The Last Sasanians and Ṭukhāristān

**Abstract**

After the death of the last Sasanian monarch, Yazdegerd III, in 651 CE, his son, Pērōz, stayed in the court of the Yabghū in Ṭukhāristān (in modern-day northern Afghanistan) from 651 to circa 674 CE before fleeing to China. Pērōz’s son, Narseh, dwelled in the same region from 680 to around 705 CE before also fleeing to China. The study seeks to reconstruct the experiences of these two Sasanian princes in Ṭukhāristān by combining multilingual sources and numismatic data to understand why they sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān, and why they also then fled to China under increasing pressure from the Arabs. The study shows that Pērōz and Narseh stayed in the Yabghū’s court mainly because of that Turkic dynasty’s power and influence. However, they were no more than prominent fugitives who were dependent on the Turkic dynasty and their attempts to restore their own lost dynasty were fruitless. When the Arabs expanded into the region, they fled to the Tang court mainly because the political power of the Tang was able to protect them from the Arabs. Other members of their royal family scattered to neighboring regions such as Transoxiana and that lying south of the Hindu Kush.

Keywords: Pērōz; Narseh; Ṭukhāristān; Yabghū; Arabs; China.

## Introduction

While the Arabs were rapidly conquering the territories of the Sasanian Empire (224-651 CE), the last Sasanian monarch, Yazdegerd III (632-651 CE), fled eastward as far as Marw (in modern-day Turkmenistan), where he was killed in 651 CE. Both Armenian and Muslim historians see Yazdegerd’s death as the end of Sasanian rule.[[1]](#footnote-1)

After Yazdegerd’s death, the surviving Sasanian royal family members sought refuge elsewhere. Both the Muslim and the Chinese sources contain information about the last Sasanian princes: Yazdegerd’s son, Pērōz (d. 679 CE), and the latter’s son, Narseh (d. in the late 700s CE). They both dwelled in Ṭukhāristān (classical Bactria;[[2]](#footnote-3) in what is now northern Afghanistan) for around two decades before moving to the Chinese Tang court.[[3]](#footnote-4)

The history of these last two Sasanian princes is only briefly mentioned by scholars of the Arab conquests of Khurasan, such as Gibb, Shaban, Kennedy, and Hoyland and by scholars of Sasanian history such as Frye, Christensen, and Pourshariati. The reasons for this are twofold: the last Sasanian princes were of no great significance in both the history of the Arab conquests and the Sasanian dynasty; and material in the Muslim sources on them is meager, while the Chinese sources are unfamiliar to these scholars.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Chinese scholars have focused on Chinese written and archaeological sources. Both Liang & Wen and Zhang provide studies of the foreign rulers listed in the Qianling Mausoleum (乾陵).[[5]](#footnote-6) Jiang observes the appearance of a Persian army in the Turfan archives[[6]](#footnote-7) and argues that this confirms the *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu*’s records of Narseh’s returning to Ṭukhāristān in the late 670s CE.[[7]](#footnote-8) Xue argues that the Sasanian princes actively fought the Arabs after Yazdegerd’s death with the assistance of the Ṭukhārā Yabghū and the Tang Empire, with the Tang playing an important role in these political events.[[8]](#footnote-9)

The 21st century has witnessed a significant increase in research relevant to this topic. Scholars such as Compareti, Pashazanous, and Stark fully exploit the Chinese sources, along with others. Compareti’s 2013 paper is near exhaustive in drawing on Chinese sources and presents a comprehensive study of Yazdegerd’s successors.[[9]](#footnote-10) Pashazanous and Sangari combine the Chinese sources with recent archaeological discoveries in China to trace the experiences of the Sasanian princes.[[10]](#footnote-11) Agostini and Stark’s 2016 article argues that a Sasanian court-in-exile existed to the south of the Hindu Kush until at least the middle of the 8th century, basing their findings on the Chinese records of “Persian embassies” (波斯).[[11]](#footnote-12)

On the history of the last Sasanian princes in Ṭukhāristān, Haug presents a largely descriptive account of the career of Pērōz and Narseh.[[12]](#footnote-13) Pashazanous and Afkande’s article presents the only detailed research on the matter, locating Ji-ling-cheng (疾陵城) as the center of the “Persian area command” (波斯都督府), and stating that Pērōz returned to Ṭukhāristān instead of Zaranj, as other scholars such as Agostini and Stark have contended.[[13]](#footnote-14)

Extant research has concentrated on describing the relations between the refugee Sasanian princes and the Tang court, establishing the exact chronology of the events, and identifying the toponyms mentioned in the Chinese sources, such as the controversial identification of Ji-ling-cheng. Little attention has been paid to the events themselves or the political and military situation in Ṭukhāristān and Sīstān in this period, undoubtedly the main factor influencing the last Sasanians’ decision making in their ill-fated attempt to regain the throne of Iran. This study, however, addresses the following key questions:

1. Why did Pērōz seek refuge in the Yabghū court in Ṭukhāristān and not elsewhere to the east of the Sasanian Empire?
2. What challenges did Pērōz and Narseh face during their stay in Ṭukhāristān, given the regional geopolitical situation?
3. Why did they subsequently flee to China?

**The Sources**

To answer these questions, examined both from the perspective of the Turks and the Hephthalites who controlled the region and from that of the Arabs who expanded into it, it is crucial to analyze all other relevant sources to minimize the patchiness and partiality of the Muslim and Chinese ones. The Arabic and Persian sources suffer from partiality, focusing on the Arab conquests and Islam. They barely mention the last Sasanian princes because of a lack of interest in these claimants to the throne who were no threat to their rule over Khurasan. The Chinese sources limit their interest to their relationship to the Tang court such as paying tribute and their arrival there.

Most sources on the geopolitics of Ṭukhāristān from the 650s to the 700s CE are Muslim accounts. Among them, al-Ṭabarī’s annals are the most informative and to reader-friendly because of their clear chronology, while others allow one to check and/or supplement al-Ṭabarī. These supplementary sources include the histories of the earlier Arabic historians al-Kūfī (active in the 810s CE),[[14]](#footnote-16) Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ (d. 854 CE), and al-Balādhurī.[[15]](#footnote-17) Contemporaneous accounts are provided by al-Dīnawarī and al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 897/8 CE),[[16]](#footnote-18) while later accounts come from Ibn-’Athīr (d. 1233),[[17]](#footnote-19) together with the Persian sources of Bal‘amī’s translation of al-Ṭabarī’s annals from the 10th century,[[18]](#footnote-20) *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* and *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī* from the 11th century,[[19]](#footnote-21) and the local history of Balkh *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh* from the 13th century.[[20]](#footnote-22)

The Middle Persian or Pahlavi sources, such as Chapter 33 in *Iranian Bundahišn*, as well as the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, and the *Jāmāsp-Nāmag*, also shed some light on the last Sasanian princes. However, they are not only to be used with great caution because of their apocalyptic nature, but also difficult to use because of later heavy editing.[[21]](#footnote-23)

The Chinese sources are or contain valuable contemporary records of Ṭukhāristān’s geopolitics, especially the travelogues of the Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang (玄奘), who traveled through Ṭukhāristān in 630 and during the 640s CE,[[22]](#footnote-24) and of the Korean monk Huichao (慧超), who went back to China through the region in the 720s CE. Additionally, the two dynastic histories of the Tang Empire, the *Jiu Tangshu* (旧唐书) and the *Xin Tangshu* (新唐书), compiled in 945 CE and 1060 CE respectively, incorporate useful information from diplomatic reports.[[23]](#footnote-25) Another noteworthy source is the *Cefu Yuangui* (册府元龟),[[24]](#footnote-26) which was presented to the Chinese Song court in 1013 CE, and which contains information about foreign states including Ṭukhāristān, and Persia. The *Quan Tangwen* (全唐文), a complete anthology of the prose composed during the Tang Dynasty, also contains relevant epitaphs.

Besides acknowledging the significance of the Muslim and Chinese sources, the study also gives due consideration to the Bactrian documents, mainly discovered in the 1990s and including more than 150 legal and economic contracts from ancient and early medieval northern Afghanistan.[[25]](#footnote-27) These local and contemporary sources also provide precious political information for the study’s purposes.

Another important category of primary source is the numismatics,[[26]](#footnote-28) coins being an important medium for a ruler’s propaganda and crucial to understanding the politics of this region. Information from coins help to check and make up for gaps in the meager and patchy written historical sources on Ṭukhāristān.

Despite all of these sources to draw on, the picture of the political situation is still, unfortunately, far from complete. Only the brief records in the *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu* provide any detail on Pērōz and Narseh’s experiences in Ṭukhāristān, meaning that it is necessary to employ some reasonable speculation in the study also.

**The Historical Background**

The study not only draws on multilingual primary sources, but also examines the major contemporaneous Central Asian and neighboring powers, including in the Tarim Basin (modern Xinjiang), Transoxiana (classical Sogdiana; modern Uzbekistan), Tajikistan, southern Kazakhstan, southern Kyrgyzstan,[[27]](#footnote-29) and Ṭukhāristān. The Arabs, who expanded into Central Asia after the demise of the Sasanian Empire and its local political entities, the Western Turkic Khaganate (581-742 CE), the Tang Empire, and the Tibetan Empire (618-842 CE) all competed for control of Central Asia and played a role in its history in early medieval times (see Map 1 in Appendix I).

The Turks threw off the yoke of the Rouran Khaganate (柔然, 330-555 CE) in the 550s[[28]](#footnote-30) and rapidly expanded into Central Asia from the steppes of Mongolia, in westward pursuit of the fleeing Rouran. In the 560s the Turks collaborated with the Sasanian monarch, Khosrow I (531-579 CE) and toppled the Hephthalite Empire (440s-560 CE),[[29]](#footnote-31) a nomadic confederation of Hunnic origin that migrated from the Altai into Central Asia in the 2nd half of the 4th century and dominated Central Asia over a century between the mid-5th and the mid-6th century.[[30]](#footnote-32)

Once the Western Turks had established their suzerainty over the Tarim Basin and Transoxiana, they were encouraged by the Sogdians to open up trading routes to Byzantium through the Sasanian territories. However, Khosrow I refused to cooperate with the Turks and the Sogdians,[[31]](#footnote-33) and competition for control of Central Asia between the Turks and the Sasanian Empire ensued in the following decades. Although the Sasanians won in several military encounters with the Turks, such as the campaigns led by Sasanian general Bahrām Chubineh in the late 580s and by Armenian general Smbat Bagratuni in the late 600s CE,[[32]](#footnote-34) the continual warfare with the Byzantines on the western front in the first three decades of the 7th century and the internal instability of the late 620s and early 630s CE greatly undermined the Sasanian Empire’s capacity to control Central Asia. Consequently, the Western Turks became the lords of Central Asia until they were challenged by the Tang Empire from the east and the Arabs from the west in the 650s CE.[[33]](#footnote-35)

The Tang Empire founded in 618 CE was able to destroy the Eastern Turkic Khaganate by 630 CE. The Tang expanded westwards thereafter and annexed the oasis principalities in the Tarim Basin over time. The local rulers remained in place, with the Tang exerting their influence and controlling trading routes by establishing garrisons in Kucha (龟兹), Khotan (于阗), Kashgar (疏勒), and Sūyāb (碎叶) in the 640s and 650s CE.[[34]](#footnote-36) After capturing Helu in 657 CE, the Tang Empire attained suzerainty over the Western Turks’ Central Asian vassals.[[35]](#footnote-37) Although the Tang organized a kind of administration in Central Asia, both Wang and Haug point out that their military presence was in the Tarim Basin, while other parts of Central Asia, such as Ṭukhāristān, were chiefly subject to their diplomatic influence.[[36]](#footnote-38)

The *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu* record the diplomatic relations between the Tang and the Sasanians.[[37]](#footnote-39) The Sasanians had quite often maintained diplomatic relations with the earlier Chinese Wei (386-581 CE) and Sui (581-619 CE) dynasties.[[38]](#footnote-40) Relations between the Sasanian Empire and China included not only the exchange of diplomats, but also both overland and maritime trading, with direct maritime trade most probably established in the 7th century.[[39]](#footnote-41)

The Tibetan Empire (618-842 CE) was founded on the Tibetan Plateau at almost the same time as the Tang Empire, and expanded beyond it after it had subjugated its principalities. It first annexed its eastern neighbors, the Tuyuhun, and began challenging Tang control over the Tarim Basin in the 670s CE.[[40]](#footnote-42) The Tang maintained control there until the rebellion of An Lushan (755-763 CE), when the bulk of the Tang army in the west withdrew into China’s heartland to fight the rebels, leaving the four isolated garrison towns to the Tibetans,[[41]](#footnote-44) who were only able to capture them at the end of the 8th century.[[42]](#footnote-45)

The Tibetan Empire reached the peak of its power during the second half of the 8th and the beginning of the 9th centuries. It established an alliance to compete with the Abbasid Empire (750-1258 CE) for the control of western Central Asia from the end of the 8th and into the first two decades of the 9th centuries.[[43]](#footnote-46) However, fighting on multiple fronts – with the Tang, the Uyghur Khaganate (744-840 CE),[[44]](#footnote-47) Nanzhao (738-902) in modern Yunnan after its defected to the Tang in 793 CE,[[45]](#footnote-48) and the Arabs – drained the Tibetan Empire’s manpower and led to its collapse sometime around the middle of the 9th century.[[46]](#footnote-49)

**The Geography**

It would also be beneficial here to provide a geographical survey of Ṭukhāristān, along with a brief description of the routes taken by the exiled Sasanian princes between Marw and Balkh,[[47]](#footnote-50) Balkh and Sīstān,[[48]](#footnote-51) and Ṭukhāristān and China.[[49]](#footnote-52)

The richest geographical information on Ṭukhāristān is found in the medieval Muslim geographies from the 9th and 10th centuries.[[50]](#footnote-53) As for contemporary sources, which are preferable references, the local Bactrian documents simply mention several subregions of Ṭukhāristān such as Rūb, Siminjān, Warwālīz, Kadagstan and Gūzgān (Jūzjān in Arabic),[[51]](#footnote-54) while the main contemporary written sources are the Chinese reports either by Buddhist pilgrims such as Xuanzang and Huichao from the 7th and 8th centuries or relevant records later compiled into the *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu*.[[52]](#footnote-55)

Among the Chinese sources, the most prominent is Xuanzang’s travelogue the *Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (大唐西域记) finished in 646 CE and the *Biography of Sanzang Fashi of the Great Ci’en Monastery* (大唐慈恩寺三藏法师传) composed by two of his disciples, Huili and Yancong, in 688 CE. According to these two works, the Oxus ran through the center of Ṭukhāristān instead of marking its northern border as the medieval Muslim geographies contend.[[53]](#footnote-56) Northern Ṭukhāristān included Tirmidh, Chaghāniyān, Akharūn, and Shūmān;[[54]](#footnote-58) Quwādhiyān on the Kafirnihān River; Wakhsh and Khuttalān between the Wakhsh River and the Panj River; Huoguo (活国), where the Yabghū held his court;[[55]](#footnote-60) and Balkh. Western Ṭukhāristān included Zumathān, Gūzgān, and Ṭālaqān. Southern Ṭukhāristān reached as far as Bāmyān.[[56]](#footnote-61) Eastern Ṭukhāristān incorporated Khost, Mungān, Ārhan, Rāhula, Kishm, Pārghar, Hephthal, Badakhshān, Yamgān, Kurān, and Dar-i Mastit in the Wakhān Corridor.[[57]](#footnote-62) Ṭukhāristān was thus not limited to what is now northern Afghanistan, but included regions of modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well. Huoguo was the political center of the region, while the traditional capital, Balkh, was a major religious center (see Map 2 in Appendix I).[[58]](#footnote-63)

The region is divided up by natural boundaries such as mountains and rivers.[[59]](#footnote-64) Haug describes these separate regions, consisting largely of cities with dependent villages and agricultural hinterlands, were connected by a web of routes.[[60]](#footnote-65) Warwālīz, Baghlān, Badakhshān, and Himatala in the east and Bādghīs and Gūzgān in the west had pasturelands and attracted nomadic Hephthalites and Turks.

Interestingly, Xuanzang refers to Ṭukhāristān in two ways in his reports: One is to the contemporaneous geographical region named Ṭukhāristān and the other is to “the old territories” of the state of Ṭukhāristān (睹货逻国故地), an apparent reference to a defunct polity,[[61]](#footnote-67) most probably the Kushan Empire (20-230CE),[[62]](#footnote-68) with Ṭukhāristān as its core territory.

Comparing Xuanzang’s reports and the medieval Muslim geographies reveals a striking contrast between the definition of the boundaries, with the Muslim sources reporting that Ṭukhāristān was situated between the Oxus in the north and the Hindu Kush passes in the south, and between Balkh and Badakhshān with both beyond the region.[[63]](#footnote-69)

An explanation for this confusion over boundaries is the fact that borders of Ṭukhāristān changed due to changes in its administrative divisions during the 9th and 10th centuries. This explanation correlates with the earlier geographical information found in al-Balādhurī’s history and al-Ṭabarī’s annals which matches that in Xuanzang’s reports.[[64]](#footnote-70) Barthold appears unaware of these historical developments in the boundaries of Ṭukhāristān and so tries to reconcile the conflicting data in the Muslim sources by suggesting that the term Ṭukhāristān is used in two senses: narrow and broad.[[65]](#footnote-71)

The terms eastern and western Ṭukhāristān are used in this study instead of Upper and Lower Ṭukhāristān to avoid ambiguity,[[66]](#footnote-72) although these latter terms are in medieval Muslim geographies. Gibb employs the term Lower Ṭukhāristān to refer to the regions between the Murghāb river and Balkh,[[67]](#footnote-74) but this is problematic, since Lower Ṭukhāristān was a region to the east of Balkh, according to the medieval Muslim geographers.[[68]](#footnote-75) Consequently, the study employs

There were two routes between Ṭukhāristān and China: One was through Transoxiana and hence much longer,[[69]](#footnote-77) so most Chinese people favored the route through Badakhshān and the Wakhān Corridor, including imperial emissaries such as Song Yun (宋云) and Wukong (悟空), as well as pilgrims such as Faxian (法显) and Huichao.[[70]](#footnote-78)

There were also routes between Marw and Balkh and between Balkh and Sīstān. The most frequented route by medieval travelers from Marw to Balkh followed the Murghāb River as far as Marw al-Rūd, then continued northeast to Balkh via Ṭālaqān of Gūzgān and Fāryāb.[[71]](#footnote-79) This is probably the route that Pērōz traveled on his way to Ṭukhāristān following his father’s death. There was also a route from Balkh to Zaranj of Sīstān, along which Pērōz traveled to recover control of Sasanian territory during the First Fitna (656-661 CE), the first civil war of the Muslims after Caliph ‘Uthmān’s assassination. The first leg of the route leads to Herāt via Marw al-Rūd, and the second continues southward to Sīstān.[[72]](#footnote-80)

**Argument and Structure**

Three chapters respectively address the three research questions already outlined. The first chapter discusses why Pērōz sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān instead of other principalities to the east of the Sasanian Empire. The second chapter analyzes the political situation in Ṭukhāristān from the 650s to the 700s, especially the Yabghū dynasty and its powerful vassal, the Hephthalite Nīzak dynasty; it also analyzes the Arab expansion into the region. It then attempts to reconstruct the experiences of Pērōz and Narseh there based on these analyses. The third chapter seeks to understand why these Sasanian princes fled from Ṭukhāristān to China instead of elsewhere.

The study argues that the Sasanian princes sought refuge in the court of the Ṭukhārā Yabghū mainly due to the political power and influence of the Western Turks in Central Asia. The Yabghū accepted these Sasanian exiles for prestige reasons and to have an additional ally to fight Arab expansionism.

The Yabghū dynasty did not receive military assistance from the Western Turks or the Tang Empire, and probably suffered due to tribal feuds between the Turks and the Hephthalites. The Umayyad Arabs in Khurasan, for their part, attenuated tribal feuds and provided reinforcements. They gradually got the upper hand in the competition with the Turks and the Hephthalites for the control over Ṭukhāristān. Pērōz and Narseh were dependent on the Turks; they did not pose a threat to the Arabs and attempted to restore their lost dynasty, though in vain.

When the Arabs expanded deep into Ṭukhāristān, Pērōz and Narseh fled to China, mainly because the political power of the Tang Empire would provide a safe refuge for them, with other Sasanians scattered across Sogdiana and regions to the south of the Hindu Kush, though the meager relevant information on this in the sources means the reconstruction of events lacks detail and a clear chronology.

## 1 Why Pērōz and his son Narseh sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān

According to the Arab scholar al-Masʿūdī (d. 956 CE), Yazdegerd had two sons, Wahrām and Pērōz.[[73]](#footnote-81) The historian al-Balādhurī (d. 892 CE) reports that Pērōz fell back on the Turks, settled among them and married a Turkish woman.[[74]](#footnote-82) And this should be a Turkic princess.[[75]](#footnote-83) It is clear that Pērōz, like Kavad I did, married a Turk in order to win their support, though this is the only information about these two Sasanian princes in the Muslim sources despite there being records of other Sasanian members.[[76]](#footnote-84)

The Chinese sources are more informative on Pērōz. The *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu* report that Pērōz stayed in the court of the Ṭukhārā Yabghū during the 650s and 660s before he moved to the Tang court in the mid-670s CE. His son, Narseh also stayed in the same region between the 680s and the 690s and ended up in China in the late 700s CE.[[77]](#footnote-85)

So why did both Pērōz and Narseh seek refuge in Ṭukhāristān? Ḥitti translates al-Balādhurī’s record stating of Pērōz that “*waqaʿa fīrūz ibn yazdjird ila al-turk”* as “Pērōz was captured by the Turks.”[[78]](#footnote-86) Pashazanous and Afkande, Khazaee and Haug, and other scholars accept Ḥitti’s translation as valid.[[79]](#footnote-87) If this translation is accepted, Pērōz did not seek refuge in Ṭukhāristān of his own free will.

However, the Arabic here could simply mean that Pērōz “came upon the Turks.” The *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu* support this alternative translation, implying that he sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān voluntarily.[[80]](#footnote-88) Moreover, the Chinese sources state that Pērōz went to the court of the Ṭukhārā Yabghū, meaning that there are possible reasons for his move on both Pērōz’s and the Yabghū’s parts. It stands to reason that Pērōz would seek refuge with an ally whose political and military power could provide him and his followers with protection. Therefore, it is logical that he went to the Turks, by the same logic that made the Sasanian monarchs Pērōz I (459-484 CE) and Kavad I (488-496, 498-531 CE) flee disaster at home to the Hephthalites.[[81]](#footnote-89) The only difference is that Hephthalite hegemony in Central Asia had been replaced by Turkish.

According to al-Ṭabarī, Yazdegerd III wrote to the Khāqān of the Turks, the king of the Sogdians, and the king of China seeking reinforcements to fight the Arabs.[[82]](#footnote-90) Yazdegerd had also planned to either join up with the ruler of the Turks or go to China, when he was asked by the Persian nobles about his plan to deal with the Arab offensive. Al-Ṭabarī’s report of his crossing the Oxus with his family and dependents and joining up with the Khāqān of the Turks in Farghānah during ‘Umar’s years is historically unreliable.[[83]](#footnote-91) However, Yazdegerd was clearly on his way to Ṭukhāristān when he was killed in 651 CE.[[84]](#footnote-92)

Why would Yazdegerd choose to go to Ṭukhāristān instead of Sūyāb or Farghānah, which were closer to the center of the Western Turks’ settlement when they were still the strongest power in Central Asia?[[85]](#footnote-93) Why did Pērōz carry out the plan his father had aborted and flee to Ṭukhāristān? The explanation lies in political developments among the Western Turks.

The Western Turks suffered from internecine strife during the 640s and the 650s CE.[[86]](#footnote-94) Irbis Duolu Khāqān was attacked and fled to Ṭukhāristān,[[87]](#footnote-95) most probably because he could find support in the region in which he had waged his campaign. He stayed in Ṭukhāristān until his death in 653 CE.[[88]](#footnote-96) Relations between the new ruler, Irbis Shekui Khagan (乙毗射匮可汗, 642-651 CE), and Ṭukhāristān were expected to turn sour. Yazdegerd and Pērōz were apparently aware of the situation with the Western Turks and decided to join the deposed Khāqān, who had himself probably assisted them.

Pērōz stayed in Ṭukhāristān after the death of Irbis Duolu Khāqān. He did so because he was married to a Turkic princess and had settled down. On the other hand, as the deputy of the Western Turks to the south of Oxus since the 620s,[[89]](#footnote-97) the Yabghū was the nominal lord of larger territories, including Ṭukhāristān, Transoxiana and the regions to the south of the Hindu Kush, according to the Chinese sources and the relevant numismatics.[[90]](#footnote-98)

It is clear that Pērōz was drawn to Ṭukhāristān by the political power of the Western Turks, which would both protect him from the Arabs and assist him in seeking to restore the lost dynasty. This is clear from his choosing to go to Ṭukhāristān instead of Transoxiana or the regions to the south of the Hindu Kush, given that the plains in western Ṭukhāristān were easier for the Arabs to traverse, while Transoxiana was separated from Marw by the Oxus and the regions to the south of the Hindu Kush were protected from the Arabs based in Sīstān by their difficult terrains.[[91]](#footnote-99) Ṭukhāristān was the most dangerous compared to Transoxiana as well as Kabul and Zabul to the south of the Hindu Kush.

Another possible reason for Pērōz avoiding Zabul or Kabul relates to his brother Wahrām, if the reports of the Middle Persian sources of Wahrām seeking refuge to the south of the Hindu Kush are historically reliable.[[92]](#footnote-100) Wahrām was lauded in a medieval Zoroastrian poem that stated that he would return with a large army of Indian and Chinese people to restore the Sasanian dynasty.[[93]](#footnote-101) It is possible that Wahrām traveled along the Helmand Valley to the regions to the south of Hindu Kush when Yazdegerd fled Sīstān for Marw.[[94]](#footnote-102) Pērōz chose Ṭukhāristān so that the two princes would not meddle with each other’s activities.[[95]](#footnote-103)

For the Yabghū, it was a question of not only hosting Pērōz and his immediate family, but also his dependents, who most probably numbered several thousands. Al-Ṭabarī reports that Yazdegerd was accompanied by 4,000 men when he approached Marw,[[96]](#footnote-105) while the Chinese sources record that Pērōz’s son, Narseh had several thousand companions in the 680s CE.[[97]](#footnote-106) Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Pērōz’s companions numbered several thousands, so why would the Yabghū receive the last of the Sasanians with such a large retinue?

Wu-shi-bow, who most probably ascended to the throne in 651, was likely the Yabghū who received Pērōz and his dependents in the early 650s CE.[[98]](#footnote-107) Although the presence of the Sasanian prince in the Yabghū’s court would surely increase his prestige, there must have been practical reasons as well for Wu-shi-bow to host Pērōz and his large retinue.

Western Ṭukhāristān was under attack of the Arabs in the 650s CE, with Aḥnaf ibn al-Qays penetrating as far as Balkh.[[99]](#footnote-108) Since Ṭukhāristān was threatened by the Arabs, Pērōz and his dependents were welcomed as allies to fight the common Arab enemy.

Nothing is known about Narseh’s early life except that he resided in Chang’an as a hostage and probably served as a royal guard.[[100]](#footnote-109) After his father’s death in the late 670s CE, the Tang court bestowed on him the title of king of Persia and dispatched a Chinese military force to escort him to his country led by Pei Xingjian, the vice minister of the Board of Personnel (吏部侍郎) and named “the Persian army” (波斯军).[[101]](#footnote-110) Cen suggests that the 679 CE in the *Xin Tangshu* is more likely than the 678 CE in the *Jiu Tangshu* as a date for this event.[[102]](#footnote-111) The relevant Turfan manuscript also indicates that Narseh was not left completely alone, with a small unit of the Tang army his entourage until late 680 CE.[[103]](#footnote-112)

However, Narseh could not return to his country because of the presence of the Arabs there and so sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān, as his father had.[[104]](#footnote-113) He was familiar with Ṭukhāristān and the Yabghū’s elite, having stayed there for some time before traveling to China, and some of his family and the bulk of his father’s dependents must have still been in the region.

The Yabghū was not under threat from the Arab expansionism of the 680s CE and so acting as host to Narseh posed no problem. When Yazīd I (680-683 CE) succeeded his father, Muʿāwiya I (661-680 CE) as caliph of the Arabs, a leadership dispute erupted, leading to the Second Fitna (680-692 CE). The lack of records in al-Ṭabarī’s annals in the early 680s CE that relate to Ṭukhāristān suggests that the Arabs controlled the western part of the region but had not expanded into the eastern part.[[105]](#footnote-114) This being so, the Sasanian claimant to the throne was able to join his family in Ṭukhāristān and gather around him several thousand loyal supporters.[[106]](#footnote-115)

## 2 What Pērōz and Narseh experienced in Ṭukhāristān

It seems that Pērōz was right to seek refuge in the Yabghū’s court. According to the Chinese sources, the Turkic ruler sent an army to escort Pērōz to Ji-ling-cheng, which had been found to be within the territories of the Sasanian Empire in the late 650s CE.[[107]](#footnote-116) Besides his return to Ji-ling-cheng, the *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu* clearly indicate that Pērōz and Narseh each stayed in the region for two decades before leaving for China, while the Muslim sources are almost silent about their time in Ṭukhāristān.[[108]](#footnote-117)

Although no sources explicitly connect Pērōz and Narseh’s leaving Ṭukhāristān to Arab pressure on the Yabghū dynasty, the failure of the dynasty to resist the Arabs was clearly directly responsible for their departure. To corroborate this assertion, it is necessary to analyze the Arab expansion into the region and assess the wellbeing of the Yabghū dynasty. It is also necessary to examine the brief records that exist and to reconstruct the experiences of Pērōz and Narseh in the context of the political situation in Ṭukhāristān. Anything else would, at best, be only reasonable speculation.

According to Xuanzang, Ṭukhāristān was not subject to centralized power like the Kushan and Hephthalite empires were, but was politically fragmented and divided into 27 principalities during the 630s and the 640s CE by natural barriers such as mountains and rivers. These principalities, be they Iranian or Hephthalite, were all dependent on the Turks.[[109]](#footnote-118) Thus, the analysis of the political situation will be from both the perspective of the local powers, especially the Yabghū and Hephthalite Nīzak dynasties, and from that of the Arabs.

### **2.1 The Yabghū dynasty**

Our knowledge of the dynasty is quite limited and even a known list of its rulers would be incomplete.[[110]](#footnote-119) In their studies of the Arab conquests of Ṭukhāristān, scholars such as Gibb, Barthold, and Shaban touch on the local polities,[[111]](#footnote-121) but their focus is on their interaction with the Arabs. The Chinese sources largely limit their interest to diplomatic relations with the Tang court. In other words, the internal politics of the Yabghū dynasty and notably its relations with its vassals, has barely been studied.

Contemporary Bactrian documents shed light on the taxation relations between the suzerainty and its vassals. Although the taxation documents are from the Hephthalite period,[[112]](#footnote-122) it stands to reason that the Yabghū dynasty followed the Hephthalite tradition and appointed representatives among the vassals to collect the taxation annually from the principalities ruling the cities, villages and agricultural hinterlands. Taxation could be paid in grain, livestock or money.[[113]](#footnote-123) Vassals were also most probably obliged to provide troops for the Yabghū’s military campaigns. For the Yabghū dynasty, the fiscal and military obligations of the principalities were of critical importance, and the military power and financial income of the dynasty relied heavily upon them.

The case of Tirmidh, which was probably a city with a mint,[[114]](#footnote-124) exemplifies the relations between a vassal principality and its suzerain, although no sources show that it was necessarily a vassal of the Yabghū dynasty.[[115]](#footnote-125) According to al-Ṭabarī, the king of Tirmidh, Tirmidhshāh, went to the Turks for help, when Mūsā ibn ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī, son of the Zubayrid governor of Khurasan, ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Khāzim, expelled him from Tirmidh, seizing control of it in 690 CE.[[116]](#footnote-126) If the Yabghū, as a suzerain, was unable to protect his vassal from foreign invaders, he suffered from losing a source of income.

The case of Tirmidh also shows that the political influence of the Yabghū dynasty was dynamic. When the dynasty was powerful, it was able to impose the financial and military obligations upon its vassals, but when its power was in decline it lost vassals to its competitors, not only the Arabs, but also the Hephthalites.

The Yabghū dynasty continued with the Hephthalite tradition of taxation and also did not challenge the regional religious *status quo*. The Turkic elite probably retained adherence to Shamanism in the early period,[[117]](#footnote-128) but respected, patronized, and gradually themselves converted to the predominant Buddhism popular in Balkh and present in Gūzgān, Zumathān, Rūb, Siminjān and elsewhere, though local cults were not limited to Buddhism.[[118]](#footnote-129)

Although the political and economic importance of Balkh declined even before Xuanzang’s visit in 630 CE,[[119]](#footnote-130) it remained the center for Buddhism in Ṭukhāristān. The famous Nawbahār monastery was a repository for relics and attracted both Buddhist scholars and pilgrims from far and wide.[[120]](#footnote-131) The Barmakids, its hereditary administrators, enjoyed privileges such as possessing large portions of land surrounding the monastery,[[121]](#footnote-132)privileges which remained largely intact under the rule of the Yabghū dynasty.[[122]](#footnote-133)

The Yabghū dynasty, it seems to have been independent when Irbis Duolu Khāqān fled to the region in the 640s CE,[[123]](#footnote-134) although it was established as a vassal of the Western Turks in the 620s CE. The *de facto* independence of the regime is reflected in the change of the ruler’s title from *shad* to *yabghū* during the second Yabghū Ishbara’s reign, as attested by both Xuanzang’s report and contemporary coins.[[124]](#footnote-135) Although *yabghū* had been attested in Ṭukhāristān since the Yuezhi,[[125]](#footnote-136) its appearance as a term on the ruler’s coins supports Wang’s suggestion that Ishbara had thereby adopted a higher-ranking title in the Turkic titular system to demonstrate his *de facto* independence.[[126]](#footnote-137) Nominal suzerainty over Ṭukhāristān passed to the Tang when its army defeated Khāqān Helu in 657 CE,[[127]](#footnote-139) but that suzerainty meant less given that Ṭukhāristān was a region remote from it.[[128]](#footnote-140) Ṭukhāristān, therefore, remained largely independent of both the Western Turks and the Tang during the second half of the 7th century, with its biggest external threat being the Arabs to the west.

The two Fitnas slowed down the Arab expansion into the Yabghū’s realm and that realm’s geographical location in eastern Ṭukhāristān was a long way from the Arabs’ base in Marw. These two facts meant that the dynasty remained largely intact throughout the early 700s CE. Nevertheless, when Qutayba became governor of Khurasan in 705 CE, the Yabghū were unable to resist the Arabs due to his weakness.[[129]](#footnote-141)

The memoir presented to the Tang court by Du-ni-li’s brother, Puluo, however, portraits the Yabghū as actively resisting the Arabs and the Tibetans until 705 CE. Puluo was always able to levy taxes and lead his vassals in combat against the invading Arabs.[[130]](#footnote-142) Puluo’s memorandum is apologetic in nature and exaggerates the number of his vassals’ troops in order to portray the Yabghū as the Tang’s dutiful subaltern in defending the frontiers from both the Arabs and the Tibetans. Therefore, his account of fighting the Arabs is historically untrustworthy. If the Yabghū did engage the Arabs, he did so only in a modest way.

If the Yabghū was relatively inactive militarily, he was not so diplomatically. Even before Qutayba arrived at Khurasan in 705 CE, the Yabghū had already sent his brother to the Tang court as a hostage to request Tang assistance against the Arabs in the west and the Tibetans in the east. The failure of the Tang army to come to Ṭukhāristān and the arrival of a more formidable Arab governor in Khurasan must have led the Yabghū to change his policy from combat to dialogue.

It is clear that the Yabghū’s weakness, as evinced in his choosing dialogue instead of combat with the Arabs, actually reflects his shrewdness as a politician. He was reluctant to fight the Arabs because he had received no reinforcements from the big powers and had failed to enlist his vassals’ support for military campaigns.[[131]](#footnote-143) Hephthalite independence meant that the Yabghū’s fighting forces were greatly diminished and trade was interrupted by hostile confrontation between the major powers.[[132]](#footnote-144)

The Yabghū was first detained by his vassal, the Hephthalite Nīzak, in 709 CE,[[133]](#footnote-145) and then sent by Qutayba to Umayyad Caliph Ibn al-Walīd (705-15 CE) in Damascus as a hostage after Nīzak was captured and executed.[[134]](#footnote-146) Why did Nīzak detain his lord, the Yabghū, instead of fighting together with him against the Arabs? In order to answer that question, a study of the Hephthalite principalities in Ṭukhāristān is necessary.

### **2.2 The Nīzak dynasty and the Hephthalites**

Although both the Muslim and Chinese sources record that the Yabghū dynasty was the suzerain over Ṭukhāristān, the power and influence of the dynasty was largely limited to eastern Ṭukhāristān no further than Balkh because of the insignificant number of Turkic immigrants into the region,[[135]](#footnote-147) while the Hephthalite principalities dominated but not were limited to western Ṭukhāristān because of their superior number. They gradually became independent or at least semi-independent *de facto*[[136]](#footnote-148) and only nominal vassals of the Turks.[[137]](#footnote-149)

The most prominent of the Hepthalite principalities was the Nīzak dynasty based in Bādghīs, a region to the right of the banks of the Harī Rūd and to the left of the banks of the Murghāb and lying between Herāt and Sarakhs. This dynasty interacted more frequently with the Arabs due to its closeness to Marw, where the Arabs of Khurasan were based, and there are rich relevant records on this matter in the Muslim sources.

As mentioned, Nīzak Ṭarkhān detained his lord, the Yabghū and rebelled against Qutayba.[[138]](#footnote-150) This Nīzak, who was active in Ṭukhāristān in the 690s and the 700s,[[139]](#footnote-151) is not the only ruler bearing that name. According to al-Ṭabarī, Nīzak Ṭarkhān fought Yazdegerd III in 651 CE when called upon by the marzbānof Marw.[[140]](#footnote-152) It is reasonable to suggest that these were two Nīzaks of the same dynasty, since it is unlikely that the same ruler could be active for nearly six decades.[[141]](#footnote-153) Moreover, these reports clearly depict a powerful man strong enough to challenge his lord and to organize an anti-Arab coalition in Ṭukhāristān in 709 CE.[[142]](#footnote-154)

However, the origins of this powerful dynasty are not cited in the historical sources.[[143]](#footnote-156) Its precise identity is also unclear in the Muslim sources and is disputed among modern scholars, with the vast majority arguing for its being Hephthalite.[[144]](#footnote-157) Instead of focusing on ethnic dimensions, the following analysis considers the dynasty’s identity from other perspectives.

Al-Ṭabarī reports that Nīzak was in Bādghīs in the 700s CE.[[145]](#footnote-159) Al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī, Gardīzī, and Yāqūt (d. 1229 CE) state that Bādghīs, together with neighboring Herāt and Qūhistān, had been under Hephthalite domination since no later than the 650s and into the early medieval centuries.[[146]](#footnote-160) The Nīzak dynasty based in Bādghīs is therefore most likely to have been Hephthalite and it is reasonable to suggest that it was established in the region before the 650s, when Nīzak set out to meet Yazdegerd in Marw.[[147]](#footnote-161)

The reasons Bādghīs became the power base of the Nīzak dynasty include it having excellent pastures, upon which the Hephthalite tribes relied[[148]](#footnote-162) since the nomadic tribes were still the military backbone of the dynasty,[[149]](#footnote-163) even though the Hephthalites had begun settling in cities from the first half of the 6th century onward.[[150]](#footnote-164)

The titles Nīzak and Ṭarkhān do not conflict with asserting the Hephthalite identity of the dynasty.[[151]](#footnote-165) The term Nīzak is attested on coins minted by another Hephthalite dynasty in the south of the Hindu Kush,[[152]](#footnote-166) while the Chinese sources show that the term Ṭarkhān was in circulation among the Hephthalites as a title for their chieftains from pre-Turkic times, although it was also used among the Western Turks and borne by the close companions of the Yabghū too.[[153]](#footnote-167)

Nīzak’s adherence to Buddhism also correlates well with his bearing a Hephthalite identity. Richly detailed reports about Nīzak’s religion are in the Muslim sources. He was a Buddhist who executed Barmak in the 700s CE when the latter converted to Islam and refused to return to Buddhism.[[154]](#footnote-168) Al-Kūfī reports that Nīzak converted to Islam as well, but later renounced the faith.[[155]](#footnote-169) Al-Ṭabarī states that Nīzak prayed for blessings in the Nawbahār monastery when fleeing from Qutayba.[[156]](#footnote-170) Although the story of Barmak is legendary and the credibility of Nīzak’s conversion is disputed, Nīzak being a Buddhist is credible and something from which later stories evolved. Nīzak’s religious affiliation is a continuation of the Hephthalite tradition that began in the imperial period, when the rulers on both sides of the Hindu Kush adopted the predominant religion in Central Asia.[[157]](#footnote-171)

Given all of the above, it seems safe to conclude that the Nīzak dynasty was Hephthalite. If this is the case, it is interesting that the Muslim sources are wrong in reporting Nīzak as the ruler of the Turks. Since it is not germane to the present study, it suffices to say here that the Hephthalites were under the suzerainty of the Turks.[[158]](#footnote-172)

However, the term ‘Turk’ gradually became a general designation for nomads on the eastern frontiers in the later Muslim sources,[[159]](#footnote-173) due to the enduring predominance of the Turks in Central Asia and the decline and eventual demise of the Hephthalites. To take the meaning of the term ‘Turk’ as a frozen in time would be misleading. As de la Vassière points out, Hephthalite describes an identity more precisely political than ethnic in character and one that most probably took shape before and/or during the imperial period.[[160]](#footnote-174)

Despite its power and influence, the Nīzak dynasty was far from being the only Hephthalite principality of this period. After the collapse of the Hephthalite Empire, various Hephthalite polities emerged on both sides of the Hindu Kush, among which was the dynasty best known by their coins under the Pahlavi title *nyčky* *MLK῾* that was based in Kabul. There were other Hephthalite polities in the 7th and 8th centuries even in Ṭukhāristān, such as Chaghāniyān and Khuttal.[[161]](#footnote-175) There was another noteworthy Hephthalite polity at the time, about which our discussion starts by assessing a rather confusing record of it made by al-Ṭabarī.

After capturing Nīzak, Qutayba asked the Hephthalite prince if al-Sabal, the king of Khuttal, and the mytherious Shadh would come to his call to arms. They did so, though Nīzak responded in the negative. When the four rulers met, the Shadh prostrated himself before the Yabghū, acknowledging the latter both as his lord and enemy, while Nīzak addressed the Shadh as his lord and greeted him by kissing his hand.[[162]](#footnote-176)

The meager information available makes it difficult to definitively identify the Shadh. Al-Ṭabarī also states that Shadh was the name of the Yabghū,[[163]](#footnote-177) further confusing matters. Al-Ṭabarī is probably wrong in this regard since *shadh* and *yabghū* were separate titles that could not apply to the same person at the same time.[[164]](#footnote-178) Qutayba asked Nīzak about the attitudes of al-Sabal and the Shadh toward the Arabs, because they were all Hephthalites. Gibb’s suggestion that the Shadh was the supreme ruler of the Hephthalites makes sense, although he also proposes that the Shadh was ruler of Chaghāniyān Tīsh without providing textual evidence of this.[[165]](#footnote-179)

It is understandable that the Muslim sources have no information to supply us about the Shadh, because he was unlikely to have interacted with the Arabs, being most probably in eastern Ṭukhāristān and close to Khuttal. Fortunately, the Chinese sources shed further light on who the Shadh, the supreme ruler of the Hephthalites, was.

The *Cefu Yuangui* records that the Yabghū’s brother, Puluo, presented himself to the Tang court in 718 CE and lists Yabghū’s vassals including the number of troops under each of their commands.[[166]](#footnote-180) Could the Shadh be the ruler of the Yida dynasty in the list, namely the Hephthalite dynasty?

Kuwayama proposes that the Yida dynasty was based in Baghlān, a region on the western fringes of Badakhshān, in winter and in Himatala in summer,[[167]](#footnote-181) argues that this dynasty held sway over all of the Hephthalite principalities in Ṭukhāristān including the Nīzak dynasty, and contends that its ruler was the Shadh referred to in al-Ṭabarī’s annals.[[168]](#footnote-182)

The Muslim sources show that there was a kind of solidarity among the Hephthalite principalities. When the Arab general, Al-Aḥnaf ibn al-Qays campaigned in Marw al-Rūdh, Ṭālaqān, Fāryāb, Gūzgūn, Herāt and Bādghīs in 652-653 CE, he fought not only the Hephthalites from these places, but also those from Chaghāniyān who came to assist.[[169]](#footnote-183) Shaban and Haug plausibly state that the Turks who raided to the east of Nīshāpūr in 683/4 CE, when the Arabs in Khurasan were preoccupied with tribal factions, were actually the Hephthalites.[[170]](#footnote-184) A third example of this solidarity is the coordinated insurrection led by Nīzak against Qutayba from 708 to 710 CE.

This solidarity was most probably built on a common culture and common adherence to Buddhism.[[171]](#footnote-185) Nīzak most probably played the religious card to rally his allies. He traveled to Balkh and prayed in the Nawbahār monastery in 708 CE, writing to invite his allies to rebel against Qutayba only afterwards.[[172]](#footnote-186)

Nevertheless, the solidarity was probably limited and fragile since it was based on particular self-interests held in common, either to defend themselves against raiding Arabs or for expand their domains. Not every Hephthalite principality would join the coalition on every occasion: for example, both Chaghāniyān and Baghlān were not part of the insurrection led by Nīzak. The alliance lacked robustness in the face of tough challenges such as the cruel punitive expeditions that Qutayba led.

The Nīzak dynasty, despite being a nominal vassal of the Yabghū dynasty and a subordinate of the supreme Hephthalite dynasty in Baghlān, was the most formidable military power in Ṭukhāristān in the 700s CE and its power nourished its appetite for independence. The dynasty allied with the marzbān of Marw against Yazdegerd, since both rulers were against the Sasanian monarch’s attempt to establish a central administration in their realms.[[173]](#footnote-187) In the late 7th and early 8th centuries, the biggest threat to its independence was not the Yabghū dynasty from the east, but the Arabs from the west. Nīzak probably attempted to forge an alliance with both the Hephthalites and the Yabghū to fight the common enemy, the Arabs. However he ended up detaining his own sovereign lord.

### **2.3 The tribal feuds between the Turks and the Hephthalites**

Why did Nīzak detained his lord, the Yabghū, instead of allying with him when the Arabs were expanding into Ṭukhāristān in 709 CE? Shaban proposes that he acted in that way so that the Yabghū’s vassals would join in the insurrection to defend their lord.[[174]](#footnote-188) The is a strange logic, however, since the Yabghū was clearly treated as a captive, though placed in golden fetters.[[175]](#footnote-189) Al-Kūfī’s record that Nīzak looted the Yabghū’s golden girdle further reinforces this argument[[176]](#footnote-190) that relations between Nīzak and the Yabghū were hostile. Was this hostility related to their differing ethnic identities, with Nīzak a Hephthalite and the Yabghū a Turk?

Nīzak was not only hostile to the Yabghū, but also the Shadh, the supreme ruler of the Hephthalites, who referred to the Yabghū as both his lord and enemy.[[177]](#footnote-191) Although the origin and development of the hostility is not entirely clear,[[178]](#footnote-192) the isolation of the Yabghū from the Western Turks emboldened the Hephthalite principalities, especially those in western Ṭukhāristān, to challenge the hegemony of the Turks and seek for independence.

The independence of the Hephthalite principalities weakened the Yabghū dynasty both financially and militarily. The financial difficulties probably caused the Turkic principalities fall on the Hephthalite ones and *vice versa*.[[179]](#footnote-193) The tribal conflicts that probably began as local, such as the strife between the Hephthalite ruler of Chaghāniyān and the Turkic Akharūn and Shūmān in 705 CE,[[180]](#footnote-194) dragged both the Yabghū and the Shadh in and the situation deteriorated into general strife between the Turks and the Hephthalites.

If ethnic hostility did exist, its eruption would be both ethnic and geopolitical in character.[[181]](#footnote-195) An example of this is the above-mentioned Chaghāniyān’s conflict with Akharūn and Shūmān in 705 CE. If the strife was a purely ethnic one, Tīsh would have turned to the Shadh or Nīzak instead of Qutayba for assistance.

The conflict between the Yabghū and Nīzak was also both ethnic and geopolitical. When Nīzak rebelled against Qutayba, the Yabghū chose to stay out of it, since his territories were in eastern Ṭukhāristān and secure from the Arab threat, while Nīzak’s territories were in western Ṭukhāristān and bore the brunt of Arab expansion. This calculation was not limited to the Yabghū, but shared by the Hephthalites in Baghlān, Khuttal, and Chaghāniyān, who did not participate in the rebellion led by Nīzak either.[[182]](#footnote-196) The Yabghū was probably hopeful that the Arabs would dissolve the Nīzak dynasty, the biggest challenger to his hegemony in Ṭukhāristān.

When the Yabghū would not join in the rebellion, Nīzak detained the Turkic ruler to present himself as the leader of the Hephthalites in confronting the Turks and to organize a Hephthalite coalition to fight the Arabs instead of inviting the Yabghū’s vassals to defend their lord, as Shaban had suggested.

The tribal feuds continued until the last days of Nīzak’s rebellion and led to his capture. When Nīzak fled from Qutayba and camped in a fortress beyond a defile in Baghlān, the difficult terrain impeded the pursuing Arabs for months. However, they bypassed the defile with the help of the Khān, the ruler of Rūb and Siminjān, who showed them a path to the fortress.[[183]](#footnote-197) His title, Khān, suggests that the ruler was probably a Turk.[[184]](#footnote-198) He cooperated with the Arabs most probably for safe-conduct and to correct the wrong that Nīzak did to the Yabghū by means of Arab swords.

To sum up, the Muslim sources show that the feuds between the Turks and the Hephthalites escalated in the 700s from local to general ones. Together with geopolitical calculations, ethnic strife hindered the Turkic and the Hepthalite principalities from forming an alliance to resist the Arabs. The situation helped the Arabs to divide and rule.

### 

### **2.4 The Arab conquests of Ṭukhāristān**

Gibb observes that Ṭukhāristān was unimportant to the Arabs and its conquest is not reported in detail as with Transoxiana.[[185]](#footnote-199) Modern scholars of the Arab conquests of Central Asia pay more attention to Transoxiana than Ṭukhāristān as well. It is, therefore, worth redressing that balance here.

Scholars sometimes use terms such as Muslim or Islamic conquests for Ṭukhāristān in particular and Central Asia in general in order to clarify that not all of the conquerors were Arabs.[[186]](#footnote-200) This is true, but they were not all Muslims either.[[187]](#footnote-201) This was true in Ṭukhāristān’s case from the 650s CE. Aḥnaf ibn al-Qays’s treaty with Marw al-Rūd in the 650s and Qutayba’s treaty with Nīzak of Bādghīs in the 700s CE, for example, demonstrate that the conquered principalities were periodically obliged to provide auxiliary troops to the Arabs, who suffered manpower crises due to their continual expansionism. Though none of the terms applied to these conquerors is entirely accurate, the present study uses the term the usual term Arab conquests to avoid ambiguity. It should be noted too that Arab identity is far from fixed and a product of the early Islamic history.[[188]](#footnote-202)

Muslim historians of Arab expansion to the east such as al-Kūfī, al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī indicate from the outset when the Arabs conquered particular cities in Central Asia, by force or by treaty. If such a city subsequently rebelled, the Arabs would return to reconquer it.[[189]](#footnote-203)However, this victors’ model of conquest-rebellion-reconquest is misleading.

Haug’s model of raid-abandon-raid again is a better one,[[190]](#footnote-204) with the most important objective of the campaigns being economic gain – including booty, slaves, tribute from urban centers, and the acquisition of fertile agricultural lands – rather than occupying territories and establishing administrations.[[191]](#footnote-205) The settlement of 50,000 Arab families in Marw in 670 CE did not change the nature of these military campaigns but only facilitated further raiding.[[192]](#footnote-206) Even Qutayba’s campaigns were for economic gain.[[193]](#footnote-207)

However, even Haug’s model is not perfect. It fits better the early expansion into Ṭukhāristān before the 690s CE, since the 690s and the 700s witness the establishment of Arab rule in the region, especially after Qutayba’s crushing of Nīzak’s rebellion. What Arab rule meant was that local rulers remained in charge of the administration, while the Arabs imposed tax and military obligations upon them.[[194]](#footnote-208) Because of this, Arab expansion is a preferable term to conquest for this study’s purposes.

The rule of the Arabs in Ṭukhāristān resembles that of the Turks and the Hephthalites,[[195]](#footnote-209) as the three power competed to control the principalities of Ṭukhāristān. These local principalities had to side with the Arabs or the local big powers, the Yabghū or the Nīzak dynasties.[[196]](#footnote-210)

When Nīzak rebelled against Qutayba in 709-710 CE, the local principalities faced this same choice. Marw al-Rūd, Ṭālaqān, Fāryāb, and Gūzgān responded to Nīzak’s call for insurrection, while Nīshāpūr, Bīward, Sarakhs, and Herāt fell in behind Qutayba’s punitive campaigns.[[197]](#footnote-211)

This division clearly shows that the Arabs were gradually gaining the upper hand over the Hephthalites and the Turks in the 700s CE in winning over the local principalities. Even the Nīzak dynasty, the most formidable power in western Ṭukhāristān, had to negotiate terms with the Arabs in order to maintain the *status quo*. What contributed to the Arabs’ success?

Although Qutayba’s leadership played a significant role in the Arab expansion,[[198]](#footnote-212) comparison between the Arabs and the local powers in Ṭukhāristān shows that the existence of a central government is a critical difference. The Umayyad government put out the tribal factions and united them for military expansion.[[199]](#footnote-213) Furthermore, it supplied external reinforcements of both manpower and finance to the Arabs in Khurasan. The settling of 50,000 Arab families in Marw, for example, played a decisive role in furthering Arab expansion into Ṭukhāristān.[[200]](#footnote-214)

The Hephthalites’ and the Turks’ lack of a central government in Ṭukhāristān meant that external reinforcements were unavailable and the order among the principalities could not be maintained.[[201]](#footnote-215) The rivalry between the principalities was unchecked and probably deteriorated into large-scale tribal feuding between the Turks and the Hephthalites. This rivalry and feuding significantly undermined their capacity to resist the Arabs. Chaghāniyān’s conflict with Akharūn and Shūmān facilitated Qutayba’s subjugation of all three principalities.[[202]](#footnote-216) Another example is that the Khān of Rūb and Siminjān cooperated with Qutayba to capture Nīzak probably because of Nīzak’s detention of the Yabghū.[[203]](#footnote-217)

Qutayba executed the rebellious Nīzak[[204]](#footnote-218) along with his male family members and close dependents,[[205]](#footnote-220) thus ending the Nīzak dynasty. As for the Yabghū dynasty, it ceded vassals to the Arabs,[[206]](#footnote-221) probably ceased minting coins, and retreated to Badakhshān.[[207]](#footnote-222) However, because of its pacific policy toward the Arabs, Qutayba let the dynasty survive and maintain its administration and foreign relations, though under Arab hegemony.[[208]](#footnote-223) The Arabs were able to gain control over the whole of Ṭukhāristān, including the Hephthalite Baghlān and the Yabghū’s Badakhshān in eastern Ṭukhāristān, with Balkh becoming an Arab garrison town.[[209]](#footnote-224) Ṭukhāristān was incorporated into the Muslim world and underwent gradual Islamization.[[210]](#footnote-225) This also left the Arabs able to cross the Oxus with a more secure base.

### 

### **2.5 The failure of Pērōz to restore the Sasanian dynasty**

All of this has prepared the ground for analyzing Pērōz’s and Narseh’s experiences in Ṭukhāristān. According to the Chinese sources, Pērōz’s greatest achievement was the recovery of Ji-ling-cheng, to which he returned under the escort of the Yabghū’s troops[[211]](#footnote-226) after the Arabs had retreated.[[212]](#footnote-227)

Pashazanous and Afkande argue against the location of Ji-ling-cheng as the capital of Sīstān Zaranj and suggest that it was, in fact, in Ṭukhāristān.[[213]](#footnote-228) However, a close reading of both the *Jiu* *Tangshu* and the *Zizhi Tongjian* shows that Ji-ling-cheng was formerly part of the Sasanian territories and was outside of Ṭukhāristān.[[214]](#footnote-229)

The region that Pērōz returned to was clearly Sīstān, but when was this? The *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu* do not specify a year, but *the Zizhi Tongjian* gives it as 654 CE.[[215]](#footnote-230) However, it could not have been that year, since both al-Balādhurī’s history and the local Persian history *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* report the rebellion in Sīstān taking place when the Arab governor of Sīstān, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura, left Sīstān to join up with Muʿāwiya after the death of ‘Uthmān in 656 CE. The locals expelled his viceroy and ceased paying the annual tribute,[[216]](#footnote-231) and the rebellion lasted until ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura returned to the region.

Al-Balādhurī’s report differs from *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* concerning ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura’s whereabouts during the Fitna.[[217]](#footnote-232) Bosworth tries to reconcile the two by suggesting that the governor was waging a military campaign in Zābulistān.[[218]](#footnote-233) However, it is highly improbable that he would wage such a campaign in a challenging region with a turbulent base of support. The earlier historian, al-Balādhurī, is more likely to be right than the later and chronologically confused *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*. In other words, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura was absent from Sīstān until returning as a representative of Muʿāwiya I in 661 CE, Alī having failed to establish order in the region during ibn Samura’s absence. This therefore would mean that the rebellion took place between 656 and 661 C.[[219]](#footnote-234) and that Pērōz returned to Sīstān during the rebellion not before it. Thus, the year cited in the *Zizhi Tongjian* is unreliable.[[220]](#footnote-235) As for the exact year of Pērōz’s returning, no sources shed light on this issue.

If Pērōz was present during the rebellion, why do the Muslim sources not mention him? Have the Muslim historians deliberately erased any record of him? According to Bosworth, the sources reflect the fact that Pērōz did not rule Zaranj,[[221]](#footnote-237) an argument that makes sense. This does not mean that the Sasanian prince was not involved in the rebellion at all. He was most probably a politically and religiously symbolic figurehead instead of initiating or leading the rebellion.

During these turbulent years, the local rulers in Sīstān acted like those in Nīshāpūr, Marw, and Marw al-Rūd,[[222]](#footnote-238) seeking independence and viewing any outsiders, be they the Sasanian monarch or the Arabs, as threats. They had thrown off the yoke of the Arabs for the sake of independence and were reluctant to accept the Sasanian claimant Pērōz. The unwelcome Pērōz was most probably imposed forcibly upon them by the Yabghū after the Arabs had retreated.[[223]](#footnote-239) Nevertheless, the local rulers held firmly onto their military or financial power and would not hand them over to Pērōz.

This argument finds support in both the absence of Pērōz from the Muslim sources and of coins featuring him, they being key means for political propaganda.[[224]](#footnote-240) Scholars have debated the absence of coins featuring Pērōz. Daryaee and Khazaee suggest that the Sasanian claimant continued to mint coins in his father’s name, while Pashazanous and Afkande argue that Pērōz did not mint coins either in his father’s or his own name.[[225]](#footnote-241) Pashazanous and Afkande’s argument is more convincing: Pērōz did not mint coins in his own name, not because he minted them in his father’s name instead or because he ruled only briefly.[[226]](#footnote-242) Sasanian monarchs who ruled briefly, such as Kavad II and Queen Būrān, minted coins in a considerable number of mints.[[227]](#footnote-243)

The absence of references in the Muslim sources and also of coins minted in his name indicates that Pērōz played but a minor role in the rebellion of Sīstān. When Muʿāwiya I (661-680 CE) established his dynasty and began pacifying Khurasan, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura returned to Sīstān, while Pērōz retreated to the Yabghū’s court, where he stayed for a decade.[[228]](#footnote-244)

During that decade, Pērōz sent emissaries to the Tang court with greater frequency, under the increasing pressure from the Arabs,[[229]](#footnote-245) and most probably sent his son, Narseh, as a hostage in the 660s.[[230]](#footnote-246) However, Tang policy in the region, as Haug explains, was markedly different from that of the Arabs. Instead of seeking for military conquest, they established only a nominal kind of suzerainty without any effective control.[[231]](#footnote-247) Although the Tang court was generous in bestowing titles on Pērōz and ready to affirm whatever he had achieved,[[232]](#footnote-248) Tang military assistance did not materialize.[[233]](#footnote-249)

Along with the viceroy of Iraq, Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyān’s settling of 50,000 Iraqi Arab families in Marw in 671 CE, the Arabs expanded more effectively to the eastern frontiers.[[234]](#footnote-250) When Balkh submitted to Arab rule in 671-672 CE, the Yabghū was probably no longer able to keep Pērōz at his court due to Arab pressure.

Pērōz, is not mentioned in the Muslim histories in any of the military campaigns carried out by the Arabs in Khurasan from the 650s to the early 670s.[[235]](#footnote-251) Xue’s argument that Pērōz actively fought the Arabs is not correct.[[236]](#footnote-252) He was no apparent threat to the Arabs and did not achieve anything significant, because he had no power base from which to enlist soldiers or exact taxation[[237]](#footnote-253) and had to depend almost totally on the Yabghū.

When even eastern Ṭukhāristān was no longer safe for him, Pērōz scaled the Pamirs and traveled eastward to the Tang court together with some family members and diehard adherents.[[238]](#footnote-254) The Chinese records on the date of Pērōz’s arrival are contradictory. Pashazanous and Afkande, as well as Haug, are confused and draw the conclusion that Pērōz arrived at the Tang court on two occasions in 673 and 675 CE.[[239]](#footnote-255) This is highly improbable, since it would mean that Pērōz would have traveled for a continuous period of three years. The most compelling argument for the date of his arrival seems to be the early 675 CE found in the annals of the Gaozong Emperor in the *Jiu Tangshu*.[[240]](#footnote-256)

Pērōz was treated well by the emperor right up until his death in 679 CE. The Tang court granted him allowances besides his honorary titles,[[241]](#footnote-258) a Persian temple was built in Chang’an in 677 CE at Pērōz’s request,[[242]](#footnote-260) and a statue of him was erected in the mausoleum of the Gaozong Emperor and the Empress Wu Zetian.[[243]](#footnote-261)

### 

### **2.6 The experiences of Narseh in Ṭukhāristān**

After his father’s death in Chang’an in the late 670s CE, the Tang court gave Narseh the title of king of Persia and an army led by Pei Xingjian escorted him back to his own country in 679 CE. The real purpose of the expedition was to crush a potential military rebellion by the Western Turks, escorting Narseh simply serving as a cover. It is, therefore, not surprising that Pei stopped at Sūyāb and left Narseh to continue the journey by himself with a much smaller escort.[[244]](#footnote-262)

As for Narseh’s experiences in Ṭukhāristān, the Chinese sources simply record that his adherents gradually deserted him and that he stayed in Ṭukhāristān for around two decades before returning to the Tang capital.[[245]](#footnote-263) The above analysis of the political situation from the perspective of the local dynasties in Ṭukhāristān and that of the Arabs in Khurasan permits us to further reconstruct his experiences.

After Muʿāwiya I’s death, the Second Fitna plagued the Umayyad dynasty for more than a decade and the Arabs in Khurasan endured ferocious tribal factionalizing. It is safe to suggest that the Yabghū was able to host Narseh, who was at ease in his court in eastern Ṭukhāristān during the 680s and the 690s CE. Although one could argue that Narseh resided in western Ṭukhāristān in the 690s and early 700s CE, when Umayyah ibn ‘Abdallāh b. Khālid (693/4-697/8 CE) and al-Muhallab ibn Abī Ṣufra (697/8-702/3 CE) were governors of Khurasan,[[246]](#footnote-264) and that he developed close relations with the powerful Nīzak,[[247]](#footnote-265) the complete absence of Narseh from the Muslim sources does not support the argument.

When Qutayba arrived at Ṭukhāristān in 705 CE, the Yabghū chose to talk to rather than fight the Arabs due to his military incapability and geopolitical calculations at the expense of the principalities in western Ṭukhāristān, such as the Nīzak dynasty. He was probably expecting that the Arabs would annihilate Nīzak’s dynasty, which he regarded as unpleasant since it challenged his hegemony in Ṭukhāristān.

When the Yabghū chose talks with the Arabs, Narseh had to leave the region. He was already in the Tang court by 708 C,[[248]](#footnote-266) and witnessed neither Nīzak’s last stand against the Arabs nor the humiliations that the Yabghū suffered, first at Nīzak’s and then at Qutayba’s hands.

Although he stayed in Ṭukhāristān for more than two decades, Narseh, like his father, failed to restore the dynasty. Xue’s argument that Narseh fought actively the Arabs is baseless.[[249]](#footnote-267) The complete absence of his name in the Muslim sources shows that he most probably did not fight the Arabs.[[250]](#footnote-268) This is to be expected, since he was totally dependent on the Yabghū due to the dearth of his own manpower and finances. His dependents, numbering several thousands, gradually dispersed over these two decades,[[251]](#footnote-270) as well as Sasanians scattered across other regions.

The Sasanians began scattering even before Yazdegerd III’s death,[[252]](#footnote-271) continued doing so in Pērōz’s years, and increasingly so during Narseh’s time.[[253]](#footnote-272) After Narseh left Ṭukhāristān, they further scattered across Sogdiana to the north of the Oxus,[[254]](#footnote-273) across China to the east of the Pamirs,[[255]](#footnote-274) and across what is southern Afghanistan to the south of the Hindu Kush.[[256]](#footnote-275) The most famous account of this is to be found in al-Ṭabarī’s annals. When Qutayba campaigned in Sogdiana, one of Yazdegerd’s granddaughters was captured[[257]](#footnote-276) and sent to Caliph al-Walīd; she later gave birth to a boy who became Yazīd III.[[258]](#footnote-277) It is impossible to reconstruct a definitive chronology for how the Sasanians dispersed. As for Ṭukhāristān, no sources indicate that the Sasanian princes remained in the region, although the prestige of their dynasty would remain felt for centuries in Khurasan.[[259]](#footnote-278)

## 3 The Reasons behind Pērōz and Narseh’s flight to China

Both Pērōz and Narseh left Ṭukhāristān for China. For Narseh, it was an easier decision, since he had already lived in Chang’an for several years. The reason for Pērōz deciding to travel all the way to China instead elsewhere requires greater scrutiny, however.

Byzantium was far off to the west and out of the question as a destination, but the lands of the Western Turks, Indian, and even the Tibetan Empire were feasible ones.[[260]](#footnote-279) We have already noted that Pahlavi literature suggests that a group of Sasanians under the leadership of Pērōz’s brother, Wahrām, lived to the south of the Hindu Kush, having sought refuge in the Indian subcontinent.[[261]](#footnote-280) However, this prince made no notable achievements during his lifetime and his expected restoration of the dynasty turned out to be a mere religious aim circulating among the Zoroastrians there.

Pērōz had parted from his brother and sought refuge in Ṭukhāristān among the Turks. When he could no longer stay in Ṭukhāristān, Pērōz and his father, Yazdegerd went to the Tang court, from which they sought military assistance. According to the Chinese sources, Yazdegerd III sent emissaries to the Tang court both in 639-640 and in 647-648 CE.[[262]](#footnote-281) The purpose was more than just to present gifts, as the Chinese sources report,[[263]](#footnote-283) but to ask for military assistance, as al-Ṭabarī reports.[[264]](#footnote-284) If al-Ṭabarī’s report is to be trusted, Yazdegerd himself even thought of seeking refuge in China, when he was asked to do so by the Persian nobles.[[265]](#footnote-285)

Yazdegerd requested reinforcements from both the Turks and the Chinese, while Pērōz sent emissaries to the Tang court with a greater frequency to seek a military expedition against the Arabs.[[266]](#footnote-286) In order to reinforce the alliance, Pērōz sent his son Narseh to Chang’an as a hostage. Yazdegerd planned to go to the Turks and then to China, while Pērōz indeed traveled first to the Turks and then to China.

They turned to the Turks due to the latter’s political power. They turned to the Tang for the same reason. The Tang’s political power and prestige among the Sasanians must have been closely related to the Tang’s victory over the Turks and was, moreover, the main reason Pērōz decided to flee to China, although the existence of prosperous Persian communities in China was probably also a factor.

The bulk of the Persians in China during the 7th and 8th centuries were merchants and the prosperity of the maritime trade between the Persian Gulf and China brought them to Chinese ports such as Guangzhou and Yangzhou, while rich Persian merchants lived in Chang’an and Luoyang as well.[[267]](#footnote-287) These communities were joined by fugitive nobles such as Nanmei,[[268]](#footnote-288) A-luo-han,[[269]](#footnote-289) members of the Suren family, and others.[[270]](#footnote-290) Although it is impossible to specify the time of their arrival in China, it is certain that some nobles such as A-luo-han arrived independently at the Tang court before Pērōz did.

As well as the probable building of a Nestorian temple in Chang’an at Pērōz’s request, of Zoroastrian and Manichean temples had been built from the first half of the 7th century onward. As Leslie comments, adherents of foreign religions were largely limited to foreigners themselves, with the native Chinese forbidden to convert to them.[[271]](#footnote-291) The continual flourishing of these temples in the 8th century therefore also reflects the prosperity of the Persian communities in the heartlands of China.[[272]](#footnote-292)

Given the existence of prosperous Persian communities in China, the Sasanian claimants to the throne who had fled to China could still toy with aspirations to restore their lost dynasty. They could try to win the support of the Sasanian nobles and build a political base for such a future restoration while also hoping to garner money and support from the rich Persians there.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the existence of the Persian communities in China was the main reason for Pērōz fleeing there, given that the maritime trading in the Indian Ocean had also led to the establishment of Persian communities in the ports of the Indian subcontinent.[[273]](#footnote-293) It is also significant in this regard that Pērōz and Narseh stayed in the political center of China, Chang’an, instead of Guangzhou or Yangzhou, where the biggest communities of the Persian merchants were.

The fugitive prince and his adherents were able to live comfortably by relying on stipends from the Tang court,[[274]](#footnote-294) which were ended only in 787 CE by the Dezong Emperor (779-805 CE). However, the abolition of these stipends was not due to hostility toward foreigners after the An Lushan rebellion, as Compareti argues,[[275]](#footnote-295) but to the great financial burden these allowances placed on the Tang court.

As for the Western Turks, they were subjugated by the Tang army in 657 CE and recognized the suzerainty of the Tang, with the fealty of their vassals in Central Asia passing to the Tang. The waning army of the Western Turks did not show up in Ṭukhāristān in the second half of the 7th century.

The Tibetan Empire expanded northward in the 670s after its annexed its eastern neighbor, the Tuyuhun, and challenged Tang control over the Tarim Basin. As Wang argues, this region was subject to the competition of two empires rather than being wholly controlled by the Tibetan Empire from 670 to 692 CE, as Beckwith contends.[[276]](#footnote-296) The Tibetan Empire sought an alliance with the ruler of the Western Turks Ashina Duzhi (阿史那都支) in 677-678 CE to jointly attack the Tang garrisons.[[277]](#footnote-297) However, when Pērōz traveled through the Basin, the routes leading to China were not yet blocked off. The prestige of the new power, Tibet, was growing but was not yet at the level of a true rival to the Tang. There were also no Persian communities on the Tibetan plateau from which Pērōz could rally adherents and raise support.

To summarize, Pērōz traveled to China after leaving Ṭukhāristān mainly due to the Tang Empire’s political power, with the existence of prosperous Persian communities there and the allowances to foreign princes and emissaries provided by the Tang court also being factors.

As for Narseh, his relations with the Tang court remained largely the same as they were in the days of his father. During his two decades in Ṭukhāristān, he sent emissaries to Chang’an in 682, 695, 700, and 706 CE.[[278]](#footnote-298) When Qutayba penetrated into the region, he could neither rely upon the weak Yabghū nor the Hephthalite, Nīzak and so returned to the Tang capital to join the Persian community there.

Although Al-Ṭabarī’s record of the Tibetans penetrating as far as Tirmidh together with the Turks in 704 CE is also found in the epic account of Mūsā ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Khāzim al-Sulamī,[[279]](#footnote-299) it is further supported by Puluo’s memorandum to the Tang court in the *Cefu Yuangui*, which refers to the Yabghū fighting both the Arabs and the Tibetans.[[280]](#footnote-300) However, the years following the death of the Tibetan emperor in the winter of 704 CE witnessed internal political and military chaos within the Empire and the end of its expansion.[[281]](#footnote-301) Although the Tibetans would return to the Pamirs and Ṭukhāristān, this initial incursion was apparently not sufficient to convince Narseh to seek refuge among them.

## Conclusion

Tardu Shad, the first ruler of the Yabghū dynasty of Ṭukhāristān, was installed by Tong Yabghū Khāqān of the Western Turks in the 620s CE. This Turkic dynasty governed large parts of Central Asia and its political power and influence drew Pērōz to the Yabghū’s court in Ṭukhāristān after the last Sasanians had fled Marw in 651 CE.

The Yabghū dynasty was *de facto* independent from its nominal masters, first the Western Turks in the 640s and the 650s and then the Tang Empire from the 660s CE. The dynasty was only able to directly control eastern Ṭukhāristān due to the limited number of Turkic immigrants in the region, while the Hephthalite principalities were practically independent thanks to their numerical superiority.

Among the Hephthalite polities, the powerful Nīzak dynasty based in Bādghīs was the most active opponent of the Arab incursion into Ṭukhāristān. It probably collaborated with the Hephthalites in resistance against the Arabs in 653-654 CE and its last ruler made a last stand against Qutayba in 709 CE. Although it is hard to be definitive, certain events seem to point to the existence of tribal feuds between the Turks and the Hephthalites in the 700s. These include the expulsion of the Hephthalite king of Chaghāniyān by the Turkic rulers of Akharūn and Shūmān in 705 CE; Nīzak’s detention of the Yabghū Du-ni-li, the supreme ruler of the Hephthalites claiming the Yabghū as enemy; and the cooperation of the Khān, the Turkic ruler of Rūb, and Siminjān with Qutayba in the capture of Nīzak.

As for the Arab conquerors, they never met with serious opposition to their expansion in Central Asia before the Türgesh moving southward to Transoxiana and beyond in the 720s and the 730s.[[282]](#footnote-302) Without foreign military assistance and beset by tribal feuds, the Arabs could have been expected to conquer Ṭukhāristān more easily way under a capable leader like Qutayba, since the Umayyad government had both provided external reinforcements to the Arabs in Khurasan and had countered the tribal factionalizing of the Arabs.

The Sasanian successor, Pērōz, sought refuge in the Yabghū Wu-shi-bo’s court and was able to return to Sīstān with the assistance of the Yabghū when the Arabs retreated from the eastern frontiers during the First Fitna. He played but a minor role in the rebellion because the local rulers would cede power to him and he was no more than a prominent fugitive in Ṭukhāristān, without a sufficient base of manpower and income.[[283]](#footnote-303) He had to depend on the Turks and did not fight the Arabs at all. His attempts to restore the dynasty were predictably fruitless, as is clearly shown by the absence of his name being mentioned in the Muslim sources.

As did his father, Narseh attempted to restore his dynasty in vain. When the Yabghū Du-ni-li succumbed to Arab pressure after Qutayba arrived in Khurasan in 705 CE, Narseh had to leave Huoguo and seek a new refuge. The political power of the Tang convinced him to flee to its court, with other Sasanian royal family members scattering farther to the north of the Oxus and to the south of the Hindu Kush.

Although the political power of the Tang was the major reason behind Pērōz and Narseh’s flight to China, other reasons include the existence of the Sasanian fugitive nobles and prosperous communities of Persian merchants there – a result of the flourishing maritime trade between China and the Persian Gulf – and the stipends the Tang court granted foreign princes and emissaries staying in its capital. Although the later started to exert its influence in Central Asia in the 7th and early 8th centuries, its political power could not rival that of the Tang in the eyes of Narseh.

1. These include the 7th century Armenian historian Sebeos (1999, p. 135) and Muslims such as al-Dīnawarī (d. 896 CE) (1888, p. 149; tr. 2010, p. 271: ذلك انقضى ملك فارس), al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE) (2001, volume 2, p. 624; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 90: وكان اخر ملك ملك من ال اردشير بن بابك وصفا الملك بعده للعرب) and Gardīzī (active in the 11th century) (1984, p. 104: ومملكت عجم بروي ختم شد وپس مسلمانان ايرانشهر بگرفتند). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bactria (Βακτριανή) is the Hellenized form of probably a local Iranian term, which was close to the Old Persian form *Bāxtrī* attested in the inscription of Darius the Great (522-486 BCE) at Behistun (Rawlinson, 1948, p. i, xi, xxvii, xxxiii; Lecoq, 1997, pp. 188, 201-2; Kuhrt, 2007, pp. 141-58). And *Bākhtarish*, the old transcription of the Old Persian word for Bactria given by Rawlinson (Rawlinson, 1948, pp. 85, 123) is updated as *Bāxtri/ī* according to Skjærvø (2016, pp. 170, 175). The Middle Persian geographical text *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr* attests that it had evolved as *Baxl* in Middle Persian (Daryaee, 2002, pp. 13, 17), from which its New Persian form Balkh (بلخ) as attested in the *Shāhnāmeh* is evolved (Ferdowsi, 1987, volume 2, p. 245; tr., 2006, pp. 230-1; volume 5, pp. 178, 184, 431; tr., pp.369, 420; volume 7, pp. 552, 579, 589, 609; tr., pp. 747, 757, 760, 767).

   As for Ṭukhāristān (τοχοαρστανο), a compound meaning the land of the *Tokharoi* (τοχοροι) in the local Bactrian language, it is first attested in the early 2nd century by the Bactrian inscription from the reign of the Kushan king Kanishka I (120-144 CE) (Sims-Williams, 2015, p. 257). A combination of the written sources and the archaeological discoveries show that the *Tokharoi* in the Greek sources (Strabo, 1928, volume 11.8.2, pp. 259-61; Ptolemy, 1845, p. 116; tr., 1991, p. 141) should be identified with the Yuezhi (月氏) mentioned in the Chinese sources (Bailey, 1970, pp. 121-2; Beckwith, 1987, p. 6; Sims-Williams, 2002, p. 229; Benjamin, 2007, p. 213; Grenet, 2012, p. 7; Haug, 2019, p. 11), who migrated from western China all the way to Bactria under the pressure of the Xiongnu (匈奴), a confederation of nomads established in the late 3rd century BCE in modern Mongolia (for primary sources, see Sima, 1996, volume 110, p. 2890, volume 123, p. 3157; Ban, 1995, volume 61, pp. 2687-8, 2692, volume 94a, pp. 3750, 3757, volume 96a, pp. 3890-1; for scholarly studies, see Benjamin, 2007, pp. 66-8, 71-4, 86-101, 136-68, 191-215). Clearly, Ṭukhāristān was the most popular geographical term for the region in the 7th and 8th centuries, while the Bactrian term βαχλο is attested in coins as an archaic form and was geographically limited to the region’s capital city, Balkh as it remains today (de la Vassière, 2010c, pp. 213-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. The capital of the Tang Empire (618-907 CE) was Chang’an (长安). For more information on the Empire, see the following historical background. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Among historians of the Arab conquests in general, Kennedy does not mention Yazdegerd’s family in his monograph (2007, pp. 169-99); Hoyland (2015, pp. 87, 261), who largely relies on non-Arabic sources, incorporates an account of the last Sasanian princes that is based on Daryaee (2009, pp. 37-8) and others’ research. Gibb (1923, pp. 16, 27) and Shaban (1970, pp. 27-8), the two historians of the Arab conquests of Central Asia, incorporate Chavannes’s translation of the relevant records about the last Sasanian princes into their narratives of the Arab conquests of Central Asia. As for the historians of the Sasanian dynasty, Frye (1984, pp. 334-9) and Pourshariati (2008, pp. 161-285) do not touch upon the topic; Christensen presents but a brief account of Yazdegerd’s descendants based on Marquart’s *Ērānšahr* (1936, pp. 502-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Liang & Wen, 2003, pp. 44-51; Zhang, 2003, pp. 8-11. The Qianling Mausoleum is the tomb of the Gaozong Emperor (649-683 CE) and his wife, Wu Zetian, who subsequently reigned for more than a decade (690-705 CE). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The surviving names of the escorting soldiers shows that the Persian army was actually a Chinese army labeled as Persian. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Jiang, 1994, pp. 37-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Xue, 1988, pp. 65-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Compareti, 2003, pp. 197-213. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Pashazanous and Sangari, 2018, pp. 1-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Agostini and Stark, 2016, pp. 17-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Haug, 2019, pp. 92-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Pashazanous and Afkande, 2014, pp. 144-6; Agostini and Stark, 2016, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. See Gibb (1923, pp. 11-4), Barthold (1928, pp. 1-6) and Shaban (1970, pp. xvii-xxii). Shaban references al-Kūfī’s *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, unlike Gibb and Barthold, and accords it its proper value as one of the oldest Arabic histories that has survived largely intact. For al-Kūfī's chronology and historical composition, see Conrad (2015, pp. 87-125). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
15. Gibb, Barthold, and Shaban do not reference Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ’s *Tārīkh*, since the only surviving copy was not found until 1966 in Morocco.

    Al-Balādhurī’s *Futūḥ al-Buldān* is a history about the Arab conquests about different regions. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
16. Although al-Dīnawarī’s *Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl* is written in Arabic, it is a history from a Persian point of view. Al-Yaʿqūbī’s *Tārīkh* includes both the pre-Islamic and the Islamic periods (al-Yaʿqūbī, 2018, volume 1, pp. 4-6) but, despite its breadth, contains fewer details by far than al-Ṭabarī’s annals. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
17. According to Barthold (1928, pp. 2-3), the chief source of Ibn ’Athīr’s history for the first three Islamic centuries is al-Ṭabarī’s annals, However, Ibn ’Athīr presents the records with a more thorough understanding of them. For dedicated discussions about Arabic historiography, see Rosenthal (1968, Part I, pp. 1-193) and Duri (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
18. The translation was done by the Samanid vizier in the second half of the 10th century, although Peacock (2007, pp. 4-14) argues that it is more than a mere translation and reflects the political agenda of the Samanids. However, the records relevant to the present study are largely identical to al-Ṭabarī’s Arabic text, with some abridgements of narratives and omission of the chain of informants. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
19. *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* is a local history of Sīstān, a region in modern eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan.

    Gardīzī’s history, which is also called *Zayn-i ’Akhbār*, summarizes the early history of Islam with a focus on Khurasan (Gardīzī, 2011, pp. 1-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
20. Azad, 2013, pp. 10-2, 22-7. This source only briefly reports Qutayba’s conquest of Balkh in 707 CE without mentioning the rebellion of Nīzak (Balkhī, 1971, p. 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
21. Agostini, 2016, pp. 26-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
22. Traditionally, there are two opinions concerning the year Xuanzang’s journey started: 627 CE or 629 CE. De la Vassière argues for 629 CE (2010b, pp. 157-68). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
23. The *Zizhi tongjian* (资治通鉴), which was presented to the court by Sima Guang (司马光) in 1084 CE after compilation for almost two decades, is an important source to check the two dynastic histories of the Tang. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
24. The title of the encyclopedia can be translated as the *Model of Archives*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
25. The Bactrian documents, which are edited and translated by Sims-Williams in three volumes (volume 1, 2000; volume 2, 2007; volume 3, 2012), are precious sociopolitical information of Ṭukhāristān in the local Bactrian language, one of the eastern Middle Iranian languages. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
26. The coins of Central Asia minted by the Hephthalites and the Western Turks are collected and studied by Vondrovec in two volumes (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
27. Transoxiana is *mā warā’ al-nahr* in Arabic, meaning beyond the Oxus. It is found between the Oxus in the south and the Jaxertes in the north with Samarkand and Bukhara as the most important city-states. When the Arabs came to the region, it was a trading kingdom of the Sogdians that dominated international trades in the east. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
28. The Rouran fled to Europe through the Eurasian steppes after defeating by the Turks and was called the Avars in the Byzantine sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
29. See Litvinsky, 1996, pp. 143-4; Bregel, 2003, p. 14; Kurbanov, 2010, pp. 186-90; Vondrovec, 2014, pp. 404-5; Haug, 2019, pp. 64-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
30. For the Hephthalites in general, see: Ghirshman (1948), Kurbanov’s (2010) and Yu (2012); more specific studies, see: Kuwayama (2002, pp. 107-39) discusses several political, military and religious issues of the Hephthalites; de la Vassière (2003, pp. 119-32) studies their origin; Grenet (2002, pp. 209-224) pays attention to the contribution that the Hephthalites made to regional interaction in Central Asia; Rezakhani (2017, pp. 125-56) traces the relations between the Sasanians and the Hephthalites and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
31. The Byzantine historians Menander (1985, pp. 111-27, 171-9) and Simocatta (1986, pp. 188-95) report several exchanges of emissaries between the Byzantine Empire and the Turks in the 2nd half of the 6th century. According to Menander (1985, pp. 111-7), the Sogdian Maniakh was sent by Ishtemi Khāqān (553-576 CE) of the Western Turks to Byzantium in 568 CE to establish trading relations with the Byzantine Empire after Khosrow I refused the request to trade. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
32. For Bahrām’s campaign, see al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 1, pp. 462-3; tr., 1999, volume V, pp. 298-303. See also Haug, 2019, pp. 64-9. Bahrām’s victory is reflected by Hormizd IV’s (579-590 CE) coins minted in Balkh (Vondrovec, 2014, volume I, pp. 369-70; Wang, 2017, pp. 111-2). For Smbat’s campaign, see Sebeos, 1999, pp. 49-53. According to the *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*, both Sogdiana and Ṭukhāristān were within the domain of the Sasanians (Daryaee, 2002, tr., pp. 13, 17-8). Although both Daryaee and Geus argued that part of this source was composed as late as the early 7th century (Ibid., pp. 4. 7-8; Geus, 2017, pp. 131-43), its propagandist nature makes historical arguments based on the source slippery. Sogdiana, for example, was under the hegemony of the Turks instead of the Sasanians. In other words, even after the military victories, the Sasanians controlled mainly Ṭukhāristān. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
33. Bregel, 2003, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
34. Sūyāb was one of the garrisons in the earlier stage, and was replaced by Karashahr (焉耆) in the early 8th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
35. The administration of the Tang is called the Ji-mi system (羁縻), under which the vassals were autonomous. Liu, 1995, volume 194b, p. 5187; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, p. 6063. For academic studies see Bregel, 2003, p. 16; Wang, 2017, pp. 125-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
36. Wang, 2009, pp. 8-12; Haug, 2019, pp. 95-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
37. Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; Ouyang & Song, 1995, p. 6259. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
38. Wei, 1996, volume 63, 83, pp. 1856-7. The Sasanian emissaries arrived at China in 455, 461, 468 and 517 CE during the Wei dynasty with a letter of Kavad I (484-496, 498-531 CE, 居和多) arriving at the court in 517 CE; the Wei sent Han Yangpi (韩羊皮) to the Sasanian court in the early 460s (Wei, 1995, volumes 5, 6, 9, 102, pp. 115, 128, 228, 2272). And during the Sui dynasty, the *Suishu* reports that the Sasanians always sent emissaries to the court, while the Sui sent Li Yu (李昱) to Khosrow II (590-628 CE) in the early 7th century (Wei, 1996, volume 83, pp. 1856-7). Although not all these Sasanian emissaries were necessarily sent by the court, with part of them being representatives of the *marzbāns* in eastern frontiers or even merchants who pretended to be official envoys, the Sasanian court clearly established diplomatic relations with Chinese dynasties. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
39. The Sasanians actively engaged in trading in the Indian Ocean from the early stage of their dynasty (Ghosh, 2003, pp. 132-42). In the 6th century, the Persian merchants met their Chinese counterparts in Sri Lanka for trading, which was a commercial hub for ships from India, Persia, Ethiopia, and China (Cosmas, 1897, pp. 365-8). In 671 CE, the Buddhist pilgrim Yijing boarded a Persian vessel in Guangzhou for India (Yijing, 2000, p. 152). Clearly, the Persian merchants arrived at China at an earlier stage. The archaeological discoveries such as the Sasanian silver coins found in the coastal regions of Guangdong show that direct maritime trade most probably started already in the 6th century (Sun, 2014, pp. 41-2; Pahazanous, Zohouri, 2020, pp. 547-58). The direct maritime trade between the Persian Gulf and China continued to develop and flourished in the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties (Geogre, 2015, pp. 579-624). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
40. Another direction of the Tibetan expansion is the upper streams of the Indus River (Dunlop, 1973, p. 302). However, this is bascailly irrelevant to the present study. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
41. Nevertheless, the Tibetans were able to capture the four garrisons only at the end of the 8th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
42. Beckwith, 1987, pp. 11-142; Bregel, 2003, p. 16; Wang, 2009, pp. 42-190. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
43. Dunlop, 1973, pp. 301-12. The allies of the Tibetan Empire included the Karluks, who occupied the steppes around Sūyāb and Talas after the collapse of the Türgesh (699-766 CE), and the Kyrgyz (Beckwith, 1987, p. 157; Wang, 2009, pp. 193-4). Actually, the Tibetan Empire had made attempts to penetrate to Ṭukhāristān as early as 704 CE and to Farghānah in 715 CE though without much success (Dunlop, 1973, p. 304; Beckwith, 1987, pp. 69-70; Wang, 2009, pp. 130-1). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
44. For the battles between the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, see Beckwith, 1987, pp. 151-6. For a general study of the Uyghur Khaganate, see Mackerras, 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
45. For the tripartite relations between Nanzhao, the Tibetan Empire and the Tang, see Backus, 1981, 69-100; Marks, 1978, pp. 11-8, although mistakes are present in the study. For a general study of the Nanzhao kingdom, see Backus, 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
46. Beckwith, 1987, pp. 143-72; Wang, 2009, pp. 190-6. Li Mi (李泌) proposed in 785 CE to the Dezong Emperor (779-805 CE) to forge an alliance with the Uyghurs in the north, Nanzhao in the south and the Arabs in the west to confront the Tibetan Empire. Emissaries were sent to carry out the alliance, with Yang Liangyao (杨良瑶) sailed for Baghdad. The Uyghurs responded positively in 787 CE; Nanzhao defected to the Tang in 793 CE; after Yang Liangyao’s mission, the Abbasid emissaries to the Tang court in 798 CE, and the Abbasids did fight intensively with the Tibetans (Beckwith, 1987, pp. 151-2; Wang, 2009, pp. 190-3; Schottenhammer, 2015, pp. 177-204). However, because of defect of positivce evidence, it is still not conclusive that the Abbasids engaged the Tibetans as a direct result of its alliance with the Tang. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
47. After leaving Marw, Pērōz most probably went to the Yabghū’s court via Balkh. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
48. Pērōz returned to Sīstān most probably by the route passing Balkh and Herat. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
49. Both Pērōz and Narseh most probably left Ṭukhāristān from Badakhshān, which leads to the Wakhon Corridor and the Tarim Basin. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
50. The Muslim geographies mainly include *Kitāb al-Buldān* by al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-Masālik va-Mamālik* by al-Istakhrī (d. after 952 CE), *Kitāb al-Masālik va-Mamālik* by Ibn al- Ḥawqal (d. after 978 CE), *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* by al-Muqaddasī (d. 991 CE), the anonymous Persian geography *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* (published in 982 CE), and so on. These Muslim geographies keep detailed records of the subregions, cities and routes of Ṭukhāristān. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
51. For a detailed explanation of the geographical information contained in the Bactrian documents, see Sims-Williams’ study in 2018, pp. 11-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
52. Huichao's travelogue *Hye Ch'o Diary: A Memoir of the Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India* (慧超往五天竺国记) was lost until its recovery from Dunhuang in 1905 by Paul Pelliot.

    The geograhical information of the two dynastic histories of the Tang is found in the entries of the political entities in Ṭukhāristān and in the geographical monographs. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
53. Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 100, 103; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 25-6; Huili & Yancong, 2000, p. 30; Barthold, 1928, p. 66; 1984, p. 18; Le Strange, 1930, pp. 426-7. Tirmidh was a famous crossing point of the Oxus with a journey of two days to Balkh (Ibn Ḥawqal, 1872, pp. 331-2; tr., 1800, p. 228: ومن بلخ الى شط جيحون في طريق الترمذ يومان). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
54. Akharūn and Shūmān are at the at the upper stream of Kafirnihān and close to modern Dushanbe. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
55. Huili & Yancong, 2000, p. 31. Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 105-12; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 26-7. Xuanzang's itinerary mainly passed regions controlled by the Turks in his journey to India. Le Strange, 1930, p. 435-6; Barthold, 1928, p. 69; al-Istakhrī, 1927, p. 279: والختل بين نهر وخشاب و بين نهر بذخشان). Although there is a consensus among scholars to identify Huoguo as Warwālīz in the Muslim geographies (Le Strange, 1930, p. 428; Barthold, 1968, p. 67; 1984, p. 24; Harmatta & Litvinsky, 2002, p. 133), Kuwayama disagrees with the remaining scholars in identifying Warwālīz as m odern Kunduz and suggests it should be modern Qal'a-ye Zal, where the Kunduz river joins the Oxus. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
56. Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 127-9; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 30-1; Huili & Yancong, 2000, p. 33. Xuanzang did not leave Ṭukhāristān via Andarāb on the northern slope of the Hindu Kush, although this was the most frequent route for merchants and pilgrims (Barthold, 1928, p. 67; Le Strange, 1930, p. 427), but might have followed the route that was mentioned by Ibn Ḥawqal (1872, p. 335: ومن بلخ الى مذر ٤ مراحل ومن مذر الى كه مرحلة ومن كة الى الباميان ٣ مراحل). Namely, he proceeded upstream along the Balkh River (Kuwayama, 2005, p. 153). [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
57. Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 125-7, 962; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 30, 317; Huili & Yancong, 2000, pp. 33, 116. On his way back to China in the 640s, Xuanzang arrived at Huoguo for a second time via Andarāb in southern Ṭukhāristān and stayed with the Yabghū Ishbara for a month before joining a trading caravan and continuing his journey for China (Xuanzang, 2000, p. 963; tr., Li, 1996, p. 318; Huili & Yancong, 2000, p. 116). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
58. Al-Balādhurī (1987, p. 573: tr., part II, p. 167: وهي مدينة طخارا) reports that Balkh was still the capital of the region. Haug also adopted this geographic definition of Ṭukhāristān in late antique and early medieval periods (2019, p. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
59. Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 125-6; Hoyland, 2015, p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
60. Haug, 2019, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
61. Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 961-74; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 317-21. Actually, almost all the mentioned regions that were found in eastern Ṭukhāristān on his journey back were noted explicitly as old territories of Ṭukhāristān. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
62. The ancient polity of Ṭukhāristān clearly refers to a political entity that had ceased to exist several centuries before Xuanzang’s time. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
63. Barthold, 1928, p. 66; 1984, p. 18; Le Strange, 1930, pp. 426-7. Generally, Ṭukhāristān in the medieval Muslim geographies was of decreased territories. *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* from late 10th century reports that Bādhghīs, Gūzgān, Balkh, Tirmidh, Chaghāniyān, Shūmān and so on did not belong to Ṭukhāristān (1937, pp. 102-9, 114-5). Al-Muqaddasī (d. 991 CE) clarifies that Ṭukhāristān was limited to regions between the Oxus in the north and Bāmyān in the south and between Balkh in the west and Badakhshān in the east (1906, pp. 295-6: فاما بلغ فانها اسم القصبة أيضا ومن مدنها اشغورقان سليم كركو جا مذر برواز ومن النواحي طخارستان وهى القصبة أيضا ومن مدنها ولوالج الطيقان خلم غربنك سمنجان اسكلكند روب بغلان السفلي بغلان العليا اسكيمشت راون آرهن اندراب خست سراي عاصم; p. 303: وبذخشان متاخمة لبلاد الترك فوق طخارستان), with Balkh not being part of the region as attested by al-Istakhrī (d. after 952 CE) (1927, p. 275: واما بلخ فان الذي يتصل بها طخيرستان والختل و بنجهير وبذخشان و عمل باميان وما يتصل بها). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
64. Al-Balādhurī's reports show that Ṭukhāristān extended all the way to the east bank of the Murghāb (Shaban, 1970, p. 10); al-Ṭabarī’s annals report Akharūn and Shūmān as part of Ṭukhāristān (2001, volume 3, p. 670; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, p. 128: اخرون وشومان – وهما من طخارستان. See also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 241), though later medieval Muslim geographies such as *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam* excluded them from the region (1937, pp. 114-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
65. Barthold, 1928, p. 68; 1984, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
66. De la Vaissière employs the term *Bactriane orientale*, namely eastern Bactria (2010a, p. 524). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
67. Gibb, 1923, pp. 15-7, 31-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
68. Barthold, 1928, p. 68; Le Strange, 1930, pp. 426-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
69. This overland route to China through Sogdiana is also mentioned by medieval Muslim geographers such as al-Ya‘qūbī (2010, p. 227; tr., 2018, volume 2, p. 486:ومن أراد الصين على البر سار في نهر بلخ وقطع بلاد السغد وفرغانة والشاش والتبت حتى يصير اليها). Of course, it is important to realize that a route was subject to minor or major changes due to changing of the political situations. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
70. Song and the Buddhist monk Huisheng (慧生) were dispatched to Uddiyana (modern Peshawar in Pakistan) and Gandhāra (modern Swat in Pakistan) by the Wei empress dowager in late 518 CE and returned to the Wei court in late 522 CE. They traveled through Khotan, principalities in the Wakhān Corridor and the Pamirs for Uddiyana instead of continuing eastward for Ṭukhāristān. See Yang, 2000, pp. 181-224.

    Wukong went to Central Asia in the 750s and stayed there for almost four decades. Another monk Yuanzhao met and interviewed him in 800 CE and kept a record of his travelogue. Wukong’s itinerary to Gandhāra was largely the same as Song Yun. On his journey back to China in the late 780s, he traveled through Ṭukhāristān before crossing the Wakhān Corridor. See Yuanzhao, 1987, pp. 122-5; Nie, 2007, pp. 161-7, 170-1.

    Faxian, the first Chinese Buddhist pilgrim with surviving travelogue, left Chang’an in 399 CE for India. After leaving the Tarim Basin, he crossed the Wakhon Corridor, turned southward and crossed the Karakoram mountains for the Indus valley instead of traveling eastward for Ṭukhāristān. See Faxian, 2008, pp. 2-22; tr., 1959, pp. 1-9; Yu, 2004, pp. 138-41.

    As for Huichao, he entered Ṭukhāristān from Bāmyān, and traveled through Balkh, Badakhshān and the Wakhān Corridor before arriving at Kashgar. See Huichao, 2000, pp. 96-153; tr., 1984, pp. 52-7.

    According to the medieval Muslim geographers such as Ibn al-Faqīh and al-Yaʿqūbī, after crossing the Wakhān Corridor, the route that turns southward leads to Tibet through Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh and so on (Dunlop, 1973, pp. 305-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
71. Barthold, 1928, pp. 79-80; 1984, pp. 35, 50; Le Strange, 1930, pp. 404, 423, 431-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
72. Barthold, 1984, pp. 44, 47, 50, 64; Le Strange, 1930, pp. 408, 412, 431. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
73. Al-Masʿūdī, 1863, volume II, p. 241: وخلف من الولد بهرام وفيروز ومن النساء ادرك وشهين ومرداوند. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
74. Al- Balādhurī, 1987, p. 443; tr., part I, 1916, p. 493: ووقع فيروز بن يزدجرد فيما يزعمون الى الترك. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
75. Both al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 4, p. 272; tr., 1989, volume XXVI, p. 243: وامه ام ولد اسمها شاه آفريد بنت فيروز بن يزدجرد بن شهريار بن كسرى) and Ibn al-Faqīh (1996, p. 417) report on the authority of al-Kalbī (d. 819) that the Sasanian princess whom al-Walīd I took as concubine and who later gave birth to Yazīd III (744 CE) was a daughter of Pērōz. Ibn al-Faqīh even adds that she was captured by Qutayba when the Arab governor of Khurasan was engaging Pērōz in Khurasan. However, al-Kalbī’s report is impossible since Pērōz died in the late 670s and clearly could not fight Qutayba. Actually, al-Ṭabarī also reports on the authority of al-Madāʾinī (d. 843) that the captured Sasanian princess was by a posthumous son of Yazdegerd and captured in Sogdiana (2001, volume 2, p. 621; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 79). It seems that al-Madāʾinī is more trustworthy than al-Kalbī. And the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd III’s claiming his ancestors being the Sasanian monarch and the Khāqān (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 272; tr., volume 26, p. 243: انا ابن كسرى وابي مروان وقيصر جدي وجدي خاقان) seems to be irrevant to Pērōz, since the ancestral Khāqān can refer to the grandfather of the Sasanian monarch Hormizd IV (579-590 CE), whose mother was a daughter of the Khāqān Ishtemi (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 1, p. 461; tr., 1999, volume V, p. 295: وكانت امه ابنة خاقان الاكبر). Pērōz probably married a daughter of Irbis Duolu Khāqān (乙毗咄陆可汗, 638-642 CE), who fled to Ṭukhāristān after his deposition in 642 CE until death in 653 CE, or a daughter of the Yabghū. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
76. These include the Sasanian princess Shāh-i Āfrīd, who was captured by the Arab governor of Khurasan Qutayba ibn Muslim (705-715 CE) in Transoxiana and became the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd’s (705-715 CE) concubine and Yazīd III’s (744 CE) mother (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, p. 621; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 79), the Sasanian prince Khosrow, who was campaigning together with the Türgesh Khāqān Suluk in Transoxiana in 728/9 CE against the Arabs (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 133; tr., 1989, volume XXV, pp. 55-6) and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
77. Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
78. Al-Balādhurī, translation, part I, 1916, p. 493. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
79. Haug, 2019, p, 92. Pashazanous and Afkande (2014, p. 142) even claim that the *Xin Tangshu* shows that his son Narseh instead of Pērōz was captured by the Turks. As for Khazaee (2015, p. 223), he states that the *Jiu Tangshu* records that Pērōz was captured by the Turks and made up the story that the Sasanian prince tried to outwit his Turkic guides in order to send an emissary to the Tang court. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
80. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5312; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259, tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
81. Livtvinsky, 1996, pp. 138-40; Rezakhani, 2017, pp. 126-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
82. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, pp. 546-8; tr., 1994, volume XIV, pp. 54-8. According to al-Ṭabarī, the Turks and their vassal the Sogdians led by the Khāqān did come to assist him. However, the assistance should be after the battle of Nahāvand in 642 CE instead of during the caliphate of ‘Umar (632-644 CE). The campaign of the Western Turks in Ṭukhāristān led by Irbis Duolu Khāqān in the early 640s seems to support al-Ṭabarī’s report. However, the suggestion meets chronological difficulty. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
83. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, pp. 548-9; tr., 1994, volume XIV, pp. 59-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
84. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5312; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259, tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
85. Sūyāb is identified as Ak-Beshim in modern Kyrgyzstan by Clausen (1961, pp. 1-13) and Zhang (1979, pp. 71-83). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
86. Liu, 1995, volume 194b, pp. 5179, 5182, 5184; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, pp. 6055-6, 6058-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
87. Liu, 1995, volume 194b, p. 5182; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, pp. 6059-60. The Khāqān was greedy, and withdrew the booty from the tribes. One of the tribal chiefs took the booty by force and the Khāqān executed him. As a result, a general of the executed tribal chief attacked the Khāqān. The chaos led to his final flight to Ṭukhāristān. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
88. Liu, 1995, volume 194b, p. 5184; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, p. 6062. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
89. The Ṭukhārā Yabghū dynasty was established when Tong Yabghū Khāqān (618-630 CE) conquered the region in the 620s and put his oldest son Tardu Shad (d. 630 CE) on its throne. Actually, this is not the first time that the Western Turks attempted to establish more efficient control in Ṭukhāristān. A Turkic prince was set up over the Hephthalites in the region probably during the last two decades of the 6th century. Yet his brief rule was terminated in the 1st decade of the 7th century (Wei, 1996, volume 83, p. 1854; tr., Yu, 2015, p. 236). As for the first Ṭukhārā Yabghū Tardu Shad, the sick ruler was poisoned by his elder son, who succeeded him as the Ishbara Yabghū in 630 CE. The transition of power took place when Xuanzang was in the Yabghū's court. Consequently, it is reported in his biography (Huili & Yancong, 2000, volume 3, p. 31; tr., Appendix III). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
90. This is shown both by the Tang’s organization of administration in the early 660s (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 43b, pp. 1135-6) and Puluo’s list of the Yabghū’s vassals in the late 710s (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, pp. 11721-2; tr., Yu, 2015, p. 250, see also Appendix IV), which include not only the principalities in Ṭukhāristān, but also those in Sogdiana and to the south of the Hindu Kush. As for numismatics, the inscription *zabul* that appears on Types 265, 265A and 266 suggests that these coins of the Yabghū were minted in Zābulistān (Vondrovec, 2014, pp. 527-8, 544). In other words, Zābulistān was the Yabghū's vassal. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
91. This is more convincing if al-Ṭabarī’s report that Yazdegerd’s family had stayed in Farghānah with the Western Turks is true (2001, volume 2, p. 549; tr., 1994, volume XIV, p. 62: واقام يزدجرد وال كسرى بفرغانة معهم عهد من خاقان). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
92. If Wahrām’s adventure is legendary, al-Dīnawarī’s historical records about the Sasanian princess Būmān, who came from Kabul to Nīshāpūr to participate an insurrection against the Arabs during Ali’s caliphate (al-Dīnawarī, 1888, p. 163), show that the Sasanian fugitives did flee to the regions to the south of the Hindu Kush. Haug (2019, p. 93) translates *bint likisra* as a daughter of Khursow II. However, a better translation is a daughter of an (unidentified) Sasanian monarch, since *kisra* is a term for any Sasanian monarch. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
93. See Daryaee, 2009, p. 38; Agostini and Stark, 2016, pp. 26-30; Rezakhani, 2017, p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
94. As for his attempts to restore the dynasty, if he made any, no historical sources shed light on them. Since Forte’s identifying A-luo-han as Wahrām, scholars such as Daryaee (2009, p. 38), Pashazanous (2014, pp. 148-9), and Rezakhani (2017, p. 184) follow the identification, which Rong suspects (2015, pp. 69-70). The identification seems out of the question in light of two points: firstly, A-luo-han was a Persian chief instead of a prince; secondly, he was born at about the same time with Yazdegerd III instead of being the latter’s son (al-Dīnawarī, 1888, p. 125; tr., 2010, p. 264: فاجتمعوا على يزدجرد بن شهربار ابن كسرى ابرويز فملكوه عليهم وهو يومئذ غلام ابن ست عشرة سنة; al- Masʿūdī, 1863, volume II, p. 241: وله خمس وثالثون سنة; Gardīzī, 1984, p. 103: وپانزده ساله بود بپادشاهي نشست). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
95. The two brothers probably came to agreement in advance to separate from one another in order to avoid putting all the eggs in one basket. Or the adherents of both young princes were ambitious to put their supported prince on the throne and could not tolerate staying together. A third possibility is simply that Wahrām left his father in Sīstān and continued to regions to the south of the Hindu Kush. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
96. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, p. 624; tr., 1994, volume XV, p. 87: شارف مرو في زهاء أربعة الاف رجل. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
97. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
98. About the Yabghū Wu-shi-bo, the *Cefu Yuangui* (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 966, p. 11365) reports that he was appointed as the military governor of Ṭukhāristān in 652 CE. Both Xue (1992, 368-9) and Wang (2017, pp. 153-5) argue correctly that the report is problematic, since the Tang’s administrative organization is possible only after the Khāqān of the Western Turks Helu’s defeat in 657 CE. Wang (ibid., pp. 132-5) even suggests that Tardu Shad's successor Ishbara attested by coins should be Wu-shi-bo in the Chinese sources. However, this identification is unlikely, since the Turkic name is rendered as Sha-bo-la (沙钵罗or沙缽略) in Middle Chinese. A more probable solution is shown by the *Tang huiyao* (唐会要, the *Institutional History of Tang*), which reports that Wu-shi-bo’s memoire was presented to the Tang court in 652 CE to inform his enthronement and to seek confirmation from the court (Wang, 1998, volume 99, p. 1773). And the same Yabghū was later confirmed as governor of Ṭukhāristān in 657 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
99. According to al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 2, p. 625-6, 630-3; tr., 1994, volume XV, pp. 90-3, 102-10), western Ṭukhāristān was subjugated by the Arabs led by Aḥnaf, who was sent by the governor of Basra ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Āmir, either by force or under conditions all the way until Balkh. For the Arab expansion into the region, see also al-Balādhurī, 1987, pp. 567-75; tr., part II, pp. 159-68; al-Kūfī, 1975, volume 2, pp. 104-7. Al-Ṭabarī’s report (2001, volume 2, p. 546; tr., 1994, volume XIV, pp. 53-4) that Aḥnaf campaigned in Herat, Nīshāpūr, Marw, Sarakhs and Balkh during ‘Umar's reign is unlikely, since the eastern territories of the Sasanian Empire was still not subjugated in the early 640s. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
100. Narseh was probably serving as a royal guard in the Tang capital, since foreign princes staying in the Tang court usually were royal guards and close to the Tang emperors. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
101. Although the *Jiu Tangshu* records that Pērōz was escorted, the other sources, including Pei’s biography in both dynastic histories of the Tang and Pei’s epitaph, show that it is secure to conclude that Narseh instead of Pērōz was escorted (Liu, 1995, volume 84, pp. 2802-3; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 108, pp. 4086-7; the *Quan Tangwen*, volume 228 for the epitaphs of Pei and Wang). Additional information about the campaign includes Pei’s deputy being Wang Fangyi (Liu, 1995, volume 185a, pp. 4802-3; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 111, p. 4135). As for the Persian army, both Wang’s epitaph and the escorts’ names found in the Turfan manuscript show that the army were of Chinese soldiers. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
102. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. Cen, 1958, pp. 58-9. Both Beckwith (1987, pp. 45-6) and Wang (2009, p. 76) follow Cen and argue that Pei undertook the mission in the year 679 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
103. Jiang, 1994, pp. 37-50. The Turfan manuscripts even record some of the names, ages and other information of the escorts. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
104. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
105. When leaving Khurasan for Iraq in 683/4 CE, Salm b. Ziyād appointed governors over Marw al-Rūd, Fāryāb, Tālaqān, Jūzjān and Herat, which were all in Ṭukhāristān (2001, vol. 3, p. 387; tr., 1989, vol. XX, pp. 71-2; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 3, p. 484). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
106. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
107. The Chinese sources include the *Jiu Tangshu* (Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; tr., Appendix II), the *Xin Tangshu* (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II), and the *Zizhi tongjian* (Sima, 1964, volume 199, p. 6285). [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
108. Ibn al-Faqīh (1996, p. 417: ظفر قتيبة بن مسلم بفيروز بن كسرى يزدجرد) reports that Pērōz engaged the Arab governor of Khurasan Qutayba ibn Muslim in the early 8th century. However, this piece of information is impossible, since Pērōz died in the late 670s. Anyhow, this piece of information shows that the Arabs were not totally ignorant of this Sasanian claimant. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
109. Xuanzang, 2000, p. 100; tr., Li, 1996, p. 25. Xuanzang’s reports include rich information about the Turks in Ṭukhāristān and their relations with the Western Turks because of personal reasons. When he passed Gaochang (modern Turfan), its ruler showed respect to the Chinese pilgrim and introduced him to visit both his suzerain Tong Yabghū Khāqān in Sūyāb, and his brother-in-law the Turkic ruler of Ṭukhāristān established by his father Tong Yabghū Khāqān (Huili & Yancong, 2000, pp. 18-23, 27-9, 31; tr., Appendix III). [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
110. Wang (2017, 132-5) attempts to present a list of the dynasty's rulers. However, there is no information at all about the ruler(s) between Wu-shi-bo, the Yabghū in the 650s, and Du-ni-li, the Yabghū in the 700s. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
111. Gibb, 1923; Barthold, 1928, pp. 180-91; Shaban, 1970. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
112. Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 50-5, 94-5; 2007, pp. 116-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
113. Although the documents were mainly about Rūb, Siminjān, Kadagistan, and Gūzgān (Sims-Williams & de Blois, 2018, pp. 11-3). However, the taxation of the other regions should be quite similar if not the same to the above-listed regions. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
114. Vondrovec (2014, volume I, pp. 401, 415-8) suggests that coins of Types 288 and 289 were found in great numbers in Uzbekistan and probably minted in Tirmidh. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
115. The ruler of Tirmidh went to the Turks when he was expelled by the governor of Khurasan ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim al-Sulamī’s son Mūsā. However, Ṭarkhūn, the ruler of Samarkand, and Nīzak, the Hephthalite ruler of Bādghīs, were also involved in later fighting against Mūsā besides the Turks. The records are insufficient to clarify who the suzerain of Tirmidh was. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
116. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 657-8; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 90-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
117. According to Xuanzang, Akharān had two Buddhist monasteries and around 100 monks, while Shūmān had two monasteries and a few monks (2000, pp. 106-7; tr., 1996, p. 26). In Balkh, however, around 100 monasteries and 3,000 monks were found (2000, p. 115; tr., 1996, p. 28). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
118. Xuanzang visited both Balkh and the other subregions where Buddhism was practiced (Huili & Yancong, 2000, pp. 31-3). The Buddhist texts found in the Bactrian documents (Sims-Williams, 2007, pp. 174-7) also attest the popularity of Buddhism in Ṭukhāristān. For the predominance of Buddhism in the region despite the presence of Christianity, Manicheanism and other religions, see Bosworth, 2008, p. 239; van Bladel, 2011, pp. 49-57. The case of the Turkic princess who worshipped the local god Kamird found in the Bactrian documents suggests that some of the Turks even worshiped local deities (Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 98-105). And the archaeological findings in Balkh, Gūzgān, Bādghīs, Badakhshān attest the presence of Buddhism in these regions (Dhaka, 2017, p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
119. Politically, Balkh was the old capital of Ṭukhāristān; economically, it had been a commercial hub that connects China, India and Iran (Van Bladel, 2011, pp. 47-8) that had been largely replaced by Sogdiana in the 7th and 8th centuries. Although coins were struck in Balkh probably even after the collapse of the Hephthalites in 560 CE (Vondrovec, 2014, pp. 399-401), Xuanzang (2000, p. 115; tr., 1996, p. 28) records that the residents in Balkh were sparse although the fortifications were strong. De la Vassière (2018, pp. 126-7) explains that the destruction resulted from it as the buffer zone between the Sasanians and later Arabs based in Marw and the Western Turks based in Kunduz. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
120. The etymology Nawbahār is the Sanskrit *nava vihara*, meaning new monastery (Azad, 2013, p. 82). Xuanzang (2000, pp. 117-21; tr., 1996, pp. 28-9) presented a detailed description of the Nawbahār monastery. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
121. According to Bosworth (2008, p. 239) and van Bladel (2011, pp. 61-74), Barmak was a title of Sanskrit origin *pramukha*, meaning chief or leader. The local source of Balkh *Faḍā‘il-i Balkh* reports that the Barmakids built and were responsible for the monastery (1971, pp. 19-20; tr., 2013, p. 78). However, the loss of pre-Islamic knowledge of the 11th century Muslim scholars is obvious, since it reports in mistake that the monastery was a temple for Zoroastrian priests. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
122. Azad, 2013, pp. 77-83. For recent archaeological discoveries in the Nawbahār monastery and Balkh in general such as the irrigation network and the wall, see de la Vassière (2008, pp. 124-41). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
123. The Western Turks were greatly weakened in their war with the Tang and did not organize any military campaign into Ṭukhāristān in the entire 2nd half of the 7th century (Hoyland, 2015, p. 134). [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
124. According to Xuanzang, the Ṭukhārā Yabghū Ishbara was a *tegin*, literally a prince, and claimed the *shad*, a high-ranking Turkic title, when he ascended the throne in 630 CE. However, he had claimed the title *yabghū* when Xuanzang revisited his court in Huoguo between 643 and 645 CE (Huili & Yancong, 2000, volume 3, p. 31; volume 5, p. 116; tr., Appendix III). Although de la Vaissière (2010c, p. 214) suggests that *zabul* inscribed on the coins of Types 265 and 266 shows that they were minted by the Turkic rulers of Zābulistān, who claimed them as the *yabghū* of the Bactrians, a greater possibility is that they were minted by the Yabghū in Zābulistān (Vondrovec, 2014, pp. 527, 630-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
125. The title first appeared in the pre-Kushan period as the title of the tribal chiefs of the *Tokharoi* (Sims-Williams, 2002, pp. 229-30, 233). The Bactrian documents attest that the Hephthalite rulers of Ṭukhāristān bore the title *yabghū* (ιαβγο or a variant ββγο as attested in a seal) since late 5th century (Vondrovec, 2014, pp. 401-18; Rezakhani, 2017, pp. 134-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
126. Wang (2017, p. 133) even suggests that the title Yabghū was adopted by Ishbara when Irbis Duolu Khāqān fled to Ṭukhāristān in 642 CE. Similarly, the supreme rulers of the Western Turks claimed the title Khāqān, when they became independent from the Eastern Turks (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, pp. 6055-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
127. Liu, 1995, volume 194b, p. 5187; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215b, p. 6063. See also Wang, 2017, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
128. Shaban, 1970, p. 10; Hoyland, 2015, pp. 119-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
129. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, pp. 154-5: وكان جبغويه ملك طخارستان ضعيفا. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
130. Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, pp. 11721-2; tr., Appendix IV. Puluo was probably a hostage sent by the Yabghū to the Tang court, although he served as an officer of the royal guards. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
131. An example of the Yabghū’s losing control of the vassals is Chaghāniyān’s conflict with its neighbors Akharūn and Shūmān, which lasted until 705 CE (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 670; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, pp. 127-8; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 241; al-Balādhurī, 1987, p. 590; tr., part II, 1924, p. 186). Because of losing vassals, the Yabghū dynasty most probably experienced a military difficulty and a financial difficulty as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
132. Another reason for the financial difficulty is probably the interruption of the long-distance trade by the hostility between the big powers, since the tariff imposed on trading caravans is supposed to be an important source of income for the dynasty (Shaban, 1970, p. 8). The big powers competed for the hegemony of Central Asia include the Tang Empire, the Western Turks and the Tibetan Empire. Although the Tang claimed the suzerainty over Central Asia after its defeating the Western Turks in the late 650s, it failed to create a Pax Sinica as far as Ṭukhāristān. Since the 670s, the Tibetan Empire (618-842 CE) joined the competition to control Central Asia. When the two powers were fighting for the Tarim Basin during the 670s and the early 690s, the Western Turks allied with the Tibetans since the late 670s (Beckwith, 1987, pp. 28-83; Wang, 2009, pp. 62-131). Beckwith's argument (1987, pp. 34-54) that the Tibetans controlled the whole Tarim Basin from 670s up to 692 CE is revised by Wang (2009, pp. 63-4, 70) as a continuous competition between the two powers for the region. For the Tibetan-Western Turkic alliance in 677-8 CE, see the *Xin Tangshu*, 1995, volume 215b, p. 6064. Concerning the overland trading, as Azad explains (2021, p. 342), the goods from Iran, China, India and the steppes were exchanged through long-distance trade. However, this is achieved by a chain of transmissions instead of caravans traveling from the beginning to the end. Although the long-distance trade suffered severely from the political chaos, the routes were not totally blocked at all times during these decades. Both Puluo and Pērōz were able to travel to China. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
133. Al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 155, 171: وجبغويه ملك تخارستان ونيزك من عبيده) reports that the powerful Nīzak dynasty was a vassal of the Yabghū as late as the 700s. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
134. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, pp. 6; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 172: واطلق قتيبة جبغويه ومن علىه وبعث به الى الوليد فلم يزل بالشام حتى مات الوليد. See Shaban, 1970, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
135. When the Western Turks migrated to Ṭukhāristān under Tardu Shad in the 620s, they dislodged the Hephthalites and seized their winter pasture close to Warwālīz and their summer pasture in Badakhshān (Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 125-6, 133, 138; Harmatta & Lintvinsky, 1996, pp. 370-1; Wang, 2017, pp. 113-5; Haug, 2019, pp. 11-2). According to Xuanzang (2000, pp. 106-7, 963; tr., Li, 1996, pp. 26, 318; Huili & Yancong, 2000, pp. 31, 116; tr., see Appendix III), the Turks only had direct control over Akharūn, Shūmān and Warwālīz. The influence of the dynasty extended to Balkh, Tālaqān, Khost and Andarāb (Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 132, 138; de la Vaissière, 2010a, p. 524). However, there is not a definite line to separate eastern from western Ṭukhāristān. Xuanzang’s report that the monks of Balkh visited the court when Tardu Shad passed away (Huili & Yancong, 2000, pp. 31-2) and by *Faḍā‘il-i Balkh*’s record that Qutayba executed the Turkic governor of Balkh (Balkhī, 1971, p. 18: وترک را که امیر بلخ بود در آنجا کشت) seem to show that Balkh was a vassal of the Yabghū. However, Balkh was not always the western limit of the influence of the Yabghū dynasty. For example, the Bactrian documents show that Gūzgān in western Ṭukhāristān was clearly a vassal of the Yabghū from 655 to 680 CE (Sims-Williams, 2020, pp. 242-3). As for the discussion of the Turkic immigrants into Transoxiana and Ṭukhāristān, see Stark, 2007, pp. 307-334. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
136. Shaban, 1970, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
137. Al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 155, 171: وجبغويه ملك تخارستان ونيزك من عبيده) reports that the powerful Nīzak dynasty was a vassal of the Yabghū as late as the 700s. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
138. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 681-4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 154-5. See also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 254-6; see also al-Kūfī for Nīzak’s rebellion and coalition against Qutayba (1975, volume 7, pp. 225-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
139. Al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 3, pp. 657-64; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 90-108.) reports that he fought Mūsā of Tirmidh and ranked only next to Ṭarkhūn, the ruler of Samarkand, among the allies, which included Khuttal, Bukhara, Chaghāniyān and others. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 229-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
140. Nīzak Ṭarkhān (نيزك طرخان) was more often simply as Nīzak. Al-Balādhurī, 1987, pp. 441-2; tr., part I, 1916, pp. 491-2; al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, pp. 621-4; tr., 1990, volume XV, pp. 81-90. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr (1987, volume 3, pp. 15-8), whose annals clearly based on al-Ṭabarī with editing (Barthold, 1928, pp. -3). Al-Dīnawarī's Khāqān of the Turks instead of Nīzak in cooperation with the *marzbān* of Marw is a corruption (1888, pp. 148-9; tr., 2010, p. 271). Among modern scholars, Bosworth fails to realize that Nīzak was a title and suggests that he was active more than half a century (1968, p. 15), while Kennedy (2007, p. 189) mistakenly has Tarkhūn in his account of Yazdegerd III’s death in Marw. Lastly, Esin's proposed reading of Nīzak as Tirek is solely based on al-Kūfī’s history and far from convincing (1977, pp. 323-32). [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
141. Bosworth (1968, p. 15) identifies Nīzak who fought Yazdegerd as the same ruler who was active in the 690s and the 700s. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
142. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 683-4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 150-6. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 254-5, 259-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
143. The rise of the Nīzak dynasty is lost in the mists of time. It was probably one of the Hephthalite principalities emerged in Ṭukhāristān after the collapse of the Hephthalite Empire in the 560s. Others were found in Baghlān, Chaghāniyān, Khuttal, Himatala and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
144. The Muslim sources, for example al-Kūfī (1975, volume 7, p. 215), al-Balādhurī (1987, pp. 441-2; tr., part I, 1916, pp. 491-2), al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 2, pp. 620-1; tr., 1990, volume XV, pp. 78-81; 2001, volume 4, p. 4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 167), al-Yaʿqūbī (2010, volume 2, p. 208; tr., 2018, volume III, p. 994) and others, report that he was a ruler of the Turks. As for Khalīfa ibn Khayyāṭ’s annals, there is no information concerning Nīzak’s identity (1985, p. 300; tr., 2015, p. 171).

     Among modern scholars, Esin (1977, p. 324) believes that al-Barqashī found in al-Kūfī's *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* is a corruption of al-Tarqashī and argues that he was a Türgesh, while others such as Marquart (1901, p. 67), Gibb (1923, p. 26), Ghirshman (1948, p. 97), Bosworth (1968, p. 15), Shaban (1970, pp. 11-2), Litvinsky (1996, p. 456), Kuwayama (2002, p. 135), Pashazanous and Afkande (2014, p. 141), Rezakhani (2017, p. 144) and Azad (2021, p. 334) argue that Nīzak was a Hephthalite. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
145. In 703 CE his fortress in Bādghīs was captured by the governor of Khurasan Yazīd b. al-Muhallab when he was absent (2001, volume 3, pp. 650-1; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 74-6: فتح يزيد بن المهلب قلعة نيزك بباذغيس; see also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 224). However, he remained as the ruler of the region, and concluded a treaty with Qutayba in 706 CE in the condition that the latter would not enter his realm (2001, volume 3, pp. 673; tr., 1990, volume XXIII., p. 133: قدم نيزك على قتيبة وصالح قتيبة اهل باذغيس على الا يدخلها قتيبة; see also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 243-4). It is necessary to be aware that Bādghīs in medieval sources is different from modern Bādghīs as an administrative term, which refers to the whole northwestern part of modern Afghanistan (Le Strange, 1930, pp. 412-4; Barthold, 1984, pp. 47). [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
146. Al-Balādhurī (1987, p. 567; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 159-60) reports that the Arabs led by Aḥnaf b. al-Qays met the Hephthalites in Qūhistān. Al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 2, p. 625; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 91: وخرج الى ابرشهر فلقيه الهياطلة وهم اهل هراة; Bosworth, 2008, p. 240) records that the inhabitants of Herat, the main city of Bādghīs, were Hephthalites. Gardīzī (1984, P. 237; tr., 2011, p. 17: وربيع بخراسان آمد بمرو وهياطله را هزيمت كرد) reports that the Umayyad governor of Iraq Ziyād b. Abīhi sent his deputy Rabī‘ b. al-Ḥārithī to Marw in 670 CE, who routed the Hephthalites most probably in Bādghīs. Yāqūt clarifies in his *Kitāb Muʻjam al-Buldān* that Bādghīs as the residence of the Hephthalite kingdom (1906, volume 2, p. 31: وقيل انها كانت دار مملكة الهياطلة). [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
147. The distance from Herat, which was further to the south of Bādghīs, to Marw was twelve days’ journey for medieval travelers (Ibn al-Ḥawqal, 1872, p. 331; tr., 1800, p. 288). The Tang organized the Dahan military governate (大汗都督府) in 661 CE. On the one hand, Dahan is a phonetic translation of Ṭarkhān (Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 130-5); on the other hand, the governate ranked only after the Yabghū dynasty. Both linguistic and historical analyses seem to show that the Dahan governate could be identified as the Nīzak dynasty, with its capital Huolu (活路) most probably as Harē, the Middle Persian form of Herat. If the identification stands, the Nīzak dynasty was certainly Hephthalite, since the Dahan governate was a political entity of the Hephthalite tribes (Liu, 1995, volume 40, p. 1649; tr., Yu, 2015, pp. 238-9; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 43b, p. 1136). The list of toponyms of the Dahan governate (Ouyang & Song, volume 43b, p. 1136) is decisive in the identification. However, both Chavannes (1903, p. 276) and Cen (1958, pp. 144-5) admithat the toponyms are impossible to identity. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
148. Shaban, 1970, p. 14; Barthold, 1984, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
149. Haug, 2019, pp. 87-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
150. De la Vassière, 2003, pp. 123-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
151. Nīzak Ṭarkhān are titles instead of private names (Esin, 1977, p. 323). [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
152. These coins were minted from the late 5th century to the late 7th or the early 8th century. Besides the Pahlavi legend *nyčky MLK῾* on the obverse, their unique features include a buffalo’s head on top of the crowns on the obverse, and a wheel above each of the two attendants of the fire altar on the reverse (Vondrovec, 2010, pp. 169-87). See also Inaba, 2010, pp. 191-200; Grenet, 2002, pp. 217-8. It is to Kabul Shāh, the ruler of this dynasty, that Nīzak sent his baggage and sought promise of refuge during his rebellion against Qutayba (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 683; volume 4, p. 4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 154, 166). [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
153. Kuwayama, 2002, p. 125.When Xuanzang paid homage to Tong Yabghū Khāqān, the Turkic ruler was accompanied by around 200 Ṭarkhāns (Huili & Yancong, 2000, p. 27). Al-Ṭabarī reports that this title was held by other subordinates of the Yabghū, such as his deputy Ṣūl Ṭarkhān and his police chief Khanas Ṭarkhān, who surrendered to Qutayba together with the Yabghū and Nīzak (2001, volume 4, p. 4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 168: وصول طرخان خليفة جبغويه وخنس طرخان صاحب شرطه; see also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 260). For the Turkic titles, see the *Xin Tangshu* (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 215a, p. 6028), which lists *shad*, *yabghū*, *tegin*, *ṭarkhān* and other titles. See the Orkhon inscriptions too for some of the titles (Tekin, 1968, p. 275, 373, 380, 394); Bosworth & Clauson, 1965, pp. 6, 11-2. The title Ṭarkhān is also attested in the coins of Pangul (see coins Types 245 and 245C in Vondrovec, 2014, volume II, pp. 545-8). However, it is hard to conclude whether this Pangul was the ruler of the principality in Ṭukhāristān or Zābulistān and when these coins were minted. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
154. Ghirshman (1948, p. 98) argues that the episode occurred in the 650s; Bosworth (2018, p. 240) dates it to the 700s. De la Vaissière discusses this issue in details and suggests that Nīzak’s execution of the Barmak was in the 670s (2010a, pp. 525-7). See also van Bladel, 2011, pp. 63, 65-6, 69. The story of Barmak, including his visiting Mecca and converting to Islam, is legendary to glorify the family. The Barmakids’ adherence to the Arabs and later conversion to Islam are more likely politically motivated. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
155. Al-Kūfī, 1975, volume 7, p. 215; Esin, 1977, p. 325; Bosworth, 2008, p. 240. Gardīzī (1984, P. 237; tr., 2011, p. 17: واندر سنه احدى وخمسين مردمان بادغيس وگنج روستا مرتد شدند) reports that the people of Bādghīs apostasized from Islam in 671 CE. Probably this refers to the Nīzak dynasty although not necessarily the Nīzak who was active in the 690s and the 700s. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
156. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, p. 154: فساروا سيرا شديدا حتى أتوا النوبهر فنزل يصلي فيه وتبرك به; Bosworth, 2008, p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
157. Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 107-24. The Hephthalites went Bactrian in various aspects (de la Vassière, 2003, p. 123), which included religion and social customs such as polyandry, which the Bactrian documents show as pre-Hephthalite (Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 32-3; de la Vassière, 2003, p. 119). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
158. Different explanations are actually proposed to tackle this issue: the Muslim historians in the medieval period failed to distinguish the Hephthalites from the Turks; the Hephthalites were Turkified such as Xuanzang (2000, volume 12, p. 969; tr., Li, pp. 319-20) reporting that a region of the Hephthalites in the eastern part of Ṭukhāristān followed the custom of the Turks simply because they were neighbors, and therefore were called Turks. However, the Turkification is a process that took centuries and is not expected to accomplish at this stage. Two records of al-Balādhurī (1987, pp. 567, 588; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 160, 184: الهياطلة وهم اتراك; وخرج اليه من اهل الترمذ خلق من الهياطلة والترك), however, point to a third solution: the Hephthalites appeared together with their lord the Turks. The hegonomy of the Turks over the Hephthalites was supported by al-Kūfī (1975, volume 7, p. 219: خاقان ملك الترك والهياطلتهم), who reports in his *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* that the Khāqān who fought Qutayba to relieve Bukhara in 708/9 CE was the king of both the Turks and the Hephthalites. Consequently, the Arabs including historians such as al-Ṭabarī feel comfortable to call the Hephthalites the Turks, although they were able to distinguish the two groups (Gibb, 1923, p. 10; Frye, 1945, pp. 314-5; Ghirshman, 1948, p. 98). And it is interesting to know that the Turks entered into the Arabic poetry as early as the late 6th and the early 7th centuries as an obscure people living in the direction of Persia and Afghanistan (Kowalski, 2007, pp. 117-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
159. As for *T‘etal* in Sebeos, it does derive from Hephthalite. However, the interpretation is slippery, since it actually refers to the Turks as well (Howard-Johnston, 1999, pp. 168, 265, 278). [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
160. De la Vassière, 2003, p. 122, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
161. Shaban (1970, p. 22) argued that Chaghāniyān was a Hephthalite principality, since it appeared in western Ṭukhāristān in 652/3 CE in order to fight the Arab invaders together with the other Hephthalite principalities such as Marw al-Rūd, Tālaqān, Fāryāb, Gūzgūn, Herāt and Bādghīs. Moreover, Bosworth (1981, p. 17) expounds that the word Tīsh is neither Iranian or Turkic. And it is reasonable to susgest that he was a Hephthalite prince. Haug (2019, p. 75) suggests Chaghāniyān as Hephthalite as well.

     Khuttal was a Hephthalite principality (Litvinsky & Zamir Safi, 1996, p. 177). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
162. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 4, p. 5; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
163. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 155: جبغويه ملك تخارستان...واسمه الشذ. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
164. As Athamina (2008, pp. 141-55) states, the contradictory records in Arabic histories such as al-Ṭabarī are expected, since the historians were hardly critical about their sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
165. Gibb (1923, p. 9) suggests that the supreme ruler of the Hephthalites, the Shadh, was the ruler of Chaghāniyān Tīsh, while Shaban (1970, p. 12) follows the identification. However, this suggestion is rather weak, since there is no textual evidence to support the suggestion. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
166. Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, p. 11722; tr., see Appendix IV. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
167. The dynasty was established after being dislodged by the Turks from their winter pasture in Warwālīz and summer pasture Badakhshān and can be traced back to the late 6th century as a legitimate successor of the collapsed Hephthalite Empire (Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 130-5; Grenet, 2002, pp. 216-7). However, both Kuwayama and Grenet identify the Dahan governate as the Hephthalite dynasty based in Baghlān instead of the above-proposed Nīzak dynasty. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
168. The Yida dynasty in Baghlān clearly outlived the Nīzak dynasty. The*Cefu Yuangui* records envoys of the Hephthalites arrived at the Tang court twice in 748 CE (Wang &Yang, 1994, volume 971, p. 11413; tr., Yu, 2015, p. 249, see Appendix IV; Ghirshman, 1948, pp. 103-4; Grenet, 2002, p. 221 and Kuwayama, 2002, p. 139). The first envoy arrived in the 6th month together with the envoy of Zābulistān, while the 8th month of the same year witnesses the arrival of another envoy. A tentative interpretation is that the first Hephthalite principality was found to the south of the Hindu Kush, while the second one from Ṭukhāristān, probably Baghlān. Unfortunately, so far, no coins are identified minted either by the Hephthalite dynasty in Baghlān or by the Nīzak dynasty in Bādghīs. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
169. See also Shaban, 1970, p. 22. The governor of Khurasan ‘Abdallāh b. Khāzim was fighting Bakr b. Wā᾿il in Herat in this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
170. The report is found in al-Ṭabarī (2001, vol. 3, pp. 386-90; tr., 1989, vol. XX, pp. 70-80). See also Ibn al-’Athīr (1987, volume 3, pp. 483-6). Although al-Ṭabarī reports that they were the Turks, Shaban (1970, p. 43) and Haug (2019, pp. 105-6) argue that they were the Hephthalites. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
171. One important social custom of the Hephthalites is polyandry, which the Bactrian documents show as pre-Hephthalite (Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 32-3; de la Vassière, 2003, p. 119).

     The Hephthalites’ adherence to Buddhism can be traced back to the imperial period, when the rulers on both sides of the Hindu Kush had adopted the locally predominant Buddhism (Kuwayama, 2002, pp. 107-24). [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
172. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 153-4. Praying in the monastery is far from the only thing that Nīzak did in regard to Buddhism. According to de la Vaissière (2010a, p. 527), the only survived son of the executed Barmak returned to Balkh and the hereditary post as the administrator of the Nawbahār monastery. His return was possible only with the permission of Nīzak. And it is reasonable to suggest that Nīzak sent messengers to Kashmir to invite the survived boy of the last Barmak to come back to Balkh in order to build a solidarity among the Hephthalite principalities by the religious tie. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
173. The Hephthalite principalities seem to have allied with the Turks to raid the Sasanian territories when the Armenian general Smbat was dispatched to the east by Khosrow II (591-628) in the late 600s (Sebeos, 1999, pp. 51-3). However, the Nīzak dynasty was not committed to allying with the Turks and to fighting the Sasanians, but shifted sides for its own interest. Besides joint military actions, al-Dīnawarī reports that the Nīzak and the *marzbān* of Marw even intermarried (Haug, 2019, p. 87). See Kurbanov, 2010, pp. 190-1, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
174. Shaban, 1970, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
175. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 681-4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 154-5. See also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 254-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
176. Al-Kūfī, 1975, volume 7, p. 230: ليست هذه منطقة نيزك هذه منطقة رجل من عظماء الترك يقال له جيغويه. The word j-y-gh-y-h is obviously a corruption of j-b-gh-y-h, the Arabic form of *yabghū*. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
177. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 4, p. 5; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
178. The hostility probably could trace back to the first Turkic ruler over the Hephthalites, who ruled briefly at the end of the 6th century or the early 7th century (Wei, 1996, volume 83, p. 1854; tr., Yu, 2015, p. 236) and most probably deposed by a Hephthalite insurrection. When the Yabghū dynasty was established in the 620s, the Turks dislodged the Hephthalites from their pastures (Kuwayama, 2002, p. 132). This probably further intensified the Hephthalites’ hostility towards the Turks. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
179. The financial difficulty of the principalities in Ṭukhāristān in the late 7th and the early 8th centuries was probably also related to the negative influence of the competition of the big powers in Central Asia on interreginal and international trading. The Arabs not only raided the region but also cut its economical connection with its western neighbors, while the competition for the Tarim Basin between the Tang and the Tibetan Empire interrupted its trading with the east. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
180. According to al-Ṭabarī (2001, vol. 3, pp. 670-1; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, pp. 127-8; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 241), Tīsh, the Hephthalite ruler of Chaghāniyān (Livtinsky & Zamir Safi, 1996, pp. 176-7), was attacked and expelled by the Turkic rulers of neighboring Akharūn and Shūmān in 705 CE (Xuanzang, 2000, pp. 106-7; tr., 1996, p. 26). As a result, he turned to the Arab governor Qutayba for assistance, who restored Tīsh to his throne. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
181. There were purely geopolitical instead of ethnic conflicts, such as that in Gūzgān. Among two or more rulers of the region in the late 7th century, one turned to the Arabs for assistance against his rivals (Sims-Williams, 2008, pp. 115-20, 122-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
182. The rulers of Baghlān and Khuttal decided to submit to Qutayba only after Nīzak's capture. This is shown by their coming to Qutayba when the later called them. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
183. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 3; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 165-6: الرؤب خان ملك الرؤب وسمنجان. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
184. Gibb, 1923, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
185. Gibb, 1923, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
186. Gibb (1923), Barthold (1928, pp. 180-91) and Shaban (1970) predominantly use the term Arab conquests, while Kennedy (2007, p. 7) adopts Arab conquests and Muslim conquests interchangeably. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
187. Hoyland, 2015, pp. 59-60, 162-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
188. Webb, 2021, pp. 65-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
189. The model is adopted by scholars such as Shaban (1970, pp. 16-24, 26-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
190. Haug, 2019, pp. 73-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
191. Barthold, 1928, pp. 182-3; Nölle-Karimi, 2008, pp. 9-19; Azad, 2021, pp. 332-45. Of course, even in the frontier regions, the Arabs asked more than booty and tribute from the locals. Levy-Rubin’s study of the surrender treaties shows that various obligations such as military assistance were stipulated for the convenience of further expansions (2021, pp. 205-7). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
192. The bulk of the Arab expeditionary army would return for winter to Iraq in the 650s and the 660s, where their family stayed in the two major garrison towns Kufa and Basra (Shaban, 1970, pp. 23-4). The settling of the Arab families makes Marw a base for further eastward expansion (van Steenbergen, 2021, p. 63). As Shaban expounds, fighting for booty and tribute catered to the appetite of both the central government in Damascus and the Arab tribes in the eastern frontiers (1970, pp. 35-52). See also van Steenbergen, 2021, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
193. Wellhausen, 1927, pp. 434-5; van Steenbergen, 2021, p. 65. The campaigns that Qutayba and the governors preceding him such as Umayyah (693/4-697/8 CE) and al-Muhallab (697/8-702/3 CE) carried out mainly targeted at Transoxiana (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 607-8, 610, 616-7; tr., 1989, vol. XXII, pp. 166-7, 175, 188-90; Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 185-7, 192; Gardīzī, 1984, p. 245; tr., 2011, p. 20), since the region was famous for its richness and prosperity of trading, while Ṭukhāristān with a relatively weaker economy was a less attractive target. Al-Kūfī (1975, volume 2, pp. 104-7; volume 4, pp. 186-7, 190-6, 200-2; volume 7, pp. 78, 234-5, 237, 247, 250) understands well the objective of these military campaigns and pays great attention to the tribute laid down for a certain city and a governor’s dealing with the booty: to deliver a fifth to the governor in Iraq and/or to the caliph in Damascus and divide the rest among the Arabs. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
194. For the Arab rule in the eastern frontiers, see Barthold, 1968, p. 186. Al-Aḥnaf b. al-Qays’ treaty with Marw al-Rūd, which included the condition of mutual military obligation (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 630-1; tr., vol. XV, pp. 102-3), sheds light on the military aspect of the rule of the Muslims. And the Bactrian documents testify that the local principalities delivered taxation to the Arabs (Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 116-7, 126-9). Another great concern of the Arab rule of the region is their control the trading routes (Nölle-Karimi, 2008, p. 18; Azad, 2021, p. 335). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
195. Cases found in al-Ṭabarī’s annals, such as the Hephthalites from as far as Chaghāniyān assisted the cities raided by the Muslims, exemplify the Hephthalites and the Turks’ rule of the local principalities. As for the tribute and taxation that the local principalities paid the Hephthalites and the Turks, it is clarified by the Bactrian documents. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
196. Haug (2019, pp. 88-9) argues that al-Ṭabarī’s (2001, vol. 2, p. 634; tr., vol. XV, pp. 111; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 3, p. 3) account of the campaigns in western Ṭukhāristān in the 650s exemplifies the competition for the local principalities between the Arabs and the Hephthalite Nīzak dynasty, which would retreat to the mountainous regions when the Arabs advanced, and appeared in the plains when the Aabs retreated. However, the allied principalities fighting the Arabs who returned to raid in 653/4 CE were at best supported by the Hephthalites (Shaban, 1970, p. 26) instead of being ruled by them as Haug suggests. As for the Turks, no sources show that they showed up. More probably, both Iranian and Hephthalite principalities joined in the alliance under the leadership the noble Persian Karin family (Hoyland, 2015, p. 122). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
197. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, p. 683; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, pp. 154-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
198. With the trust from the governor of Iraq al-Ḥajjāj, Qutayba was able to unite the Arab tribes and non-Arab tribes under the banner of *jihād*, and tried to incorporate local troops for military campaigns (Gibb, 1923, pp. 29-30; Shaban, 1970, pp. 64-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
199. To follow Crone’s theory (1994, p. 458), although the Arabs started as a confederation of tribes, the Umayyad government makes it possible to overcome the constant liability of fission and to coordinate the tribes in Central Asia for expansion. For example, the tribal factions of the Arabs in Khurasan continued until ‘Abd al-Malik's appointing a Quraysh Umayyah as governor of Khurasan in 693/4 CE (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 545-6; tr., 1989, vol. XXII, pp. 7-11; Gardīzī, 984, p. 243; tr., 2011, p. 19). [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
200. Shaban, 1970, pp. 50-2, 54-5, 64, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
201. An external power that could challenge the Arabs such as the Türgesh appeared in Ṭukhāristān only in the 720s and the 730s. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
202. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 670; tr., 1990, vol. XXIII, pp. 127-8; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, p. 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
203. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 6; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 165-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
204. When Qutayba was appointed as the Arab governor over Khurasan in 705 CE, Nīzak first tried to maintain independence by talk instead of fight. As for Qutayba, he was interested in the military prowess of the Hephthalites. Consequently, a treaty was concluded by the two, according to which Qutayba would not enter Nīzak’s territories, while the latter was obliged to join Qutayba in his campaigns. Nīzak did fight fiercely along with Qutayba (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, p. 677, 683; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 143, 153. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 247). However, Nīzak decided to rebel, because the military obligation made him a vassal of the Arabs. Another possibility is that he was simply enraged because of the Arabs taking the lion’s share of the booty (Shaban, 1970, pp. 66, 71, 73). In 709 CE, Nīzak organized a general insurrection in western Ṭukhāristān against the Arabs (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 683-4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 153-6. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 254-5, 259-61). [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
205. When Nīzak broke the treaty that he signed with Qutayba earlier and organized a rebellion against the Arabs in 709 CE (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, pp. 683-4; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 153-6. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 254-5, 259-61), Qutayba called on the local principalities, including Nishapur, Abīward, Sarakhs and Herat for assistance, and started his military actions in the late winter of 709 CE, when Nīzak and his allies were unprepared. He ruthlessly conquered and punished the rebels one by one until his capturing and executing Nīzak (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, pp. 3-7; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 164-74. See also Ibn al-‘Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 259-61). Al-Yaʿqūbī keeps a shorter account of Nīzak’s alliance with Qutayba and death after his failed rebellion (2010, volume 2, pp. 208-9; tr., 2018, volume 3, pp. 994-5). As for Qutayba’s allies, al-Ṭabarī’s list seems more sensible than that of al-Kūfī, which includes Bukhara, Marw, Tālaqān, Fāryāb, Balkh and Sarakhs (1975, volume 7, p. 226). It stands to reason that the dynasty terminated with Nīzak’s death. According to al-Madāʾinī (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 5; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 169-70), together with Nīzak, many others were executed by Qutayba, including the two sons of the Hephthalite ruler’ brother. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
206. Among the principalities that submitted to the Arabs,Chaghāniyān is a good example*.* The *Cefu Yuangui* (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 966, p. 11365; volume 971, p. 11406; tr., Appendix IV) records that the embassies of Tīsh arrived at the Tang court in 719 CE together with the Arabs, Samarkand and others. The record suggests that Chaghāniyān remained loyal to the Arabs since submitting to Qutayba in 705 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
207. Unfortunately, Huichao (2000, p. 96) did not tell when the Yabghū moved his court to Badakhshān. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
208. Huichao (2000, p. 96; see also Shaban, 1979, pp. 106-13) attests that the dynasty was under the hegemony of the Arabs. And it had to pay heavy taxation to the Arabs (Huichao, 2000, pp. 96, 99-100; Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, p. 11723; tr., Appendix IV). However, the rulers were still from the Ashina family instead of being usurped by pro-Arab Tīsh of Chaghāniyān as Marquart suggested (1901, p. 70), whose suggestion solely bases on the record of his title as its Yabghū Tīsh in the *Tang huiyao*, and is far from convincing. The same piece of report found in the *Cefu Yuangui* has Tīsh the ruler of Chaghāniyān of the state of Ṭukhāristān (volume 971, p. 11406; tr., Appendix IV). Clearly, Du-ni-li was succeeded by his son, who remained in the throne in 727 CE, when he sent a memoire to the Tang court (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, p. 11723; tr., Appendix IV). What is more, the dynasty not only survived, but also maintained independent diplomatic relations such as with the Tang. In the memoires presented to the Tang court, it even expressed the aspiration to shake off the yoke of the Arabs when the later suffered from the Türgesh in the 720s and the 730s (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, pp. 11721-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
209. Huichao, 2000, pp. 96, 99-100; Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, p. 11723; tr., Appendix IV. The Arab governor of Khurasan Asad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī even moved the headquarter of Khurasan temporarily to Balkh in the 720s. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
210. Evidence of Arab rule includes coins, taxation, and Arabic texts. Even the Bactrian documents mention the circulation of the Arab dirhams and taxation paid to the Arabs (Sims-Williams, 2000, pp. 116-7, 126-9). The Arabic documents found in Ṭukhāristān around mid-8th century, which are studied by Khan (2007), testify the rule of the Arabs. See also Azad, 2017, pp. 50-3; Azad and Kennedy, 2018, pp. 284-305. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
211. The Chinese sources include the *Jiu Tangshu* (Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; tr., Appendix II), the *Xin Tangshu* (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II), and the *Zizhi tongjian* (Sima, 1964, volume 199, p. 6285). [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
212. This refers to the Arab retreats from Khurasan during the First Fitna. Since the assassination of ʿUthmān to that of ʿAlī, there were continuous fighting among the Arabs, which include the Battle of Camel (656 CE) between ʿAlī and those who challenged him for the position of Caliph, the Battle of Siffin (657 CE) between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah, which was concluded by an arbitration, the fighting between ʿAlī and the Khawārij (658 CE), those who broke away from his camp, and so on. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
213. Pashazanous and Afkande, 2014, pp. 144-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
214. Liu, 1995, volume 198, pp. 5312-3; tr., Appendix II; Sima, 1964, volume 199, p. 6285. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
215. Sima, 1964, volume 199, p. 6285. Although Wang (2009, p. 90) argued that the date was acceptable, it is clearly problematic, since Yazdegerd III’s death was also put in this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
216. Al-Balādhurī, p. 556; tr., part II, 1924, p. 144. *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*, 2002, p. 115; tr., 1976, p. 67. As for the annual tribute of Sīstān, it was a million dirhams and a thousand slave boys, each with a golden cup in his hand, when it submitted to the Arabs in 650/651 CE (al-Balādhurī, 1987, pp. 554-5; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 143-4: فصالحه على الف وصيف مع كل وصيف جام من ذهب). *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* (2002, p. 113; tr., 1976, p. 65) agrees with al-Balādhurī except it records a thousand slave girls instead of boys. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
217. Al-Balādhurī, 1987, pp. 556-8; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 144-6) reports that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura was away from Sīstān and with Mu‘awiya until his returning after the Fitna in 661 CE, while *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* (2002, pp. 113, 119-20; tr., 1976, pp. 67-8, 71-3) records that the representative of Mu‘awiya returned to Sīstān in 657 CE and left the region soon for Syria. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
218. Bosworth, 1968, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
219. As Shaban (1970, p. 28) argues, the fact that the Arab army marched to Sīstān instead of Khurasan after the Fitna shows that the center of agitation in the east was Sīstān. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
220. Sima, 1964, volume 199, p. 6285. Although Wang (2009, p. 90) argues that the date was acceptable, it is clearly problematic, since Yazdegerd III’s death was also put in this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
221. Bosworth, 2008, p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
222. Al-Balādhurī (1987, pp. 554-5; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 142-3) reports that the *marzbān* of Zaranj negotiated the peace treaty with the Arabs. The local rulers probably also include the religious elite of the region, although their names are unknown. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
223. The Yabghū was probably attempting to expand his suzerainty over Sīstān by imposing Pērōz to the region. Unfortunately, there is no numismatic evidence as the coins of the Turkic ruler of Kabul between the 680s and the 730s, who minted under the title Khurasan Tegin Shāh (Vondrovec, 2014, volume 2, Types 240, 208, pp. 537, 541-3), to confirm the suggestion. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
224. To mint coins is not only of great significance to the Sasanians, but also to the local rulers in the eastern frontiers. Even the rulers Spur and Pangul from late 7th or early 8th century Zābulistān, who were entirely absent from historical records, minted their coins (Gyselen, 2010, p. 237). [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
225. Pashazanous & Afkande, 2014, p. 145; Khazaee, 2015, pp. 223-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
226. Although the large number of coins bearing the year 20 of Yazdegerd III shows they were still minted after the monarch’s death, their diversity in style suggests that they were minted by various local Persian rulers with or without the permission of the Arabs (Tyler-Smith, 2000, pp. 139-40, 149; Nikitin & Roth, 1995, pp. 131-4).

     As for the brevity of Pērōz’s rule in Zaranj, the *Xin Tangshu* records that it was finished soon by the Arabs (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II), since the local ruler preferred to avoid a military confrontation with the Arabs, although he was unsatisfied with the heavy tribute (al-Balādhurī, 1987, p. 556; tr., part II, 1924, pp. 145: ثم أتوا زرنج وقد خافهم مرزبانها فصالحهم ودخلوها). [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
227. Kavad II ruled for half a year in 628, while Queen Būrān ruled twice, respectively in 630 CE and from 631 to 632 CE. Kavād II and Queen Būrān not only minted coins but also respectively in 16 and 14 mints (Tyler-Smith, 2000, p. 140). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
228. Pērōz was in the Yabghū’s court as late as 671 CE. This is shown by the fact that their emissaries arrived at the Tang court together in this year. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
229. The records in the *Xin Tangshu* seem to show that Pērōz sent an emissary to ask for the Tang assistance immediately after his father’s death. However, the account in the *Cefu Yuangui* dated his envoy coming to the Tang court in 654 CE, when the Arabs invaded both the Sasanians and Maymurgh in southern Sogdiana (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 995, p. 11686). The *Jiu Tangshu* dated his request of assistance even to 661 CE (Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313). [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
230. The records in the *Xin Tangshu* seem to show that Pērōz sent an emissary to ask for the Tang assistance immediately after his father’s death. However, the account in the *Cefu Yuangui* dated his envoy coming to the Tang court in 654 CE, when the Arabs invaded both the Sasanians and Maymurgh in southern Sogdiana (Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 995, p. 11686). The *Jiu Tangshu* dated his request of assistance even to 661 CE (Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313). Although the chronology is disputed, there is no problem to accept that Pērōz sent emissaries to the Tang court before the Tang army’s defeating the Western Turks in 657 CE, since Yazdegerd clearly had sent emissaries to the Tang court in the 640s.

     As Agostini and Stark comment, the exact embassy sent by Pērōz was found in the Chinese sources (2016, p. 18). However, it is clear that the first embassy arrived after the Tang army’s defeating the Western Turks. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
231. Haug, 2019, pp. 95-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
232. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 964, p. 11341. Pērōz was first appointed as the military governor of Persia in 661 CE, and then as the king of Persia in 662 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
233. Actually, the Tang army would not appear in Ṭukhāristān in the entire 7th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
234. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 235-6; tr., vol. XVIII, pp. 163-164; see also Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 3, p. 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
235. See the table of Appendix V for a list of the military campaigns of the Muslims. Al-Kalbī’s anecdote found in Ibn al-Faqīh’s *Kitāb al-Buldān* (1996, p. 417), which reports that Pērōz fought Qutayba, is impossible. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
236. Xue, 1988, pp. 65-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
237. When Yazdegerd fled from the Arabs and arrived at Khurasan, the Persian nobles asked him about his plan. They deserted and even fought him on hearing that he was going to join the Turks or the Chinese instead of staying in the Sasanian territories (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, p. 548; tr., volume XIV, pp. 58-60). This episode shows that the majority of the Persian nobles were reluctant to leave their own lands. Therefore, it is expected that the number of Pērōz’s dependents was diminishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
238. Although miscellaneous reports are found in the Muslim sources about the Sasanian members. However, it is impossible to construct a clear chronology of their scattering. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
239. Pashazanous and Afkande, 2014, p. 146; Haug, 2019, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
240. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; volume 5, p. 99; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259. See Agostini and Stark, 2016, pp. 18-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
241. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; Compareti, 2003, p. 211. Pērōz was granted the title general of the Right Courageous Guard (右武卫将军) upon his arrival. The title is confirmed by the inscription of his statute in the mausoleum. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
242. Wei, 2006, p. 46. Leslie, 1981-3, pp. 282-3. Compareti (2003, pp. 207-8), Rong (2015, pp. 76-7), Khazaee (2015, p. 225) and Pashazanou and Sangari (2018, p. 500) favor the identification of the temple as a Nestorian one. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
243. Liang & Wen (2003, pp. 44-51); Zhang (2003, pp. 8-11); Pashazanous & Sangari (2018, pp. 1-17). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
244. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
245. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
246. When Umayyah came, the former governor Bukayr (691/2-693/4) chose Ṭukhāristān as his target for expansion and spent a lot of money on horses and weapons to prepare for a campaign (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 546, 607; tr., 1989, vol. XXII, pp. 11, 165). This piece of information shows that Ṭukhāristān, more precisely eastern Ṭukhāristān, was clearly not under the control of the Muslims in 693/4 CE. What is more, Umayyah and his successor al-Muhallab campaigned mainly in Transoxiana for booty. As for the list of targets of al-Muhallab’s campaigns given by al-Kūfī (1975, volume 7, p. 78), which including Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh, Ṭukhāristān and Bost, it is exaggerated. However, this Arab historian from the first half of the 9th century preserved reports of tribal origin, which stated that these campaigns were raids for booty and explained that the fruitful raids won popularity for him among the Muslims. Anyhow, eastern Ṭukhāristān was not under the military pressure of the Arabs, although Balkh was controlled by them in 701/2 CE (al-Ṭabarī, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 607-8, 610, 616-7; tr., 1989, vol. XXII, pp. 166-7, 175, 188-90; Ibn-’Athīr, 1987, volume 4, pp. 185-7, 192). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
247. Gibb (1923, p. 26) even suggests that Narseh was involved in the plot organized by Thābit, a Persian client of the Arabs who was mistreated by al-Muhallab, to depose al-Muhallad’s son and successor Yazīd (702/3-704/5 CE) from the position as the governor of Khurasan and to replace him with Mūsā of Tirmidh in 702 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
248. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
249. Xue, 1988, pp. 70-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
250. Ibn al-Faqīh (1996, p. 417) reports that Pērōz fought Qutayba in the early 8th century. It is possible that it was Narseh instead of Pērōz fought Qutayba. However, this suggestion is purely hypothetical and finds no further textual evidence to confirm it. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
251. Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II. Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II. However, no sources shed light on the process of the dispersion of Narseh’s dependents. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
252. According to al-Dīnawarī (1888, p. 163), a daughter of the Sasanian monarch Būmān fled to Kabul, whence she came to Nīshāpūr to participate an insurrection against the Arabs during Ali’s caliphate. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
253. Both the *Jiu Tangshu* (Liu, 1995, volume 198, p. 5313; tr., Appendix II) and the *Xin Tangshu* (Ouyang & Song, 1995, volume 221b, p. 6259; tr., Appendix II) report that Narseh’s adherents, which was numbered several thousand, dispersed when he was in Ṭukhāristān. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
254. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 133; tr., 1989, volume XXV, pp. 55-6. In 728/9 CE, Khosrow, a Sasanian prince, together with 30 of his men, failed to persuade the besieged Arab troops to surrender the fortress to the Türgesh Khāqān Suluk. Gibb (1923, p. 71) suggests that this Khosrow was Pērōz’s son although he has no textual evidence, while scholars such as Pashazanous (2014, p. 149; also see the article that he coauthors with Sangari, 2018, p. 501) identifies this Khosrow as Aluohan's son Juluo. The second identification is not compelling as well, since Khosrow was a Sasanian prince while Juluo's father being a Persian chief and not of a royal member. Besides this unidentifiable Sasanian prince, the Mount Mugh documents testify a Persian general in the vicinity of Panjikent in 722 CE (Rezakhani, 2017, p. 184). [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
255. Li Su and Su Liang were two examples respectively from the 1st and 2nd half of the 9th century. See Rong, 2001, pp. 238-57; Liu, 1990, pp. 295-305. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
256. Pashazanous and Afkande (2014, pp. 149-50) study the relevant records found in the *Cefu Yuangui* and suggest that the Sasanian claimants stayed in Ṭukhāristān after Narseh as late as early 730s. However, Agostini and Stark (2016, pp. 17-38) more carefully analyze the records and propose that the Persian embassies who presented themselves in the Tang court were dispatched by a Sasanian court-in-exile in regions to the south of the Hindu Kush. What is clear is that the Sasanian princes and nobles were scattered and found in various locations. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
257. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, p. 621; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 79. As discussed above, al-Madāʾinī is more trustworthy than al-Kalbī, the princess was a granddaughter of Yazdegerd, but not from Pērōz. Fowden suggests that the bathing beauty found in Quṣayr ‘Amra is possibly the captured Sasanian princess (2004, pp. 240-7). [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
258. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 4, p. 272; tr., 1989, volume XXVI, p. 243; 2001, volume 2, p. 621; tr., 1990, volume XV, p. 79. See note 216 for the discussion of the identity of the Sasanian princess. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
259. The Samanids (819-999 CE) in Khurasasan claimed to be descendents of Bahrām Chūbīn, who revolted and ruled Persia for a brief duration at the end of the 6th century (Bosworth, 1973, pp. 58-9). This is reflected in the Bal‘amī’s Persian *Tārīkhnāma*, which includes an elaborated account of Bahrām in comparison to al-Ṭabarī, although it is claimed as an abridged translation of al-Ṭabarī’s history (Peacock, 2007, pp. 4-6, 90-1). It is interesting to notice that the last Sasanians were not welcomed by the local rulers of the eastern frontiers of the Empire, but later Persian dynasties in Central Asia claimed themselves as the Sasanian descendents. This reflects that their prestige and the legitimacy to rule among the Persians were useful to later dynasties. This is of course true for the local rulers in the eastern frontiers of the Sasanian Empire in the 7th century. However, the threat of the Sasanians to establish a central administration at the expenses of their independence makes the Sasanian monarch Yazdegerd and princes Pērōz and Narseh unwelcome.

     Another legacy of the Sasanians is the era of Yazdegerd, which was circulated among the Zoroastrians (al-Bīrūnī, 1923, p. 31; tr., 1879, p. 35-6), as attested by the epitaph of Suren’s wife (Liu, 1990, pp. 298-9, 301; Baghbidi, 2011, pp. 107, 109, 112-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
260. The Indian world is found to the south of the Hindu Kush and different from modern India (Agostini and Stark, 2016, p. 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
261. Daryaee, 2012, pp. 5-11; Compareti, 2003, pp. 205-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
262. Pashazanous and Afkande, 2014, p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
263. Rong, 2015, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
264. The account found in al-Ṭabarī (2001, volume 2, p. 549; tr., 1994, volume XIV, pp. 60-2) is problematic chronologically. Request for military assistance was declined by the Taizong Emperor (626-49 CE). [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
265. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 2, p. 548; tr., 1994, volume XIV, p. 59. Of course, the first option is the Turks. But it is noteworthy that China was a candidate for Yazdegerd even at this stage. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
266. Pashazanous and Afkande, 2014, p. 144; Rong, 2015, p. 65; Agostini and Stark, 2016, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
267. Although it is hard to know the number of Persian merchants in late 7th and early 8th century, Chinese sources testify that both Guangzhou and Yangzhou had several thousands of Persian merchants in the middle of the 8th century (Rong, 2015, pp. 69, 72-5). Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī from the 10th century reports that Huangchao massacred 120,000 Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians when he captured Guangzhou (2014, pp. 66-9). Although the number is most probably exaggerated, it reflects the prosperity of foreign trade and the great number of foreign traders including a large portion of Persians. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
268. Nanmei, a Persian chief, whose statue was found along with that of Pērōz in the mausoleum of the Gaozong Emperor and the Empress Wu Zetian, probably came to China as a companion of Pērōz (Zhang, 2003, p. 9; Liang and Wen, 2003, p. 44; Compareti, 2003, p. 203; Rong, 2015, p. 70; Pashazanous and Sangari, 2018, p. 502). [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
269. A-luo-han was probably from a Parthian noble clan and a Nestorian monk instead of a Sasanian prince. Since Forte’s identifying A-luo-han as Wahrām, scholars such as Daryaee (2009, p. 38), Pashazanous (2014, pp. 148-9), and Rezakhani (2017, p. 184) follow the identification, which Rong suspects (2015, pp. 69-70). The identification seems out of the question in light of A-luo-han's age. He was born at about the same time with Yazdegerd III instead of being the latter’s son, since they were both born around 616 CE (al-Dīnawarī, 1888, p. 125; tr., 2010, p. 264; al- Masʿūdī, 1863, volume II, p. 241; Gardīzī, 1984, p. 103). [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
270. An unearthed epitaph from Xi’an testifies that a branch of the Suren family, one of the seven most influential Parthian houses, migrated to China as well, although the epitaph from the late 8th century does not tell when they migrated to China (Liu, 1990, pp. 295-304; Baghbidi, 2011, pp. 105-13; Rong, 2015, p. 71). [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
271. Leslie, 1981-3, pp. 295-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
272. Leslie, 1981-3, pp. 275-84, 286-93; Rong, 2015, pp. 76-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
273. Malekandathil, 2002, pp. 156-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
274. The allowances were granted to foreign princes and emissaries, although some of them lingered in Chang’an more than four decades and did not return to their own countries (Sima, 1964, volume 232, p. 7493). [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
275. Compareti, 2003, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
276. Beckwith, 1987, pp. 34-54; Wang, 2009, pp. 63-4, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
277. For the Tibetan-Western Turkic alliance in 677-8 CE, see the *Xin Tangshu*, 1995, volume 215b, p. 6064. It is this Tibetan-Western Turkic alliance that Pei successfully frustrated. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
278. Agostini and Stark, 2016, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
279. Al-Ṭabarī, 2001, volume 3, p. 660; tr., 1990, volume XXIII, pp. 97-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
280. Wang & Yang, 1994, volume 999, p. 11722; tr., see Appendix IV. Both Beckwith (1987, pp. 66-9) and Wang (2009, pp. 129-30) argue for the Tibetan presence in Ṭukhāristān in 704 CE. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
281. Beckwith, 1987, pp. 69-70; Wang, 2009, pp. 130-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
282. Hoyland, 2015, pp. 119-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
283. Bosworth, 2008, p. 237. Although Narseh had several thousands of adherents and his father Pērōz perhaps with a larger of companions, there was a large proportion of royal members and nobles instead of fighting forces. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)