

¹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

discuss al-Harith and Jahm's positions in regards to Islamic heresy or heterodoxy.

Background on al-Harith ibn Surayj

The story of al-Harith ibn Surayj's revolt begins during the reign of the Caliph Hisham, as one of numerous other revolts against the Umayyad caliphate preceding the turbulent period of the third *fitna* by almost a decade. The revolt begins in 116/ 734 and lasts until his death in 128/745, and the records of his rebellion span three volumes in the English translation of al-Tabari's chronicle.² Al-Harith rebelled against several Khurasani governors and amirs, including 'Asim ibn 'Abdallah, Asad ibn 'Abdallah, and Nasr ibn Sayyar al-Laythi, who later under the turbulent circumstances of the third *fitna* seeks a pardon and governorship for al-Harith.³ Al-Harith lived in Khurasan and was an Arab of the Tamīmī/Qays tribe.⁴ However, his supporters were mostly from the Yamanī confederation, with the Azd tribe specifically

² Kister, "al-Ḥārith B. Suraydj (or 'Umayr) B. Yazīd B. Sawā (or Sawwār) B. Ward B. Murra B. Sufyān B. Mudjāshi', Abū Ḥātim"; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul Wa al-Mulūk*, T; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T.

³ Kister, "al-Ḥārith B. Suraydj (or 'Umayr) B. Yazīd B. Sawā (or Sawwār) B. Ward B. Murra B. Sufyān B. Mudjāshi', Abū Ḥātim."

⁴ According to 'Abd al-Maṭlib, al-Harith was likely a *mawlā*, or non-Arab convert to Islam. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul Wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:113; Judd, "Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," 172–173; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:145.

mentioned as following his revolt, while his opposition, the governors, mostly relied on Syrian (Qaysī) soldiers in an effort to quell the uprising.⁵ The division of tribes on this issue means that the Qays and Yamanī confederations were not fixed parties on this issue. In this regard, al-Tabari recounts the rebellion of al-Harith ibn Surayj largely in a political light, emphasizing the cities and tribes that side with al-Harith and those cities that the governors threaten and bribe for support. Keeping in mind Crone's thesis that at this point in Islamic history the governmental and religious sphere were practically one, al-Harith ibn Surayj's rebellion should be interpreted as simultaneously political and religious; he requested that the governors and amirs abide by the Book of God, the Qur'an, and the sunna of the Prophet, while also calling for *shūrā*, or mediated councils, in the selection for the positions of the governorships and amirships.⁶ He planned to explicitly challenge the policies of the Umayyad

⁵ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:107; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:96.

⁶ Crone explains that the call for the book of God and the sunna and to allegiance to "*al-riḍā*" as well as "*ij'al al-amr shūrā*" in the case of al-Harith meant a call for an acceptable person to be appointed in the governorships and subgovernorships. However, Crone very keenly assumes that al-Harith would also call for an acceptable caliph. Two other individuals, amongst several others, made similar calls: al-Kirmani, once an ally of al-Harith, and Yazid ibn al-Muhallab, a Yamanī rebel who was also labeled an *munāfiq* for his rebellion, as al-Harith was. Crone, *God's Rule*, 15; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:115; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:29; Crone, "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā," 97–98; Judd, "Reinterpreting al-Walīd B. Yazīd," 455; Crone, "Were the Qays and

caliphate in a letter written to Hisham, according to al-Tabari, asking the caliph to “(obey) the Book of God and the sunna of His Prophet.”⁷ At a later point, he declared himself *ṣāhib al-rāyāt al-sūd* or “He of the Black Banners,” after which someone replied, “If you are the one you claim, you will tear down the walls of Damascus and bring the rule of the Banu Umayyah to an end.”⁸ This passage is alluding to the apocalyptic mood of Islamic society at this time. These numerous demands, even to the caliph himself, are evidence that his rebellion was a serious issue, but do not indicate any religious deviation or perceived religious deviation from Islam. The demand for adherence to the religious precedent of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’an are commonly used in rebellions against the Umayyad administration in order to demonstrate their rejection of both the caliph and governors as illegitimate rulers. The proto-Shi’a and the Khawārij are two such groups that rebelled in this manner. Despite al-Tabari’s focus on the political and tribal, his chronicle provides textual reference as to society’s perception of al-Harith as a heretic, in conjunction with his rebellion against the Umayyad Caliphate.

Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?,” 53; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101, 330.

⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:115; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:30; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:331.

The textual reference to al-Harith's involvement in an Islamic heresy is found in a poem, specifically the second of fifteen poems concerning al-Harith and/or his rebellion against the Umayyad Caliphate. Before analyzing the poem, its format and content, a brief summary of al-Harith's rebellion up to this point is in order. Al-Harith was rebelling against the governor 'Asim in the year 116/ 734, calling for adherence to the Book of God and the sunna of the Prophet. Al-Harith had just defeated Nasr ibn Sayyar, the governor of Balkh, and even though Nasr had more men, al-Harith took the city. After conquering Balkh, amongst al-Juzjan, al-Faryab, al-Talaqan, and Marw al-Rudh (see map on page iv), al-Harith set out to conquer the well-protected city of Marw.⁹ Al-Harith was ultimately defeated at Marw, as the city was firmly under 'Asim's control, allegedly due to 'Asim's bribery and threats to his troops. Contributing to al-Harith's defeat, several of al-Harith's own army defected just prior to the battle. Al-Harith ran away and 'Asim pursued al-Harith for a time, but eventually stopped. At that point many more of al-Harith's men deserted him.¹⁰ Despite 'Asim's victory at Marw, the Caliph Hisham sent Asad ibn Abdallah to replace 'Asim as governor of Khurasan.

⁹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:106; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:95.

¹⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:110; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:98.

Poetic Analysis in Historic Texts

First, it should be noted that poetry is consistently intermixed in al-Tabari's chronicle and often occurs in numerous other pieces of prose during this time, including the *sīra* of the Prophet and hadith, due to the fact that poetry holds a place of utmost importance in Arab culture and history, both in pre-Islamic and Islamic societies. The methodology regarding analysis of classical Arabic poetry found within historical texts has shown that poetry is incorporated into the prose to demonstrate proof of facts, since poetry not only preserves memory, but by preserving it makes it an important event.¹¹ This is because of poetry's place in Arab society; poetry is known as "...the repository of the Arabs."¹² In fact, as renowned scholar Roger Allen puts it, "a good deal of what has been preserved of the heritage of the past consists of what can be termed occasional poetry," therefore important historical and cultural information is stored in Arabic poetry that can be useful in understanding groups, customs and conflicts.¹³ Due to the power of poetry, the poem relies only on the quality of the poem and not the poet's name.¹⁴

¹¹ Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, 50.

¹² Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 65.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁴ Stetkevych, "Umayyad Panegyric and the Poetics of Islamic Hegemony: al-Akḥṭal's 'Khaffa al-Qaṭīnu' ('Those That Dwelt with You Have Left in Haste')," 93–94.

However, that is not to say that one should not demonstrate caution when analyzing the poetry, as per the gap of sources during this time period, it can be difficult to verify the exact date, author, and specific historical circumstances the poetry refers to. That being said, it is more important to understand how the poem is remembered, since it has been remembered, selected, and incorporated into this piece. As other authors have shown, poetry acts as proof of events and history, because poets chose to remember and preserve the events and period of time through memorization and verse, but also because poems represent valid sources of transmission and preservation of memory.

The Poem: Authenticity

The narrator introduces the poem with some words regarding al-Harith and the author. Al-Tabari attributes the poem to the governor Nasr ibn Sayyar, the amir of Balkh, the city that al-Harith conquered previous to his attempt to conquer of Marw. In the same preface, al-Tabari also alleges that al-Harith is a Murji'ite, a member of a political religious movement asserting the full Islamic status of Muslim converts in Khurasan and Transoxania,

based on the principle of *irjā*, that faith and religion rely on confession of belief, not tribal association, birth, or acts of religion.¹⁵

The authenticity of the poem and its attribution to Nasr ibn Sayyar should be considered, especially in the context of the other poems referenced concerning al-Harith. The assertion that Nasr ibn Sayyar composed this poem specifically regarding al-Harith cannot and should not be confirmed at this time. In fact, it is more likely that this poem was not composed about al-Harith, since it does not specify him by name or any other specifics unique to his time or place, unlike the other six poems found in the 25th volume of al-Tabari's English translation, concerning al-Harith.¹⁶ Of the six other poems concerning al-Harith in this volume, three of them mention al-Harith by name, and three mention specific people, places, or tribes related to his story. The poem in question, found in Arabic in Appendix A and English in Appendix B, does not identify any parties. Despite the fact that this poem is possibly not written by Nasr ibn Sayyar about al-Harith, the most significant information is that al-Tabari attributes the poem to him and places it in this position in his chronicle. Therefore, even if al-Tabari is aware that this information is false or

¹⁵ See discussion in chapter one. Judd, "Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography," 173; Madelung, "Murdji'a."

¹⁶ This volume of al-Tabari's *Tārīkh* is the first volume, in the translated version of the text, that mentions al-Harith and his revolts. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T.

uncertain, he found it to be pertinent to and informative of al-Harith's story of rebellion and how he was perceived, and he also saw it as providing verification and support for his narrative.

Al-Tabari's attribution of the poem to Nasr ibn Sayyar becomes even more intriguing later in the chronicle as al-Tabari addresses who is in the position to condemn people as heretics in terms of this situation. Al-Tabari includes a speech of Nasr ibn Sayyar's in the context of his governorship of Khurasan.¹⁷ In the beginning of his governorship, he faced a crisis wherein he did not handle it well and faced the dissatisfaction of many.¹⁸ In his speech he begins, "Verily, I am one who pronounces (people) unbelievers (*inī mukaffir*) and, further, who tells (them) when they are doing wrong.....Indeed you are striving to attain your ends but deliberately arousing discord (*fitna*) in so doing."¹⁹ While this is addressed to the inhabitants of Khurasan and inserted in a different context, it seems that Nasr believes that he, as a governor and Umayyad administrator, is in the position to denounce heretics as part of his duties and responsibilities, thereby assuming the responsibility of preventing *fitna* or discord within the community. Nasr's perceived ability to label

¹⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:221; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:285.

¹⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:222; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:285.

¹⁹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:222; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:286.

apostates could be seen as anachronistic, since his poem condemning al-Harith as a heretic came prior to his appointment as governor of Khurasan. However, it seems as though any commanding position in the Umayyad administration, for example an *amir* of Balkh, may have been sufficient enough to condemn or threaten to condemn as in this case, someone as a heretic, in an effort to preserve the *umma*. This may lend more credence to Nasr ibn Sayyar as the author of the poem, and the possibility that political authorities appointed by the caliph were able to condemn heretics, thereby exercising religious authority as well.

The Poem: Format and Style

The poem is not a full *qaṣīdah*, but rather a *qiṭ‘ah*, a shorter version with only one or two of the typical Arabic genres or themes per poem. It has a rhyme- scheme of final *nūn* throughout the twenty-line poem. The major topic of the poem is Islam and the religious life, and associated with this the poem embraces two classical Arabic literary genres, both common in pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry: first *zuhdiyyah* or homiletic poetry and also *hijā* or invective poetry.²⁰ It begins with guidelines and mandates on how to live righteously: “Leave behind you a worldly life and a family you are going to

²⁰ Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 91,119.

leave.”²¹ This is one of numerous lines that demonstrate a command for asceticism and a path away from the worldly and towards the spiritual. Also, the Qur’anic reference to the Day of Judgment within the poem on line fifteen, “Your delay [of judgment] has pushed you together with polytheism in a coupling,” is another common reference for the *zuhdiyyah* genre, which asserts that Judgment Day is inevitable.²² The topic of heresy and the genre of homiletic poetry seem like a good combination, as advising others to pious behavior includes proper beliefs. However, the *hijā*, or invective theme is important in the poetic combination, due to the condemnation that the invective genre infuses on the topic of heresy.²³

While the *hijā* genre appears to be more of a subgenre in this poem, it is still a very important part of the poem, since it condemns and ridicules heretics and polytheists. While the most common forms of Arabic invective poetry center on the theme of *muruwwah*, or manliness and the honor of women, there are other examples of *hijā* poetry that condemn the lack of religiosity among a certain tribe. Specifically, the poem by Bashshar (d. 167/784) insults a tribe for its utilization and incorporation of non-Arab

²¹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:113; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:100.

²² al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 119; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

²³ Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 120.

converts, whom Bashshar views as “sin-children.”²⁴ This also speaks to the mood of derision against non-Arab converts around that same time, which al-Harith chose to combat as evidenced by his association with the Murji’a.

Based on the introduction of the poem, al-Harith is the subject of this poem’s derision, although the poem addresses numerous different parties throughout its many lines, a tactic not unfamiliar to Islamic poetry.²⁵ Therefore, the motivation for derision is the religiosity and piety of hypocrites, “How far they have deviated from what they say!”²⁶ In the previous quote, Nasr ibn Sayyar, the attributed author of the piece, criticizes “those who think for themselves” and deviate from what they presume to follow.²⁷ He continues his diatribe against the heretics, by claiming they have postponed their Day of Judgment and because of that have become polytheists. “Leave the doubter seduced [by the rebelliousness]. Your delay [in judgment] has pushed you together with polytheism in a coupling, so that you are a people of polytheism and delayers [of judgment at the same time].”²⁸ The second half of the *bayt* in

²⁴ Ibid., 92.

²⁵ Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, 80–81.

²⁶ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

²⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

²⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

lines fourteen and fifteen therefore means that the doubter is seduced into rebellion against the caliphate, God's political and religious institution on earth. By rebelling against the caliphate, the doubter, whom we presume to be al-Harith, is delaying Judgment Day, because he continues to fight against the will of God, which is embodied by the Umayyad Caliphate. The situation is framed by Islam's absolute monotheism, an attribute that began at the inception of Islam. By rebelling against the caliphate, he is introducing a political and religious opponent to the Islamic system. Therefore, he is introducing a partner to God, by introducing an opponent to the established caliphal system. Al-Harith is "...aimed at polytheism for Islam [against God-religiously] and the world [God's Caliphate- politically]."²⁹ Nasr repeats in other words the invective claiming the people are polytheists in line sixteen: "For your religion has been tied to polytheism (*bil-shirk*)."³⁰ Keeping in mind how embedded Islam and monotheism are in society, calling someone a polytheist would be a severe affront to his or her reputation as a Muslim.³¹

The last two lines of the poem also exhibit the invective style: "Do you

²⁹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³¹ The inscriptions found on the Dome of the Rock demonstrate importance and strict definition of monotheism. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, 234–235.

[people] fault us, lying about it, [saying that We are between] extremist and oppressor? What is among us is enough for me! He among those of you whom God afflicted first abstained [from God], [Being afflicted with] hypocrisy, He did not afflict us.”³² In these two lines, Nasr is condemning al-Harith as a liar and a hypocrite, someone who spreads lies about God’s religio-political establishment on earth and claims to be a believing and practicing Muslim, but instead follows his own desires, lying about the pious and righteous followers of Islam while asserting his own righteousness.

The Poem: Content Analysis

It is within the invective portion of the poem that Nasr ibn Sayyar utilizes the Arabic terms for heresy: *nafaqa* and *takfir*, thereby implying that al-Harith, the stated subject of the poem, is a heretic. The first term utilized is *takfiru* and it is found in line eleven of the poem. Nasr states, “And slay their follower among us and their helper, sometimes declaring them unbelievers, and curse them sometimes.”³³ As discussed in the second chapter, the word *takfir* means to apostatize or declare a person an unbeliever or non-Muslim.

Based on this verse Nasr ibn Sayyar believes that some of al-Harith’s

³² al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³³ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

followers are *kāfirs* or unbelievers, but some of them should not be declared such. In the lines preceding this, Nasr instructs his audience to struggle against those people who do not “hope for an afterlife,” and do not “offer Islamic worship.”³⁴ Therefore, the followers referenced in line eleven refer to the followers of a person or people who are not Muslim in this regard. Nasr is therefore accusing al-Harith of being the leader of such a group or one of its many followers, who threaten the good and righteous Muslims.

At the end of the poem, Nasr uses the second term, *nafaqa*, which generally means heresy or more specifically hypocrisy. This condemnation is comprised of two lines, first condemning al-Harith and his followers as liars and following it up with the insult of hypocrite. “Do you [people] fault us, lying about it, [saying that we are between] extremist and oppressor? What is among us is enough for me! He is among those of you whom God afflicted, [who] first abstained [from God], [Being afflicted with] hypocrisy, He did not afflict us.”³⁵ First, Nasr is claiming that lies have been spread regarding those righteous Muslims or presumably those who represent the Umayyad Empire and its administration. Evidence suggests this is due to the mention of Nasr’s group being considered as “oppressors” or “extremists,” and it is easy to

³⁴ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³⁵ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:114.

consider that the Umayyad administration would be in a position that might be considered oppressive or extreme. Nasr solidifies his position within that camp by expressing his confidence in this position, despite the lies spoken about “them,” the Muslims who have not manipulated Islam. In the last line, Nasr claims that the first of those that God afflicted with hypocrisy refused, or denied, but he neglects to say what this person refused. According to Lane’s *Arabic-English Lexicon* the verb *ya’bah* means to “refuse, refrain, forebore, abstain or hold back.”³⁶ Therefore, the text can be read two ways, first he could be refusing being afflicted with hypocrisy, thereby trying to assert that he is not a hypocrite or it seems that al-Harith, if he is supposed to be the “first” whom God afflicts with hypocrisy, has refrained from the community of good and righteous Muslims. Consequently, their actions, for example their lies and hypocrisy, demonstrate that they fall in with the other “polytheists.”

In addition to the traditional Arabic terms for heretic, other Arabic words and phrases found within the poem composed by Nasr ibn Sayyar demonstrate the author’s perception of al-Harith as a heretic. He asks Muslims to “struggle” (using the Arabic word *jihād*) against those who are not actually Muslims, i.e., “those who do not hope for an afterlife” and “those who

³⁶ See Appendix B, for notes on other possible translations of this line. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 12.

do not offer Islamic worship.”³⁷ He also refers to this group as “those finding fault with us regarding our religion, who are the worst followers of religion.”³⁸ Nasr ibn Sayyar continues on this subject and while he does not explicitly use al-Harith’s name within the poem, it is clear from the introduction that it fits al-Harith and his followers. After identifying these lesser signs that brand them heretics Nasr further explains their heretical actions: they follow their desires, claiming it is God’s will and they are “seduced [by the rebelliousness].”³⁹ Therefore, al-Harith and his followers claim they follow God’s path, but instead they follow their own selfish desires, claiming it is God’s will. This most certainly refers back to al-Harith’s conquest of Balkh, when he asserted that the Book of God and the sunna of the Prophet were not being followed and that their precedence should be returned.⁴⁰

Another intriguing part of Nasr’s poem is when he links the polytheism of religion to the “associationism” of politics and rule, in regard to al-Harith’s rebellion. Nasr is therein demonstrating the connection between caliph and God and the fusion of religion and politics within the caliphate institution, while

³⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

³⁹ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

⁴⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:105; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:95.

also revealing the importance of monotheism or the singularity within both.⁴¹

Therefore, al-Harith's rebellion is a rebellion against the political institution of the caliphate, but also against God, by dividing his community. Nasr demonstrates this aversion to polytheism in both spheres through his numerous references to *shirk* or "association," as in the association of beings or objects with the one God. By daring to present himself as a political alternative to the caliph, al-Harith is at the same time introducing a challenge to God and the imported concept of single political rule as caliph in his name.

While the phenomenon of rebellion and securing of the position of caliph occurred at least twice before, al-Harith's rebellion differs from Ibn al-Zubayr's (r. 61-72/681-692) rebellion and counter caliphate,⁴² since he offered no personal, tribal, or familial connection to the Prophet Muhammad and therefore did not cultivate religious legitimacy before his revolt concluded.

Therefore, this poem expresses quite beautifully, but simply, all the reasons that al-Harith's rebellion makes him a heretic within the Islamic world and not

⁴¹ Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, 21.

⁴² Ibn al-Zubayr was the son of one of the companions of the Prophet, who staged a rebellion from 681-692 against the Umayyad Empire based in the Hijaz, just as it was starting to be established as a hereditary dynasty. His revolt was successful enough to be considered a counter caliphate by Chase Robinson, as it garnered political and religious legitimacy from the several regions Ibn Zubayr ruled over. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, 76–77.

just a political opponent. Al-Baladhuri also describes al-Harith's revolt within his *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, while providing new details concerning the religious program associated with al-Harith's uprising.

Al-Harith in al-Baladhuri

While al-Tabari covers al-Harith's rebellion, al-Baladhuri spends more time describing his secretary and theologian, Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/746). However, al-Baladhuri does focus solely on al-Harith in two places. First, focusing on al-Harith's death, he refers to al-Harith in relation to the Abbasid revolution and the factionalism/tribalism that was perpetrated by Abu Muslim on behalf of the Abbasids.⁴³ Secondly, he details al-Harith's revolt and campaign against Nasr ibn Sayyar.⁴⁴

In the first section, al-Baladhuri confirms that al-Harith was fighting Juday' al-Kirmani, previously his ally, at the same time as Nasr ibn Sayyar was fighting him in Khurasan. The dispute pertained to tribal factionalism, which was intensified by Abu Muslim.⁴⁵ However al-Harith was killed by al-

⁴³ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:144–145.

⁴⁴ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:57.

⁴⁵ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:144.

Kirmani and crucified by Nasr.⁴⁶ Al-Harith's death will be analyzed later in the study.

The second section pertaining to al-Harith is mostly some excerpts from al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*. The selection chosen from al-Tabari's chronicle refers to al-Harith's uprising against Nasr ibn Sayyar after Marwan II had become the caliph. While al-Tabari includes a lengthy report concerning the entire revolt, al-Baladhuri seems only concerned with aspects of the story that include Jahm ibn Safwan, al-Harith's secretary and leader of the Jahmiyya.⁴⁷ These sections of the report also refer to the ideology behind the revolt. Al-Harith is calling for the rule of consultation (*shūrā*), a call for the people to choose their own governor as opposed to appointment by the caliph.⁴⁸ Nasr refuses and to stir up support for his cause, al-Harith has his secretary Jahm ibn Safwan read al-Harith's "program" or *sīrah* to the people. With the people's reaction, Nasr eventually agreed to arbitration, which ended in an agreement that Nasr should abdicate. However, Nasr refused. Al-Baladhuri

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3:145.

⁴⁷ Possibly related to the Jahmite Qadarīs. See chapter one for discussion. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, 205.

⁴⁸ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:57.

ends the passage with Jahm's capture and murder by one of the Tamīmī tribe⁴⁹ after al-Harith rejects Nasr as leader of the prayer.⁵⁰

Since al-Baladhuri's report is excerpted from al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*, the only comparison that can be made is which sections he chose to include. These are clearly those that refer to Jahm and by doing this he elucidates the ideology of the revolt, though not specific beliefs. One can guess that Jahm would be spreading his own religious beliefs, which are documented elsewhere in al-Baladhuri's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, and will be discussed later in the paper. While not strictly specifying al-Harith's rebellion, 'Abd al-Hamid's letter on behalf of Caliph Marwan II concerning sedition in Khurasan provides an Umayyad perspective on the rebellions in the region.

'Abd al-Hamid's Letter: Sedition in Khurasan

As discussed previously, Abd al-Hamid's letter, internally dated from the year 128/746⁵¹ is traditionally interpreted as referring to Abu Muslim's (d.

⁴⁹ The Tamīmī is al-Harith's own tribe, which Jahm alludes to before his death, saying that al-Harith gave his "promise" to Jahm, alluding to some kind of protection from his own tribe, which the Tamīmī do not care to uphold. This therefore indicates al-Harith's break with his own tribe, which is also mentioned in a confrontation with Nasr. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:29; Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:145; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:330.

⁵⁰ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:57; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:28–35; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:329–335.

⁵¹ al-Kātib, *'Abd al-Ḥamīd Bin Yaḥyā wa Mā Tabaqqā Min Rasā'ilihī wa Rasā'il Sālim Abī al-'Alā'*, 201.

137/755) involvement in the Abbasid revolution in Khurasan slightly later than al-Harith's rebellion. However, the lack of specifics within the letter, in addition to the date, makes it possible that it refers to al-Harith's populist revolt rather than Abu Muslim's rebellion. First, the date of 128/746 comes at the height of al-Harith's rebellion, just prior to his death, while Abu Muslim did not declare his revolt until the end of 129/748.⁵² Al-Qadi's concerns that this cannot refer to al-Harith and Juday' al-Kirmani refer to details of the letter that call for them to be associated with the 'Alid movement, their corruption of the Qur'an and calling for a leader from *ahl al-bayt*.⁵³ While there is no evidence from either al-Baladhuri or al-Tabari that al-Harith advocated for a ruler from *ahl al-bayt*, al-Tabari's reports do indicate he called for adherence to the Book of God, wherein he was striving for an acceptable candidate for the governorships and likely caliphate. While al-Harith's rebellion never specifically called for a ruler from *ahl al-bayt*, which normally indicated an 'Alid, Crone demonstrates in her article "Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā" that a call for *al-riḍā min ahl al-bayt*, simply meant appointing an acceptable person as caliph.⁵⁴ Al-Qadi also emphasizes that the movement to which the letter refers indicates a non-Arab rebel with a non-Arab following, but the reasoning behind this is not clear from

⁵² al-Qadi, "The Earliest 'Nabita' and the Paradigmatic 'Nawabit'," 37.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Meanwhile, al-Harith's one time ally, al-Kirmani, did call for "*al-riḍā min ahl al-bayt*." Crone, "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā," 102–103.

her article. However, his association as a Murji'ite, an advocate for non-Arab converts to Islam, may support this notion. In addition, the letter sent by Marwan II seems to have no preceding letter or response from Nasr, therefore Marwan II could have received information about al-Harith and al-Kirmani mixed with Abu Muslim's propaganda,⁵⁵ confusing the two and therefore including information on both.⁵⁶ Regardless of some inconsistencies, the letter seems pertinent to the study of al-Harith and heresy in general.

The letter discusses a group described as *nawābit*, which al-Qadi defines as "the sprouters," or a rapid populist movement of lowly non-Arab converts in Khurasan.⁵⁷ The word occurs only once in the letter, but is associated with lies about the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an and more significantly "disbelief" or *al-kufr*.⁵⁸ The term *kufr* is used twice in the letter, referring to the rebels in Khurasan. The first occurrence of the word is found in the introduction, adjacent to the term *nābita*. Al-Qadi translates: "Of the sprouting of the *nābita* in the land of Khurasan, there has been that with which God has wanted to abase the people of ingratitude (*ahl al-kufr*), to His

⁵⁵ Abu Muslim was also calling for "*al-riḍā min ahl al-bayt*." Ibid., 103.

⁵⁶ al-Qadi, "The Earliest 'Nabita' and the Paradigmatic 'Nawabit'," 37.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 32, 34, 43, 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 32–33.

blessing(s) and rejection to his [just] due.”⁵⁹ Just as al-Qadi translated it, this seems to be a general accusation of ingratitude for rebellions in the region rather than any accusation of heretical actions or beliefs. The letter next explains some of the heretical beliefs of the rebels. Among those are a call for a descendent of the Prophet as the ruler, a condemnation of the caliphs including and after ‘Uthman (r. 23-35/644-656) and the accusation that they “renounced the entirety of the Revelation, corrupting what they had [previously] accepted.”⁶⁰ Of the three factors that Marwan II outlines, there is at least some evidence that al-Harith satisfies two of them: he is using the Qur’an to support his rebellion, likely interpreting it to satisfy his vision, and he disapproves of the Umayyad caliphs, which is a stance of the Murji’ites.⁶¹ There is not even the slightest evidence that al-Harith supports an ‘Alid ruler. However, according to Gardizi, al-Harith’s ally, al-Kirmani, was “an adherent of the party (shi’a, sc. of the Abbasids).”⁶² The second usage of the term *al-kufr* occurs in the middle of the letter, detailing one of the weaknesses of the rebel leader’s tactics. He did not want the movement to alienate people or

⁵⁹ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁰ The fact that ‘Uthmān was still able to be criticized during the late Umayyad period demonstrates that the Rāshidūn, as a concept, had not yet been formed. Ibid., 33.

⁶¹ See the discussion of the Murji’ites in chapter one. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*.

⁶² Gardīzī, *The Ornament of Histories A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041 The Original Text of Abū Sa’īd ‘Abd al-Ḥayy Gardīzī*, 27.

else he, as Al-Qadi translates, “would have revealed of the manifold forms of disbelief (*al-kufr*), the great calumny and unsavory egotism and the partaking in monstrosities, what the living wish they were dead with.”⁶³ This quote suggests that Marwan II did not or could not know the exact nature of his heresy; simply stated the rebellion against the Umayyad caliphate was enough to garner the label, further supporting the connection between political and religious orthodoxies within Islam. Further evidence of al-Harith’s weak strategy in order to not alienate people can be found in al-Tabari’s reports on al-Harith.⁶⁴

While the confusion remains regarding whom specifically this letter was referring to, this letter has informed the concept and declaration of heretics under Marwan II’s rule and is consistent with Nasr’s statement concerning heretics, as discussed above. First, the information that Marwan II had was likely confused due to the multiple rebels in Khurasan at the time, thereby including some information about al-Harith’s rebellion. Second, the lack of specifics in the letter indicates that Marwan II is likely condemning all and any rebellion in Khurasan as heresy. Gardizi also lends some information

⁶³ al-Qadi, “The Earliest ‘Nabita’ and the Paradigmatic ‘Nawabit’,” 33.

⁶⁴ When al-Harith was trying to push Nasr from power, al-Harith’s tribe confronted al-Harith and accused him of scattering their unity. Al-Harith replied that his plan was for Nasr to rule, but al-Kirmani would assume the governorship. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:29; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:330.

associated with al-Harith and his rebellion in Khurasan, as it relates to the governors and sub-governors of the Khurasan and Iraq.

Al-Harith in Gardizi

Gardizi's information concerning al-Harith is quite short and follows much of the same narrative as al-Tabari as it concerns al-Harith and his rebellion. Prior to his retreat to Turkestan, he rebelled and controlled Guzgan, Talaqan, Faryab, and Marw al-Rud. While Gardizi makes no mention of al-Harith's heresy, he does a summary outline of the beliefs and principles of al-Harith's rebellion. "He led his movement on the basis of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and displayed opposition to the Marwanids. He gave out that the "Protected Peoples" should observe the conditions of their *dhimmī* status, that he would not take land-tax from the Muslims and that he would not act unjustly towards anyone."⁶⁵ According to Gardizi, he had many followers, before his defeat by Asad at Tirmidh and his retreat to Turkestan.⁶⁶

Once Walid II died and Yazid III took the caliphate, Yazid III ordered Nasr ibn Sayyar, governor of Khurasan, to give al-Harith a "grant of

⁶⁵ Gardīzī, *The Ornament of Histories A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041 The Original Text of Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy Gardīzī*, 25.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

protection.”⁶⁷ However, with the rise of Marwan II, al-Harith allied with al-Kirmani, who later associated with the ‘Alids, and Abu Muslim of the Abbasid revolution, against Nasr. However, al-Harith died, and the battles against Nasr continued with al-Kirmani’s alliance with Abu Muslim.⁶⁸ Al-Baladhuri’s reports contain more information regarding the ideology behind al-Harith’s rebellion. The non-Muslim sources also contain information regarding al-Harith and his rebellion, even though they do not label him a heretic.

Non-Muslim Sources on al-Harith

Limited information concerning al-Harith’s revolts appears in non-Muslim sources. Al-Harith’s revolt takes place in the year 126/744, and this period contains limited and concise accounts of major events in Muslim society.⁶⁹ The report from Theophanes notes the murder of al-Walid II and the seizure of the Caliphate by Yazid III (r. 126/744).⁷⁰ Within Agapius’ work, another extant transmitter of Theophilus’ work, the reasoning for the murder

⁶⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 27–28.

⁶⁹ Michael the Syrian, Agapius of Manbij, and Theophanes, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 57:29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57:245–248.

concerns Yazid's religious sect, the Qadariyya.⁷¹ Yazid III's association with the Qadariyya,⁷² and al-Walid II's dislike of the group, are also mentioned in al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*.⁷³ Other chronicles, which built off the work of Theophilus, explain the murder of al-Walid II in terms of his impious behavior, which garnered the hatred of other Umayyad princes.⁷⁴

The sources also have varying degrees of explicitness concerning the death and decapitation of al-Walid II. *Michael the Syrian*, *Agapius*, and the *Chronicle of 1234* all contain similar somewhat detailed accounts of al-Walid's death and the procession of his head and body.⁷⁵ The three sources then go on to explain the political divisions in the community that occurred after the death of al-Walid II. While *Agapius* simply mentions that the Arabs were

⁷¹ Although the original source has *Badriyyah*, this is thought to be an error. *Ibid.*, 57:245.

⁷² The Qadariyya is a religious group that believes in the human free will and not predestination. Because of this, they did not have to blindly trust that the person in the position of Caliph was predestined by God to hold the office. Instead, belief in free will allowed people to hold the Caliph accountable for his actions. *Ibid.*

⁷³ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:129; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:232.

⁷⁴ *Michael the Syrian* and the *Chronicle of 1234* explain the murder of al-Walid II in terms of Abbas' desire for power and al-Walid's impious behavior. *Michael the Syrian*, *Agapius of Manbij*, and *Theophanes*, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*, 57:246–247.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57:246–248.

“troubled and divided and their opinions were split,” the other two sources go into slightly more detail.⁷⁶

Al-Harith ibn Surayj is then mentioned by the name Bar Sarigi in the *Chronicle of 1234* and *Michael the Syrian* as one in a list of many people battling for power in different regions of the Umayyad Empire. In both accounts, al-Harith is described as the person battling for power in the Khurasan region of the Empire, which confirms that al-Harith, along with other rebels, represented a serious threat to the political and religious unity of the Umayyad Empire.⁷⁷ However, the two accounts do not assign al-Harith a sect of followers, as they do with two of the others listed. Among the followers listed are the “*Mūrgāye*,” likely Murji’a in Arabic, associated with Sa’id ibn Bahdal (d. 127/745).⁷⁸ However, Sa’id ibn Bahdal is known as a Khawārij, and al-Harith had connections to the Murji’a through his secretary Jahm. Therefore, it is likely that this error occurred in the transmission of reports from chronicler to chronicler or within the initial report to Theophilus.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid., 57:246.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 57:246–248.

⁷⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:10; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, 661; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:316–317.

⁷⁹ Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, 661.

The limited amount of information focusing solely on this period and the rebellions that ensued confirms that al-Harith was a major competitor for political and religious power in Khurasan, but does not label him or his brethren heretics and it neglects the fact that his rebellion started much earlier than the death of al-Walid II; in fact he began his revolt under the Caliph Hisham, in 116/734. Al-Walid II was murdered by Yazid III in 126/744 and al-Harith died in 128/746.⁸⁰ It is likely many of the other rebels began their revolts prior to the death of al-Walid II as well, making Yazid III's assassination of al-Walid II one of opportunity, in addition to jealousy and theological principle.

Other Symbols/Indications of Heresy

Other textual evidence of al-Harith's heresy is based on the literary interpretation and analysis of heretical behavior and punishments that are employed in Arabic literature and parallel stories about other established heretics in early Islamic history. In order to draw parallels in the ways their stories were written, however, this assumes two premises, first that al-Harith ibn Sa'id al-Kadhhab (d. 79/698) was a man who gathered a following as a

⁸⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:126; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:104; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:45; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:94, 231, 341–342.

Prophet in Syria, during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik. Due to his failed attempt as a Prophet, became the quintessential heretic within the literary memory of the Islamic tradition. The similarities between al-Harith ibn Sa'id al-Kadhhab and al-Harith ibn Surayj represent literary tropes that identify them as heretics within Islamic memory.

The first major symbol of heretical behavior is the punishment. The alleged heretic is sentenced to: arrest and crucifixion. Al-Harith al-Kadhhab, a heretic claiming prophethood during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik, represents an appropriate example of how heretics were apprehended and punished; he was arrested and crucified in 79/698, for portraying himself as a prophet and leading Muslims astray.⁸¹ Al-Harith al-Kadhhab tried to hide himself in a crevice, which Anthony demonstrates is a literary topos, negatively comparing al-Harith with Jesus, who also hid himself in a wall in the *Isra'iliyyāt*.⁸² In the story of Jesus, the angel Gabriel saved Jesus from those pursuing them. However, in the story of al-Harith al-Kadhhab, he is found by his pursuers, as evidence that he lacks the divine connection that he claims to have as a prophet, but that Jesus demonstrated.⁸³ The story of al-Harith ibn Surayj's

⁸¹ Anthony, "The Prophecy and Passion of al-Ḥārith B. Sa'īd al-Kadhhab: Narrating a Religious Movement from the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik B. Marwān," 2.

⁸² Ibid., 23.

⁸³ Ibid.

demise also follows this trope, though it is slightly different. He too was crucified for his heresy, but his death took place near Marw, when he was killed in battle by decapitation in 128/746.⁸⁴ Therefore his elimination and an end of his revolt were not enough; his death had to be visible both with the separation of his head from body and then displayed through crucifixion. Prior to his capture and death, he “bore a hole in the wall,” (*fathalma fi thulmah*) and when the fighting grew heated, he and some of his followers used the hole to escape the fighting. Despite his flight preparations, he was caught, killed, and crucified.⁸⁵ This may seem more like a coincidence than following literary topoi of a heretic. However, the reference to his use of holes and crevices are numerous prior to al-Harith’s death. Prior to his death, he used a hole in a wall, *naqab*, to enter and attack Marw.⁸⁶ His death came at the hands of al-Kirmani and his followers, who had disputes both with Nasr ibn Sayyar and al-Harith.⁸⁷

Another similarity between heretics is the *laqab* or nickname given to the two historical figures. Al-Harith ibn Surayj’s full name is al-Harith ibn

⁸⁴ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:43; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:333.

⁸⁵ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:42–43; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:340.

⁸⁶ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:32; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:331–332.

⁸⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:220–221; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:284–285.

'Umayr ibn Yazid ibn Sawa ibn Ward ibn Murra ibn Sufyan ibn Mujashi', Abu Hatim.⁸⁸ While it is possible that his father's name was Surayj, Surayj could also mean "little liar."⁸⁹ A parallel of this *laqab* is found within al-Harith al-Kadhhab's story as well. Al-Kadhhab also means "liar."⁹⁰ Within the Qur'an, the concept of lying is also fundamentally connected with the concept of disbelief and polytheism.⁹¹ Lying is associated with denying the truth of God, but while the term *kadhaba*, to lie knowing it is false, is prominent in the Qur'an, the root *s-r-j*, is not found at all.⁹²

Another piece of evidence for al-Harith ibn Surayj's heresy, which is found in other examples of heretical individuals, is the affiliation with other historical figures with heretical and rebellious reputations in Islamic history. While there is not much information concerning al-Harith's associations with heretical religious scholars or judges, al-Harith has one specific negative association found in the chronicle of al-Tabari. He is associated with Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/746), who was his secretary in Khurasan during his rebellion.

⁸⁸ Kister, "al-Ḥārith B. Suraydj (or 'Umayr) B. Yazīd B. Sawā (or Sawwār) B. Ward B. Murra B. Sufyān B. Mudjāshi', Abū Ḥātim."

⁸⁹ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1343–1344.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2599.

⁹¹ Beaumont, "Lie," 181.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Jahm is known for his promotion of a type of religious agnosticism, in that he advocates the concept of a God who cannot be known to humans.⁹³ Jahm's doctrine of agnosticism, at least within later sources, is considered much more extreme than al-Harith ibn Surayj. It denies the caliph the right to rule in the name of God, since he asserts that God's will cannot be known, for He, "is not a thing that can be known to us."⁹⁴ Its connection to the Murji'a school of thought can be recognized, but it should be noted that these religious movements, at least within later sources, seem to be completely separate. Al-Harith is associated with the Murji'a, which also drains the religious authority from the caliphate, because the Murji'a believe that faith is simply a confession of belief, thereby the concept of who is a Muslim under this school lies firmly with the individual. The name of the Murji'a school is morphologically related to the Qur'anic term *irjā'*, which means, "to defer judgment," to God, yet simultaneously "uphold justice against contemporary rulers."⁹⁵ Yet, the concept of *irjā'*, while complex and controversial, was not as extreme as Jahm's agnosticism. The Murji'a did not claim that God was unknowable. According to Jahm, however, all rational knowledge of God is

⁹³ Griffel, "Agnosticism."

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Madelung, "Murjji'a."

baseless, including the Qur'an, which he believed was created rather than being coexistent with God.⁹⁶

The literature concerning whether Jahm is a heretic is split. Al-Tabari does not label Jahm a heretic, but does mention his school or following of Jahmiyya.⁹⁷ It is also clear from al-Nadim's *Fihrist* that Jahm believed in the createdness of the Qur'an and wrote a treatise about it, which Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf (d. 849/850), a Mu'tazilite,⁹⁸ wrote against.⁹⁹ It is on Jahm ibn Safwan, his religious doctrines, and his association with al-Harith that al-Baladhuri writes explicitly.

Al-Baladhuri, in contrast to al-Tabari, refers to Jahm ibn Safwan as an outright heretic and details information about Jahm alongside other men, whom he refers to as "innovator" or *mubtada'*.¹⁰⁰ Al-Baladhuri refers to Jahm's beliefs as "his shameful innovation" or *bid'a al-qabiḥah*, "that killed

⁹⁶ Griffel, "Agnosticism."

⁹⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:29, 35; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:330, 335.

⁹⁸ The *Fihrist* states that Abu al-Hudhayl opposes Jahm ibn Safwan on the issue of the createdness of the Qur'an, but is not explicit on his stance. His association as a Mu'tazilite does not necessitate his belief in a created Qur'an, as the beliefs among Mu'tazilites were diverse. ibn Ishāq, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, 1:388–389.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1:387–389.

¹⁰⁰ *Mubtada'* is one of the Arabic words referring to heretic. See chapter two. Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:54.

him in the year 133/751.”¹⁰¹ This is five years later than al-Tabari records it, which was 128/746, the same year that al-Harith is recorded to have died.

Due to the fact that al-Baladhuri focuses on religious struggles and divergences, in addition to tribal affiliations, he explains the innovations within Islam that Jahm subscribed to, all of which are related to the concept of predestination or *jabr*. Jahm believed that human reason could not understand the actions of God, denied the attributes of God, and asserted the createdness of the Qur’an.¹⁰² The Mu’tazila was one group, which differs even in their own opinions, which grew from those ideas that Jahm subscribed to.¹⁰³ However, the Mu’tazila rejected Jahm’s beliefs on predestination and embraced the concept of free will. Al-Baladhuri included one report concerning Jahm’s prostylization of the Greeks to his religious beliefs in God’s lack of worldly attributes and that human reason cannot understand God.¹⁰⁴ This report was found after al-Tabari’s report concerning Jahm’s involvement with al-Harith’s rebellion and likely speaks to his role in supplying religious rhetoric and ideology to this populist movement.

In addition to al-Harith’s association with Jahm ibn Safwan, there is the accusation concerning his general association with polytheists. Al-Tabari

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 25:56.

¹⁰² Ibid., 25:55.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 25:56.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 25:58.

records Nasr ibn Sayyar's condemnation of al-Harith due to his association with "idolators," or *al-mushrikūn*.¹⁰⁵ While this accusation comes towards the end of al-Harith's life just after he breaks a pact with Nasr ibn Sayyar, his association with non-Muslims is documented in numerous passages. The straightforward accusation comes at a time when al-Harith is involved in a conflict with al-Kirmani, and Nasr is trying to mediate a peace between them. After Nasr's efforts fail and there is even more distrust between the two sides, al-Harith, speaking on behalf of his followers, rejects Nasr as leader of prayer. Due to the connectedness between the religious and political, al-Harith's rejection of Nasr signaled political ramifications as well as the religious rejection of the Umayyad administration and caliphal authority. In response, Nasr says, "How should you know [of such things]? You dissipated your life in the land of idolatry and raided the Muslims with idolaters!"¹⁰⁶ In the Arabic he uses the term *al-mushrikīn* and *al-shirk*.¹⁰⁷ In this Nasr is referring to the period of time al-Harith spent in the "country of the Turks" during his exile,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:35; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:335.

¹⁰⁶ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:35; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:335.

¹⁰⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:335; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVII:35.

¹⁰⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXVI:235; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:293.

as well as his previous exploits, especially those with the Khaqan¹⁰⁹ in the region of Tukharistan conquering or trying to conquer cities in Khurasan under previous governors.¹¹⁰ Nasr's speech could indicate two aspects of al-Harith's heretical ways. First, al-Tabari could be including this text as an indication that al-Harith exhibits little knowledge concerning the practice of prayer, therefore suggesting a heretical action.¹¹¹ Second, this line serves to demonstrate al-Harith's association with idolaters as further suggestion of his heretical ways. It is negative associations such as these that signify him as a heretic. This accusation of association with polytheists and nonbelievers is supported by al-Tabari's accounts from previous years. One of these accounts accuses al-Harith of instigating the attacks from the Khaqan on Asad and cities in Khurasan. Al-Tabari recorded Asad saying, "God's enemy, al-Harith ibn Surayj, has brought his tyrant to put out God's light and change

¹⁰⁹ He is described as a rebel Turk, who engaged the governor of Khurasan, Asad ibn 'Abdallah, the Muslims and the Iranians. It appears based on how al-Tabari describes the factions that the Turks were not Muslims at this time. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:139; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:119.

¹¹⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:139, 145; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:119, 122–123.

¹¹¹ This is an important point, since prayer is an important aspect of Islam and being considered a Muslim. This definition of a Muslim is blurred since al-Harith is considered a Murji'ite, who asserts that belief is the only requirement to being a Muslim, not practice. Van Ess, "The Origins of Islam: A Conversation with the German Islamic Scholar Josef Van Ess."

His religion.”¹¹² Therefore, this quote demonstrates the belief of the governor Asad that al-Harith is consciously attempting to overthrow the caliphate and alter Islam, which according to Asad, God would not permit.

Al-Tabari's Perception of al-Harith and his Rebellion

Al-Tabari's depiction of al-Harith and his rebellion is not entirely negative, even with the inclusion of poetic condemnation for his heretical and rebellious ways. This is not completely unexpected, since al-Tabari does not mind showing the Umayyads in a negative light. Al-Tabari shows al-Harith in a positive light by referring to the supporters of al-Harith, particularly in the city of Marw.¹¹³ The people of the city supported al-Harith and corresponded with him before he went to invade the city. 'Asim, the governor of Khurasan, discovered the correspondence and took several steps to ensure the loyalty of his Yamanī soldiers, including bribery, threatening them with Syrian troops, and extorting severe oaths from them.¹¹⁴

In addition to showing the people's support, al-Tabari employs another method to show favor towards al-Harith and his rebellion: mentioning his

¹¹² al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:139; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:119.

¹¹³ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:106; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:94–95.

¹¹⁴ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:106–108; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:94–96.

black banners and black clothes as a foreshadowing of the Abbasid revolution. It is extremely unlikely that al-Harith is associated with the Abbasid propaganda going on at the time in Khurasan, since al-Tabari separates the accounts by topic. However, al-Tabari's multiple references to his wearing black on a day of battle,¹¹⁵ or when he raises the "black banners" on his approach to Marw,¹¹⁶ is likely inaccurate, but symbolizes the coming of the Abbasid rebellion, of which al-Tabari approved. It was in this same year that Abbasid missionaries were being persecuted by Asad ibn 'Abdallah, the same governor that al-Harith faced after his defeat at Marw.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the utilization of the black banners and clothes symbolizes the downfall of the Umayyads and the coming messianic age through multiple rebellions, but should not be confused with the Abbasid revolution itself. Al-Harith's semi-successful revolt seems like the forerunner of the Abbasid revolution, as he gained territory and partisans, while explicitly challenging the established Umayyad caliph on religious grounds.

While it seems strictly interpreted as a political move, there are several clues that his revolt could possibly be interpreted as religious as well. There

¹¹⁵ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:108; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:96–97.

¹¹⁶ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:113; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:100.

¹¹⁷ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:112,123; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:99, 108.

are several calls by him and his partisans to the Umayyad caliph and governors, as well as smaller rulers in the area to return to the sunna of the prophet and the Book of God.¹¹⁸ The Umayyad governors name him a heretic and there are references to the customs of his people or theirs, as al-Harith seems to control or rule multiple cities in the province of Khurasan and later Transoxania. Evidence for differing religious beliefs and practices is supported with the additional information concerning Jahm ibn Safwan.

Al-Harith's revolt also subtly demonstrates the fractures between the Umayyad caliphate and its governors and the local populace in Khurasan and Transoxania. The best evidence of this is the necessity for the local population to swear an oath, so that they may fight alongside the then-governor 'Asim, in order to keep Syrian troops out of the region.¹¹⁹ This example illuminates an important divergence between the Syrian administration and those it rules over. The Umayyads' preference for Syrian troops demonstrates the lack of trust between the two groups, which is explicitly stated through their oaths to continue fighting as long as the governor remains. Later, the presence of Syrian troops defending and

¹¹⁸ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:105; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:95.

¹¹⁹ Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," 41; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:107; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:96.

defeating Marw shows that the needs of the governors to bring in more or better trained troops outweighed the desires of the populace.¹²⁰

Analysis

Throughout the case study, there have been three references to heresy: al-Harith prior to his exile (*kufr* and *nafaqa*)¹²¹, Jahm ibn Safwan (*mubtad'a*)¹²², and the general rebellion in Khurasan (*kufr*).¹²³ These three distinct terms and the context in which they are used elucidate the meaning of heresy in Islam on the eve and during the third *fitna*.

First, the label of heretic can be utilized in general for any serious rebellion that poses a challenge to the legitimacy and security of the caliphate. 'Abd al-Hamid's letter and the accusation of disbelief against al-Harith within a poem demonstrate this best. In these two cases, al-Harith and Jahm's desire to pose as a challenger against the religious and political authority of the Umayyad caliphate means that they are willing to defy God

¹²⁰ al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:106–107; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:95–96.

¹²¹ Periphery evidence to this is Yazid ibn Muhallib also being labeled a *munāfiq* for his rebellion, which called for adherence to the Book of God and sunna of the Prophet. al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, T, XXV:114; Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," 53; al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, 7:101.

¹²² Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 25:54.

¹²³ al-Kātib, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Bin Yaḥyā wa Mā Tabāqqā Min Rasā'ilihī wa Rasā'il Sālim Abī al-'Alā', 198,200.

and his authority on earth. Since the Islamic caliphate represents both a religious and political authority, rebellion against the political is automatically rebellion against the religious, therefore making any rebellion serious enough to garner the attention of the caliphate, a heresy.

Second, al-Harith is referred to as a hypocrite or *naḥāq*, which is associated with his usage and interpretation of the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet for his own purposes. His heresy in this regard is roughly theological, because it alludes to changing or distorting theological principles, in order to gain followers. However, al-Harith's religious association with the Murji'a also positions him in opposition to the religious program of the Umayyad caliphs.¹²⁴ The accusation of Jahm ibn Safwan being a *mubtad'a* or innovator, is much more concrete. His religious beliefs are starkly different from those of the Caliphs of the late Umayyad period, and represent a threat to them, since he is advocating not only for predestination and an accountability of the caliph to the people, but a form of religious agnosticism, which if followed to a logical conclusion questions the position of the Prophet Muhammad. Jahm's innovative religious doctrines speaks more to the

¹²⁴ The exception to this would be the Caliph Yazid, who was a Qadarite. While this is not the same as a Murji'ite, they both advocated the accountability of the caliphs, at least for a time. Judd, "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads," 91.

traditional understanding of heretic as opposed to heterodox, than the conception of a political uprising, with religious motivations.

Therefore, were al-Harith and Jahm considered heretics in their own time? Since there is much that still is unknown about the two, their rebellion, and the motivations behind it, the answer is a tentative yes. Not only are they referred to as heretics in the sources, but the little that is known about their rebellion, religious beliefs, and religious practices supports this assertion. Men of similar background in the same historical contexts have been labeled heretics, much like them. Therefore, at least within their own historical context, they were heretics. The conclusion will analyze these men outside of their specific historical context and within the several models discussed in chapter two, to determine what heretical/heterodoxical model best fits an early Islamic framework.

Conclusion

By applying the theories concerning Islamic heresy and heterodoxy to the case study of al-Harith and Jahm's rebellion in Khurasan, it becomes clear that information from all of these theories of heresy add information about the Islamic framing of this issue. Al-Harith and Jahm were considered heretics within their historical context for two distinct but related reasons: their political rebellion against the Umayyad caliphs, and the caliphs' political and religious authority and also due to their distortion of the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet, all of which were at odds with the authoritative legitimacy claimed by the Umayyad caliphs.¹ This paper has found that a combination of the theories outlined in chapter one presents the best model for the Islamic framework.

The first issue is the problem of Islamic orthodoxy, which has been dated by several scholars at different periods in early Islam. Lewis set the orthodoxy during the period of the Prophet Muhammad,² van Ess originally sets it during the Abbasid Empire with the Mu'tazila,³ while Donner sets crystallization of Islamic identity and political orthodoxy under 'Abd al-Malik (r.

¹ Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History," 282.

² Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," 46–47.

³ Van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*.

66-86/685-705).⁴ Each of the scholars also sees resistance to the Umayyads differently. With the variety of different opinions and perspectives on this issue, it appears the Islamic religion was perpetually changing and therefore, the concept of heresy too was continually in flux. Lewis' framework emphasizes the flexibility of the Islamic model as a necessary aspect, which he found necessary due to the fracturing of the Islamic community after the Abbasids. However, Donner's theory of political orthodoxy and religious identity is utilized, because it focuses on the Umayyad period, a time in which the community was unified under one polity, despite the fracturing caused by the development of different theological doctrines, tribal rivalries, and political strife.

Chapter four has established that al-Harith and Jahm represented cases of heresy in this period, particularly those heretic rebels unassociated with the 'Alids or the Khawārij. The Umayyad caliphs, while lacking the political and religious structures to identify and root out heresy in the way the Christian Church can, did designate heretics and mete out punishment to those who posed a threat to their political and religious legitimacy. Keeping in mind the multiple usages of heretic (in its many forms) found within the primary sources, the term heretic described a person who rebelled politically

⁴ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*.

and militarily against the caliphate and its governors (*kufir*), someone who used “the Book of God and the sunna of the Prophet” to call people to their rebellion, and finally someone who, using reason, innovated (*mubtada'*) in Islam in a way that differed from the interpretation favored by the Umayyad Caliphs and threatened their religious authority.

A brief explanation of the usability of the frameworks, found in chapter one, will now be discussed. The majority of theories, like that of Wansbrough's, insists on a period of co-development between the sects and the future religious orthodoxy. Whether the religious orthodoxy is established under the Umayyads is debatable. However, it seems clear that whatever the status of religious orthodoxy under the Umayyads, it continued to evolve under the Abbasids.

Lewis's theory, while fitting and appropriate for the case study in this paper due to its tractability, presents too vague an answer to be satisfactory. Van Ess' most recent theory concerning Islamic heresy as a refusal of the Prophet Muhammad and/or the Qur'an represents a fair interpretation, especially when combined with the concept of heterodoxy. Particularly in light of alternative case studies, such as Hasan al-Basri, who was able to assert divergent religious beliefs, without raising the ire of 'Abd al-Malik and being

executed as a heretic.⁵ Van Ess' theory particularly works well in later periods when the specific Islamic sects tamper with the religious legitimacy of the prophet or reject the Qur'an, and his model does fit in the period presented in this study, since the Islamic orthodoxy, as represented by the emphasis on the Prophet Muhammad and Qur'an, were recently adopted. MacEoin's theory is also referring to a later period in which once acceptable groups deviate further and become heretical groups. This theory is nicely combined with van Ess' qualification for belief in the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an.

The last theory to apply to the case study is that of Talal Asad, who reviewing the original theory from Nelson, determined that the concept of and theory of heresy developed by the Christians were too foreign to be adapted to Islam. Therefore, only part of the theory shall be applied to the case study. Asad's major point, which he derived from Nelson's original article, was that a lack of pressure and attention to particular geographical areas on the part of the caliphal government created divergence in religious thought and practice, exacerbated by a lack of Church presence. This seems to be true in the case study, and the Islamic context, despite the fact that some heretics such as Ghaylan al-Dimashqi and al-Harith ibn Sa'id al-Khadhdhab, were active in

⁵ Judd, "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History," 237.

Damascus, the capital of the empire. The Islamic system, as Asad points out, lacks the administrative infrastructure that the Christian Church has to publicize Church doctrine, discover religious heretics, and summarily punish them. Therefore, even in the Umayyad capital of Syria, heresy in terms of political/religious opposition to the established authority can be found.

Consequently, the concept of Islamic heresy at this period works best in a heterodoxical framework in which multiple religious sects, with differing religious beliefs and practices, all develop their sects at the same time. Those parties labeled and killed as heretics represent unacceptable heterodoxical groups that threatened the political (and religious) authority of the Umayyads by trying to usurp power using military brawn or arguments of legitimacy by advocating religious programs counter to the interests of the Umayyads. However, their adherence to the belief of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an make them Muslims. Therefore, while al-Harith represents a heretic to the Umayyads, who viewed themselves as the religious orthodoxy, in actuality al-Harith ibn Surayj and his following should be considered as a heterodoxical sect, against the Umayyads.

As for Jahm, the claim of heresy within the heterodoxical framework is slightly more complex. His religious beliefs require much more study to determine whether his rejection of the ability to obtain rational knowledge of

God extends to the point of questioning Muhammad's prophethood. If the primary sources support assertions of true agnosticism, then Jahm could fall outside the range of Islamic heterodoxy and be considered a heretic in Islamic terms.

This study is by no means conclusive and should be viewed as an introduction to the study of Islam in the pre-modern period and how Islam and religious authority continually relate to political power and those that rebel against it. Further study is necessary concerning al-Harith ibn Surayj and Jahm ibn Safwan in order to come to more conclusive evidence of their own "heresies" as well as the heterodoxical nature of early Islamic society. This could be done with the inclusion of more primary sources, such as additional letters from 'Abd al-Hamid's collection regarding Khurasani rebels and two other letters regarding *fitna* in general.⁶ Other primary resources, including more passages from al-Baladhuri and al-Tabari should be examined for further historical context and details concerning their religious program and rebellion. In addition, *Sīrat Sālim* and letters from Hasan al-Basri should be analyzed to provide extensive context to the development of religious doctrines within the Qadariyya and Murji'a.

⁶ al-Qādī, "Early Islamic State Letters: The Question of Authenticity," 273–275.

Appendix A: Poem as Excerpted from al-Tabari's *Tārīkh*¹
By: Nasr ibn Sayyar

و قال فيه نصر بن سيار حين أقبل الحارث إلى مرو و سود
راياته - و كان الحارث يرى رأى المرجئة:

دَعْ عَنْكَ دُنْيَا وَ أَهْلًا أَنْتَ تَارِكُهُمْ!
مَا خَيْرُ دُنْيَا وَأَهْلٍ لَا يَدُومُونَ
إِلَّا بَقِيَّةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ
فَاطْلُبْ مِنْ اللَّهِ أَهْلًا لَا يَمُوتُونَ
أَكْثَرَ تَقَى اللَّهِ فِي الْإِسْرَارِ مُجْتَهِدًا
إِنَّ التَّقَى خَيْرُهُ مَا كَانَ مَكُونًا
وَاعْلَمْ بِأَنَّكَ بِالْأَعْمَالِ مُرْتَهَنٌ
فَكَنْ لَذَاكَ كَثِيرَ الْهَمِّ مَحْزُونًا
إِنِّي أَرَى الْعَبْنَ الْمُرْدِي بِصَاحِبِهِ
مَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ الْأَيَّامِ مَغْبُونًا
تَكُونُ لِلْمَرْءِ أَطْوَارًا فَتَمْنَحُهُ²
يَوْمًا عِثَارًا وَطَوْرًا تَمْنَحُ اللَّيْنَا
بَيْنَا الْفَتَى فِي نَعْمِ الْعَيْشِ حَوْلَهُ
دَهْرٌ فَحَسَى بِهِ عَنْ ذَاكَ مَزْبُونًا
تَحْلُو لَهُ مَرَّةً حَتَّى يُسَرَّ بِهَا

¹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, Second. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1119), 100-101.

² ف <أحياناً> The preceding note was copied from: Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, O, Second. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1119), 100-101.

حِينَا وَ تُمَقِّرُهُ طَعْمًا أَحَايِينَا
 هَلْ غَابِرٌ مِّنْ بَقَايَا الدَّهْرِ تَنْظَرُهُ
 إِلَّا كَمَا قَدْ مَضَى فِيمَا تُقَضُّونَا
 فَامْنَحْ جِهَادَكَ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْجُ آخِرَةَ
 وَكُنْ عَدُوًّا لِقَوْمٍ لَا يُصَلُّونَا
 وَاقْتُلْ مُوَالِيَهُمْ مِنَّا وَنَاصِرَهُمْ
 حِينَا تَكْفُرُهُمْ وَالْعَنَّهُمْ حِينَا
 وَالْعَائِبِينَ عَلَيْنَا دِينَنَا وَهُمْ
 شَرُّ الْعِبَادِ إِذَا خَابَرْتَهُمْ دِينَا
 وَالْقَائِلِينَ سَبِيلُ اللَّهِ بَغِيَّتَنَا
 لُبُّعَدَ مَا نَكْبُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَا
 فَاقْتُلُهُمْ غَضَبًا لِلَّهِ مُنْتَصِرًا
 مِنْهُمْ بِهِ وَدَعِ الْمُرْتَابَ مَفْتُونَا
 إِرْجَاؤُكُمْ لِرُكْمٍ وَالشَّرْكَاءَ فِي قَرْنٍ
 فَأَنْتُمْ أَهْلُ إِشْرَاكِ وَمَرْجُونَا
 لَا يَبْعِدُ اللَّهُ فِي الْأَجْدَاثِ عَيْرَكُمْ
 إِذْ كَانَ دِينُكُمْ بِالشَّرْكِ مَقْرُونَا
 أَلْقَى بِهِ اللَّهُ رُعبًا فِي نُحُورِكُمْ
 وَاللَّهُ يَقْضِي لَنَا الْحُسْنَى وَيُعَلِّينَا
 كَيْمًا نَكُونُ الْمُوَالِي عِنْدَ خَائِفَةٍ
 عَمَّا تَرُومُ بِهِ الْإِسْلَامَ وَالدِّينَا
 وَهَلْ تَعْيِبُونَ مِنَّا كَاذِبِينَ بِهِ
 غَالٍ وَ مُهْتَضِمٍ حَسْبِيَ الَّذِي فِينَا
 يَا بِي الَّذِي كَانَ يُبْلِي اللَّهُ أَوْلَكُمْ
 عَلَى النِّفَاقِ وَ مَا قَدْ كَانَ يُبْلِينَا

Appendix B: Poem as Excerpted from *The History of al-Ṭabarī*¹
 Translated by: Khalid Yahya Blankinship

Nasr ibn Sayyar said regarding him at the time al-Harith approached Marw and raised black banners, al-Harith being of the opinion of the Murji'a:

Leave behind you a worldly life and a family you are going to leave;

What good is there in a world and a family that do not last,

Except for a remainder of days to an appointed time?

Therefore, seek from God a family who do not die.

Strive after much fear of God regarding secrets:

The best of fear of God is what is hidden.

Know that you are hostage to your works;

Therefore be much worried, sad.

I see murderous deceit in the master of he

Who in these days has been deceived.

(The world) will be for a man various times; it will make him²

Stumble one day, and another time it will give him ease,

While time transforms a youth having a pleasant

Life, so that he later gets knocked about:

¹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, trans. Khalid Yahya Blankinship, vol. XXV (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 113–114.

² This line could be more loosely translated as, "(The world) will pose various phases for a man; it will make him."

(Life) is sweet to him one time, so that he is pleased with it

For a while, and becomes bitter in taste for him (other) times.

Is it a passing moment from the remnants of time which you wait for,

Other than like that which has elapsed, in which you may carryout (you plans)?

Make your struggle against those who do not hope for an afterlife,

And be an enemy to a people who do not offer Islamic worship.

And slay their follower among us and their helper,

Sometimes declaring them unbelievers, and curse them sometimes,

And those finding fault with us regarding our religion, who are

The worst followers of religion if you searched out information from them,

And those saying, "The path of God is our desire";

How far they have deviated from what they say!

Therefore, slay them in anger for God, triumphing

Over them by it, and leave the doubter seduced (by the rebelliousness).

Your delay (of judgment) has pushed you together with polytheism in a coupling,

So that you are a people of polytheism and delayers (of judgment at the same time).

May God not exile into the tombs other than you,

For your religion has been tied to polytheism.

God has cast fear into your throats because of it,

While God decrees for us goodness and exalts us,

So that we may be the helpers, when a fearful event occurs

Owing to what you are aiming at through polytheism for Islam and the world.

Do you (people) fault us, lying about it, (saying that We are between)

extremist and oppressor? What is among us is enough for me!

He among those of you whom God afflicted first refused³

(Being afflicted with) hypocrisy, nor did He thus afflict us.⁴

³ This line could also be translated, "He among those of you whom God first afflicted abstained or refrained (from God)."

⁴ This line could be translated more loosely as, "(Being afflicted with) hypocrisy, He did not afflict us."

Glossary

Ahl al-Bayt- Translated as “People of the House,” referring to the family of the Prophet

Ahl al-Kitāb- Translated as “People of the Book,” referring to other religions adhering to monotheism, i.e., Christians and Jews

Fitna (*pl. fitnāt*) – conflict or discord within the Muslim community, especially that between ‘Ali and Mu‘awiya

Ijmā‘-consensus of the scholars of a particular region as embodying sunna practice, by definition exemplary

Irja‘ – a doctrine advocated by the Murji‘a, promoting the deferment to God’s will on religious doctrines by suspending judgment in the meantime

Kāfir- a heretic or unbeliever

Khurasan- a province east of the Caspian Sea (see the map on page iv)

Mawlā- ‘client’; a non-Arab who has accepted Islam; a follower of an important individual

Mubtada‘- a person who introduces innovation into the Islamic faith, related to the term *bid‘a*: innovation, the opposite of sunna

Murji‘a- a large and diverse theological group that suspended religious judgments for God’s judgment and advocated on behalf of non-Arab converts to Islam

Mu‘tazila- a theological group during the Abbasid Empire who believed in the createdness of the Qur’an and utilizing human reason to understand God

Nāfiq- literally a hypocrite, but also taken to mean a heretic

Qadariyya- a theological group during the Umayyad Empire who believed in free will, the accountability of the caliph to his people, the createdness of the Qur’an

Rāshidūn- religio-political leaders who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad, including Abu-Bakr, Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali

Sunna- accepted usage or practice; eventually identified with the sunna of the Prophet, the usage of Muhammad which Sunni Islam accepted as being, together with the Qur'an, the main source of authority for its law

Transoxania- a province in central Asia, northeast of the Oxus River, north of Khurasan or modern day Iran (see map on page iv)

'Ulama'- the religious scholars of Islam

Umma- the political, social and spiritual community of Muslims

Bibliography

- Allen, Roger. *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Anthony, Sean W. "The Prophecy and Passion of al-Hārith B. Sa'īd al-Kadhdhāb: Narrating a Religious Movement from the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik B. Marwān." *Arabica* 57 (2010): 1–29.
- Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali. "Heresy." *The Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Asad, Talal. "Medieval Heresy: An Anthropological View." *Social History* 11, no. 3 (October 1986): 345–362.
- Assman, Jan. *The Price of Monotheism*. Translated by Robert Savage. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Al-Balādhurī, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā. *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Edited by Al-'Abbas al-Maṭlab Wabnūhu. Vol. 3. 25 vols. Damashq: Ṭabī'a bitārīkh, 1998.
- . *The Ansāb al-Ashrāf of al-Balādhurī*. Edited by S.D.F Goiten. Vol. 5. 10 vols. Jerusalem: School of Oriental Studies Hebrew University, 1936.
- . *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Edited by Tamtassah Ḥimsīr Ibn Saba'. Vol. 25. 25 vols. Dimashq: Maktibah al-Yaqḏah al-'Arabiyyah, 2004.
- Beaumont, Daniel. "Lie." *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Berkey, Jonathan P. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Bierschenk, Thomas. "Religion and Political Structure: Remarks on Ibadism in Oman and the Mzab (Algeria)." *Studia Islamica*, no. 68 (1988).
- Blankinship, Khalid Yahya. *The End of the Jihād State The Reign of Hishām Ibn 'Abd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- de Blois, F.C. "Tā'rīkh." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Brill Online: Brill, 2012. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tarikh-COM_1184>.
- Cowan, J M., ed. *Arabic- English Dictionary The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*. 4th ed. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1994.
- Cook, Michael. *Early Muslim Dogma*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Crone, Patricia, and Martin Hinds. *God's Caliph Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- . "On the Meaning of the Abbasid Call to al-Riḍā." In *The Islamic World From Classical to Modern Times*, 95–111. Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1989.
- . "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?" *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 1–57.
- Donner, Fred M. *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writings*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1998.
- . *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Elad, Amikan. "The Ethnic Composition of the Abbasid Revolution: A Reevaluation of Some Recent Research." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 24 (2000): 246–326.
- van Ess, Josef. *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- . "Kaḍariyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Brill, 2012. <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/kadariyya-COM_0409>.
- . "The Origins of Islam: A Conversation with the German Islamic Scholar Josef Van Ess." Translated by Charlotte Collins, November 2011.
- Freeman, Charles. *A.D. 381 Heretics, Pagans, and the Dawn of the Monotheistic State*. New York: The Overlook Press, 2008.
- Fowden, Garth. *Empire to Commonwealth Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Gardīzī, Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy. *The Ornament of Histories A History of the Eastern Islamic Lands AD 650-1041 The Original Text of Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Ḥayy Gardīzī*. Translated by C. Edmund Bos. BIPS Persian Studies Series. London: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2011.
- Griffel, Frank. "Agnosticism." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Brill, 2012.
- Haider, Najam. *The Origins of the Shī'a Identity, Ritual, and Sacred Space in Eighth-Century Kūfah*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Hallaq, Wael B. *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Hawting, G.R. *The First Dynasty of Islam The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*. Second. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1986.
- El-Hibri, Tayeb. *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, n.d.

- Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1997.
- Humphreys, R. Stephen. *Islamic History*. Revised ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- ibn Ishāq, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Muḥammad Ibn. *Kitāb al-Fihrist al-Nadīm*. Riḍā Tajdid, 1988.
- ibn Ishāq, Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Muḥammad. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*. Edited by Bayard Dodge. Vol. 1. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Judd, Steven. "Medieval Explanations for the Fall of the Umayyads." In *Umayyad Legacies*, edited by Antoine Borrut and Paul M. Cobb. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Judd, Stephen Clark. "The Third Fitna: Orthodoxy, Heresy and Coercion in Late Umayyad History". Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1997.
- Judd, Stephen. "Reinterpreting al-Walīd B. Yazīd." *Journal of American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008): 439–458.
- Judd, Steven C. "Gaylan al-Dimashqi: The Isolation of a Heretic in Islamic Historiography." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 2 (May 1999): 161–184.
- al-Kātib, Abd-Ḥamīd bin Yaḥya. *Abd al-Ḥamīd Bin Yaḥyā Wa Mā Tabāqqā Min Rasā'ilihī Wa Rasā'il Sālim Abī al-'Alā'*. Amman: dār al-sharūq lil-nashrū al-tūzī'a, 1994.
- Kennedy, Hugh. "From Oral Tradition to Written Record in Arabic Genealogy." *Arabica* 44, no. 4 (October 1997): 531–544.
- Khalidi, Tarif. *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Kister, M.J. "al-Ḥārith B. Suraydj (or 'Umayr) B. Yazīd B. Sawā (or Sawwār) B. Ward B. Murra B. Sufyān B. Mudjāshi', Abū Ḥātim." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Brill Online, 2012.
- Lane, Edward William. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. Online. Beirut, Lebanon: Librairie Du Liban, 1968.
- Lewis, Bernard. "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam." *Studia Islamica*, no. 1 (1953): 43–63.
- MacEoin, Denis. "Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Shi'ism: The Cases of Shaykhism and Babism." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, no. 2 (June 1990): 323–329.
- Madelung, W. "Murdji'a." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Brill Online, 2012.
- McMillan, M.E. *The Meaning of Mecca The Politics of Pilgrimage in Early Islam*. London: Saqi Books, 2011.

- Michael the Syrian, Agapius of Manbij, and Theophanes. *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*. Translated by Robert G. Hoyland. Vol. 57. Translated Texts for Historians. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011.
- Michel Le Syrien. *Chronique De Michel Le Syrien*. Translated by J.B. Chabot. Vol. 2. Paris: Culture et Civilisation, 1963.
- al-Qāḍī, Wadād. "Early Islamic State Letters: The Question of Authenticity." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East Problems in the Literary Source Material*, 215–276. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992.
- al-Qadi, Wadad. "The Earliest 'Nabita' and the Paradigmatic 'Nawabit'." *Studia Islamica* 78 (1993): 27–61.
- Robinson, Chase. *Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Schoeler, Gregor. "Writing and Publishing on the Use and Function of Writing in the First Centuries of Islam." *Arabica* 44, no. 3 (July 1997): 423–435.
- Shaban, M.A. *The 'Abbāsīd Revolution*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Shoshan, Boaz. *Poetics of Islamic Historiography Deconstructing Ṭabarī's History*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Stetkevych, Suzanne Pinckney. *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- . "Umayyad Panegyric and the Poetics of Islamic Hegemony: al-Akḥṭal's 'Khaffa al-Qaṭīnu' ('Those That Dwelt with You Have Left in Haste')." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 2 (July 1997): 89–122.
- al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ja'rīr. *Tārīkh al-Rusul Wa al-Mulūk, O.* Second. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1119.
- . *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, T.* Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Vol. I. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- . *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, T.* Translated by Khalid Yahya Blankinship. Vol. XXV. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- . *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, T.* Translated by Carole Hillenbrand. Vol. XXVI. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- . *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, T.* Translated by John Alden Williams. Vol. XXVII. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.
- Taylor, John. "An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islām." *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (April 1967): 197–219.