

CHAPTER ONE

BUKAYR IBN MĀHĀN—THE EVOLUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

(Ca. 105/723-126/744)

I. *A Personal Profile*

Abū Hāshim Bukayr ibn Māhān was a *mawla* of the Banū Musliyah of Madhḥij. His father had also been a *mawla* of Musliyah who had taken up residence in Jordan. The Banū Musliyah treated Bukayr as one of their own pedigree. He was enrolled in their *ḍuwān*, and he participated, along with other members of the tribe, in the campaigns of Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab in Khurāsān and in his conquest of Jurjān, in 98/716-717.¹ However, Bukayr's involvement in the affairs of the Umayyad Establishment in the East was not limited to fighting in the ranks of the *muqātilah*. He also spent some time in the entourage of al-Junayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Murri, governor of Sind; he became his translator and won his approval as well as a fortune.²

His personal connections in this part of the empire appear to have been as vast as his travels and official endeavors there, even after he took up residence in Kūfah. In addition to friends and acquaintances, especially among the freshly instated Azd and Madhḥij community in Jurjān, and to his acquaintance with Sulaymān ibn Kathīr (no.350);³ Bukayr had family connections in Sind: his brother Yazīd ibn Māhān bequeathed to him a fortune; and it was a cousin of his who wrote Bukayr to inform him of his brother's death and of the inheritance.⁴ The suggestion that the *dā'i* from Marw, 'Īsā ibn Māhān (no.211), was probably his brother⁵ is not too far-fetched. A late tradition attaches to Bukayr's name the *nisbah* 'al-Hurmuzfarahī', an ascription to the village of Hurmuzfarah of the Marw district.⁶ It is not certain whether or not Bukayr's family are the same Banū Māhān who had to their name a south eastern suburb in the Marw Oasis and, in the fourth/tenth

¹ *Akhhbār*, p. 191.

² *Ibid.*, p. 201; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1467; Dīnawarī, p. 335; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 51.

³ *Akhhbār*, pp. 191, 198-9, 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ Crone, *Slaves*, p. 178.

⁶ Sam'ānī, V: p. 635 (al-Hurmuzfarahī); Yāqūt, V: p. 403 (Hurmuzfarrah).

century, one of the three mosques in Marw.⁷ However, it is clear that Bukayr did have family relations in the Organization: one, probably two nephews, his sister's sons, 'Īsā ibn Ḥamzah al-Hamdānī (no.28)⁸ and probably al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥamzah (no.22), and a son-in-law, Abū Salamah.⁹

The most extensive reporting on Bukayr's pre-Organization background and on his revolutionary role and activities comes from *Akḥbār*, which presents a well-rounded three-dimensional character rarely encountered amongst the mostly faceless Organization members. What emerges is fairly detailed portrait of a resourceful and relentless man of stature, generosity, altruism, diligence, secretiveness, political finesse and formidable organizational ability.¹⁰

Even after his death, his image still loomed large in the minds and hearts of his followers and adversaries alike. For, in a sense, although he was only the fourth chief of the Kūfan Organization, he was in fact its true founder and the leader who extended its reach to the East. He was the first to make the systematic effort to create the structured and cohesive force which emerged as the formidable clandestine Khurāsānian chapter of the Organization, the vehicle which Abū Muslim 'hijacked' in his final drive to victory. Therefore, a reconstruction of the role of Bukayr's role in the Organization cannot be separated from the reconstruction of the genesis and evolution of the Organization itself.¹¹

II. *Early Involvement and the Creation of the Khurāsān Chapter*

Although we are indebted to *Akḥbār* for the most complete, detailed, reliable, and closely connected record of Bukayr's role and of the evolution of the Organization, *Akḥbār* supplies very few dates. And, while Balādhurī, in his *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, offers a concise and coherent sequence of the evolution of the Organization (he even supplies some details which are totally absent from *Akḥbār* as well as from Ṭabarī), his account is rife with alternative reports and is completely lacking in dates. Ṭabarī, on the other hand, offers a strict chronology but provides little sense of a connected narrative or of a continual enterprise. His chronology is also

⁷ Le Strange, p. 399.

⁸ *Akḥbār*, p. 200.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 248, 249.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 248; Dīnawarī, p. 336.

¹¹ *Akḥbār*, pp. 191, 194, 196, 198-9, 201, 247-8; see also Dīnawarī, pp. 335-6; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 50.

sometimes confused—the same events seem to recur under different years and are attributed to different personages. Therefore, establishing a precise chronology of the Organization's genesis and evolution is difficult if possible at all.

According to Ṭabarī, Bukayr was recruited in 105/723-724, upon his return from Sind and al-Junayd's service. This was achieved by five earlier members: Abū 'Ikrimah (no.61), Muḥammad ibn Khunays (no.60), Sālim al-A'mā (no.46), Maysarah al-Nabbāl (no.34), and Abū Yaḥyā (no.6).¹² Besides Ṭabarī, some other sources also first mention Bukayr at a relatively late stage—after some initial activities and a few serious approaches towards Khurāsān had already been made. According to Azdī, Bukayr first appears in 107/725-726. The account depicts him acting as a chief and dispatching to Khurāsān, amongst others, two of those who had, according to Ṭabarī, recruited him and ought to have been his seniors.¹³ His first appearance in Ya'qūbī occurs in 111/729-730, in Khurāsān, as an active *dā'i*.¹⁴ Although offering no date, Balādhurī first mentions Bukayr in the capacity of chief in Kūfah, i.e., as the successor to Maysarah al-Nabbāl, or the successor to Maysarah's successor, Sālim al-A'mā, whose tenure is ignored by all sources except *Akhbār*.¹⁵ Even Ṭabarī, who introduced Bukayr as a new recruit in 105/723-724, allows that he succeeded Maysarah in the same year, and presided over his senior recruiters. *Akhbār*'s account presents no such problems, and it offers a more plausible succession of events, more compatible with Bukayr's early succession as chief and also with his time-honored stature in the Organization. *Akhbār*'s account can be reconstructed as follows.

When Abū Hāshim died (ca. 100/718-719)¹⁶ and, allegedly, bequeathed both his claim to the *Imāmate* and his organization to the 'Abbāsīd Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, Bukayr had already been a member of that organization, which, supposedly, grew into The Organization. Bukayr's was the second name to be written down in the 'Abbāsīd *dūwān*, in Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's own hand, from the list Salamah ibn Bujayr (no.45) dictated to him. Thus, Bukayr was one of the most prominent Principal Twenty.¹⁷ His tenure in Sind, and other earlier travels which

¹² Ṭabarī, II: p. 1467; see also Dīnawarī, p. 335.

¹³ Azdī, p. 26; see also Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1489, 1492.

¹⁴ Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II: p. 319.

¹⁵ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117.

¹⁶ The date commonly accepted is ca. 100/718-719, cf. Qāḍī, *Kaysāniyyah*, pp. 208-9, n.3. Other dates are also cited: 97/715-716, according to Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II: p. 298; 99/717-718, according to Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 155.

¹⁷ *Akhbār*, p. 191.

he had undertaken, mixing services to the cause with his own personal interests and, probably, commercial enterprises must have occurred while he was committed to some proto-form of the Organization.

When the second chief of the Organization, Maysarah al-Nabbāl, died, shortly after 100/718-719; Sālim ibn Bujayr al-A'mā (no.46) became the third chief of the still tiny group. He wrote to Muḥammad ibn 'Alī with the news; and Bukayr, who had just received from Sind the mixed tidings of his brother's death and his inheritance, insisted on postponing his journey to Sind in favor of carrying out the task of conveying the news to the *Imām*, a task for which he had been chosen. He traveled under disguise to Ḥumaymah, where he established a very intimate relation with the *Imām*, and advised him to relocate his personal residence to Kudād. This was necessary, Bukayr reasoned, in order to secure privacy and to ensure secrecy – concerns which would prove to be his lasting obsession. He also suggested that, as a further precautionary measure to protect his identity, the *Imām* should designate a trusted intermediary who would receive and forward all letters between himself and his adherents. The *Imām* accepted both proposals; he took Bukayr with him to Damascus, where he introduced him to his *mawlā*, Faḍālah ibn Mu'ādh, whom he designated as the proposed intermediary in spite of Bukayr's objections. However, Bukayr's security concerns were addressed by making Faḍālah swear that he would not divulge the *Imām*'s secret, even if it meant his own demise.¹⁸

Before leaving Damascus for Kūfah, Bukayr related to the *Imām* his vast experiences and travels, especially in Jurjān and Khurāsān. He concluded that the East was the most fertile territory for cultivating the cause of the House of the Prophet, and, in a colorful and melodramatic recounting, he reported how he had won the pledges (for that general cause of *Āl Muḥammad*) of a Persian Muslim, Yazīd ibn al-Nuhayd (no.385), in the company of an already committed group of the Banū Musliyah in Jurjān; and he told the *Imām* how he had also won the pledges of the later- celebrated Sulaymān ibn Kathīr. He then proposed to spread the propaganda in the East, only to find that this had already been the firm and religiously sanctioned conviction of the *Imām*, who readily gave him his permission to start, and consecrated him as the initiator of the enterprise, with the words "*fa'anta bikru hādihā al-amr wa bika iḥtāḥuh.*" This was during the reign of 'Umar II.¹⁹

Back in Kūfah, Bukayr met Sālim and their comrades, dispensed the *Imām*'s instructions, and headed for Sind, by way of Khurāsān, in the

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 194-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 198-200.

company of Saʿīd al-Ḥarashī. This must have been in 103/721-722, when al-Ḥarashī was appointed governor of Khurāsān. Bukayr stopped first in Jurjān, where he spent a month as a guest of Abū ʿĀmir Ismāʿīl ibn ʿĀmir (no.221) and Abū ʿUbaydah Qays ibn al-Sariyy (no.317), both of the Banū Musliyah.²⁰ Jurjān would always be the first Eastern station on Bukayr's way to Khurāsān and the last on his way back to Kūfah; and this was so not only because of the natural geographical sequence. Jurjān was partly a conquest of Musliyah, a campaign in which he had participated; and it was also his Eastern 'home' when he was not in Kūfah. It was there that he began grooming the all-important circle of 'conspirators' who, though conspicuously underrepresented in the subsequent Organizational structure as depicted by the sources, would prove crucial in the affairs of the Organization some twenty-six years later.)

From Jurjān, accompanied by Abū ʿUbaydah, he left for Marw, where he spent two months as a guest of Sulaymān ibn Kathīr's. During this stop in Marw, Bukayr made some of the most important recruitments to the cause; and it appears that Khuzāʿah in particular flocked to him in impressive numbers. It is interesting to note, however, that the new recruits came to him in two separate and distinct blocks: those who were brought by Sulaymān ibn Kathīr, and those who came on their own. On the one hand, Sulaymān, an Arab of Khuzāʿah, brought Mālik ibn al-Haytham (no.252), another Arab of the same tribe, ʿAmr ibn Aʿyan (no.127), Ziyād ibn Ṣāliḥ (no.395), and Ṭalḥah ibn Zurayq (no.351), all three *mawālī* of Khuzāʿah; he also brought Abū al-Najm ʿImrān ibn Ismāʿīl (no.209), a *mawlā* of Umayyah, and Abū Dāwūd Khālīd ibn Ibrāhīm (no.237), an Arab of Bakr ibn Wā'il. On the other hand, al-ʿAlā' ibn Ḥurayth (no.121), a *mawlā* of Khuzāʿah, independently came to Bukayr with a group of anonymous members of the tribe and declared their allegiance separately. This episode foreshadows the most consequential autonomous status al-ʿAlā' enjoyed in the Organization's arm in Transoxania and Khwārizm. Among the notable recruits won over during this stop was Mūsā ibn Ka'b (no.292).²¹

After Marw, Bukayr journeyed to Sind on his personal business. There, he collected his inheritance and amassed still more fortune in al-Junayd's service.²² *Akhbār* reports nothing further about his stay in Sind, its duration, his revolutionary activities during the period, or even his return to Kūfah. However, we know from Ṭabarī, and from the fact that

²⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

²¹ Ibid., p. 201-2.

²² Ibid., p. 201.

al-Junayd's governorship of Sind ended in 105/723-724, that Bukayr went back to Kūfah that year.²³

III. *The Interim Leaderships of Maysarah al-Nabbāl and Sālim al-A'mā—Abū 'Ikrimah's Mission as the First Resident Envoy-in-Chief in Khurāsān*

The first two chiefs, Salamah ibn Bujayr and Abū Rabāḥ Maysarah al-Nabbāl (nos. 45, 34), had died in quick succession, and Sālim ibn Bujayr al-A'mā (no.46) became the third chief of the proto-organization, shortly after 100/719.²⁴ Maysarah was the first to start the practice of sending envoy-propagandists to Khurāsān. *Akhbār* does not report on Maysarah's activities; but other sources are almost unanimous on the names of some of the missionaries he sent. These were Muḥammad ibn Khunays, Abū 'Ikrimah Ziyād ibn Dirham, and Ḥayyān al-'Aṭṭār (nos. 60, 61, 23).²⁵

More important, however, is the identity of the active leader who commissioned these envoys. Was it the 'Abbāsīd Muḥammad ibn 'Alī acting directly, or Maysarah acting on the instructions of the 'Abbāsīd, or was it Maysarah acting independently? It is rather certain that the sources would involve the 'Abbāsīd *Imām* one way or the other.²⁶ But it is of special interest that Balādhurī pointedly (?) makes the case for the independence of the Kūfan leadership. In one variation he writes: "[Muḥammad ibn 'Alī] ... sent a man to Khurāsān ... It is also said that Maysarah [was the one who] sent him from Kūfah, he, [the man], was Muḥammad ibn Khunays."²⁷

The chronology of these missions, which continued through Sālim's unassuming leadership²⁸ and the first years of Bukayr's, is very confused in the sources. The most important, however, is Abū 'Ikrimah's mission. Abū 'Ikrimah remained active in Khurāsān until he was executed in 107/725-726 by Asad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī during his first governorship of the province.²⁹ But the reference here is to the specific

²³ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1467.

²⁴ *Akhbār*, pp. 192, 194. Cf. Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117. Ṭabarī dates Maysarah's death to 105/724-724, and does not mention Sālim's leadership (Ṭabarī, II: p. 1467).

²⁵ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1358, 1434; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, pp. 115-6; Dīnawarī, pp. 334-5; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II: p. 308; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 159.

²⁶ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1358; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, pp. 114-6; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II: pp. 298, 308; Dīnawarī, pp. 334-5.

²⁷ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 115; cf. Ṭabarī, II: p. 1434.

²⁸ Cf. *Akhbār*, p. 205, for an account indicative of the character of this leadership.

²⁹ Cf. *Akhbār*, pp. 203-5; Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1358, 1453, 1467, 1502-1503; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, pp. 114, 116; Azdī, pp. 18, 26; Dīnawarī, pp. 334-6; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, p. 308; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: pp. 195, 193, 197, 200.

episode of his encounter with the dissident Ghālib (no. 18). This must have occurred during Bukayr's tenure in Sind and Sālim's leadership.

Abū 'Ikrimah was reportedly sent to Khurāsān with the explicit instructions to follow in Bukayr's footsteps, i.e., to meet the people Bukayr had recruited and to report to Sālim, and, in the event Bukayr returned to Iraq, he was instructed to report to Bukayr.³⁰ He was also instructed to be cautious of a certain Ghālib.

Ghālib is mentioned in two versions of what appears to be essentially the same account. *Akhbār*'s version is attributed to a first hand source, Mūsā al-Sarrāj (no.40).³¹ Ṭabarī relates Madā'inī's paraphrased version.³² Both versions report on Abū 'Ikrimah's first mission to Khurāsān. Except for Madā'inī's assertion that Ghālib was a "man from Abrashahr" (Nishāpūr), and *Akhbār*'s wording which suggests that he may have been from Kūfah (a resolvable discrepancy), all other differences between the two versions are complementary rather than contradictory, and are attributable to style and geographic perspectives. While Madā'inī reports in précis form and, as usual, from a Khurāsānian perspective Mūsā al-Sarrāj saw the events from the Kūfan end and, allegedly, reported them verbatim.

According to *Akhbār*, when Muḥammad ibn 'Alī sent Abū 'Ikrimah off to Khurāsān, probably ca. 103/721-722, he cautioned him:

... Beware Ghālib and a small group of Kūfans who supported him in his view; amongst them are 'Ayyāsh ibn Abū 'Ayyāsh and Ziyād ibn Nadhīr; they are a small group of the Banū Tamīm; and Abū Khālīd al-Jawāliqī; for they have endeavored to sow discord. We declare ourselves free of [any relation to] them, and thou shalt do the same. They, Ghālib and his comrades, were Faṭīmiyyūn who adhered to the *Imāmate* of Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn.³³

Madā'inī, too, reports that Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's warning to Abū 'Ikrimah of Ghālib; but he goes further to report a debate between the two in Marw. Ghālib is introduced here without his group. He came from Nishāpūr to Marw, where Abū 'Ikrimah was conducting propaganda, allegedly 'Abbāsīd, amidst a large scale show of hospitality—"he took to feeding people." The two debated—one advocating the Ṭālibids, and the other the "Abbāsids".

Of course, this is improbable. It is not compatible with the 'Abbāsīd claim that the cautious approach of their propaganda was the reason

³⁰ *Akhbār*, pp. 203-5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

³² Ṭabarī, II: p. 1501.

³³ *Akhbār*, p. 204.

why the Organization's efforts were conducted in the name of *al-riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*, concealing at once the identity of the *Imām* and that of the dynasty. It is also not compatible with the stringent warnings of the alleged 'Abbāsīd directives to their missionaries not to divulge their secret except to extremely trusted people; especially that the last such directive had been issued to Abū 'Ikrimah himself, before he embarked on his present mission. It defies the claim that the *Imām* had specifically warned his emissary of this one Ghālib. If someone as distrusted as Ghālib were to be let in on the secret of the *Imām*, or even the dynasty in general, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, or any alternate 'Abbāsīd patriarch, would not have survived to die a natural death, and Ibrāhīm wouldn't have survived till the Khurāsāniyyah took Khurāsān and surged westwards.

This is one of many situations where we are faced with the task of unweaving the strands of false claims of early 'Abbāsīd involvement from the texture of historical facts. Once Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's alleged and practically inconsequential role is omitted, the result will be a tenable situation. The Organization's quarrel with Ghālib was not centered around his preference of any one specific contender as opposed to the Organization's preference of any other specific candidate. It rather had to do with the Organization's resistance to any early choices, and with its consistent policy of keeping its options open.

IV. *Bukayr's Accession as the Fourth Chief of the Organization—
First Phase: Remote Management Through Resident Envoys
(Ca. 105-109/723-728)*

Between Abū 'Ikrimah's mission and Bukayr's reappearance, probably ca. 120/738, a huge gap of almost fifteen years exists in *Akhbār's* reporting of Bukayr's activities and the evolution of the Organization.

Essentially the same gap also exists in all other sources. But a few of these sources offer some sporadic reporting of some events of the first four years, until 109/727-728, and probably one or two years towards the end of the period. Ṭabarī reports some activity in his reporting on the events of the years 105, 107, 108, 109, 113, 117 and 118/723, 725-728, 731-732, 735 and 736; Azdī reports on the years 105 and 107/723-724 and 725-726; and Dīnawarī gives no dates to his very confused and brief account. Although the conciseness, continuity and lack of dates in Balādhurī's account leave no sense of any missing links, the gap exists, and, in *Akhbār*, it is a black hole. However, in these other sources, it takes on the deceptive appearance of a series of minor gaps, with major revolutionary activities interspersed in between.

The following is a brief attempt to draw a sketchy portrait of the evolution of the Organization during this historiographical gap. The period may be divided into two broad phases. The first covers the first four years of Bukayr's leadership, approximately 105-109/723-728. The second phase starts with Khidāsh's takeover of the Khurāsān Chapter, and it ends with Bukayr's regaining control over it, in 120/738.

Sālim's tenure must have ended when he lost his eyesight.³⁴ Bukayr succeeded him, shortly after coming back from Sind,³⁵ and he apparently continued the tradition of reliance on resident envoys to Khurāsān. A number of these envoys were frequently exposed; the ruthless governor, Asad ibn 'Abd Allāh, killed many of them in the years 107, 108, 109/725-728.³⁶

Actually, the combined product of these sporadic reports is mainly a repetitious replay of the same formulaic episode of dispatching propagandist envoys to Khurāsān. Specific names, roles, dates and destinies are confused and interchangeable. Also, some organizational measures are attributed, in these sources, to some of these envoys. *Akhbār*, more credibly, attributes these very same measures to Bukayr, after he had regained control of the Khurāsān Chapter.

One major fact, however, emerges from or, rather, is confirmed by these reports, namely that, during the first decade of the second century/third decade of the seventh century, the chief propagandists were still being sent to Khurāsān and controlled from Kūfah. No organizational measures had been taken to structure the movement. The outcome was three grave results for the Kūfan leadership. Firstly, the envoys were frequently exposed and executed. Secondly, there was no systematic reassessment of the propaganda, its message, and the extent of its success. Thirdly, when the right man appeared on the provincial theatre of Khurāsān, he did reassess the message of the movement, and he tuned it to suit the territory. The success with which he met, ironically, meant the severance of the Chapter's organizational ties to the Kūfan leadership. This man was the Kūfan envoy, Khidāsh *al-dā'i* (no.58).

³⁴ Cf. *Akhbār*, p. 191.

³⁵ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117; variantly on dates and immediate predecessor, *ibid*; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1467; Dīnawarī, p. 336; Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, II: p. 319.

³⁶ Muḥammad ibn Khunays, Abū 'Ikrimah, Ziyād *Khāl* al-Walīd al-Azraq, a certain Abū Mūsā, and 'Ammār al-'Ibādī (nos.60, 61, 55, 5, 9). See: Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1488, 1492, 1502-1503; Azdī, p. 26; also, but no dates given, Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 116; Dīnawarī, p. 336. Of course, 'Ammār al-'Ibādī (no.9) could himself be the celebrated and enigmatic Khidāsh, 'Ammar ibn Yazdād (no.58), see below.

*V. The Disruption: The Khidāsh Years—Independence of the Khurāsān Chapter
(Ca. 109-118/727-737)*

More important than the aforementioned differences between *Akhbār* and the other sources are their differences on the Khidāsh question. With Khidāsh, we are actually confronted with three major questions. First, who was Khidāsh? Second, what was his message? And, third, to what extent was he successful? *Akhbār* provides two different answers to the second question, but none to the other two. Ṭabarī, Balādhurī and a few other sources provide one uniform answer to the second question, and the only scant information we have about this taboo figure. This information, though sketchy, may be enough to provide an adequate indication as to what may have happened in this historiographical black hole.

Khidāsh's original name was 'Ammar or 'Umārah, son of Yazīd or Yazdād or Zayd or Budayl.³⁷ According to Balādhurī, he was a Christian potter from al-Ḥīrah. He converted to Islam and became a teacher in Kūfah.³⁸ We do not know how he joined the Organization, nor how he attained the status which enabled him to become an envoy propagandist. Accounts, as usual, differ on whether it was Bukayr who sent him to Khurāsān,³⁹ or Muḥammad ibn 'Alī.⁴⁰ Balādhurī's style, which pointedly introduces the alternative accounts with the expression "it was also said (*wa yuqāl*)," accentuates the presence of a submerged parallel tradition. But it is instructive to note that only Balādhurī and Nāshi' mention the account that makes Muḥammad ibn 'Alī responsible for sending Khidāsh to Khurāsān. Nāshi' even attributes it to Khidāsh's followers. It was not a comfortable affair to claim credit for.⁴¹

Khidāsh commenced his mission in 109/727-728,⁴² succeeding Abū al-Ḥasan Kathīr ibn Sa'd (no.59). Balādhurī reports that Kathīr simply

³⁷ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 116; Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1503, 56; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 201; Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, V: p. 27; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216; Maqdisī, VI: pp. 60-1.

³⁸ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117; cf. Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216.

³⁹ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1588; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117; Nāshi', p. 35; Maqdisī, VI: p. 60; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216.

⁴⁰ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 116; Nāshi', pp. 34-5.

⁴¹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117.

⁴² Ṭabarī, II: p. 1503. But Ṭabarī also reports that Khidāsh was sent to the province in 118/ 736-737, (Ṭabarī, II: p. 1588). The difference between the two dates is substantial and consequential. Wellhausen doesn't argue for the first date, but he finds the second improbable (p. 514). Balādhurī gives no dates, but his sequence of the succession of the envoys appears to corroborate the earlier date. Ibn al-Athīr copies Ṭabarī on both dates, (IV: pp. 201, 135); the other sources date the event to 118, Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216; Maqdisī, VI: p. 60.

came back from Khurāsān after a tenure of three years; only then did Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, or Bukayr, dispatch Khidāsh.⁴³ In an anonymous account, Ṭabarī provides a different and consequential detail. Kathīr was still in Khurāsān, in a village called Mar‘am, preaching, apparently without much success, when Khidāsh came upon him. Ṭabarī, in this account, does not say that Khidāsh was sent by a higher authority. Actually, the nature of the encounter and its outcome suggest that it was an intrusion. “Kathīr was ‘illiterate’, *ummī*,” continues Ṭabarī, “so [Khidāsh] got the better of [him].”⁴⁴

Without going into the etymology of the term ‘*ummī*’, it can safely be assumed that, in this context, it must be understood in a general sense. Kathīr was ‘naïve’, not as cunning or ‘educated’ in the ways of conducting the movement’s propaganda as Khidāsh was. In the ensuing fight for the control of the Chapter’s apparatus, Khidāsh won. More important yet is the fact that he won the fight for its soul. Khidāsh must have found and articulated the proper message to address the provincial constituency.

What, then, was Khidāsh’s message? The standard tradition on which the sources are almost unanimous is that he changed the norms and procedures sanctioned by the ‘Abbāsid Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, (*ghayyara sunana al-Imām*), and altered the practices of his own predecessors.⁴⁵ Deviation is the key accusation. The basic content of his message is also agreed upon by the sources, with shades of variation. He preached the religion of Khurramiyyah and permitted the partisans to share their women with one another, (*aḡhara dīna al-Khurramiyyah wa da‘ā ilay-hi wa rakhkhaṣa li-ba‘dI-him fī nisā’i ba‘d*).⁴⁶ Further specific preachings that are attributed to him redefined the precepts of Islam. Fasting is refraining from divulging the *Imām*’s identity, praying is invoking God in favor of the *Imām*,⁴⁷ pilgrimage is visiting the *Imām*,⁴⁸ and *jihād* (holy war) is shedding the adversaries’ blood by assassination, poisoning, strangling, and crushing skulls. He also preached the transmigration of souls (*tanāsukh*) and God’s transformation of himself in different images (*al-*

⁴³ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, pp. 116-7.

⁴⁴ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1503.

⁴⁵ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117. Cf. Ṭabarī, II: p. 1588; Nāshī’, p. 34; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 235; Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Maqdisī, VI: p. 61; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216. This is also the gist of Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī’s alleged letter disavowing Khidāsh, *Akhbār*, pp. 212-3.

⁴⁶ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1588; cf. Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216; Maqdisī, VI: p. 61.

⁴⁷ Nāshī’, p. 33; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216.

⁴⁸ Ibn Khaldūn, III, p. 216.

qalb).⁴⁹ On the whole, from an Islamic point of view, “he represented wrong as right (*maththala al-bāṭil fi Ṣūratī al-ḥaqq*),”⁵⁰ “and stipulated reprehensible and detested stipulations (*wa ḥakama bi-aḥkāmīn munkaratīn makrūhah*).”⁵¹ That is why, according to one version, he was called Khidāsh, because he tore the religion to pieces, *Khadasha al-dīn*.⁵² *Akhbār*, in its account of Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī’s renouncement of Khidāsh, lends credence to these traditions. The *Imām* ordered the partisans not to believe anyone who may attribute to him (i.e., as Khidāsh had done) a saying or a message which contradicts the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*.⁵³

The general picture that emerges from the above essentially uniform statements is generally accepted by modern scholars.⁵⁴ Moshe Sharon, however, argues against these traditions. He writes, “There is no neutral evidence whatsoever that [Khidāsh] was Khurramī.”⁵⁵ He gives more weight to the second tradition in *Akhbār* where Khidāsh is mentioned. According to this report, a certain Abū Khālid, originally a partisan of ‘*da’wat Banī al-‘Abbās*’, dissented. After the death of Ibrāhīm al-Imām, Abū Khālid postulated that the *waṣīyyah* must be restored to the sons of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. A few years later, during Abū Muslim’s tenure, Abū Khālid and his followers rose in rebellion in Nishāpūr. They were originally followers of Khidāsh, they were called the Khālidīyyah, but during al-Manṣūr’s reign, they came to be known as the Faṭīmiyyah.⁵⁶ Basing his argument on this unique report, Sharon draws the conclusion that Khidāsh had supported the cause of the ‘Alīds. That is why, he contends, the ‘Abbāsīd propaganda distorted his image.⁵⁷

We have no argument with Sharon’s conclusion regarding Khidāsh’s ‘Alīd sympathies; it may have been the case. Actually, the aforementioned Abū Khālid may very well have been the same Abū Khālid al-Jawālīqī (no.3) who was one of Ghālib’s dissident group of ‘Alīd sympathizers, of whom Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī allegedly warned Abū

⁴⁹ Nāshī’, p. 33.

⁵⁰ Maqdisī, VI: p. 61.

⁵¹ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 117-8; Nāshī’, pp. 32-3. According to a different account, he himself assumed the name upon his arrival in Khurāsān, apparently as a *nom de guerre*, Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 116; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1588; Maqdisī, VI: p. 60; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216. The first account is clearly a fabrication. Even if the poetry cited to corroborate it is authentic, ‘*wa Kidāshu l-muḥillu idh khadasha d-dīna ...*,’ it means that the poet simply capitalized on the pun implicit in the root of the verb.

⁵³ *Akhbār*, pp. 212-3. See also below.

⁵⁴ Wellhausen, p. 510; Daniel, *Khurasan*, pp. 36-7; Madelung, ‘Mazdakism,’ pp. 1-12; Madelung, ‘Khurramiyya.’ See also below, pp. 212-9.

⁵⁵ Sharon, ‘Khidāsh,’ p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Akhbār*, pp. 403-4.

⁵⁷ Sharon, ‘Khidāsh,’ p. 2; Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 169 ff.

‘Ikrimah.⁵⁸ It is Sharon’s categorical rejection of Khidāsh’s Khurramī affiliations which cannot be accepted. Of course, it is not in defense of the ‘Abbāsīd *riwāyah* that we question Sharon’s theory, but for completely different reasons.

First, and foremost, there is no intrinsic contradiction between advocating the cause of a specific line within the holy family and preaching some extra doctrines. In this regard, the propagandist does not necessarily implicate the propagated, unless the latter is an accomplice in reaping the benefits. But even then, the stigma is not politically or ideologically irrevocable.⁵⁹

Second, in the case of Khidāsh and of Abū Muslim as well as any pragmatic operative, one’s message does not necessarily reflect one’s true beliefs. What historians look for is the resonance, the appeal with which the shrewd operative adorns his message, the ‘charm’, the rare quality of the ever-present harmonious affinity in populist movements between the ‘call’ and the ‘called’. The ‘caller’ has only to find the tune and play it with skill, not necessarily with conviction.

Khidāsh did happen on the Khurāsānite scene; he preached something which made people flock to him. The ‘Alīd cause had been preached across the land for decades—to no avail. This Khidāshist call was different. It rallied a completely different constituency to a completely different call. The admixture of indigenous Iranian beliefs and practices to the Islamic politico-religious motifs of the Organization appealed to the Iranian masses, not to the Arabized *mawālī* and the Arabs. The movement grew dangerously large. Balādhurī says that, during al-Junayd’s governorship (112-116/73-735), the *da’wah* spread and grew strong, “*intasharat du’ātu Banī Hāshim wa qawīya amruhum*.”⁶⁰

But the growth was too conspicuous for Khidāsh’s own good. A subsequent governor, Asad ibn ‘Abd Allāh, killed him in 118/736-737.⁶¹ But Khidāshism did not die with its founder, nor was it simply al-Khidāshiyyah, a mere heresy in the heresiographers’ books,⁶² that out-

⁵⁸ *Akhbār*, p. 204.

⁵⁹ Examples abound; numerous radicals, *ghulāt*, called for numerous Hāshimites- ‘Abd Allāh ibn Saba’ preached the divinity of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, for one prime example.

⁶⁰ Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, p. 527. Other sources state that people responded to Khidāsh in great numbers, Ṭabarī, IV: p. 56; Maqdisī, VI: p. 61; Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216.

⁶¹ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1589; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117; Nāshi’, pp. 34-5; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, V: p. 27; Maqdisī, VI: p. 61; Ibn Kathīr, IX: p. 333; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216. In an alternative account, Balādhurī reports that it was the ‘Abbāsīd partisans who killed Khidāsh, Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 117.

⁶² See Nāshi’, pp. 32-3, 35; Ibn Ḥazm, *Fīṣal*, V: p. 27.

survived its founder. As this study unfolds, it will investigate the human and ideological continuum in which Khidāsh's call resonated.⁶³

VI. *Second Phase of Bukayr's Leadership: Regaining Control over the Khurāsān Chapter, the 'General Assembly', Restructuring*

A long apocalyptic sermon by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī occupies the pages of *Akhhbār* between the last events preceding the gap (Bukayr's last appearance and Abū 'Ikrimah's mission)⁶⁴ and the first event thereafter (Bukayr's reappearance).⁶⁵ The void is, of course, not acknowledged. Bukayr reappears as if continuing an activity from the previous day, rather than resuming one which had been denied him for over a decade. Despite this, the chronology can easily be deduced, Bukayr reappears carrying two letters from the *Imām* to his Khurāsānian adherents. The first was a very lengthy, pedagogic letter.⁶⁶ The second was a much shorter letter renouncing Khidāsh.⁶⁷ This helps place Bukayr's reappearance after Kidāsh's execution, i.e., ca. 120/738. Furthermore, the *Imām's* apocalyptic sermon is quoted as having foretold that the beginnings of Umayyad decay would coincide with the simultaneous occurrence of the two cracks in the east and in the west, *fatqā al-maghrib wa al-mashriq*, and these two cracks are interpreted to have been the resurgence of the insurgency of al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj in Khurāsān and that of the Berber under Maysarah al-Saqqā' in North Africa; and Bukayr's reappearance is reported to have come on the heels of both flares,⁶⁸ i.e., ca. 119-120/737-738.⁶⁹ Moreover, the date of Bukayr's reappearance is explicitly stated in Ṭabarī. He reports that Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, in 120/738, sent Bukayr to Khurāsān on a damage control mission to contain the consequences of Khidāsh's conduct there.⁷⁰

Before leaving these two accounts, it must be noted that an internal contradiction in Ṭabarī's account confirms a suggestion imparted by *Akhhbār's* muddled report: namely, that Bukayr, the pillar of the Organization in both Kūfah and Khurāsān, had to be reintroduced to the Khurāsānian chapter, and in a humiliating manner at that.

⁶³ See below, especially the immediately following section, and chapters three, six, and eight.

⁶⁴ *Akhhbār*, p. 205.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-12.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁶⁹ Cf. Ṭabarī II: p. 1608 ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 222.

⁷⁰ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1640.

Akhbār, the more confessional or avid ‘Abbāsīd mouthpiece, claims, in a grandiose fashion, that the much strengthened and expanded ‘Shī‘ah’ of Khurāsān venerated Bukayr the instant they met him; then, when the *Imām*’s lengthy and pedagogic letter was read to them, they prayed for him and extolled his letter. Next, when Bukayr produced the shorter letter renouncing Khidāsh, and absolving the *Imām* of what Khidāsh had falsely attributed to him, they responded by confirming that they had already received from the *Imām* something to the same effect, and that they were in a state of obedience and compliance. Now, in reverse order, came an ostensibly uncalled for and rather inexplicable letter, introducing Bukayr and recommending him as the *Imām*’s confidant who should be strictly obeyed. If Bukayr had been sufficiently known to the partisans as to be met with veneration before any letter was read, why did he have to be introduced! The only effort made to explain this anomaly was the claim that the letter had been sent earlier with Qaḥṭabah, who was able to produce it only in this circumstance because he had been detained by sickness. Of course, the response to the letter was that the adherents grew yet more respectful and aggrandizing of Bukayr, and they entrusted him with their affairs.⁷¹

The more objective Ṭabarī, despite the internal contradiction apparent in his account when taken in its totality, presents elements from which a more logical version may be reconstructed. What is puzzling in Ṭabarī’s account, however, is that he speaks of two angry parties—Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, on the one hand, and his presumed Khurāsānian adherents, on the other—each performing two sets of actions in succession and, indeed, almost in the same breath. These two courses of action taken by each party are mutually incompatible, and one of them is definitely untenable under the supposedly prevailing psychological mood of its perpetrator, and in view of the declared infuriator-infuriated relationship between the two parties. First, the *Imām*, angry with his adherents for following Khidāsh’s misleading guidance, snubbed them and discontinued all communications with them; the adherents, puzzled by their *Imām*’s attitude, delegated, in a concerned and deferential gesture, Sulaymān ibn Kathīr to find out why, and, ostensibly, to appease him. The *Imām* chastised his adherents, and sent their envoy back, virtually empty handed—with a sealed, but blank scroll. They then realized that they had been misguided by Khidāsh. Next, in a blatant reversal of roles, the *Imām* sent his own envoy, Bukayr, to his adherents, with a letter disowning Khidāsh, and

⁷¹ *Akhbār*, pp. 208-213.

washing his hands of his legacy (after an untold number of years of silence!). The defiant adherents snubbed his envoy and sent him back in humiliation. Unabashed, the *Imām* sent Bukayr once again, this time with a coded message – “sticks tipped, some with iron and some with brass,” which Bukayr distributed amongst the *naqībs* and other adherents. Then they understood that they had deviated from the *Imām*’s course, and they repented.⁷² Wellhausen, appropriately, and almost sarcastically remarks: “They must have understood the meaning of the sticks better than I.”⁷³ It simply does not add up!

Both the confusion in *Akhbār*’s account and the internal contradiction in Ṭabarī’s precipitate a lingering and unmistakable suspicion that both accounts, like most others where the ‘Abbāsīd connection is tapped, originated in a milieu of ‘enriched’ historical data, where the bare historical facts had been subjected to a thorough, though not unflawed, process of weaving strands of ideological fiction into the fabric of historical reality. Both accounts are unsuccessful attempts to paper over the intentional obliteration of the records of over a decade, that obliteration which caused the aforementioned historiographical gap. This tampering with historical data was meant to salvage the claim of an early, continuous, and effective ‘Abbāsīd involvement from the potential damage which the denial of the events of an entire decade could wreak upon it. This is especially so in the case of *Akhbār*, an account that implicitly boasts putting the entire history of the *da‘wah* in the limelight of reliably transmitted history. The bare facts were that, during the gap of a decade or so, the Khurāsān chapter had broken away from the Kūfan headquarters. After the elimination of Khidāsh, the Kūfan leadership succeeded in regaining control, but only after some stiff resistance on the part of the provincial cadres.

In his attempts to gloss over the disruption, the compiler of *Akhbār* does not cease to blur the issues and the sequence of events. Concluding the section in which the *Imām*’s letters were read to the obedient crowd of Khurāsānian adherents, and introducing Bukayr’s next action, *Akhbār* states:

When [the *Imām*’s letter ordering the partisans to obey Bukayr] was read to them, they aggrandized Abū Hāshim [Bukayr] all the more and entrusted him with their affairs. He stayed in their midst, reaching out to the districts of Khurāsān through his envoys and propagandists; and he became subject to [widespread] attention.

⁷² Ṭabarī, II: p. 1641; cf. Nāshī, p. 34; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 235; Maqdisī, VI: p. 61; Ibn Khaldūn, III: p. 216.

⁷³ Wellhausen, p. 511, n.1.

Then, when the situation in Khurāsān became tumultuous, (*thumma lammā Idṭaraba amru Khurāsān*), Bukayr gathered the 'Shr'ah' in Sulaymān ibn Kathīr's house.⁷⁴

On its face value, the above text appears to relate, in chronological order, four consecutive occurrences. These are:

- (1) Bukayr's effortless and smooth assumption of the reins of leadership of the Khurāsān chapter;
- (2) his immediate and unchallenged settling into the role, conducting a province-wide propaganda campaign;
- (3) then, the occurrence of some trouble of an unexplained nature in Khurāsān.
- (4) And, in the wake of the above disturbance, Bukayr's convening of a meeting of the 'Shr'ah'.

This is actually a scrambled order of events. A key to restoring a more viable order may be found if we take a closer look at the situation in Khurāsān.

If the chronology established hitherto is accepted, it must also be accepted that there was no turmoil on the provincial scale in Khurāsān around this time. Asad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qasrī had died early in 120/738,⁷⁵ concluding a successful second tenure as governor of the province, during which he had crushed the Turgesh and effectively extinguished al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj's revolt in Dhū al-Hijjah 119 or 118/December 737 or 736.⁷⁶ An interim period of four months followed his death, during which the position was filled by Ja'far ibn Ḥanẓalah al-Bahrānī,⁷⁷ or by Ja'far and then by Juday' ibn 'Alī al-Kirmānī, in short but peaceful succession.⁷⁸ Then, in Rajab of the same year, i.e., 120/June-July 738, the powerful Naṣr ibn Sayyār was installed.⁷⁹ Thus, these were hardly tumultuous times in the province.

Therefore, the 'tumultuous situation' referred to in *Akhbār's* statement must be explained in terms of the internal commotion within the ranks of the Organization. Ṭabarī's preceding account, in both its two contradictory varieties, is firmly grounded in the fact that this commotion was a lingering consequence of the events of the Khidāsh years. The 'tumultuous situation' did not arise after Bukayr had arrived in the province. It had actually accrued from the chaotic growth of the Organization; and it materialized in the authorities' cracking down on

⁷⁴ *Akhbār*, p. 213.

⁷⁵ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1635-8; cf. Wellhausen, pp. 473-4.

⁷⁶ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1603 ff.; cf. Wellhausen, pp. 471-2.

⁷⁷ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1638.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, IV: p. 78.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

the Organization. The situation thus arising was alarming to the Kūfan leadership, but it was also an opportunity for that leadership; to try to regain control of the mutinous Chapter. Thus the usually articulate Balādhurī explicitly states that, after Khidāsh's elimination, "Bukayr went to Khurāsān and mended what Khidāsh had spoiled."⁸⁰

Nor could it have been all that simple for Bukayr to immediately regain control upon his arrival (as *Akhbār's* celebration of the alleged harmony and as Balādhurī's synoptic brevity would have us believe). Despite its internal contradictions, Ṭabarī's version of Bukayr's reappearance⁸¹ depicts in no uncertain terms the resistance he had to contend with. Moreover, even from *Akhbār's* unique report of the proceedings of the meeting at Sulaymān ibn Kathīr's house, a fairly clear idea can be gleaned of Bukayr's uncertain and cautious tentativeness as well as the conflicting interests and currents in the ranks of the partisans.⁸² Therefore, rather than being the last event in Bukayr's present trip to the province, this meeting must have been only a milestone, albeit the major and conclusive one, in his struggle to regain control of the Chapter.

The meeting must have also taken place during the relatively lax interim period between the tenures of the two strong governors. It is probably not likely that a meeting of such size and importance, even though it took place on a private estate, would have escaped notice by the watchful eyes and the punishing hands of either Naṣr or Asad, both of whom possessed a record of efficient intelligence operations against such clandestine activities. Moreover, both Ibn Ḥanẓalah and al-Kirmānī (and the latter's heirs) would subsequently display some sort of affinity to the new regime or to the victorious Organization. Although nothing more should, or could, be made of them, the following facts merely favor this interim period over the periods bracketing it as the probable time frame for the meeting. Later Ja'far became close to al-Manṣūr, and served in the new government until at least 146/763,⁸³ and Kirmānī's sons and followers allied themselves with Abū Muslim in

⁸⁰ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 118. Sharon takes the expression, '*thumma lammā idharaba amru Khurāsān*,' at face value, and uses it to date the assembly to 126, 'when the tribal struggle was being renewed in Khurāsān,' (*Black Banners*, p. 189). Lassner understands it better, although still in the context of 'Abbāsīd involvement, (*Revolution*, pp. 77-8). The article 'then', (*thumma*), must not be strictly read as a conjunction denoting a chronological order in which the events depicted in *Akhbār's* account occurred. It is linguistically accepted, and historiographically more sensible, to read it as an article for inception (*ḥarf isti'naḥ*).

⁸¹ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1640.

⁸² Cf. *Akhbār*, pp. 214-5; also *infra*, chapter thirteen.

⁸³ Ṭabarī, III: pp. 116, 125, 223-4, 291, 318, 327.

Jumādā II, 130/February, 748.⁸⁴ Therefore, this meeting took place, probably, sometime in the second quarter of 120/738.

This meeting, which took the proportions of a general assembly, marked the real birth or at least the vital re-birth of the Organization as a potent, hierarchically and functionally structured underground movement, jealously guarded and firmly controlled. This organizational revamping created a flexible but solid, beehive-like organization, which ensured secrecy and an extensive reach into the remote districts of the province, but which also kept the reins gathered in Marw, and the power concentrated in the hands of an elite group headed by a Marwite. It also restored and provided for a sustained dependence on Kūfah for spiritual inspiration and strategic guidance and command. It was thus a superbly balanced blend of strict central control enshrined in secrecy and an elastic allowance for maximum room to reach the vast landscape of untapped and alienated masses.

The general assembly created an elaborate leadership structure and manned it. *Akhhbār* provides the following lists: 12 *naqībs* (headmen); 12, or 20, or 21 *naẓīr naqībs* (alternate headmen); 58, actually 59, *dāʿīs* (propagandists); and yet a second list of 70 *dāʿīs*, actually 65; and, finally, 37 *dāʿī duʿāts* (junior propagandist?).⁸⁵ Some names occurred in more than one of these lists. In all, a total of 147 names, all Khurāsānians, make up the above six lists.⁸⁶

Before adjourning, Bukayr accepted the pledges of all present, to guard their secret, and he solicited financial donations for the *Imām*. When a big sum of money was collected, he was ready to leave. He left Sulaymān ibn Kathīr in charge of the Organization, and recommended that they defer to the discretion and judgement of Abū Ṣālih Kāmil ibn al-Muẓaffār (no.232). A company of Marwite 'Shīʿites' travelled with him on his usual route to Jurjān, where they stayed for a month, collected Jurjān's generous donations, were joined by another company of Jurjānid 'Shīʿites,' and then they all headed west to Kūfah.

In Kūfah they were joined by Abū Salamah and, allegedly, proceeded to Ḥumaymah, where the collected donations were handed over to the *Imām*.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.

⁸⁵ *Akhhbār*, pp. 213-23.

⁸⁶ A detailed analysis of these lists and their significance is undertaken in chapter thirteen, *infra*. Cf. Omar, 'Abbāsīd Caliphate', pp. 72-4, 352-6; Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 189-98; Daniel, *Khurasan*, pp. 33-6; Lassner, *Revolution*, pp. 77-82.

⁸⁷ *Akhhbār*, pp. 223-4.

VII. *Shuttle Management and the Maturity of Bukayrism—
Asserting the Strategic Independence of the Organization
and Its Uniqueness on the Proto-Shī'ite Theatre*

This above exercise would become a pattern for Bukayr, whose shuttle management of the Organization lasted all through the first half of Naṣr ibn Sayyār's ten years governorship. At least two, or probably three more such trips are reported.

The first of these three is the one which cannot be confirmed as having been a separate trip. We meet Bukayr in Kūfah, on his way back from Ḥumaymah. In one of the rare occasions where *Akhbār* supplies any dates, it explicitly states in this instance that this return to Kūfah occurred at the beginning of 122/740.⁸⁸ This could scarcely have been the return ending the trip mentioned above, which featured the 'general assembly', in the second quarter of 120/738; this is, of course, provided the above chronology is correct. Of course, it does not have to have been the final leg of a trip to Khurāsān either, as it could have theoretically been a come-back from a separate trip to Ḥumaymah. This is doubtful, however, since the whole Ḥumaymah connection is viewed here with great suspicion.

VII.1 *The Assertion of the Organization's Independence in the Context of Zayd ibn 'Alī's Rising*

The more important feature of this juncture, however is that it coincided with the preliminaries of Zayd ibn 'Alī's revolt in Kūfah and occurred just before its actual eruption; this must have been in Muḥarram 122/December, 739. Bukayr's position (and, by extension, that of the Organization) towards this 'Alīd revolt is a telling element in exposing and understanding the role and nature of 'Abbāsid apocalypics. This position is also an exponent of the real connections of the Organization on the Hāshimite scene, and of its obstinate and ruthless insistence on the independence of its strategic agenda.

The author of *Akhbār* carefully and skillfully synthesizes three reports attributed to three different participants cum witnesses. The fabric he thus weaves brings together apocalypics fiction, subtle apologetic and factual reporting. First, an unnamed source relates:

I heard Abū Hāshim [Bukayr] saying: Muḥammad ibn 'Alī said unto me: 'The time has come over you when the uprising of a man from my family in Kūfah is impending; he shall be deluded in his uprising like others

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 230.

[before him] have been, and he shall be slain in vain and crucified. Thou shalt warn the Shī'ah in your domain of his enterprise.'⁸⁹

Second, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr al-Muslī (no.7) reports that he and others of the same Kūfān Shī'ite milieu visited Bukayr as he came back to Kūfah from Sharāt,⁹⁰ at the beginning of 122/739-740. This coincided with Zayd's preparations and the growing awareness of his imminent insurrection. Bukayr asked Ibn 'Umayr about the news, thus initiating the following interesting conversation:

I, [Ibn 'Umayr], said: 'We have been speaking [of the fact] that Zayd ibn 'Alī is about to rebel; the people of Kūfah have agreed (*atbaqa*) to rise with him. Your neighbor, Abū Kidām, has buckled down to his enterprise.' Abū Kidām was a man from Hamdān, [attached as] a neighbor of Banū Musliyah. [Bukayr] said: 'Woe to Abū Kidām! It is as if I can picture him imminently slain or banished, and Zayd crucified in Kunāsah.' His, [Bukayr's], statement enraged me, [Ibn 'Umayr], because of my sympathies towards Zayd and Zayd's Family; so I said: 'You have always been bringing us lies with which you depress us. By God, I indeed anticipate that God would eradicate the regime of Banū Umayyah by means of Zayd, and you would [then] boast no precedence [of a contribution to his cause].' Bukayr said: 'I know what you do not know. Stay in your homes and avoid Zayd's men and do not mix with them; for, by God, he will indeed be killed and crucified in the gathering place [in the communal presence] of your comrades. As for what you said about the eradication of the reign of Banū Umayyah, how imminent that is!' Then he, [Bukayr], summoned his brethren, [fellow members of his order], amongst the Shī'ah, *ikhwānu-hu min al-Shī'ah*, cautioned them of Zayd's enterprise, relayed to them their *Imām's* statement about him, and ordered them to stay in their homes until their time came when their banner would be hoisted.⁹¹

The author interrupts Ibn 'Umayr's report here to inject a dose of naked reality into the woven account. The third reporter, Yaḳṭīn ibn Mūsā (no.51) is made to interject:

Yaḳṭīn ibn Mūsā said: At the time, I had been exclusively devoting [myself] to Abū Salamah. It happened that we were at Abū Hāshim's, [Bukayr's], when someone came to him and said: 'Zayd has risen in revolt and has ordered the people to come to the mosque.' [Yaḳṭīn] said: So he, [Bukayr], said: 'Let us move away from these [people] and their evils.' He left [Kūfah], and we, myself and Abū Masrūr 'Īsā ibn Ḥamzah, left with him. We came to Ḥīrah and resided there until Zayd was killed and crucified. Then we went back to Kūfah as people had calmed down.⁹²

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 230.

⁹⁰ The Jordan district where Ḥumaymah is located.

⁹¹ *Akhbār*, p. 231.

⁹² Ibid., p. 231.

Ibn 'Umayr then is made to resume from where Yaqtīn stops:

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr said: Then I met Abū Hāshim and said to him: 'By God, I have never witnessed anything more astonishing than your talk! By God, you were as if you had been seeing [with your own eyes] Zayd's episode and what happened to him. Indeed, he is now crucified in Kunāsah.'⁹³

Of course there is no intention here to undermine the whole account. It is too unique and precious for that. We must, however, try to unweave the strands of familiar 'Abbāsīd apocalyptic and apologetics from the fibres of reality. It is superfluous to say that Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's prediction of Zayd's revolt is difficult to accept. But even if we were to grant that, since Zayd's preparations were not a well-guarded secret, the *Imām* might have known about it, then there would be no reason to make such a big thing out of it. Multitudes of others knew about it; in fact, the whole Shī'ite community of Kūfah did, as did, without recourse to any special refined intelligence effort, Iraq's governor, Yūsuf ibn 'Umar al-Thaqafī who aborted the uprising without much ado.⁹⁴ Were it to be assumed that the *Imām* had the foresight or the intuition to anticipate Zayd, a co-member of the *de facto* 'board of chiefs' of the Banū Hāshim, simply because he must have known Zayd's views and temperament, it remains untenable that he would have foreseen Zayd's failure, crucifixion, and death. Nor did Bukayr have any way of supplementing the *Imām*'s prophecy by specifying Kunāsah as the site of crucifixion.

If this reflects the wishful thinking of the 'Abbāsīds at the time, and the apologetic flavor of their future opportunistic make-believe sorrow over the destinies of the 'Alīds who had fallen victim to the Umayyad sword,⁹⁵ it certainly has no place in the authentic annals of the Organization and in its real connections to the different branches of the Hāshimite clan. This also applies to the aggrandizing of Bukayr's supplemental or native prophetic talents, which are echoed in other reports as well.⁹⁶

This familiar lofty, wisely and compassionately knowing image was bestowed on Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, and on his heir Ibrāhīm, both in partnership with Bukayr. And it was conveniently smuggled into the stream of recorded historical events for the purpose of fabricating an

⁹³ Ibid., p. 231.

⁹⁴ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1699 ff.; Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, p. 135 ff.

⁹⁵ E.g., *Akhhbār*, p. 242.

⁹⁶ Cf. e.g. *Akhhbār*, pp. 247, 249-50; Azdī, p. 136; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, IV: p. 481.

early, active and paramount presence for the ‘Abbāsids at the helm of the Organization and on the ‘Shī‘ite’ theater.

The theater, of course, did exist, at least in its proto-type formations; but any positively or negatively active presence belonged only to the real players: the alert Umayyad authorities, the frothy Kūfan ‘Shī‘ite’ masses in a state of flux, the temperamental and impatient Zayd ibn ‘Alī with his tiny group of dedicated and committed followers, and the noncommittal, cautious, patient, scheming, secretive, cunning Organization, which held its own strategic cause above that of any and all Hāshimite contenders, be they Ṭālibids, Ja‘farids, ‘Alīds, Fāṭimids, Ḥanafids, or ‘Abbāsids—that is, if the latter were real contenders at all.

Akhhbār is not particularly a source of information on Zayd’s movement, which is well-documented in the general historical sources and in some specific ones as well. It is interesting, however, to note that *Akhhbār* agrees with other sources on the relatively huge number of 15,000 adherents who were enrolled in Zayd’s *ḍiḡwān* in Kūfah. Both *Akhhbār* and Iṣfahānī state that this figure represents adherents in Kūfah alone; Ṭabarī does not qualify. And, while Iṣfahānī mentions Khurāsān amongst the areas where Zayd did have pledged (but uncounted) supporters, *Akhhbār*, predictably, does not.⁹⁷ But what is truly novel in *Akhhbār*’s account is the exposure of the active role assumed by the Organization in frustrating and discouraging support for Zayd amongst the general ‘Shī‘ite’ masses, a role which undoubtedly contributed to the deflation of his movement, even before its eventual demise.

What emerges from this account is the simple fact that the Organization refused to be prematurely rushed into action by amateur or over-zealous revolutionaries. In this respect, the Organization was a novel phenomenon in the history of ‘Shī‘ite’ movements (or, for that matter, of all Islamic revolutionary movements hitherto, save the Prophet’s, whose movement though incomparable to any, was also very well planned and carefully prepared—although substantially conducted in the open). The Organization resisted an active *imām* setting the pace. This corollary confirms and renders applicable to the Organization a perceptive observation by Wadād Qāḍī. She contends that a major influence of al-Mukhtār on subsequent Kaysāniyyah splinter sects was the neutralization of the *Imām* to such an extent that he was denied any executive or decision-making powers.⁹⁸

One more precious yield of this rich account is the extremely vivid portrait it depicts of this cross section of the Kūfan ‘Shī‘ite’ scene,

⁹⁷ *Akhhbār*, p. 232; Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, p. 135; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1685.

⁹⁸ Qāḍī, *Kaysāniyyah*, p. 109.

specifically in the Banū Musliyah quarter.⁹⁹ It shows that other contemporary 'Shī'ite' leanings coexisted in this particular community, which was alleged to have been an exclusive domain of the 'Abbāsids, but which was, more realistically, the Kūfan bastion of the Organization.

VII.2 *Shuttle Pattern and Frequency*

Bukayr's next reported trip to Khurāsān¹⁰⁰ took place sometime after Zayd had been killed,¹⁰¹ and it allegedly ended in Ḥumaymah shortly before Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's death ca. 124/741-742,¹⁰² or earlier, at some unrelated date.¹⁰³

Though it is difficult to date this trip with precision, it may be possible, by inference, to substantially narrow it down to a probable date.¹⁰⁴ When Zayd revolted, Bukayr had just come back to Kūfah from a recent trip, and, unless a particular urgency called for it, it is unlikely that he would have immediately embarked on another. The sequence of the narrative in *Akhhbār* suggests that Bukayr made the trip after Yahyā ibn Zayd had already fled to Khurāsān, after he had spent six months in Sarakhs hiding in the house of Yazīd ibn 'Umar, and after he had

⁹⁹ See also *Akhhbār*, pp. 192, 194, 247, 249.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁰¹ In *Ṣafar* 122/January 740, *Ṭabarī*, II: p. 1701.

¹⁰² *Akhhbār*, p. 239.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

¹⁰⁴ Putting aside the question of the authenticity of the Ḥumaymah connection it is probably safe sometimes to use the dates mentioned in connection with it as a tentative frame of reference, in order to help establish a chronology of events that relate to the Organization. For, even though our suspicion that the later 'Abbāsīd propaganda machine did superimpose reports of 'Abbāsīd involvement on an existing structure of authentic events may very well be justified, it remains credible to assume that such a calculated and cunning process would have made every effort, where tenable, to bring its additive or fabricated material into conformity with the existing facts. It is probably as credible to assume that, when such conformity was untenable, the cosmetic operation would have moved into an advanced level of interference with the bone structure of authentic events, to change or rearrange them. Therefore, each case must be taken on its own merit. But, some self-evident guidelines do exist (indicators which point out to the researcher which of the two types of 'conformity' is being encountered). If a potential incompatibility was benign, precedence would have had to be given to the facts; and the fabricated material would have had to be custom-tailored to suit the 'specifications' mandated by the authentic events, especially where such events would have occurred in the context of the overt affairs of the community. If the potential incompatibility was consequential, historical facts were not sacrosanct, especially where such facts would have occurred in a clandestine context, where only a limited and manageable number of individuals would have been privy to the situation. History was manipulatable (indeed, even Prophetic traditions were). In the 'Abbāsīd *riwāyah*, everything was permitted, even the glorification of Mu'āwiyah's *ḥilm*, so long as it helped make believable 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās' improbable daring and insolence.

moved to Balkh to stay in hiding at al-Ḥarīsh ibn Abī al-Ḥarīsh's.¹⁰⁵ This must have consumed the remainder of the year 122/740. Hence, Bukayr's present trip could not have taken place before 123/740-741, and probably late in the year, if the end of the trip is to be related with Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's death in 124/741-742. This indicates a lapse of two years between these two trips punctuated by Zayd's death and the fleeing of his son. All that may be suggested by this, however, is that two years elapsed between the present and the previous reported trips; but theoretically, there could have been one or more unreported trips between these two. No frequency pattern can therefore be established for Bukayr's trips during this period of shuttle management.

On this present trip, Bukayr followed the same routine. He started in Jurjān where he spent a month, then moved on to Marw where he conducted his propaganda and sent his emissaries to the districts from a secret headquarter, at the house of one of the adherents—in this instance, Kāmil ibn al-Muẓaffar. When Naṣr ibn Sayyār was informed of his presence, Bukayr moved from Ibn al-Muẓaffar's house to that of Khālīd ibn 'Uthmān or 'Isā ibn A'yan, stayed for one more month and then went back to Kūfah, after which he, allegedly, went to Ḥumaymah.¹⁰⁶

VII.3 *Was Yaḥyā ibn Zayd an Aborted Possibility for a Suitable Ridā?*

The role played by Bukayr in Kūfah, i.e., discouraging the 'Shī'ites' from supporting Zayd, he now repeated, discouraging the Khurāsānians from supporting Yaḥyā, undoubtedly for the same strategic reasons and allegedly under the same pretext. Said Bukayr, warning his partisans:

Yaḥyā ibn Zayd is hiding in your midst, and you will soon behold him rising against these people, [the Umayyads]. None of you should rise with him or contribute to his cause, for he is indeed [a] slain [man], and the *Imām* has already announced his [future] death to his family.¹⁰⁷

But the highlight of *Akḥbār*'s account of Bukayr's present trip is the nature of the tip brought to Naṣr ibn Sayyār:

... A man of the Banū Tamīm by the name Abū al-Ḥajjāj had mixed with the Shī'ah but did not thoroughly know the essence of what they were about; he came to Naṣr and submitted to him that in Marw a propagandist (*dā'iyyah*), whose followers had become numerous, was

¹⁰⁵ *Akḥbār*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-3.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

propagandizing for Yaḥyā ibn Zayd, and that he was residing in such a place—and he described Bukayr's place.¹⁰⁸

It is of course expected of *Akhbār* to deny, or relegate to a misconception, any hint suggesting that another Hāshimite, other than the 'Abbāsīd of the time, could have been a possible candidate for the Organization's propaganda or, more accurately, a potential *riḍā* in the common Shī'ite perception or anticipation. But a closer look into the nature of Yaḥyā's movement and its circumstances suggests that the very possibility that *Akhbār* relegates to a misconception may very well have been the more likely state of affairs.

At the time, i.e., ca. 123/740-741, Yaḥyā, a terrified youth of only nineteen years of age, was in deep hiding in Balkh and could not have shown any promise—or danger—of a premature and independent insurrection which the Organization might have viewed as a potentially disruptive movement. Even when he did eventually rebel in 125/742-743, he was rather coerced into doing so by being fetched from his hiding place, and by the subsequent relentless efforts of Naṣr's men to drive him west into the ruthless grip of Iraq's governor, Yūsuf ibn 'Umar, whom he dreaded.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, even Bukayr's discouragement and prohibition of all forms of support for Yaḥyā's ill-conceived, ill-timed, ill-executed and inconveniently independent movement cannot be accepted. Although such an attitude on Bukayr's part towards such an adversely qualified movement is, by itself, credible, it cannot be considered so at the time when it is reported to have been expressed, and under the circumstances which clearly indicate that Yaḥyā's movement, unlike his father's, occurred perforce and without any preliminaries, and well after Bukayr's reported warning.

Moreover, Yaḥyā's first hiding place was the house of Yazīd ibn 'Umar, a brother of a member of the Organization, Tamām ibn 'Umar (no.352), and possibly a member himself. Yaḥyā was so popular amongst the 'Shī'ah' of Khurāsān that their wealthy competed in an auction to buy the chains with which he had been bound, and it sold for twenty thousand dirhams.¹¹⁰ All the boys born in Khurāsān in the year he was killed were named after him,¹¹¹ and his murder was later used by Abū Muslim as a rallying theme against the authority that slew him. After his capture of Khurāsān, Abū Muslim brought down Yaḥyā's crucified body, performed prayers and buried it, ordered that he be mourned

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 242-4; Tabarī, II: pp. 1770-4; Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, pp. 152-8.

¹¹⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, p. 155.

¹¹¹ Mas'ūdī, VI: p. 3.

throughout the province, and pursued his murderers and executed every one of them he could find.¹¹²

So, the allegedly skewed perception of Abū al-Ḥajjāj, Naṣr's informer, may have been not so skewed after all. Yahyā, the unassuming, terrified 'Alīd youth, son of a martyr, could very well have been a perceived candidate for the position of a figurehead *Imām* of a still uncommitted Organization, which was conducting its propaganda in the name of a secret, unknown, or more accurately, as yet unchosen, but acceptable descendant of the Prophet's House, *al-riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*.

VII.4 *Ibrāhīm al-Imām 'Succeeds' His Father in the Finest 'Abbāsīd Tradition*

Muḥammad ibn 'Alī died, but not before a final fit of apocalyptic utterances in which he foretold Bukayr and the company of everything to come, from the tribal strife in Khurāsān to the accession of Abū al-'Abbās and the slaying of Marwān ibn Muḥammad in Egypt at the hands of a Musliyyite, and an assortment of other things.¹¹³ Bukayr stayed for a few days with the *Imām's* successor, his son Ibrāhīm, and then made for Khurāsān, by way of Kūfah, in a hurry to break the news. He performed the same routine, and, on his way back, he was accompanied by a delegation of 'Shrīite' notables, from both Marw and Jurjān, to meet Ibrāhīm, introduce themselves to him, and reaffirm their loyalty.¹¹⁴

In 125/743, they arrived in Kūfah, where they learnt of caliph Hishām's recent death and the accession of al-Walīd II.¹¹⁵ Ṭabarī, however, places the whole trip in 126/743-744 but expresses his reservations by introducing his report with the phrase: "according to what some [reporters] claimed."¹¹⁶ Bukayr and the Khurāsānian delegation stayed in Kūfah for only a short time and proceeded to meet Ibrāhīm in Makkah. Makkah's being the place suggests that the meeting may have occurred during the pilgrimage season, i.e., Dhū al-Qa'dah—Dhū al-Ḥijjah, the 11th—12th months of 125/September of 743. This presents a slight difficulty in dating the sequence of events. For them to have heard in Kūfah of Hishām's recent death and Walīd II's accession, Bukayr and his company must have arrived there in the same month, i.e., ca. Rabī' II or, at the latest, early Jumādā I, the 4th or 5th months

¹¹² *Akhhār*, pp. 288, 327; Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, p. 158; Ibn al-Athīr, IV: p. 260.

¹¹³ *Akhhār*, pp. 237-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-1.

¹¹⁶ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1869.

of 125/February or early March of 743; otherwise, they would have heard of the news in Khurāsān or on their way from there to Kūfah. This leaves at least six months between their arrival in Kūfah and the pilgrimage season, and this is too long for it to have been the short period they are reported to have stayed in Kūfah between their arrival there and their departure to meet Ibrāhīm in Makkah. The internal logic of the account further corroborates their leaving Khurāsān before Hishām's death, i.e., also before the hunting party went after Yaḥyā ibn Zayd at the outset of Walīd II's reign. In a provocative remark made to Ibrāhīm by a zealous member of the Khurāsānian delegation, the zealot said: "... we left Zayd [ibn 'Alī] crucified in Kunāsah and his son [Yaḥyā] exiled in the land."¹¹⁷

Now Bukayr and company handed over to Ibrāhīm a huge sum of money which they had brought with them. Ibrāhīm's brother, Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad, the future infamous butcher of Mawṣil during the reign of al-Saffāh, took notice of his brother's good fortune and threatened to expose his revolutionary connection unless he paid him off. Ibrāhīm bought his brother's silence for 5,000 dirhams and cautioned the 'Shī'ah' of his extremely weak character.¹¹⁸ The Khurāsānian delegates went back home to extol Ibrāhīm's virtues, and Bukayr went with Ibrāhīm to Sharāt, where we witness Ibrāhīm's grief over the news of Yaḥyā ibn Zayd's slaying.¹¹⁹ Bukayr also took the opportunity to ask the *Imām* about his father's prophecy regarding the timing of their triumph and the hoisting of their Black Banners. Ibrāhīm obliged by expounding the religious significance of the color and confirming the prophecy, a confirmation made complete with his declaration of the year 130/747-748 as the decisive date. Now he instructed Bukayr to proceed to Khurāsān and to order the 'Shī'ah'

¹¹⁷ *Akhbār*, p. 241. Of course, the meeting may have occurred during a pre-planned minor pilgrimage, *'umrah*. It may also have never taken place. In all cases, it is of very little consequence, except inasmuch as it underlines the later 'Abbāsīd intent on securing a presence for their alleged *Imām* in every toss and turn of 'events', which may or may not have happened, but which firmly and consistently fall into a pattern of foretelling and vindication. Being no exception, this alleged meeting was also used as the first opportunity to prove that the new *Imām* was his father's son. He erupted with a dense bout of apocalyptic, proving, once again, that this clan's claim to the leadership of the Organization rested on a simple but rigid, naively 'manufactured' formula, which restricted every single alleged encounter between an 'Abbāsīd *Imām* and the Organization's delegates to the familiar terms of the equation: the *Imām*'s insatiable appetite for financial donations and binding moral homage, repeatedly paid, in return for his boundless willingness to lay the future fully exposed, in 'obscene' detail, before a bewitched audience composed of the elite leadership of one of the most sophisticated and worldly-wise movements that Islamic history has ever witnessed.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

there to dye cloth and banner in black, in order to have them ready for the appointed time,¹²⁰ i.e., four full years in advance!

VIII. *The Twilight Year and the End—Passing the Torch to Abū Salamah*

While on his way to carry out the *Imām's* instructions, Bukayr was detained in Kūfah by some of his creditors who had him imprisoned for default in repayment.¹²¹ He had been a very wealthy man, but had spent his fortune, as well as the money he had borrowed, on the cause.¹²² Thus incapacitated, he had to deputize Abū Salamah to carry out the mission. The reports on the duration of Abū Salamah's absence on this mission are confused;¹²³ but, when he did come back, he found Bukayr still in prison. Only then did the wealthy son-in-law bail out his direct boss and father-in-law.¹²⁴ Why Abū Salamah did not make this show of generosity in the first instance, before the dignified man had to suffer the indignity of jail in bankruptcy, is anybody's guess. *Akhbār* doesn't even appear to recognize the anomaly.¹²⁵

Two months after his release, Bukayr fell ill. During his illness, news came of al-Walīd II's murder; and Maṣṣūr ibn Jumhūr, the new governor, arrived in Iraq¹²⁶ in the first days of Rajab, 126/the early twenties of April, 744.¹²⁷ This places Bukayr's term in prison between *c.* late 125 and Rabī' II, 126/autumn, 743 and February, 744, a time frame compatible with the broad chronological sequence of *Akhbār's* continuing account.

In this account, *Akhbār* also fields one of its numerous and conflicting reports regarding Abū Muslim's first access to the Organization; it states: "And in the days of Abū Hāshim's [Bukayr's] imprisonment, Abū Muslim came to be known, and he dedicated his time exclusively to Abū Hāshim; he was introduced to the *da'wah*, and he mingled with its constituency."¹²⁸ The same element, i.e., bringing Bukayr and Abū Muslim together, during a term that Bukayr spent in prison, is also

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., p. 248; cf. Dīnawarī, p. 336.

¹²³ See below.

¹²⁴ *Akhbār*, p. 248.

¹²⁵ Of course, the dim corners and corridors of clandestine movements are fertile grounds for breeding all sorts of conspiracy theories. It may not be so wild to suggest here that the more energetic, designated or natural successor had grown impatient; so, when the opportunity presented itself, he seized it.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 249.

¹²⁷ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1836-7.

¹²⁸ *Akhbār*, p. 249, cf. p. 265.

echoed in an account by Madā'inī, where he reports that Bukayr bought Abū Muslim from 'Īsā ibn Ma'qil al-'Ijlī (no.30). Madā'inī places the event in 124/741-742, and attributes Bukayr's imprisonment to a tip exposing his revolutionary activity, rather than to financial default. But Madā'inī's report is essentially confused; its depiction of this event as having occurred in the wake of Bukayr's return from his Sind tenure (as "a clerk for one of its officials") betrays a jumbled mass of information, which also lacks specificity.¹²⁹ Moreover, as the case is with all other reports, in which accounting for Abū Muslim's roots is an element, it is futile here to attempt using his presence even as a tentative criterion by which other elements of the report may be verified.

Bukayr's illness (ca. Rajab 126/April-May 744) was severe, apparently brief, and terminal. His bedside was attended by his daughter, Ḥamāmah, her husband Abū Salamah, and a new bride from a marriage which he, apparently due to lack of time or strength or both, did not consummate. Present also were: a neighbor of his, called Mudrik (no. 35) from Banū al-Ḥārith, two men from the Banū Hamdān, and three men from the Banū Musliyah: 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr al-Musli, 'Amr ibn Shabāb al-Musī, and Usayd ibn Dughaym al-Musli (nos.7,10, 47). The last two are responsible for the solemnly vivid account of Bukayr's last day. Mudrik and the two Hamdānīs relayed to him the news of al-Walīd II's murder. When, in his agony, he finally understood the news, he broke into a brief, but detailed, interpretation of the apocalyptic signs of the approaching demise of the Umayyads. He intimated to Abū Salamah that it was time for him to buckle down to his enterprise. "He babbled on incomprehensibly until he was overcome."¹³⁰ Before the party left, he had perished.¹³¹

Leadership of the Organization passed to Abū Salamah. But, while the succession in *Akhbār* is automatic,¹³² due to Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's anticipatory designation of Abū Salamah as Bukayr's successor,¹³³ other sources strike a middle course between the imperatives of organized work and the requirements of the 'Abbāsid *riwāyah*. They report that Bukayr appointed his own successor, and that he wrote to the *Imām* with his decision. The *Imām* sanctioned the appointment, and he wrote to the

¹²⁹ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1726-7; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 51.

¹³⁰ *Akhbār*, p. 250.

¹³¹ *Akhbār*, pp. 249-50. Bukayr's death must be dated close to al-Walīd II's assassination, (probably to ca. Rajab 126/April-May 744). Ṭabarī places Bukayr's death in 127/744-5 (II: p. 1916). Wellhausen had to follow Ṭabarī, and he depicts an active Bukayr in 127/744-5 (p. 518). Sharon, to fit the event in his overall ill conceived chronology, neglects *Akhbār*'s report and adopts Ṭabarī's (*Black Banners*, p. 182).

¹³² *Akhbār*, p. 250.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

partisans ordering that Abū Salamah be obeyed. The trouble with this reporting is that it defers such a vital executive decree by the highest echelons of a meticulous, calculating and superbly structured Organization till its careful and far-sighted leader is in the final throes of death. Except for *Akhbār*, Ṭabarī and Jahshiyārī, the other sources, including the careful Balādhurī, name the *Imām* of the time as being Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī- not Ibrāhīm, his son. And only Ṭabarī attaches a date, 127/744-745, to the event.¹³⁴

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the crucial weight of Bukayr’s character, and his formative role in the Organization’s genesis, is Naṣr ibn Sayyār’s. So large Bukayr’s image loomed, even after he had been physically gone and politically superseded, that his name was still associated with the Jurjān’s hefty participation in the Revolution. When all the districts of the East had risen up with Abū Muslim and news of Jurjān’s build-up under the leadership of Abū ‘Awn (no.109) had reached Naṣr, his frustration was brought to the point of desperation, and he blamed it on none other than the deceased Bukayr. Said Naṣr:

... And those of their comrades in Jurjān, amongst them have emerged men who have been thoroughly bred in this affair ... and their master, who festered in the land, corrupted Jurjān, and dispatched [agitators] all over the districts of Khurāsān, is Abū ‘Awn, comrade of their daemon (*tāghiyatuhum*) Bukayr ibn Māhān.¹³⁵

Thus, understanding Bukayr’s role is essential to the understanding of the Organization—its character, structure and strategy. But it is also of such brittle quality that it collapses upon the application of internal criticism. Occasionally, the sources will furnish some scattered material which support the theory that the independent Organization cultivated numerous connections with the Hāshimites, none of which, though, was binding. But this is rare and it belongs to submerged traditions. His pragmatic maneuvering to safeguard the security of the Organization took precedence in his strategy over ideology. When he steered the Organization away from Zayd ibn ‘Alī’s uprising, he did so for calculated political reasons, not to be in compliance with the divinely illuminated directives of some *Imām*. Bukayr’s role defines the Organization since it bounced from its Khidāsh years. What happened after he died, and before Abū Muslim carried out his internal coup and relegated the Kūfān leadership, along with its surrogates in Khurāsān, to the status of impotent spectator, was an obtainment. The two main

¹³⁴ Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf III*, p. 118; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1916; Ya‘qūbī, *Ta‘rikh*, II: p. 319; Dīnawarī, p. 336; Jahshayārī, p. 84; Ibn al-Tiṭṭiqā, p. 154.

¹³⁵ *Akhbār*, p. 293.

phases of the movement must therefore be viewed within two frames of reference: Bukayr's serene, 'aristocratic' structuralism, followed and superseded by a resurgence, at the hands of Abū Muslim, of Khidāshist grass-roots activism.