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# How the Umayyads Lost the Islamic West: Contrasting Depictions of the Uprising of 122/740 by Arab Historians

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**Abstract:** In 122/740 an uprising in the Far Maghrib triggered a series of rebellions that eventually ended Arab rule over the Islamic West. The event is not of key importance for the historians of the Islamic Empire, and when it is discussed, the focus tends to lie on the uprising's significance for Arab rule in al-Andalus rather than the Maghrib.

This study compares the most detailed accounts of the Uprising of 122 by early imperial historians such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam with those of later historians writing in the heartland of the Islamic Empire, such as Ibn al-Athīr and al-Dhahabī, and of historians situated further west, in al-Andalus and the Maghrib. It finds that the presentation of the Uprising of 122 varies depending on the historical context of and the source tradition used by the author in question. It also finds that while the Umayyad and Khārijite actors tend to be presented with a degree of differentiation and from a variety of perspectives, the portrayal of the rebels is more uniform. The rebels, referred to as Berbers in all accounts, are depicted as a monolithic entity displaying a stereotypical set of characteristics that sets them apart from notions of order and propriety that the authors associate with the Islamic Empire. Although its consequences for Arab rule in the West are not explicitly acknowledged by the historians, this comparison of how they depict its actors reveals the Uprising's impact on the historical consciousness, particularly in regard to the inhabitants of the seceded region.

**Keywords:** Maghrib, al-Ṭabarī, revolt, Ibn 'Idhārī, Umayyads, Berber, Khārijites

## Introduction

In 122/740, a revolt against Arab rule broke out in what is now western Morocco. Having begun in Tangier, it spread quickly to other regions of the Far Maghrib (*al-maghrib al-aqṣā*, encompassing most of western Algeria and Morocco), setting

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off a chain of localized rebellions that led to the loss of Arab control over the Maghrib and a renegotiation of sovereignty over the caliphal province of Ifriqiya. The Uprising of 122, as it will be referred to in this study, had momentous consequences for the Caliphate.<sup>1</sup> Not only did the series of rebellions trigger the loss of the West, but after Umayyad troops sent to repress the uprising were defeated, they took refuge in al-Andalus, a development that was to have a decisive effect on how this region would relate to the Caliphate in the coming centuries.

Despite its significance, the Uprising of 122 is not a central topic for most historians of the Caliphate.<sup>2</sup> Compared to the attention given to the First and Second *Fitna* (35/656–41/661 and 60/680–73/692) in histories of the conquests and early Caliphate, the *fitna* that led to the largest territorial loss of the Umayyad period is often mentioned in a single paragraph or ignored completely. The historians that do address the uprising agree about its consequences for the Caliphate, but their interpretations of its causes and their depictions of the actors that were involved vary widely. This study will compare seven accounts of the uprising in texts written between the third/ninth and the eighth/fourteenth century. I will relate the different depictions of Umayyads, Khārijites, and rebels to the historical context, ideological position, and source tradition used by the author, showing the extent to which these factors influenced the presentation of the event. As Najam HAIDER's study of rhetoricized historiography has shown,<sup>3</sup> the rhetorical elaboration and manipulation of the basic elements of a historical account not only reflected the worldview or positionality of the author but also established a specific relationship between the author and the intended reader. By following HAIDER's approach in this study, I show that most of the historical authors engaged with their readers as members of a caliphal realm that, although flawed, protected them from chaos or disorder beyond its borders. Rather than seeking to reconstruct the uprising itself, this article is concerned with its significance for Arab authors in different historical contexts and the role that it played in constructions of identity as a result of the caliphal enterprise. I will show that, despite contrasting views of the factors that motivated the uprising, and differing assessments of the role of the Umayyads, most of the sources concur in depicting the rebels as a monolithic entity that they name Berbers and to whom most of them ascribe a specific set of negative characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Even if the conse-

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1 BLANKINSHIP 1994, 19.

2 I use the term imperial historians to refer to the historians writing within the Islamic Empire between the third/ninth and the ninth/fifteenth century, which is the time span covered by this study.

3 HAIDER 2019.

4 Because it is unclear whether the rebels were actually a unified entity understood as Berbers by the time of the Uprising in 122/740, I refer to them in this study as Maghribis. This term may also

quences of the Uprising of 122 tend not to be analyzed in detail by the historians, its impact on the historical consciousness is evident in their unanimous portrayal of the Berber protagonists, which corresponds to portrayals of Berbers in other literary genres. Therefore, this study relates to the work of Ramzi ROUGHY, Annliese NEF, and Nicola CLARKE that have also highlighted the relevance of rebellion for the depiction of Berbers in Arab historiography.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted here that the same cannot necessarily be said of Arabic historiography, or historical texts written in Arabic by persons of a non-Arab ethnic background. Historical writings by non-Arab inhabitants of North Africa do not always highlight the role of rebellion in their portrayal of their relationship with the Caliphate. Some do not mention any conflict at all, while others focus on different aspects, such as the revival of Islam in the West, as a means by which to distinguish their role in the Islamic historical narrative.<sup>6</sup>

I will begin this study with a brief introduction to the Uprising of 122 and its historical context. I will then compare the accounts of the uprising in historical works written in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, (d. 257/871), and Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854).<sup>7</sup> In a second step, I will relate these accounts to two accounts that were also compiled within the Caliphate but in a later historical context. How do these later accounts by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) and al-Dhahabī (d. 749/1348) differ from those of their predecessors, and what factors are responsible for this?

In a third step, I will consider accounts compiled by authors who did not live under ‘Abbāsīd rule. I will begin with the account of the Uprising of 122 in *Akhbār Majmū‘a*, an anonymous history that was probably compiled in al-Andalus in the fifth/eleventh century.<sup>8</sup> I will then consider the depiction of Ibn ‘Idhārī, who lived in Marrakesh in the seventh/thirteenth century but whose account was based on that of Ibn Raqīq al-Qayrawānī (ca. 428/1028), a prestigious ambassador and historian in the Zirīd emirate. These two accounts have been selected because of the different historical circumstances and the relation to the Caliphate that dominated in fifth/eleventh-century al-Andalus and Marrakesh. They can be clearly related to the dif-

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be anachronistic, as there is little evidence that “the Maghrib” existed as a concept by the second/eighth century either. However, it has the advantage of maintaining the distinction between the historians’ portrayal of the rebels and my own.

5 ROUGHY 2019; NEF 2021, 15–28; CLARKE 2013, 510–525.

6 The depictions of Berbers in Arab historiography and the more varied self-depiction by non-Arabs in historical texts written in Arabic would require a separate article to be analyzed in full. AILLET 2022, 88–92 provides a good introduction to this question.

7 On alternative death dates for Ibn Khayyāt, see ANDERSSON 2019, 47.

8 On the provenance and the background of the book, see the introduction to JAMES 2012.

ferent perspectives of their authors regarding the role of the rebels and the legitimacy of the revolt. In the case of Ibn ʿIdhārī, the difference between his account, his source text, and the quotation of the same source text by more eastern historians such as Ibn al-Athīr is a good example of the relevance of historical context to rhetorical embellishment in historical narrative.

## The Uprising of 122

The Arab conquest of the region west of Egypt began in 21/641 with a raid led by ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ as far as Sabratha. Further raids followed this, but compared with their swifter victories in the east, the progress of the Arab armies was slow and irregular. In 79/698, troops led by Ḥassān b. al-Nuʿmān conquered the Byzantine stronghold of Carthage, and most of the Byzantine leadership surrendered or left the region. This left the main opposition to the Arabs in the hands of the tribes living further inland.<sup>9</sup> Non-Byzantine resistance to the conquest was subdued in what was probably a piecemeal fashion, through policies alternating between military oppression and guarded cooperation.<sup>10</sup> For example, during Mūsā b. Nuṣayr's leadership over the Maghrib (ca. 80/700–97/716) large numbers of non-Arabs, who later came to be referred to as Berbers, converted to Islam and joined the Muslim campaigns in al-Andalus and other regions. The man who led the first Muslim armies into the Iberian Peninsula in 92/711, Ṭāriq b. Ziyād, was a tribal chief who had converted to Islam at the hands of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr and who, like the men who converted at his command, was a *mawlā* of Mūsā and his family. The loyalty of these converts to the Nuṣayrid family was to prove troublesome to the Umayyad rulers who removed Mūsā from his post in the Maghrib, as will be shown below.

As the example of Ṭāriq b. Ziyād shows, local tribal rulers received important functions under Arab rule and participated not only in the military conquests but also in the administration of the region. However, despite close cooperation between the demographic groups, key functions remained in the hands of Arab leaders who had been nominated by the Umayyad governor in Kairouan. For example, the military fortification of Tangiers (Arab. Ṭanja), which was the main Arab settlement in the region, was placed under the control of an Arab governor named ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Murādī. A second key fortification in Sous (al-Sūs)

<sup>9</sup> KAEGI argues that resistance shifted to the autochthonous population around the death of Constantians II in 669. KAEGI 2010, 220.

<sup>10</sup> MORENO 2010, 584.

further south was placed under Ismā'īl b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, the son of the Umayyad governor of Ifrīqiya.

On the fifteenth of Ramadan 122/fifteenth of August 740 a revolt broke out against Arab rule. It was neither spontaneous nor a reaction to a single incident. Rather, it seems to have been carefully planned in advance as the rebels chose a time when the Arab army was campaigning in Sicily and there were few Umayyad troops in Ifrīqiya that could quell the revolt. The rebels killed the governor of Tangier, 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Murādī, along with other inhabitants of the city. Having installed their own governor over the city, they then moved south to Sous, where they also killed Ismā'īl b. 'Ubayd Allāh and his Umayyad forces in the region. Like the selection of the moment for the rebellion, the methodical progression from one fortification to another and the appointment of a governor over the newly conquered city of Tangiers has much in common with the military tactics of the Arab conquerors and reflects the rebels' experience in the Arab armies, as well as the care with which they had planned their operation.

According to most versions, the revolt was initially led by a man named Maysara al-Madgharī, who was killed by his own troops shortly after the revolt began. Rather than signaling the end of the revolt, after his death the leadership of the rebels was taken up by Khālid b. Ḥumayd al-Zanātī, whose Arab name combined with a non-Arab *nisba* indicates that he, like al-Madgharī, was a non-Arab who had served in the Arab army and was therefore well acquainted with Arab fighting techniques. By the time the Umayyad governor of Ifrīqiya, 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, had recalled his troops from their campaign and sent them to confront the rebels, it was Muḥarram 123/December 740 and the rebellion had gained in strength. The Umayyad forces were defeated and their battle against the rebels became known as “the Battle of the Nobles” (*ghazwat al-ashrāf*) due to the number of Arab noblemen that were killed. It appears to have been this massacre that attracted Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik's attention to the events in the West, allegedly prompting him to vow that he would “send an army whose beginning is where they are and whose end is where I am.”<sup>11</sup> This army, led by the general Kulthūm b. 'Iyāḍ al-Qushayrī and consisting mainly of Syrian and North African troops, was also defeated and sustained heavy losses. Following this second battle most of the surviving North African troops seem to have returned to Kairouan or the military bases in which they had been settled. The Syrian troops either despaired of a safe passage to Syria or were nervous about the changed political circumstances that they would find when they returned. They requested and were eventually granted refuge by the governor of al-Andalus, 'Abd al-Malik b. Qaṭan. Although they initially

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11 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 84; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 4, 417.

supported ‘Abd al-Malik by helping him to quell a Berber rebellion in the province, they subsequently asserted their own claims to power and within a decade they were able to dominate al-Andalus.<sup>12</sup> In the Maghrib, localized rebellions continued to undermine Arab rule. No further armies of the size of that sent by Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik returned to the region, and subsequent Umayyad governors focused on strengthening rule in the province of Ifrīqiya rather than recovering territory that had been lost further west. Small political entities gathered around local dynasties, most of which professed a form of Islam but refused political allegiance to the Caliphate.<sup>13</sup> The revolt of 122/740 can therefore be seen as having played a decisive role in the fate of the caliphal enterprise both in North Africa and in the region that became al-Andalus.

## Early Imperial Reports of the Revolt

Despite its significance, the Uprising of 122 does not receive much attention from historians of the Caliphate. This might be due to the thematic interests of the various works: al-Balādhurī’s (d. 279/892–3) *Futūḥ al-buldān* only refers to the conquest period and not to later events,<sup>14</sup> while Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī limits the wider historical scope in his *Kitāb al-futūḥ* to events in the eastern Empire. The Andalusian historian ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 238/853) does summarize the early history of the Islamic West but his focus is al-Andalus, not the Maghrib. However, even if it is understandable that the event falls outside the scope of these writers, it is surprising that al-Ya‘qūbī (ca. third/ninth century),<sup>15</sup> whose *Tārīkh al-buldān* shows extensive knowledge of the West, does not refer to the uprising in this work or in the account of Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign in his *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī*.<sup>16</sup> Unlike revolts in regions that remained under caliphal rule, which became incorporated into the imperial historical narrative, the Uprising of 122, which led to the Maghrib’s secession from Abbasid control, is excluded from many imperial memories. The most detailed account is given by Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in his *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*.<sup>17</sup> Rather than discussing the uprising

12 MORENO 1998, 86–91.

13 MORENO 2010, 593.

14 Al-Balādhurī summarizes the conquest of the Far Maghrib in Aḥmad b. Yahyā, *al-Ṭabba‘* (1987), 322–323.

15 It is unlikely that the year of 283/897 that is sometimes given for al-Ya‘qūbī’s death is correct. ANTHONY 2016, 24, 19.

16 Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh* (1939), 3.

17 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (1964), 4, 254–256.

in his chapter around the year 122/740, al-Ṭabarī treats it in his summary of the year 67/687, alongside the conquest of the West. He lists the key Umayyad leaders and notes that following their submission to Arab rule the people of Ifrīqiya “were most obedient and docile, until the people of Iraq came to them.”<sup>18</sup> This term refers to the Khārijites who are said to have entered the Maghrib shortly after the conquest.<sup>19</sup> Like many other sources, al-Ṭabarī regards the Khārijites as enjoying wide acceptance among the conquered inhabitants of the Maghrib. He describes the uprising as having been initiated by Khārijites, who exploited the discontent of the subject population for political purposes. In a vividly described scene, he depicts the Maghribis complaining about their treatment by the local governor, whereupon the Khārijites inform them that rather than a local phenomenon, the orders for this treatment come from the Caliph in Damascus. Upon hearing this, a Maghribi delegation travels to Damascus to address their concerns to Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik. They are led by a man that al-Ṭabarī calls Maysara without identifying him further. Despite a long wait, the men are not admitted to the Caliph. Eventually, they leave a written list of their names and return to Tangiers, where they revolt against the Umayyad governor.

Although al-Ṭabarī portrays the Khārijites as inciting the Maghribis to rebellion, the narrative elements of his account assign the ultimate responsibility for the uprising to the Umayyad ruler. He gives a detailed description of the unfair treatment of Maghribis in the Umayyad armies, including their being assigned the most dangerous tasks and their exclusion from the rewards given to Arab troops. Although this practice could be due to local generals’ decision, al-Ṭabarī also mentions the ruinous practice of slaughtering the Maghribis’ pregnant ewes to obtain the soft wool of the unborn lambs for sending to the Caliph, and the large consignments of female slaves sent east every year. He leaves the reader in no doubt that the oppression of the subjected population is practiced to fulfil the demands of the Caliph, thus affirming the claims of the Khārijites. His readers would probably have been aware that – at least by the time that al-Ṭabarī was writing – the enslavement of Muslims was illegal.<sup>20</sup> But al-Ṭabarī emphasizes the illegality and impiety of Umayyads by permitting his protagonists to speak for themselves. When seeking the audience of the Caliph, the Maghribi delegates are depicted as complaining about their conditions and noting that they know nothing in the Qur’an or the Sunna that would justify these practices. They wonder aloud why they, as Muslims, are being subjected to this treatment. Is it on the orders of the Caliph? Not

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<sup>18</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (1964), 4, 253.

<sup>19</sup> REBSTOCK 1983, 10–53.

<sup>20</sup> On early disagreement about whether it was permitted to enslave people who had submitted to the Arab armies, see BRUNSCHWIG 1975, 138–142.

only the undeniably cruel treatment of the Berbers but also the explicit reference to their status as Muslims and the use of direct speech in this passage encourages the reader to sympathize with the plight of the subjects rather than the position of the Umayyad rulers. At no point in his account does al-Ṭabarī permit the Umayyad governors or rulers to use direct speech to communicate with the reader. They are depicted through the rhetoric of the Khārijites and the Maghribis, which weakens their moral standing.<sup>21</sup> Neither is al-Ṭabarī very critical of the Maghribis' actions. Although he refers to the uprising with the negative term *fitna*,<sup>22</sup> he also describes them as “defending their land” (*mana'a al-barbar arḍahum*)<sup>23</sup> and his account contains no exaggerated reports of their brutality. He makes the connection between the uprising and the Caliph's actions even clearer at the close of his account, when the Caliph, asking for the names of the rebels, learns that they were the men who had come to him for justice.<sup>24</sup>

As Hannah-Lena HAGEMANN has shown, al-Ṭabarī is highly critical of militant Khārijites but less so of more quietist currents.<sup>25</sup> In this account, his depiction of Khārijites is not positive but he is more critical of the mistakes made by the Umayyads and the consequences of these. This brings al-Ṭabarī's account of the uprising into conversation with Steven JUDD's assessment of al-Ṭabarī's character development, in which explaining and assigning blame for the demise of the Umayyads is an important factor.<sup>26</sup> Al-Ṭabarī is even less critical of the people he refers to as Berbers, depicting them as oppressed and the Uprising as warranted, if not legitimate.

This portrayal is quite different to that of the Basran historian Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ (d. 240/854–5). Khalifa's *Tārīkh* is the earliest surviving annalistic history from an author of the Islamicate realm.<sup>27</sup> Only the recension of Baqī b. Makhḷad (d. 76/889) has survived.<sup>28</sup> Ibn Makhḷad, a Cordoban scholar who traveled east and studied with Khalifa in Basra,<sup>29</sup> included additional material in his recension, most of which was transmitted from the Egyptian scholar al-Layth b. Sa'd via Yaḥyā b.

21 On character development and narrative embellishment in al-Ṭabarī, see LEDER 1990, 72–96.

22 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (1964), 7, 191. On the negative connotations of *fitna*, see AYALON 1987, 66, 149–157.

23 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (1964), 4, 255.

24 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* (1964), 4, 255.

25 HAGEMANN 2016, 50–53.

26 JUDD 2005, 209–226.

27 Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, *Tārīkh* (1985), 7.

28 A second transmission was made by his student, Mūsā b. Zakariyyā al-Tustarī, but this has not survived. Comparison with the recension of Tustarī are made on the basis of references to the work by later writers.

29 On this scholar, see Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat* (1995), 10.



‘Abd Allāh b. Bukayr.<sup>30</sup> Although Khalifa attributes his material about the Uprising of 122 to Abū Khalid, a source that he uses throughout the *Tārīkh*, there are similarities between his account and the version of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, who cites Yaḥyā b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Bukayr as his source.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, there is a possibility that the account of the uprising is a later addition by Baqī b. Makhlad and not the original work of Khalifa. Characteristically for his narrative style in the *Tārīkh*,<sup>32</sup> Khalifa’s description of the uprising is brief, with few additional details. He describes it as having been initiated by ‘Abd al-A‘lā b. Ḥudayj (other sources describe him as Jurayj) and Maysara in Sous and Tangiers, respectively.<sup>33</sup> He describes the rebels as killing the governors of both cities before killing and capturing the inhabitants, including women and children. Following his summary, he mentions that ‘Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb sent a small army to confront the rebels and lists the names of the generals who fell in the battle. He also refers to the larger army sent by Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik, which was also defeated. Despite his laconic writing style, Khalifa’s description of the uprising clearly reveals his condemnation of the rebels. He refers to the rebel leader as “Maysara *al-ḥaqīr*” (Maysara the contemptible), describing him as a water seller from Kairouan, and emphasizes the lack of mercy that the rebels show toward the weak.

By contrast, his portrayal of the Umayyad leaders does not imply any criticism for their mistreatment of the Maghribis or for their mishandling of the military conflicts. If not Umayyad oppression, what motivation does Khalifa find for the Uprising? He refers to the rebels as Ṣufrids throughout his account, although he also uses the term Berber in a more general sense. The Ṣufrids are depicted as one of the sectarian groups that developed out of the Khārijite movement,<sup>34</sup> and Ṣufrism became the most widespread form of Khārijism in the early Islamic Maghrib.<sup>35</sup> It would not be unreasonable to link the spread of Ṣufrism to anti-Arab rebellion in the early Islamic Maghrib, and later authors, such as al-Bakrī, make this connection quite explicitly. However, although Khalifa defines the rebels as Ṣufrids, he does not link their ideology to the rebellion and neither does he refer elsewhere in his *Tārīkh* to Ṣufrism as a violent or dangerous ideology. Instead, he emphasizes the role of the

<sup>30</sup> Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh* (1985), 32. On additions and abridgements introduced by Ibn Makhlad, see ŞADDAM, *Tārīkh Khalifa* (2017), 21–22. For a comparison between the two transmissions of Khalifa’s *Tārīkh*, see ANDERSSON 2018, 15–44.

<sup>31</sup> Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh* (1985), 22.

<sup>32</sup> WURTZEL 2015, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Khalifa b. Khayyāt, *Tārīkh* (1985), 22, 352. A reference to the event is also given for the year 116, p. 347.

<sup>34</sup> On the nature of early Ṣufrism and its depiction in heresiographical texts, see LEWINSTEIN 1992.

<sup>35</sup> REBSTOCK 1983, 34.

Maghribis' loyalty to Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, the general at whose hands they converted and who was later dismissed and killed by the Umayyad Caliph.<sup>36</sup> Whereas other historians describe Maysara as initiating the rebellion, Khalifa depicts 'Abd al-A'lā b. Ḥudayj as the main actor and describes him and other rebels as *mawālī* of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr who were seeking to avenge their dishonored patron. Concern about the actions of Nusayrid *mawālī* in al-Andalus and North Africa is evident in several sources, who attribute the murder of the Umayyad governor Yazīd b. Abī Muslim in Ifrīqiya to them,<sup>37</sup> and who describe another Ifrīqiyan governor, Bishr b. Ṣafwān al-Kalbī, as organizing a campaign against the last members of the Nusayrid family in the Maghrib in 103/722.<sup>38</sup> Thus, like al-Ṭabarī, Khalifa sees the initiative for the uprising as originating with imperial actors or men who had arrived with the Arab conquest. Although he does not give the responsibility to the Khārijites that al-Ṭabarī imagines, Khalifa does not ascribe any initiative to the Maghribis themselves. In contrast to al-Ṭabarī, he exempts the Umayyads from any responsibility for the Uprising and its consequences.

The third account from this early period of history-writing is that of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871), who mentions the uprising in his *Futūḥ Miṣr wa l-Maghrib*.<sup>39</sup> His history provides an interesting contrast with al-Ṭabarī's because Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam relies heavily on Egyptian traditions rather than the eastern traditions incorporated by al-Ṭabarī.<sup>40</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam precedes his account of the uprising with a reference to 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb's raid of Sous and a description of the unprecedented booty, particularly slaves, that the troops acquired.<sup>41</sup> Directly after this description, he notes that the Berbers rose up (*intaqadat al-barbar*) against 'Ubayd Allāh, killing his governor in Tangier and then Isma'il b. 'Ubayd Allāh in Sous. Like al-Ṭabarī and Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam summarizes the Battle of the Nobles and the defeat of the army sent by Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik. He also describes the crossing of the Syrian troops into al-Andalus after their defeat while the Umayyad troops from North Africa returned to Kairouan.

Throughout his account, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam focuses on the Umayyad protagonists. His main interest in the uprising, which he describes as *al-fitna bi-l-barbar*,

<sup>36</sup> According to Ibn 'Idhārī, he died naturally while on pilgrimage with the Caliph Sulaymān. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 74; 2, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-muḥabbar* (n.d.), 492. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam attributes the murder to Yazīd b. Abī Muslim's decision to brand the *mawālī* of Mūsā as his guards. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 214.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn 'Idhārī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 245–247.

<sup>40</sup> ZYCHOWICZ-COGHILL 2020, 539–570.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 245.

is its role in forcing Syrian troops to cross into al-Andalus. He depicts the cause of the Umayyad defeat as the discord between the Syrian and North African factions, which he describes in some detail,<sup>42</sup> and is less interested in the concerns or motivations of the rebels. He does not refer to Arab exploitation as a factor for the uprising. And although he is comparatively well-informed about the rebel leader, who he names “Maysara *al-faqīr*” (Maysara the poor), his portrayal is by no means sympathetic. For example, he notes that Maysara arrogated the title of Caliph to himself, receiving the *bay’a* from his supporters, who withdrew it later when Maysara failed to fulfil the conditions of his oath.<sup>43</sup> Both the idea of a rebel leader (and one who is *faqīr* or *ḥaqīr* at that) assuming the position of Caliph, and the image of his deposition and murder, emphasize Maysara’s challenge to the Caliphate and the hubris of his undertaking. However, the fact that Maysara is deposed so quickly renders his hubris faintly ridiculous rather than genuinely threatening. A similar presentation of the rebels, as laughable in their challenge to Arab leadership, is also found elsewhere in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam’s account when he describes a rebel leader as one of the “Berber tyrants” (*tawāghī al-barbar*) and refers twice to the fact that their troops only wore loincloths when they went to battle. As Solena CHENY has observed in her analysis of historiographical presentations of Berber resistance, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam is less interested in the Berber rebels than the political and spiritual dimension of the conquest, in which the heroes function as models that the reader should take as an example.<sup>44</sup> Although he does not consider Arab oppression as a relevant factor for the uprising, he does, like Khalīfa, connect it to influences from the eastern Islamic Empire. For example, he refers to ‘Abd al-A‘lā b. Ḥudayj, the rebel leader in Sous, as a Byzantine *mawlā* of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr,<sup>45</sup> and he describes the rebels as Ṣufrids, thus linking them to the Khārijite movement from the East.

Al-Ṭabarī, Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, and Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam were all writing relatively shortly after the fall of the Umayyads, and one detects a shared interest in the factors that led to this in their analysis of the uprising. This is less marked in the case of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, who shows little interest in the rebels and for whom the main relevance of the uprising is its consequences for Umayyad rule in al-Andalus. But al-Ṭabarī and Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ approach the uprising not as an isolated event but rather as a symptom of the ills that were beginning to undermine the Umayyad Empire. They depict these ills variously as the greed of the rulers, the agitation of Khārijites, or the corruption of *mawālī* loyal to disgraced rulers. By depicting the

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42 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 247.

43 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 246.

44 CHENY 2021, 52.

45 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 246.

uprising as the Maghribis' reaction to these ills, they place its cause, and also the principal agency, with imperial actors rather than the rebels. Although al-Ṭabarī depicts these as fully developed characters with legitimate concerns, he, like Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam and Khalifa b. Khayyāt, is chiefly interested in their relevance for his own assessment of what led to the fall of the Umayyads.

## Later Reports of the Revolt

As Antoine BORRUT and Fred DONNER have shown,<sup>46</sup> historians of the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries were concerned in crafting a memory of the past that explained, or legitimized, the succession of the 'Abbāsids to Umayyad rule. If the interpretation of the uprising by Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, al-Ṭabarī and Khalifa b. Khayyāt can be understood in this context, can we detect a difference between their depictions and those of authors writing later, who were not as deeply affected by the same concerns? In this section, I will consider the account of the Uprising in the histories of Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233).<sup>47</sup> Although both were writing within the borders of the Empire, and Ibn al-Athīr was still living, at least in a formal sense, under Abbasid rule,<sup>48</sup> both the political and ideological context had changed significantly by the time that they were writing, so that one might expect a different portrayal of the Uprising of 122.

Ibn al-Athīr attributes the cause of the Uprising to the injustice of the Umayyad governor in Tangier, 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Murādī. He describes al-Murādī as “conducting himself wrongly, transgressing his prerogative and intending to impose the fifth (*khums*)<sup>49</sup> on the Berbers who had converted to Islam, claiming that they were the battle spoils of the Muslims.”<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Athīr follows this explanation with a comment that “no one before him had committed this act,” and then goes on to describe the events of the uprising. The same reference to al-Murādī's injustice, and the same comment that no governor had done this previously, appears with exactly the same wording in al-Nuwayrī's (d. 733/1333) *Nihāyat al-arab fi funūn al-adab*.<sup>51</sup>

46 BORRUT 2011; DONNER 1998. See also the astute analysis in EL-CHEIKH 2015, 28–37.

47 El<sup>2</sup>, “Ibn al-Athīr” (F. ROSENTHAL).

48 El<sup>2</sup>, “Ibn al-Athīr” (F. ROSENTHAL).

49 The *khums*, or fifth of battle spoils payable (in this instance) to the Caliph, also applied to the captured slaves of the non-Muslim enemy. The imposition of this obligation on the Maghribis treats them as defeated enemy combatants rather than allies and party to a peace agreement. On the *khums*, see El<sup>2</sup>, “*Ḳhums*” (ZYSOW and GLEAVE).

50 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 4, 416.

51 Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab* (2004), 24, 31.

A very near parallel is also found in the work of Ibn Raḡīq al-Qayrawānī (d. ca. 420/1029), a fifth/eleventh-century author based in Kairouan who is known to have been an important source for al-Nuwayrī and other historical authors.<sup>52</sup> Ibn Raḡīq's text was thought to be lost, but a manuscript fragment attributed to him and published in 1968 and again in 1990 contains a reference to the Uprising of 122. If the attribution of the manuscript fragment to Ibn Raḡīq is correct,<sup>53</sup> we can see al-Nuwayrī's and Ibn al-Athīr's explanation of the uprising as drawing on Ibn Raḡīq's interpretation or on the tradition within which Ibn Raḡīq and the later authors worked. However, a few differences reflect the different perspectives of the authors.

Ibn Raḡīq's portrayal is interesting for its balancing of interest between Maghribi actors and actors originating from the eastern Islamic Empire. For example, he refers to a "*qawm fihim da'wat al-khawārij*" in the West, a phrase that lends more agency to the Maghribis affected by Khārijite propaganda than to the Khārijite leaders originating from the East. And he notes that a major cause of the uprising was al-Murādī's attempt to treat the non-Arabs as *fay'* or battle spoils, which he describes as illegal and unprecedented. He refers to the rebel leader as Maysara al-Madgharī rather than Maysara *al-ḥaqīr* or *al-faqīr* and, when describing his followers' revocation of the *bay'a*, attributes this to their "changing" (*taghayyarū*) rather than any failure of Maysara himself. Ibn Raḡīq's portrayal reveals more respect or interest for the non-Arab actors than the portrayal of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam or Khalifa does, but he is carefully neutral with regard to the imperial enterprise as a whole. His criticism of al-Murādī's injustice is followed by the phrase "and this was something that no one had committed before him," thus exempting the broader structure of Umayyad governance from any culpability. This combination of neutrality toward the imperial structure, despite his sympathy for the position of the Maghribi actors, fitted well to historical writing of the fifth/eleventh century, in which Umayyad rulers were no longer judged as harshly as in the first centuries of 'Abbāsīd rule. It may also reflect the extent to which the author identified with the Islamic Empire and its historical narrative, despite the fact that Ibn Raḡīq was writing before Ibn Badīs (r. 406/1016–454/1062) acknowledged Abbasid rather than Fatimid sovereignty.

Ibn al-Athīr incorporates some of Ibn Raḡīq's criticism of al-Murādī but omits a few comments that emphasize the impiety of al-Murādī's actions. He notes that both Muslims and non-Muslims (*muslimuhā wa-kāfiruhā*) of the region joined the rebellion, implying a political rather than religious motivation. He also refers to Maysara

<sup>52</sup> Al-Qayrawānī, *Quṭb al-surūr* (1969), 3–8.

<sup>53</sup> For the debate about the manuscript fragment's attribution to Ibn Raḡīq, compare IDRIS 1970, 311–312; TALBI 1972, 86–96.

as “Maysara the water-seller, a Khārijite and a Ṣufrid”<sup>54</sup> and emphasizes his claims to the title of Caliph by describing him being addressed as “amīr al-mu’minīn” by his followers. Ibn al-Athīr’s account follows the approach of Ibn Raḡīq in that he criticizes al-Murādī without calling broader imperial structures into question. But his portrayal of the Maghribi actors is less charitable than that of Ibn Raḡīq.

Ibn al-Athīr’s account contains some similarities with that of al-Dhahabī, who also mentions the misconduct of al-Murādī.<sup>55</sup> However, like Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, whom he refers to as one of his sources,<sup>56</sup> al-Dhahabī begins his account by noting that one of the leaders, ‘Abd al-ʿAlā, was a *mawālā* of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr.<sup>57</sup> He also refers to Ṣufrism, rather than Khārijism, as the sectarian doctrine that had spread in the region. Rather than al-Murādī’s mistreatment, he describes the cooperation between Ṣufrids and Nuṣayrid *mawālī* as the main cause of the Uprising. As Khalīfa does, al-Dhahabī emphasizes the savagery of the Ṣufrids, describing Muslim women as preparing for death when they heard of their impending arrival, stressing the chaos that they spread throughout the Maghrib, and commenting that they called other Muslims unbelievers.<sup>58</sup> Rather than the defeat of the Umayyad army, al-Dhahabī focuses more heavily on the chaos that the sectarian Muslims cause in the Maghrib, which is also the main focus in Khalīfa’s account. Given how little it develops his narrative concerns, it is interesting that al-Dhahabī includes the reference to the Umayyad governor’s injustice toward the rebels, and the anger that this provoked. The fact that he does so indicates that by the time he was writing this detail had become a standard element of the account of the Uprising of 122. However, the way that he incorporates it into his narrative reduces the relevance of the criticism and does little to soften his harsh portrayal of the rebels.

Neither al-Dhahabī nor Ibn al-Athīr are concerned with relating the Uprising to an explanatory narrative about the fall of the Umayyads. For Ibn al-Athīr, citing Ibn Raḡīq, the Uprising developed out of one governor’s failures and the propaganda of the Khārijites. Al-Dhahabī locates the cause with Khārijite missionaries and the *mawālī* of a treacherous general. Both of their accounts place imperial concerns and agency at the forefront and pay little attention to the rebels in the narrative.

54 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil* (1987), 4, 416.

55 Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (1988), 8, 7.

56 Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (1988), 8, 6.

57 Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (1988), 8, 7.

58 Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* (1988), 8, 13.

## Western Accounts of the Uprising

In this section, I will consider two accounts by historians writing outside the traditional heartland of the Abbasid Empire and closer to the region in which the conflict took place. I will look first at the depiction in *Akhbār majmū'a*, a collection of accounts relating to the history of al-Andalus from the conquest until the mid-fourth/tenth century. Following this, I will examine the description of the Uprising in *Bayān al-Mughrib fī akhbār al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib* by Ibn 'Idhārī (d. after 710/1310), who lived in Marrakesh under Marinid rule. How did the historical context of these authors or their different relation to the rebels affect the way that they depicted the Uprising?

*Akhbār majmū'a* was compiled by an anonymous author in the fifth/eleventh century from a variety of earlier works.<sup>59</sup> As Nicola CLARKE has observed in her analysis of this text, the author was writing in a time when Umayyad authority had ended and non-Arabs from North Africa, referred to as Berbers, played a key role in the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>60</sup> He is clearly deeply concerned about the chaos that he sees the non-Arabs as causing in the Peninsula, and these anxieties are reflected in his text. Unlike the other accounts analyzed in this study, which only refer to Ṣufrids, his account attributes the cause of the Uprising to the influence of both Ibādī and Ṣufrid forces in the region.<sup>61</sup> This probably reflects the author's own historical context; by the fifth/eleventh century, Ṣufrism had become a marginal movement and it is likely that readers would have been more familiar with Ibādīsm, which was another sect descended from the Khārijite schism.<sup>62</sup> Another contrast with the other accounts is that the author of *Akhbār majmū'a* stresses the connections between the rebels and Khārijite rebellions in other regions. He refers to the behavior and the use of symbolism by which the rebels can be identified as Khārijites, including shaving their heads "in imitation of the Azraqites and the People at Nahrawan."<sup>63</sup> This use of iconography links the rebels of 122/740 with the violent Khārijites who opposed 'Alī b. Abi Ṭālib at the Battle of Nahrawan, a deeply traumatic memory for most Muslim readers.<sup>64</sup> Thus the writer uses an array of means to encourage his readers to link the perpetrators of the Uprising of 122 with

59 On its stylistic variety and the debate about its author or authors, see GUICHARD 1976, 290–296. On the text's relation to other Maghribi historical texts, see MOLINA 1989, 513–542.

60 CLARKE 2013, 518.

61 Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 24. This work is translated into English as JAMES, *A History of Early Al-Andalus. The Akhbār Majmū'a* 2011.

62 On Ibādīsm and its political relevance in the Maghrib, see PRÉVOST 2014, 315–334.

63 Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 32; CLARKE 2013, 518.

64 On other Khārijite rebellions during the Umayyad period, see HAGEMANN 2020, 493–498.

the rebels against Islamic authority in other parts of the Empire, and the disturbing connotations that these evoked. He also emphasizes their primitive nature. Like Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, he mentions that the rebels fight half-naked,<sup>65</sup> but by juxtaposing this observation with references to the rebels' imprisonment and murder of women and children,<sup>66</sup> and their use of violence with whatever means that come to hand,<sup>67</sup> this practice is given more threatening overtones, of savagery and danger that contrast with the mocking tone of Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam discussed above.

The author of *Akhbār majmū'a* does not refer to the internal conflict that weakened Umayyad troops in their campaign against the rebels. Neither does he countenance any reference to Umayyad oppression as a motivation for the Uprising. He notes:

Those who wish to cast aspersions on the leaders might say that [the rebels] revolted because they were angered by the treatment of their governors. And [they might say] that the Caliph and his son were writing to the governors of Tangiers asking for the light-coloured skins of the unborn lambs, and that 100 sheep could be slaughtered for this, perhaps without even yielding a single skin. But these are the words of people who harbour enmity for the rulers.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear from the clarity and detail of this paragraph that the complaints mentioned by al-Ṭabarī were well-known to the writer of *Akhbār majmū'a*. He even includes an additional detail, regarding the Caliph's son, that al-Ṭabarī does not mention. His emphatic dismissal of these complaints reflects his loyalty to the memory of the Umayyads, who no longer rule the Peninsula and the fall of whom he sees as having catastrophic consequences for the Arabs living there. His portrayal contains obvious inaccuracies. For example, he refers to the governor of Ifrīqiya at the time of the Uprising as Bishr b. Ṣafwān,<sup>69</sup> seemingly unaware that this governor had died in 109/728, many years before the Uprising.<sup>70</sup> Despite these inaccuracies, the author of this passage evinces more personal engagement with the history of the uprising than any of the other authors analyzed thus far. His presentation of the characters reflects his own positionality and is clearly aimed at eliciting a similar response from his readers.

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<sup>65</sup> Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 32.

<sup>66</sup> Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 38.

<sup>67</sup> Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 32.

<sup>68</sup> Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 32.

<sup>69</sup> Anon., *Akhbār majmū'a* (1867), 30.

<sup>70</sup> Bishr governed Ifrīqiya from 103/722–109/728, when he died. The author of *Akhbār majmū'a* frequently makes references to his rule after his death, indicating that he was not aware when his rule ended.



On the other side of the Strait, written three centuries later, Ibn 'Idhārī's account of the Uprising differs significantly from that in *Akhbār majmū'a*. This is partly due to the difference in historical context; Ibn 'Idhārī wrote for an audience that may well have viewed themselves as descendants of the Uprising's protagonists, and, even if the Marinid rulers regarded themselves as affiliated with, or even part of, the Islamic Empire, he was not affected by the same loyalties to the Umayyad rulers that influenced the author of *Akhbār majmū'a*. However, the difference is also a result of the different source tradition on which Ibn 'Idhārī relied. Like Ibn al-Athīr and al-Nuwayrī, he draws on the account of Ibn Raqīq, using this as the basis for his depiction of the Uprising. He quotes Ibn Raqīq directly to describe the transgressions of 'Umar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Murādī, using the same phrase borrowed by Ibn al-Athīr and al-Nuwayrī, that the governor regarded the Berbers as *fay'* or battle spoils and emphasizing that no governor had done this before.<sup>71</sup> However, he then adds his own comments to the material that he transmits, telling the reader that al-Murādī's contemptible action (*fi'luhu al-dhamīm*) was the reason for the Uprising and the further spread of rebellion in the West.<sup>72</sup> After this, he transmits Ibn Raqīq's comment, also transmitted by Ibn al-Athīr, that the Khārijites had attracted a large following in the region. Unlike Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn 'Idhārī follows this comment with his own view that the Khārijite influence was not the cause of the Uprising:

At this time there was a group of people in the Maghrib who professed allegiance to the Khārijites. They had a great many followers and were very powerful. They were the Barghawāta. But the reason for the revolt of the Berbers and the uprising of Maysara was that they rejected the oppressive treatment that the governor for Ibn Ḥabḥāb meted out to them, as I have mentioned.<sup>73</sup>

Diverging further from the account of Ibn Raqīq, Ibn 'Idhārī continues:

The caliphs in the east were fond of the fineries that came from the west. They would send word to the governor of Ifrīqiya, asking for these. And they [the governors] would send them Berber women and female prisoners. And when Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb became governor, he sent them many gifts. And he committed himself, or they committed him, to delivering more than had been the case previously. So he was forced to adopt an oppressive manner and to treat his subjects badly.<sup>74</sup>

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71 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 81.

72 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 81.

73 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 82.

74 Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Bayān al-mughrib* (2013), 1, 82.

Although the gist is the same, Ibn ʿIdhārī’s analysis is not based on al-Ṭabarī’s text or on the tradition that al-Ṭabarī used. He omits the reference to the lambs and connects, as al-Ṭabarī does not, the pressure from the Caliph with the difficult situation of the governor. Is this Ibn ʿIdhārī’s personal addition to the material that he transmitted from Ibn Raḳīq? Ibn Raḳīq exculpates the Umayyad Caliph and describes a single governor as responsible for the oppression. It is likely that the criticism referred to as the words of traitors by the Andalusian writer of *Akhhbār Majmūʿa* was also circulating in the Maghrib and that his singling out one governor for blame was Ibn Raḳīq’s attempt to mediate between the positions. But Ibn ʿIdhārī dismisses this attempt. Like al-Ṭabarī, he connects the local governor’s activities to a system of slavery and exploitation that went beyond the Maghrib. In doing so, he offers a damning critique of the Umayyads and, indirectly, a vindication of the rebels and of the role of the Khārijites.

## Analysis

Writing in the late eighth/fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) concludes his account of the Uprising of 122 with the gloomy observation that “submission to the caliphs of the east did not return.”<sup>75</sup> No such statement is found in the accounts addressed in this study. Al-Ṭabarī’s inclusion of the Uprising in his account of the conquest of the West suggests that he regards the region as a closed chapter.

But he does not make this point explicitly, and for most authors the Uprising’s main significance is the defeat of the Umayyad army led by Kulthūm b. ʿIyād and the movement of the Syrian troops over to al-Andalus that ensued. What is the reason for this imbalanced emphasis? The simplest explanation would appear to be the writers’ varied historical context and political positionality. Despite the political opposition between its Umayyad rulers and the ʿAbbāsīd caliphs, the claim of al-Andalus to an Arab, Umayyad history gave it a relevance in the eyes of the historians that they did not award to the Maghrib. In light of this relevance, it is understandable that they focused on the uprising’s consequences for al-Andalus rather than the Far West. However, the historians’ attitude to the Maghrib should also be related to their construction of the Berbers discussed below. It does not correspond to the region’s continued relevance for the Islamic Empire as a whole (Fatimid rule could not have begun without the support of the Kutama, for example) and the perception of the western dynasties themselves as part of, or even rulers over, an Islamic Empire.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh* (2000), 2, 156.

The approach to the Umayyad rulers differs depending on the viewpoint and historical context of the writer. For example, the author of *Akhbār majmū'a*, frightened by non-Arab dominance and longing for a return of Umayyad rule over the Peninsula, portrays them as heroes of law and justice. By contrast, al-Ṭabarī constructs his narrative so as to correspond to his wider focus on the relevance of corruption and greed to Umayyad downfall. Ibn Raḳīq is clearly aware of the criticisms leveled at the Umayyads but is reluctant to give them full credence. Even if Ifrīqiya was not part of the Islamic Empire at the time when he was writing, Ifrīqiyan historians regarded the second/eighth century, and the period of Umayyad governance, as foundational for the Islamic history of the region. Rather than criticize the Umayyad Ifrīqiyan governor or the Caliph himself, Ibn Raḳīq assigns all responsibility to al-Murādī. It is likely that the governor of Sous, Ismā'īl b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, was as renowned for his oppression as al-Murādī was, given that he was the next person to be targeted by the rebels. But Ibn Raḳīq avoids mentioning his wrongdoing, possibly because he was the son of the Ifrīqiyan governor 'Ubayd Allāh.

In addition to adjusting their narrative presentation in order to correspond with their broader view of Umayyad rule, the authors of the accounts analyzed in this study distinguish between Umayyad rule, the Umayyad Caliph, and individual Umayyad rulers. As Ibn al-Athīr and al-Dhahabī note, an individual ruler can be bad without this implying that the structure as a whole is corrupt. Only the author of *Akhbār majmū'a* is so committed to his standpoint that he is unable to incorporate any element of dissent.

If most accounts present a differentiated view of Umayyad rulers and their errors, can the same be said for their portrayal of the Khārijites? All authors agree that the Khārijites were present in the Maghrib in the second/eighth century and that their presence contributed to the fomentation of rebellion. None of them define the Khārijites more closely or discuss their doctrine. Rather, the Khārijites function as a foil for the authors' assessment of the Umayyads. Where the rulers are upstanding and competent, as in *Akhbār majmū'a* and the account of Khalifa b. Khayyāt, the Khārijites are enemies of Islam. Where the Umayyads are corrupt and oppressive, as in al-Ṭabarī's account, the Khārijites voice the legitimate complaints of the oppressed subjects. For Ibn al-Athīr and al-Dhahabī they are a more shadowy presence, somehow explaining the corruption of order but without a fully developed role in the narrative. As imperial agents, they are familiar figures to the authors, but they play for the wrong side; even in al-Ṭabarī's account, the reader is not encouraged to sympathize with their aims or the methods that they use.

The last set of protagonists that feature in all accounts are the rebels themselves, whom the authors refer to as Berbers. Even the earliest authors like Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam describe the Uprising as *al-fitna bi-l-barbar*. But were the subjected inhabitants of the Maghrib Berbers, in the early second/eighth century? Ramzi

ROUGHİ and Annliese NEF argue that the term was a later development. The use of the word Berber to refer to all non-Arab peoples of the Maghrib, like the use of the term *'ajam* in the East, was established by the time the first Arab histories about the Maghrib were written in the third/ninth century. However, ROUGHİ and NEF argue that it was not inherent to the way that these tribes saw themselves before or during the first decades after the Arab conquest.<sup>76</sup>

Their argument is relevant for understanding the Arab portrayals of the Uprising. Although the rebels are referred to as Berbers, the references to individual protagonists reveal the variety of tribes that took part. The leader is described as a Madgharī (or Maḡharī, in some accounts),<sup>77</sup> who is seconded by a Zanātī.<sup>78</sup> The Hawwāra,<sup>79</sup> Mīknāsa, and the Ghumāra are also mentioned.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the description of 'Abd al-A'lā b. Jurayj as *al-ifrīqī* in some sources indicates that this man was a member of the Romanized urban populations who had converted to Islam. There were a variety of demographic groups involved in the uprising who maintained a variety of interactions with the Arabs. Their familiarity with Arab military strategies and use of Arabic indicates that many of them had participated in the Arab armies, while al-Ṭabarī's reference to Maysara's delegation to Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik and a written list of their names suggests that they were also familiar with the administrative structures of the Empire.

There is little evidence that the rebels regarded themselves as a Berber unity. If anything, it seems to have been an allegiance to Ṣufrism that united them. Maysara is described as being elected head of the Ṣufrids, and there is nothing in their rhetoric, as recorded by the Arab historians, to suggest a sense of Berber identity. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence but given that the historians themselves saw the rebels as Berbers, one might expect them to include any rhetoric of this nature, if they knew of it. Although they know the separate tribal affiliations of the men, and they have little evidence on which to base their categorization, the authors of all accounts refer to the rebels as Berbers, analogous to the categorization of the conquerors as Arabs.

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76 Significantly, Greek and Latin sources do not use a single ethnographic term to describe the inhabitants of North Africa in the way that terms such as Galli or Germani were used to describe non-Roman inhabitants of other regions. Instead, they are referred to using group names such as Gaetulians, Garamantes, Mauri, and so on. This supports the argument that the catch-all term Berber was a later innovation.

77 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam refers to him as "*al-barbarī thumma al-Madgharī*." Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 246.

78 Al-Raḡīq, *Tārīkh Ifrīqiya* (1990), 74.

79 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr* (1995), 248.

80 REBSTOCK 1983, 37.

Their accounts suggest that the rebels acted in a well-planned, cooperative fashion. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that they elected the leader of the Madgharī tribe, Maysara, to lead their movement. Ibn Raḡīq notes that Maysara was removed from this position because he stopped abiding by the conditions on which the rebels had offered him loyalty,<sup>81</sup> suggesting that the Uprising had been negotiated between the tribes and that a basis for cooperation existed before it began. The way that the Uprising advanced evinces a well-considered strategy, as does the rebels' ability to overcome both of the Arab attacks. However, none of this organization or strategic intelligence is mentioned in the Arab historians' portrayals of the rebels. Instead, they are described as vicious, savage, and chaotic. Khalifa emphasizes their lack of morality, while Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam mentions that they fight half-naked. Al-Ṭabarī's depiction of their complaints as legitimate and their failed delegation as the background to the Uprising might be seen as presenting a more sympathetic view of the rebels, but his aim is to castigate the Umayyad rulers and not to understand the actions of the Maghribis. For him, as for the other authors examined in this study, the rebels exist on the edge of the narrative. They are depicted as reacting to imperial actors, whether Umayyad rulers or Khārijite missionaries, and they lack real character development. Even Ibn 'Idhārī's highly sympathetic portrayal of their Uprising does not develop the narrative of Berber agency. Like Ibn Raḡīq, on whose account he bases his narrative, he focuses on the Arab, or Umayyad, aspect of Ifrīqiya's history, in which the Berbers are only peripheral players.

The peripherality of the Berbers in the authors' worldview is also reflected by the homogeneity with which they are presented. The depictions of the Umayyads in the historical accounts often change according to the historical event or subperiod being described, and many authors single out particular caliphs as distinct from their categorization of the dynasty as a whole. By contrast, the Berbers tend to be characterized as a monolithic entity and the authors rarely distinguish between groups living in a particular region or historical context.

For example, the author of *Akḥbār majmū'a* refers to the Berbers of al-Andalus and the Maghrib as the same people, linking the subjects of his fifth/eleventh-century account seamlessly with those of the second/eighth-century Uprising. Writing in the eighth/fourteenth century, al-Dhahabī portrays the Berbers as a strange and fearsome mass, spreading chaos throughout the region. Despite the fact that he was writing at a time when Berber dynasties had effectively and efficiently governed the Maghrib for centuries, maintaining peaceful relations with the Islamic Empire for most of this time, his portrayal does not reflect this history. Rather, the Berbers appear as unchanging outsiders, unpredictable and primitive, prepared to cooper-

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81 Al-Raḡīq, *Tārīkh Ifrīqiya* (1990), 74.

ate with any enemies of the Empire in order to achieve their aims, and lacking all respect for Muslim morals. It is likely that the Uprising of 122, which was the first successful secession of any region from Arab rule, constituted the basis for this view of the Berbers. From this point onward, the Berbers were viewed not only as outsiders but as rebels against imperial rule and the order that it represented. Even al-Ṭabarī and Ibn ʿIdhārī, who sympathize with the cause of the rebels, do not seriously challenge this view.

## Conclusion

This comparison of accounts of the Uprising of 122 has found that, although the authors agree broadly on the sequence of events and the names of the key characters, each of them invites a different response from their intended reader by adding rhetorical embellishments such as direct speech on the part of the protagonists, authorial comment, and descriptions of characters and events. As Najam HAIDER has shown in relation to the life and death of Mūsā al-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) and other case studies, it is these rhetorical embellishments that determine how the event enters the historical tradition and the significance that it acquires for later authors.

How the authors compared in this study present the Uprising of 122 differs depending on their historical context, their political or ideological concerns, and the source tradition on which they relied. Despite the status of al-Ṭabarī as a historian and exegete, his interpretation of the Uprising is not integrated into any of the later accounts, which rely instead on the accounts of Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ and the western historian Ibn Raḡīq. It is possible that this was due to the explicit criticism of Umayyad rule that al-Ṭabarī's account contained and with which later readers may have felt uncomfortable.

While the authors vary in their assessment of the Umayyads and distinguish between levels of Umayyad rule and rulers, they display a considerably less differentiated approach to the rebel protagonists, whom they describe as Berbers. This term is anachronistic as the non-Arab inhabitants of the Maghrib do not appear to have understood themselves as a “Berber people” by 122/740, instead appearing to have acted as coalitions of separate tribes. The authors only characterize the Berbers in terms of their relation to actors from the eastern Islamic Empire, whom they depict as initiating situations to which Berbers react. Although some authors, such as al-Ṭabarī, evince understanding for the plight of the Maghribis who rebelled, most authors portray them as disorderly, impious, and savage, in contrast to the order and religiosity represented by the Umayyad Empire. This is

despite the fact that, for authors such as Ibn al-Athīr and al-Dhahabī, stable and productive relations between Arabs and the people they called Berbers had been in place for some centuries. None of the authors link the loss of the West and the Uprising of 122 explicitly in their accounts. However, the negative stereotyping of the Berbers is an indication of the historians' memory of the Maghrib's secession and their mistrust toward the first peoples to successfully discard Arab rule.

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