CHAPTER TWO

ABŪ SALAMAH AL-KHALLĀL—THE TRANSITION FROM BUKAYRISM TO THE NEO-KHIDĀSHIST ABŪ MUSLIMISM (126/744-128/746)

I. *A Personal Profile, and a Socio-Economic Portrait of the Early Leadership of the Organization*

Ḥafṣ ibn Sulayman al-Khallāl, Abū Salamah, was a *mawlā* of Musliyah,[1] or of its mother tribe, Banū al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b,[2] or of al-Subau',[3] or of its mother tribe Hamdān.[4] Hamdān and Madhḥij, of which Musliyah was a branch, were profusely intermingled in Kūfah. Except for the special connection of Musliyah, and especially its *mawālī*, to the Organization, particularly in its formative stage, the above divergence does not really matter. The intricate Musliyite internal relations, and the fact that the majority of the Principal Twenty, and all four of Abū Salamah's predecessors, i.e., the 'aristocracy' of the movement, were *mawālī* of Musliyah, may appear to favor *Akhbār*'s solitary but well informed report.

Of his family background, we only know that he was Bukayr's son-in-law, husband of his daughter, Ḥamāmah.[5]

Abū Salamah's professional affiliation, coupled with his wealth, provide a clue to the social and financial conditions prevailing amongst the high concentration of adherents within the ranks of Kūfan trade organizations, or what prototypes of such organizations must have existed at the time.[6] For 'Amrawayh al-Zayyāt, Musāwir al-Qaṣṣāb, and

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[1] *Akhbār*, p. 191.

[2] Azdī, p. 120; *'Ūyūn*, p. 181.

[3] Ṭabarī, III: pp. 20, 25; Azdī, p. 120; Mas'ūdī, IV: p. 115; Ibn Khallikān, II: p. 195; Dhahabī, *Tā'rīkh al-Islām*, VIII: p. 400; Ibn Qutaybah, *Ma'ārif*, p. 371.

[4] Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf III*, p. 118; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 7.

[5] *Akhbār*, pp. 248-9; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf III*, p. 118; Jahshayārī, p. 83; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭiqā, p. 154.

[6] Manufacturers, wholesalers, export merchants, brokers, dealers, retailers, artisans and/or employees in such trades as: *Khallālūn*, 'vinegar-dealers'; *sarrājūn*, 'saddle-makers' (nos.24, 29, 40, 57, 61); *qaṣṣārūn*, 'fullers or bleachers' (nos.41, 48); *ṣarrāfūn*, 'bankers' or 'money exchangers', Abū Salamah himself; *bazzārūn*, 'seed-squeezers' (no.1); *abẓāriyyūn*, 'spice dealers' or 'seed and nut-roasters' (no.51); *'aṭṭārūn*, 'druggists' (no.23); *jawāliqiyyūn*, 'pot-makers' (no.3); *zayyātūn*, 'oil-dealers' (no.11); *nabbālūn*, 'arrow-makers' (no.34);

Yaqṭīn al-Abzārī (nos.11, 42, 51) to have been friends of Abū Salamah and for him to have picked the first as his chamberlain and the other two as companions and dining partners of the future caliph, it is reasonable to assume that they belonged to the socio-economic class as Abū Salamah, himself.

The Organization itself did not finance the activities of its prominent members. Its financial resources consisted mainly of the donations of ordinary adherents—the time-honored practice of the Shī'ite donation of the *khums*. The other source of financing was what the wealthy members, like Bukayr and Abū Salamah himself, provided. Most of the emissaries who traveled the land posed as merchants. Naturally, they must have had something to show to the suspicious and watching eyes of the authorities to verify their pretence; and some of them did not even have to pretend, for they, indeed, were merchants. It must be concluded that these emissaries who took time off to travel extensively for the cause, or to spend months on end in the exclusive company of their leaders, were either making money on such trips, or could otherwise afford the altruistic expense. Of these wealthy Kūfan businessmen/members of the Organization, we also know specifically of 'Īsā ibn Ibrāhīm al-Sarrāj and Mūsā ibn Surayj al-Sarrāj (nos.29, 40).

But what we know of Abū Salamah goes beyond proving the riches of yet another businessmen member of the Organization. From scattered reports emerges an outline of a mode of 'conglomerate' corporate commercial activity on the Kūfan business scene. None of the sources dispute that Abū Salamah was very wealthy and that he financed the cause from his own resources. The nature of his business, however, was subject to slightly divergent reports. Dhahabī states that Abū Salamah was a money exchanger.[7] Balādhurī says: "he was a money exchanger; and it is [alternatively] said a vinegar dealer."[8] Ibn Khallikān denies altogether that Abū Salamah was a vinegar dealer, and attributes the *nisbah* to the fact that his residence was in the vinegar dealers' quarter *(ḥārat al-Khallālīn)* in Kūfah. He asserts that al-Khallāl "dealt in money exchange *(kāna yu'āliju al-ṣarf)*;"[9] i.e., he was not a mere money exchanger but that he was involved in the business, probably in a higher capacity. Ibn Khallikān's deletion of the vinegar trade from the list of Abū Salamah's business interests can be best understood in the light of a

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raḥḥālūn, 'saddlers' (no.33); *qaṣṣābūn*, 'butchers' (no.42); *fākhrāniyyūn*, 'potters' (no.58); *ṭaḥḥānūn*, 'millers' (no. 32).

[7] Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, VIII: p. 401; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 7.

[8] Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf III*, p. 118.

[9] Ibn Khallikān, II: pp. 196-7; *Akhbār*, pp. 248-9.

remark in *Akhbār*,[10] explaining that he was called al-Khallāl only after he had been killed. If the precision was intentional, *Akhbār*'s and Ibn Khallikān's wordings can easily be understood to intersect a lowest common imparting the conviction that giving Abū Salamah this occupational *nisbah* (without specifying what status he had enjoyed on the social scale of the trade) was meant as a derogatory label. *Akhbār* is careful to explain that the name had explanation in the fact that Abū Salamah was a proprietor of a chain of stores where vinegar was sold for his account ("*Kānat la-hu ḥawānīt yubā' la-hu fī-hā al-khall.*")[11] In another remark, *Akhbār* identifies Abū Salamah—incidentally—by saying: "he used to sell (*kāna yabī'*) vinegar in Zurārah."[12] Coupled with the preceding tidbit, this remark can be constructed as pinpointing Zurārah (a quarter in Kūfah) as the focal point of Abū Salamah's interests in the vinegar business. In *Akhbār*, Abū Salamah emerges as a 'tycoon' with a variety of business interests. As an employer, he installed Abū Muslim in his own money exchange business ("*ajlasa-hu fī al-ṣarf*"). Then, as an investor in other varieties of business, he bought shares for him in a saddle dealership and fixed him up in partnership with another wealthy and notable 'Shī'ite' ("*ashraka bayna-hu wa-bayna Mūsā al-Sarrāj.*")[13]

These people were not poor artisans; and a good many of them were wealthy business proprietors in their own rights. If this takes the cutting edge from the concept of economic deprivation as a driving factor and as an element of cohesion in the ranks of this current leadership, other factors of motivation and unity did exist. The proto-Shī'ite ideological component was certainly one such factor. But the major and undisputable factor was the fact that they all (or at least their overwhelming majority) were ethnic non-Arabs who, as *mawālī*, were not completely alien to the sub-structure of the Arab Ruling Establishment. Later, in Khurāsān, the equation will change, but only to bring into the ranks small groups of disaffected ethnic Arabs and masses of nationally inflamed and economically deprived non-Arabs, who either never attempted or never had the chance to attain the reasonably comfortable and relatively assimilating status of *mawālī*.

As befits his social status and financial fortunes, Abū Salamah comes across as a cultivated character. He was generous and hospitable, articulate and elegant, endowed with a delightful sense of humor, political finesse and administrative skills; and he was urbane, well-bred,

[10] *Akhbār*, p. 249.
[11] Ibid., p. 249; cf. Ibn al-Ṭiqṭiqā, p. 154.
[12] *Akhbār*, p. 259. In Arabic, the verb *yabī'* does not necessarily denote retail selling.
[13] Ibid., p. 266.

well mannered, seasoned, decent, gallant, brave and high-minded.[14] And, of course, he was literate and highly educated,[15] unlike the illiterate Kathīr ibn Sa'd (no.59) whose tenure, as delegate-in-chief of the Khurāsānian Chapter, had been the gate through which the populist Khidāsh had stormed the Organization. This polished profile establishes Abū Salamah as the ultimate and last example of Bukayrist elitism.

II. *In Bukayr's Shadow: The Expansion and Upgrading of the Organizational Structure of the Khurāsān Chapter*

II.1 *A Prominent Founding Father Superficially Reported*

Abū Salamah's activities, while in the shadow of Bukayr, are not widely reported, neither in *Akhbār*, nor in the other sources. He does, nevertheless, come across as a prominent 'member of the board' through a variety of appearances and activities.

He is first encountered as one of the Principal Twenty, when his name was the third to be inscribed in the "*dīwān* of the 'Abbāsids."[16] He appears, in 122/739-40, during Zayd ibn 'Alī's uprising, as a pivotal figure commanding loyalty as well as a monopoly on Yaqṭīn ibn Mūsā's time.[17] He did not express any views, however, and he does not appear to have joined the Bukayr-led exodus boycotting Zayd's movement.

If he was secretly or openly sympathetic to the 'Alīds, as later charges indicate, he was not actively demonstrative about it in Zayd's instance. Naturally, trying to impose his view would have been out of line with the independent strategy of the Organization. But the mere existence of such a leaning would also confirm the acceptable coexistence of conflicting Hāshimite sympathies in the ranks of the practically uncommitted but, in general principle, 'shī'ite' Organization. The coexistence of such conflicting sympathies on the level of a leadership which had been, at least so far, unquarrelsome and steady-handed, underlines the absence of a commitment to the 'Abbāsids, or, for that matter, to any other Hāshimite branch or person. The issue was not pertinent yet -- that is, not until Abū Muslim's internal coup eliminated or undercut the previously coexisting wings in favor of his own choice.

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[14] Some of these attributes are: *fakih, mumtiˇ, adīb, 'ālim bi-al-siyāsah, 'ālim bi-al-tadbīr, lahu khibratun bi-al-umūr, shahm, shujāˇ, 'ālī al-himmah.* See, e.g., Jahshayārī, p. 86; Mas'ūdī, IV: p. 116; Ibn Khallikān, II: pp. 195-6; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 7; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, VIII: p. 401; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭiqā, p. 155.

[15] *Akhbār*, p. 249; Jahshayārī, p. 86; Ibn al-Ṭiqṭiqā, p. 155.

[16] *Akhbār*, p. 191.

[17] Ibid., p. 231.

In this atmosphere of unity of purpose and positive coexistence, Abū Salamah quietly performed his normal revolutionary duties as one of the most notable of the Organization's elite. He was jailed for his activities;[18] he recruited partisans (e.g., Yaqṭīn ibn Mūsā, Musāwir al-Qaṣṣāb, al-Walīd al-Azraq);[19] he cultivated his recruits (and his personal 'acquisitions') in the service of the movement, as we see in his training of Abū Muslim, who was manumitted and launched into the ranks.[20] If the report is true, it may have had a tremendous psychological impact on the formation and unfolding of Abū Muslim's relationship to his previous master and mentor.

Perhaps the most superficially depicted of Abū Salamah's activities during the post- Kidāsh period was his playing the role of a constant idle fixture in all of Bukayr's alleged encounters with the two *Imāms*, Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm. It was part of Bukayr's routine on his way back from Khurāsān to drop by his headquarters in Kūfah, take Abū Salamah in his company, and resume his travel to Ḥumaymah or Makkah to meet Muḥammad ibn 'Alī or, later, his son Ibrāhīm. As far as *Akhbār*'s 'dramatic' plot went, Abū Salamah's presence is inconsequential. Save for Muḥammad ibn 'Alī's alleged designation of Abū Salamah as Bukayr's successor,[21] and for the fact that the report on Ibrāhīm's grief over Yaḥyā ibn Zayd's slaying is attributed to Abū Salamah as an eye-witness,[22] the presence of the next chief of the Organization in these alleged encounters is completely ornamental.[23] A completely unassuming and unassertive Abū Salamah is hardly a tenable concept. Yet, it must not come as a surprise that he does not contribute a single word to the immensely apocalyptic and mostly one-sided 'dialogues' featuring a single star. For the *Imām* to break into one of his messianic monologues, it usually takes one 'interlocutor' to ask a question or volunteer a thinly veiled inviting remark. A primitive dramatic plot requires only one pseudo-partner in the 'dialogue', and Bukayr usually fulfilled the role. If anything, these alleged encounters, where Abū Salamah had to be featured, only confirm his forceful presence on the stage of actual events, upon which the later 'Abbāsid propaganda machine superimposed Muḥammad's and Ibrāhīm's roles.

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[18] Ibid., p. 259.
[19] Dīnawarī, pp. 336, 358.
[20] *Akhbār,* pp. 259, 263, 265-8.
[21] Ibid., p. 238.
[22] Ibid., p. 242.
[23] Ibid., pp. 224, 241.

II.2 *The Institution of the Three Regional Commands in Khurāsān—the Journey of the Three Black Banners*

This forceful presence welled to the fore with Abū Salamah's first reported assumption of an active role. When Bukayr was detained in Kūfah and could not personally carry the *sawād* message to Khurāsān, Abū Salamah was his natural choice to carry out this most important mission. Bukayr gave him three Black Banners and (of course, pursuant to the *Imām*'s instructions) instructed him to hand them over: one to the Shī'ah of Marw, one to those of Jurjān, and to dispatch the third to Transoxania. Abū Salamah was thus "the first [man] to arrive in [Khurāsān] with the Black Banners."[24]

This obtrusive reversal of the real geographical direction of the flow of symbolism, although only of minor historical significance, is yet one more indication of the transparent attempt of later 'Abbāsids propaganda to depict the dynasty as the driving force and inspiring leadership behind the movement; and it is of significant historiographical consequences.

Perhaps it is appropriate to dwell here, briefly, on the matter of *sawād*. Despite the inherent ahistorical nature and overwhelming messianic overtones, *sawād*, or, most blatantly, "the 'science' of the Black Banners of Khurāsān" (*'ilm rāyāti Khurāsāna al-sūd*),[25] was a major theme in the vast 'Abbāsid 'Operation Pretence'.[26] Actually, this 'black bannerology' was not an 'Abbāsid monopoly. Al-Ḥārith ibn Surayj had hoisted his Black Banners some fifteen years before Abū Muslim did;[27] and the Zaydite poet, al-Kumayt al-Asadī, applauded and incited him:

> Else, hoist the banners black against the sinners and aggressors, (*wa-'illā f-arfa'u r-rāyāti sūdan 'alā ahli ḍ-ḍalālati wa-t-ta'addī*).[28]

And, inasmuch as the Prophet's banner, (*al-'Uqāb*) was black, some of his other banners were white; for example, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib triumphed at Khaybar under one of the latter.[29] If it was because the Umayyads had waved the white color, or because 'Alī's banner at Ṣiffīn was black, and black was the color of good omen for the entire clan of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib,[30] then the entire clan, not only Banū al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, were heirs to the symbolic legacy. Realistically, the best of all

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[24] Ibid., p. 245.
[25] Ibid., p. 185; on the Black Banners, see Athamina, 'Banners.'
[26] See, e.g. ibid., pp. 179, 199, 207, 245-8.
[27] Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1570,1919.
[28] Ibid., II: p.1575; Kumayt, verse 7 of the poem 162 in I: pp. 159-60.
[29] Ibn Hishām, II: p. 334, also p. 328, I: p. 612.
[30] *Akhbār*, pp. 245-6.

possible ideological milieus for the 'Abbasids may be assumed to have been one which did not particularly exclude them as partners in this pan- Hāshimite legacy.

Moreover, the qualified democracy of consensus inherent in the 'philosophy' of *riḍā*, or *al-Riḍā*, can only be assumed to have gravitated, in the popular perception as well as in the minds of considerable segments of the leadership of the Organization, around a 'vote' or 'votes' for one or more of the eligible 'Alīds. The fact is that the black symbols were reared and hoisted in the east, probably charged as much with Persian symbolism and sentiment[31] as with the 'Shī'ite' identification with the martyrdom of Hāshimite standard bearers—who happened to be 'Alīds, to the last one in their long chain.

Eventually, from the east the Black Banners began to march.[32] They marched amidst mixed loyalties and a declared policy of non-commitment to any specific hāshimite candidate. This then came to be appropriated, in the final outcome of a series of 'hijackings', by the 'Abbāsids, and was used by them as the major introductory phase of their enormous operation of historical embezzlement of symbols and fundamentals of Shī'ite claims to legitimacy.

Be that as it may, Abū Salamah carried out the mission as instructed. He handed over three Black Banners—one to Abū 'Awn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Yazīd, the chief of the shī'ah in Jurjān (no.109), one to Sulaymān ibn Kathīr, their chief in Marw and the head *Naqīb* (no.350), and he sent one to Transoxania with Mujāshi' ibn Ḥurayth (no.282), or with 'Amr ibn Sinān (no.130).[33] Beneath the thick camouflage of later 'Abbāsid interpolations, it is clear that the Kūfan leadership (still under the long shadow of the now incapacitated Bukayr but already in the able hands of his *de facto* successor who continued in his tradition) was affecting a major and advanced tactical move.

The subordinate command east of Kūfah had been centered only in Marw. The Organization had grown,[34] and Bukayr's earlier structuring of the Khurāsānian Chapter, in 120/738, must have become too centralized for the imperatives of steady expansion in the districts. The necessary seeds of further decentralization were latent in Bukayr's arrangements, and now was the time for them to sprout. By handing over three banners—black or otherwise—the Kūfan leadership of the Organization was creating and designating three regional field

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[31] Cf. Daniel, *Khurasan*, p. 102.

[32] Dhahabī even says that Abū Muslim was the first to enact, for the 'Abbāsids, the donning of black (*Siyar*, VI: p. 51).

[33] *Akhbār*, pp. 247-8.

[34] Ibid., p. 248.

commands east of Kūfah: (1), the regional headquarters in Marw, (2), a new command east and north thereof, in Transoxania and Khwārizm, and, (3), another new command west and northwest of Marw and Khurāsān proper, in Jurjān. In Bukayr's celebrated tradition of solid but elastic beehive-like structure, a considerable measure of regional centralization, still strongly controlled from Kūfah, was maintained in this latest upgrading of the flexibility of the Organization. Thus, Sulaymān ibn Kathīr in Marw was still in charge of the whole territory, assisted by his administrative officer, Kāmil ibn al-Muẓaffar.[35]

The actual significance of these three banners, enshrouded as it were in the fabricated mystique of 'Abbāsid pretensions, has been overlooked in modern scholarship. Implanting the 'Abbāsid *Imām* at the heart of events not only stole the credit from two great tacticians such as Bukayr and Abū Salamah, but it also clouded the strategic independence and ingenuity of the Organization and, above all, blurred beyond recognition the very possibility that any new organizational measures were at all being taken. The historiographical consequences have been immense. Compounded by meager (virtually non-existent) reporting in the sources on the pre-eruption activities outside Marw, this dislocation of credit, and the complete blindness to these latest organizational measures, led to a severe under-estimation of the crucial contributions made to the initial and ultimate success of the Revolution by the Khwārizm-Transoxania and the Jurjān Chapters. Thus was the supremely vital role of al-'Alī' ibn Ḥurayth (no.121) and his Sughdian, partly ex-Murji'ite constituency, all but obliterated; and thus was the role of Abū 'Awn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Yazīd (no.109), with his south-eastern Caspian constituency, diminished and almost reduced to their distinguished and widely reported service in the march to Kūfah, Zāb, and beyond.[36] It is this opaque historiographical blend which led to the inflation of the role of Marw in the eventual military capture of Khurāsān. It is this opacity which precluded a normal understanding of Abū Muslim's strategy and tactics, and of the fact that he must have acted in compliance with his understanding of his demographic and geographical assets and liabilities.[37] The inadequacy of the sources, and the over-zealous rush of a fashionable trend in modern scholarship to challenge Wellhausen's conclusions, have thus been fused to render unrecognizable such a decisive organizational move in the history of the Organization.

[35] Ibid., p. 248.
[36] See below, chapters six and thirteen and passim.
[37] See chapter three below.

III. *The Succession*

On the above mission, *Akhbār* reports, Abū Salamah stayed in Khurāsān for four months. Through an inarticulate mixing of an orderly sequence of events with a jumbled anticipatory flash of future event, *Akhbār* slips and imparts the wrong impression that Abū Salamah was still in Khurāsān when al-Walīd II was killed, and when, subsequently, the tribal strife erupted in Khurāsān.[38] Al-Walīd II was killed late in Jumādā II, 126/mid April, 744.[39] By that time, Abū Salamah had already bailed out Bukayr from jail, following his return to Kūfah, at least two months earlier. Bukayr's term in prison coincided with Abū Salamah's absence, both in Khurāsān and in transit, for five to six months, i.e., between ca. late 125 and Rabīʿ II, 126/autumn, 733 and February, 744. When Bukayr died, probably ca. Rajab 126/April-May, 744, Abū Salamah was by his bedside, and the reins of leadership fell naturally into his hands.

The real weight of Abū Salamah's authority and influence within the Organization had made him Bukayr's *de facto* replacement in the last mission and, later, his natural successor. It was not invented or bestowed upon him by Bukayr's will or the *Imām's* designation. It must have been the sheer balance of power within the multi-loyalty Organization that positioned him first in line for the succession. He must have had a preponderant power base, which his personal qualities and alliances helped him groom and preside over. And, if he was truly an ʿAlīd loyalist, he could not possibly have been a twenty-fourth hour solitary defector, as charged later; rather, he must have reflected the sympathies of his power base. Moreover, it must never be forgotten that he had been one of the most prominent Principal Twenty Founding Fathers—all of whom were ʿAlīd loyalists.

IV. *Brief Hands-on Phase—Abū Salamah's Only Trip to Khurāsān as Leader of the Organization*

IV.1 *Chronological Problems and Abū Muslim's Involvement*

Within months of taking charge, it is to be inferred, Abū Salamah took his first, and last, trip to Khurāsān as the leader of the Organization. Although the sequence of events (as reported in the only continuous account we have) is slightly confused, it is clear that there could not have

[38] *Akhbār*, p. 248.
[39] Ṭabarī, II: p. 1836.

been more than one such trip. *Akhbār* reports that Abū Salamah, accompanied by Abū Muslim as his servant, visited the *Imām*, Ibrāhīm, carrying gifts for him from Khurāsān. This means that he was concluding an earlier trip to the province. At the end of this visit, Ibrāhīm instructed Abū Salamah to go to Khurāsān.[40] He did; and this was the present trip which he must have concluded in, or shortly after Sha'bān 127 /May-June 745, i.e., just a year after Bukayr's death. Abū Salamah had come back from his earlier trip to Khurāsān, the journey he had undertaken as second-in-command, approximately three months before Bukayr died. The period of twelve or thirteen months between Bukayr's death and Abū Salamah's return from this trip could not possibly have accommodated a third trip between the previous and the present, unless we assume that all three took place on the heels of one another, without a pause even for attending to such serious matters as the aftermath of Bukayr's death and the succession. Of course, Abū Salamah's visit to Ibrāhīm, if it did occur at all, could have been the one he presumably ought to have paid after returning from the trip in which he had filled in for Bukayr. But this still presupposes that Abū Salamah had come back, bailed Bukayr out, stayed for more than two months until the latter fell sick and died, all before visiting Ibrāhīm—and all the while holding on to the money and gifts he had brought, and, more importantly, not recognizing the need to report to him on his vital mission. This would have been awkward. That is, if the 'Abbāsid connection holds any measure of truth.

Projecting Abū Muslim's later prominence, Dhahabī briefly reports, a visit which Abū Muslim and Abū Salamah, ostensibly as equals, paid to Ibrāhīm at Ḥumaymah, where he ordered them both to travel to Khurāsān.[41] Dhahabī's report does not pose the problems that the continuous context in *Akhbār* poses. But it is precisely such problems that help expose the inaccuracy that sometimes attends wholesale 'Abbāsid interpolations into the stream of events. In this instance,[42] Ibrāhīm's prophetic vision of Abū Muslim's future achievement is compounded by Abū Salamah's simplistic belief in the intimations of Abū Muslim and Idrīs ibn Ma'qil (no.27) regarding Abū Muslim's apocalyptic dreams, dreams which were a substantial part of his credentials. Actually, Abū Muslim had started appearing on the scene of events with in the company of Abū Salamah on his previous trip to Khurāsān in 125-

[40] *Akhbār*, pp. 266-7.
[41] Dhahabī, *Siyar*, VI: p. 50.
[42] *Akhbār*, p. 267

126/743-744;[43] and from this point on he started playing an active role. Therefore, it was time he was introduced to the *Imām*; or, more accurately, it was time the *Imām* made an interjection into the stream of events, in order to meet him. The classic setting for such an appearance has always been a visit with the *Imām* by the current leader of the Organization; and it was made to be so in this instance also. It is more likely that there was no such visit.

Some reasonable time must have elapsed after Bukayr's death, perhaps not less than six months, before Abū Salamah was ready to consider that a trip to Khurāsān. This brings the event to early 127/744, probably Muḥarram or Ṣafar/October-November. It would mean that by placing Bukayr's death and Abū Salamah's succession and his trip to Khurāsān all together in 127/744-5.[44] Ṭabarī subordinated the date of the earlier occurrences to that of the later. This date also fits perfectly with *Akhbār*'s description of the situation in Marw upon Abū Salamah's arrival there and in Kūfah upon his return. When he arrived in Marw, its people "were still in their trenches engaged in tribal strife (*'alā al-'aṣabiyyah*)."[45] Thus, Abū Salamah's arrival in Marw in the first quarter of the year 127/last quarter of 744 would fit in with the raging of the tribal strife. Upon his return, he arrived in Kūfah after the Khārijite al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays had captured the city,[46] an event that took place in Sha'bān 127/May 745.[47] Thus Abū Salamah's absence, on this trip, would come to around six months, which is a fair approximation for an average trip.

IV.2 *The General Political Situation Surrounding the Trip*

Especially Ṣafar (or late Muḥarram) appears to have been very opportune for the trip. This timing befits the changing conditions in the province, and at the heart of the empire, and the nature of the message Abū Salamah had for the Khurāsān Chapter. The previous six or seven months had witnessed the greatest existential shock the Umayyad house and the entire Establishment had ever suffered -- the assassination of a sitting caliph, al-Walīd II, and the accession of his assassin, Yazīd III. The resulting tremors never subsided, and the damage was irreparable—an unhealing chasm in the reigning dynasty, a new caliph

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[43] Ibid., pp. 247,249

[44] Ṭabarī, II: p. 1916.

[45] *Akhbār*, p. 268. This *'aṣabiyyah* had started sometime after Shawwāl 126/July-August 744, when Kirmānī rejected Naṣr ibn Sayyār's confirmation as governor, by Iraq's new governor, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz; Ṭabarī, II: p. 1864.

[46] *Akhbār*, p. 268.

[47] Ṭabarī, II: p. 1905.

who could not win consensus, and a resurgence of tribal strife. In the last month of 126/September-October, 744, the usurper died, leaving an untenable situation for his heir-apparent, his brother, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, whose assumption of authority was never to be completed.[48]

Almost immediately, in Muḥarram 127/October-November 744, neither an ʿAlīd nor an ʿAbbāsid, but a Ṭālibid Hāshimite, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muʿāwiyah ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib, who shared with the ʿAbbāsids their later claim of having received the *waṣiyyah* from Abū Hāshim,[49] rose in rebellion in Kūfah, claiming the *Imāmate*. He was supported by the Zaydite faction of the Kūfan 'Shīʿites', amongst others. And he was later joined, in Fars, by many Hāshimites, amongst whom, ironically and notably, were the celebrated ʿAbbāsids, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAlī, ʿĪsā ibn ʿAlī, and non less than Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, the future al-Manṣūr).[50] Ibn Muʿāwiyah was soon defeated in Kūfah, and he withdrew westward, to Fars and Jibāl,[51] taking with him whatever potential dangers any unauthorized 'Shīʿite' uprising posed to the Organization's agenda.

IV.3 *In Khurāsān, a Flourishing Organization Ready to be Transformed into a Grass-Roots Movement*

The time was therefore ripe for a reconnaissance trip to assess the position of the Organization in the province in light of the above-mentioned crucial events, and also to inspect the fruits of the last organizational measures Abū Salamah had implemented some nine months earlier. The situation could not have been a surprise, but it was pleasant:

> The Shīʿah met him; they had grown numerous and had brought into the open some of their treatises; many people had accepted their call; and those who used to oppose them had grown fearful of them.[52]

Abū Salamah's instructions to the adherents, befitted the impassively and carefully calculated methods that had always characterized Bukayrist tactics; but they were also sufficiently advanced to suit this newly found confidence, strength and opportunity. In Jurjān he said:

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[48] For these occurrences, see in Ṭabarī the events of the year 126, esp., II: pp. 1775, 1825 ff., 1870 ff.

[49] Others also claimed to have received the *waṣiyyah* from Abū Hāshim, see: Nawbakhtī, pp. 52-4; Qummī, pp.35, 38-42; cf. Qāḍī, *Kaysāniyyah*, p. 241, and passim.

[50] Ṭabarī, II: p. 1977; Jahshayārī, pp. 98-9; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf III*, p. 183.

[51] Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1879 ff., 1976-7.

[52] *Akhbār*, p. 268.

> Your enterprise has ripened, so prepare and be ready; when the year 130 begins [September 747], proclaim your call; blacken your clothes, and sharpen your weapons; but do not get into the open before that, unless something forces you to do so and to defend yourselves.

He dispensed the same instructions in Nasā, Abīward and Marw.[53]

Setting a date three years in advance is not foreign to the ʿAbbāsid pattern of recounting history. Of course, Abū Salamah's instructions were supported by a letter from the *Imām* bringing to his adherents the glad tidings of their future victory, and instructing them to prepare for the time which he, the *Imām*, had fixed for them.[54] This, however, does not undermine the fact that the Organization did plot for the future, and that a certain sense of urgency was setting in. The right time for the long-planned uprising was approaching. The features of Abū Salamah's trip, which had not been part of Bukayr's routine, only confirm the extent of the Organization's expansion: Nasā and Abīward, quite off the highway between Jurjān and Marw, had never been on Bukayr's itinerary; Balkh, farther east, also appears to have been one of the recently maturing centers. Abū Salamah visited Nasā and Abīward in person, and to Balk he sent Abū Muslim to meet Ziyād ibn Ṣāliḥ (no.395) and his fellow propagandists.[55] Fruits of the further decentralizing arrangements, which had been implemented by Abū Salamah in his previous trip, must have started to ripen. The exceedingly occupied governor Naṣr ibn Sayyār, and his government at the center of Arab power in Marw, were increasingly turning their energies inwardly to handle their immediate internal crises. Though never really distracted, Naṣr was reduced to a wide-eyed and impotent second spectator.

The Organization flourished all over the province, but especially in the remote and off-center districts, naturally to the detriment of the Arab center of power, and, ironically, came at the expense of the historical leadership of the Organization. The last drive towards effective decentralization had apparently overachieved its desired goals. It had over-expanded and diluted the narrow and compact historical popular base of the Organization—so much so that the reins would soon slip away from the prudent impassive hands of the seasoned and tempered handful of the well-to-do, assimilated, and ideologically inspired *mawālī* of the *miṣr* (Kūfah). These reins would soon pass to the

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[53] Ibid., pp. 267-8.

[54] Ibid. Ṭabarī's account of this trip is very brief, but it highlights the *Imām*'s letter, to the Khurāsānian adherents, relaying to them his appointment of Abū Salamah in charge of their affairs (Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1916-7).

[55] *Akhbār*, p. 268.

frenzied grip of the coarse and inflamed multitudes of deprived, alienated, and 'ideologically negotiable' masses of the east Iranian landscape. Abū Muslim's time had dawned on the blood-and-history drenched banks, hamlets, desert, and oases of Khurāsān.

Abū Salamah, in a last performance of a Bukayrist ritual, left Sulaymān ibn Kathīr in charge of the Shī'ah in Khurāsān. This ritual would soon become a relic of the past, as would Abū Salamah's active involvement in the affairs of the province. Thus, Abū Salamah's first trip was also his last. Soon, Abū Salamah's involvement would be restricted to management by correspondence, the East would begin to set the tempo, commands would begin to flow from east to west, and the historical Kūfan Establishment within the Organization, and its Khurāsānian surrogates, would soon be sentenced to death or to oblivion. If the introduction of Abū Muslim into the Organization gently and tangently touched Bukayr's last months in life and leadership, his active presence in its ranks, and the mysterious process of his infiltration of its highest levels of command, venomously cut right through Abū Salamah's years of otherwise very competent leadership.

Had Bukayr's Khidāsh been Abū Salamah's Abū Muslim, or vice versa, nothing much would probably have changed besides having the inverted characters play out the roles and destinies of their counterparts. 'Abū Muslim' would probably have been sucked into that twelfth (Hijrī) decade black hole, while 'Khidāsh' would have led the victorious masses of the late thirteenth decade. For, the same forces which had cut off Bukayr and the Kūfan leadership from the Khurāsānian revolutionary bases, and which were ultimately smashed by the ruling Arab Establishment, were, themselves, the forces which cut off Abū Salamah from the same bases, and ultimately smashed the ruling Arab Establishment. Only, a decade earlier, they had been much weaker and less organized, and they had been operating under unfavorable historical circumstances, against a foe who had been much healthier. Of course, under this highly hypothetical but demonstrative substitution, an infinite number of personal variables would have been different. Bukayr, for one, was not Khidāsh's mentor or master, nor, as it happened, was his destiny so savagely interlocked with the triumphant will and profound apprehensions of the emissary who wrested the regional command. The unfolding and final outcome of the Abū Salamah-Abū Muslim drama provides only a sampling of a wider knowledge of the inter-revolutionary dynamics, a knowledge we might never come to possess in any satisfactory proportions.