

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A COLLECTIVE PROFILE (II): VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION

The criteria of Name Recognition have been discussed as a tool of determining ethnicity. But they also serve as a function of gauging the individual and collective Recognizability of the Revolutionaries. As such, the eight grades of completeness of a name have been combined in three categories, classifying the name bearers in three categories of Recognizability: high, medium, and low.

Now, two further groups of criteria are also devised by the author to gauge the raw data for Recognizability of the members. As yardsticks, both have been inspired by Naṣr's *bā'yyah* poem. While the results they yield are not different from the portrait Naṣr depicted of the Revolutionaries, I have tried to conduct an objective application to the situation as transmitted to us through the present Statistical base. As such, the exercise should be viewed as an independent corroboration of Naṣr's depiction.

These two further sets of criteria are historiographically-based. They range from relatively recognizable status of prominence to complete obscurity. One gauges the individual profiles within the context of Organizational and Revolutionary activities; this is termed as Intra-Organization Historiographical Recognition (henceforth I.O.H.R.). The other gauges the individual profiles outside this context; this is termed as Extra-Organization Historiographical Recognition (henceforth E.O.H.R.).

I. *Intra-Organization Historiographical Recognition*¹

Although the survey base comprises only the twenty-three sources, the assumption is that, historiographically, it is fairly representative. It is here contended that expanding this base will not change, to any significant extent, the inevitable conclusions which must be drawn from

¹ The statistical base for this criterion is codified in field Kf.55 = Kn.61 of the Membership Tabulations, in Agha, 'Agents,' pp. 509-19, and elucidated in p.569. For the statistical computations and tribal breakdown, see *ibid.*, tables B.9-13 of the series I, II, and III, for Kūfah, Khurāsān, and the whole Organization, consecutively, pp. 609-18, 694-703, 794-803.

the present results. Any additional number of likely sources will only add to the scores of the better known and more widely reported members. For those who scored only one appearance, i.e., a mere 4.35% on the present scale,² an unlikely additional appearance that may crop up from the survey of, say, seven more sources, will only improve this rate by an insignificant 2.31%, to 6.66%—which is still a very poor showing.

This presumably gauges the degree of recognition extended, so to speak, by Arab Islamic historiography, to these men, on their own turf, i.e., within the context of reporting on the Organization, the Revolution, and the era they helped bring about, when the originally obscure amongst them ought to have risen to relative visibility. It must be admitted that this is a posthumous criterion. But it must reflect a fair measure of the degree of public visibility they enjoyed during their lives.

The very few impressive scores are expected.³ Only 1 member scores appearances in 20 sources; and 2 members in 19, 18, 17, and 16 sources. Only 31 members, 7.7% of the known membership, score appearances in between 10 and 20 sources; that is a token Recognition of between 43.48% and 87%. The number of those who score a token Recognition of above 50% is only 18, i.e., 4.48% of the known membership.

Even if certain very important considerations were factored in, these degrees of Recognition would not change in any significant measure. As expected, the highest scores go to *Qaḥṭabah* (20 appearances), *Abū Muslim* and *Sulaymān ibn Kathīr* (19 appearances each). *Abū Muslim*, being outside Arab genealogies, is not expected to appear in the 4 genealogical sources; *Qaḥṭabah*'s untimely demise and *Sulaymān*'s early execution, which prevented them from taking part and thus appearing in the annals of the 'Abbāsīd regime, ensure their absence from some sources. The same applies to *Abū Salamah*, who scores 14 appearances, and in a greater measure, to *Bukayr ibn Māhān*, who scores 9 appearances, and, for a variety of reasons and to different degrees, to other celebrities who would otherwise merit 100% Recognition, or close to that. To provide for this differential, suppose all those who score 10 appearances and more attain 100% Recognition; we would still have only 7.7% of the known membership enjoying a high degree of Recognition.

² 100% being all 23 sources.

³ Figure no.3 (p. 263) shows the detailed scores. The percentage ratios worked out in the following discussion are an instrument of simplification and instant comparison. The term 'appearance' is used to indicate presence in a source, regardless of how intensive.

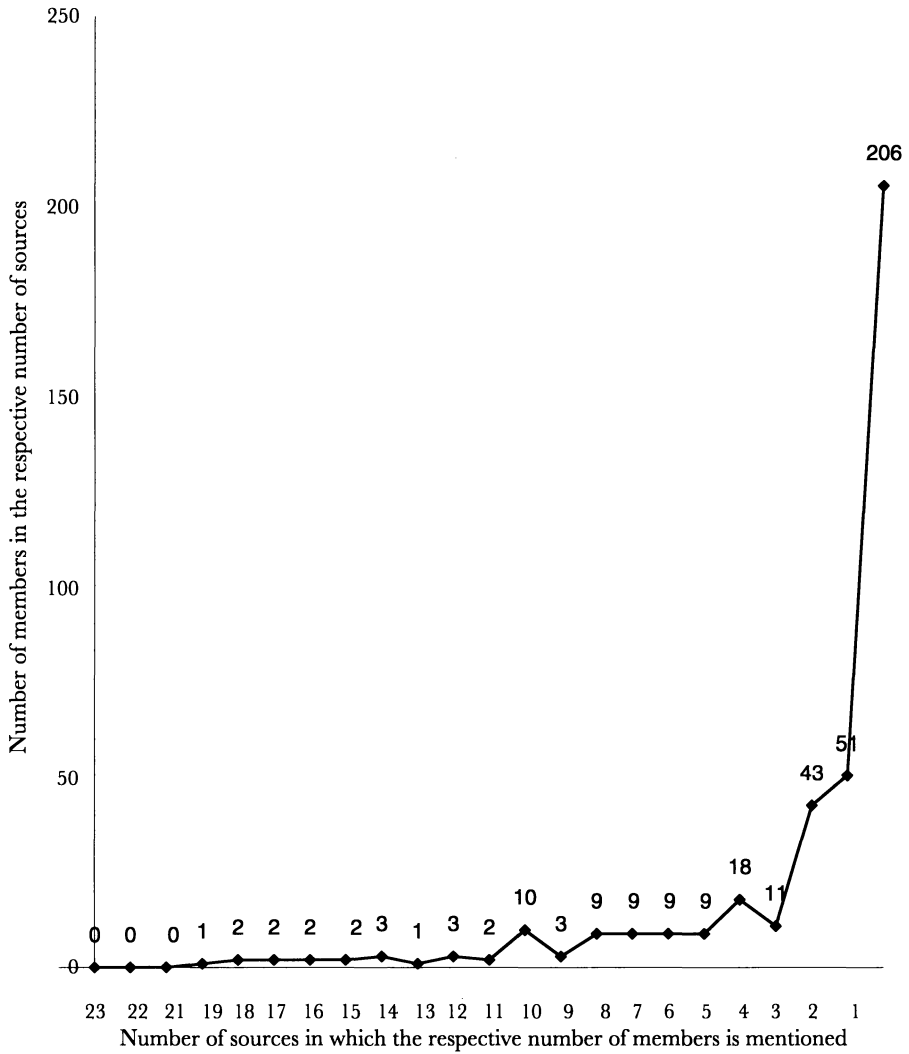


Figure No. 3
Individual I.O.H.R.

The highest brackets are entirely monopolized by the more active *naqībs*,⁴ and the military and administrative stars who went on to assert and deepen their presence in the new regime.⁵ The two *naqībs* especially known for their special and different plights, score moderately.⁶ This covers the seven Arab *naqībs*. The remaining five *naqībs* were *mawālī*. One was very little known except for his belonging to the Revolutionary family of the sons of A'yan, and the other four, apparently confined themselves, or were confined, even after victory, to Khurāsān, and to relative inconsequence.⁷

At the other and more substantial end of the statistical spectrum, the poor scores carry no surprise. Two hundred and six members, 51.37% of the known membership, are mentioned each in only 1 source; that is a token Recognition of 4.34%. Three hundred members, 74.81% of the membership, are mentioned in no more than 3 sources, that is, a token Recognition of no more than 13%. The total number of appearances made by all 401 members is 1282 instances. Gauging the collective profile of the known membership against this criterion works out to an average of about 3.2 sources recognizing each member; that is an average token Recognition of 13.9%.

This is indeed a very poor score for the men who were instrumental in bringing about the greatest change in Islamic history, second only to the advent of Islam itself. What makes it all the more relevant is that their undeniable contribution was crowned by the creation of their own Establishment, and that the event crowning their endeavors took place in the full glare of conscious and purposeful historical reporting. Both factors were so much closer to the beginnings and the flourishing of recorded history than were the beginnings of Islam.

⁴ After Qaḥṭabah and Sulaymān, Mālik ibn al-Haytham scores 17 appearances; Abū Dāwūd Khālīd ibn Ibrāhīm, 16 appearances; Mūsā ibn Ka'b, 15 appearances.

⁵ Khāzim ibn Khuzaymah scores 18 appearances; the celebrated sons of Qaḥṭabah, al-Ḥasan, 18, and Ḥumayd, 17; the commander of the contingent which hunted down Marwān II, 'Amir ibn Ismā'il, 16; the renegade 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 15; the eternal policeman *par excellence*, al-Musayyab ibn Zuhayr, 15, etc.

⁶ Lāhiz ibn Qurayz shows up in 11 appearances; his tribal compatriot, al-Qāsim ibn Mujāshi', in 10.

⁷ 'Amr ibn A'yan scores 5 appearances; his better known brother, 'Isā, 7; 'Imrān ibn Ismā'il, Abū Muslim's father-in-law, 9; Shibl ibn Ṭahmān, 7; the uncle of the later Ṭāhirids, Ṭalḥah ibn Zurayq, 9.

II. *Extra-Organization Historiographical Recognition*⁸

This system of grading is quite independent from any degree of eminence a member may have attained within the ranks of the Organization, or in the annals of the general history of the Muslim polity if it accrued to him only as a result of his Revolutionary Status. Thus, a *naqīb* like the celebrated Mūsā ibn Ka'b ibn 'Uyaynah ... of Umru' al-Qays of Tamīm (no.292), for example, whose Arab lineage is reported up to his great tribal patriarch, merited the lowest, i.e., the negative grade, because neither he, nor any member of his family are encountered other than in the context of the Organization. The mighty Abū Muslim himself (no.57), the misleading wealth of legends shrouding his humble or noble origins notwithstanding, narrowly escaped the lowest grade 4 to grade 3, simply because he is encountered, at least once, brushing elbows with Kūfān revolutionary circles other than the Organization.⁹ Conversely, someone as Organizationally insignificant as 'Abd al-Salām ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nu'aym ... al-Ghāmīdī (no.8), merited grade 1. His father had been an ex-governor of Khurāsān, and 'Abd al-Salām himself, side by side with his father and brothers, took part in the battle of *yawm al-'aṭash*, the Day of Thirst, against the Turgesh, in 106/724-725.¹⁰

But belonging to a ruling family is not a mandatory criterion for high recognition. The chief of the Khurāsānian chapter before Abū Muslim, Sulaymān ibn Kathīr (no.350), and the formidable Qaḥṭabah ibn Shabīb (no.314), brought to their celebrity status in the Organization the highest grade of extra-Organization recognition. Sulaymān's father, who was a member of the elders of his tribe, *mashyakhat Khuzā'ah*, took part in one of the governor's raids in Khuttal, in 119/737, and was killed while Sulaymān himself was reported to have been enrolled in the *dūwān*, the main military administrative instrument of the ruling Establishment.¹¹ Qaḥṭabah's grandfather, Khālīd ibn Ma'dān, had been a commander in 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's armies, in 38/658-659, and he

⁸ The statistical base for this criterion is codified in field 17 of the Membership Tabulations, and it is elucidated in the Key, thereto, in Agha, 'Agents,' pp. 509-19, 522-3. For the statistical computations and tribal breakdown, see *ibid.*, tables B.4-8 of the series I, II, and III, for Kūfah, Khurāsān, and the whole Organization, consecutively, pp. 599-608, 684-93, 784-93.

⁹ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1620-1. The episode occurred in 119/737 presumably before he was introduced to the Organization.

¹⁰ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1480-1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1595, 1601; *Akḥbār*, p. 199.

appeared once again in a Baṣran contingent chasing the Khārījites, in 43/663-664.¹² Qaḥṭabah himself appears only once outside a direct Organization-related context, and this instance earns him grade 1 instead of grade 2. On the righteous pretences of al-Kirmānī, embroiled at the time in the bitter tribal cum political strife against Naṣr ibn Sayyār and his tribal cum governing faction, Qaḥṭabah is reported to have commented: "If he were true[ly sincere], I would have reinforced him with a thousand horse-riding [fighters]."¹³

If the above connections of Sulaymān and Qaḥṭabah betoken a semblance of high birth, I must hasten to say that the grading system according to the present criterion has nothing to do with any measure of aristocracy. The otherwise totally obscure Mu'ādh ibn Muslim, and the better known Sabbā' ibn al-Nu'mān (nos.262, 322), for example, earn a positive grade of Recognition, albeit only the lowest of the positive grades, grade 3; the first for having been known as a policeman in charge of some highway patrols;¹⁴ the latter for having played a role, a courageous one as it were, in a confrontation between the Muslim *muqātilah* and the Turgesh, in 110/729-730, and for apparently having been active in the tribal strife between Naṣr and al-Kirmānī.¹⁵ If anything at all were known about their families' Extra-Organization background, both would have automatically merited grade 1.

If all the above indicates that some form of involvement with the Establishment is necessary to earn the member a positive grade, it does so because it is more or less true. But it is true only as far as the nature of the historiography at hand requires—it is not subject to what the formative intentions of this study aspire to find and use. Our sources concern themselves mainly with the politico-military history of the Establishment; and this is, in a sense, a shortcoming. However, the personages belonging to an organization such as this (purportedly operating within a tribal imperial context) would rarely appear in any context other than that of a role within the mainstream history of the Establishment, whether in a loyal or in an opposition role. That notwithstanding, whenever any such rare context did occur, it has been utilized. Of the background of Naṣr ibn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Khuzā'i (no.310), nothing is known besides his being the paternal nephew of

¹² Ṭabarī, I: pp. 3418-38, II: pp. 28-65. And therefore Qaḥṭabah must have originated from the Baṣran, not the Kūfan Ṭayyi'. The misunderstanding is due to as erroneous reading of Ṭabarī's accounts. See Sharon, 'Qaḥṭaba,' p. 446a; Blankinship, 'al-'Arab fi Khurāsān,' p. 337; idem, 'Tribal Factor,' p. 591. Cf. Agha, 'Qaḥṭabah'.

¹³ Ṭabarī, II: p. 1930.

¹⁴ *Akhbār*, p. 225.

¹⁵ Ṭabarī, II: pp. 1524, 1858.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Marthad al-Khuzā‘ī, who had been in the service of the rebel Mūsā ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khāzim, in 85/704-705.¹⁶ For this extra-Organization appearance, which also happened to be an anti-government familial association, Naṣr ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd earned grade 2. Zuhayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥayyān ... al-Azdī (no.400) earned grade 1 for the rare combination of his being the father-in-law of the celebrated ‘Alīd revolutionary and martyr, Zayd ibn ‘Alī, and, of course, the father of the latter’s wife, who was killed in an infamously spectacular show of brutality by the governor of Iraq, Yūsuf ibn ‘Umar.¹⁷

This irremediable shortcoming is, however, more damaging to the abstract worthiness of the criterion, on the purely theoretical level, than it is to the empirical significance and validity of the conclusions drawn from its application. These men were, in a capital sense, political creatures. If they were to be well known in a public capacity, or noteworthy to any type of information sources, it is in a political context that they would more likely be encountered, and it is in sources on the politico-military history of the community that any records of their activities would be expected to be found. These sources did not restrict their information to the activities of Establishment officials, or members in the Establishment’s *muqātilah* corps. All kinds of personages appear in all kinds of contexts, albeit, somehow, the image of the Establishment always looms as ever-present. The incognito millions, the faceless masses of any era, who pass away leaving no individual traces in the records of their times, represent no issue. At no point in their lives would they have distinguished themselves to warrant a retracing of their previous records.

Even those few out of the four hundred and one members, who did distinguish themselves in the course of the Revolt, its aftermath, and the new realm, and who attained high profile spots as governors, leaders, rebels or founders of illustrious *Abnā’* ‘dynasties’, and thus earned their places in the literary, and other sources of variety, did not bring to their newly attained celebrity status news of their pre-Revolutionary past; at least, not in the limited number of sources surveyed for the purpose. It is not expected that a survey of more sources would yield such information in any measure adequate enough to alter the results of the present survey. If this is a limitation, then, for purposes of defining the parameters of statistical validity, it must be admitted that the findings of this study—at least as far as this criterion goes—are governed by this limitation, which we believe to be inconsequential.

¹⁶ Ibid., II: p. 1155.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Nasab*, p. 485; cf. Ibn A‘tham, VIII: p. 123.

Therefore, if most of the known elite leadership of this huge and crucial mass movement do not appear except in the context of the movement which elevated them to a certain degree of visibility; then the issue of their visibility in the wider social context of the period is forcefully tabled, and certain conclusions must be drawn.

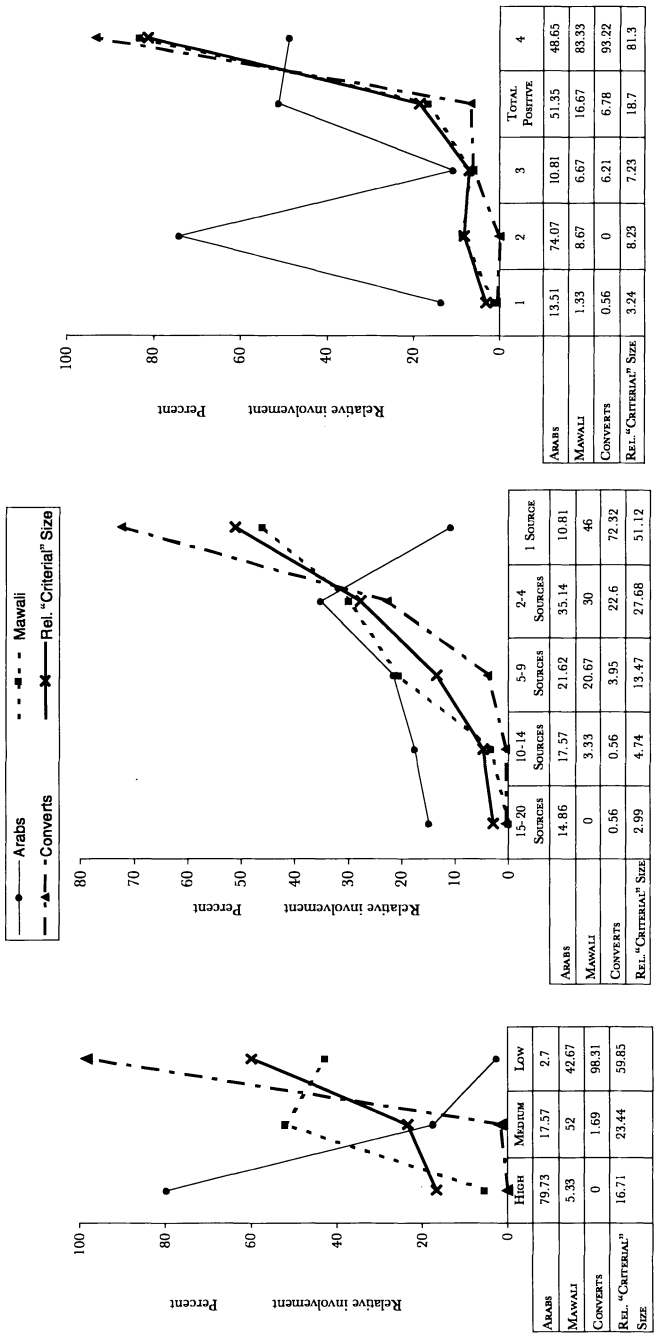
Although the criterion is, within the prescribed parameter, valid and significant in every individual case; it is much more so when the entire known membership is collectively gauged against its scale. Errors and oversights may have affected the grading of few individual cases. Providing for twenty such cases is already a generous estimate. This would make for a 5% error margin, and, if fully realized, would alter the general picture by only that much—far too short to affect the soundness of the general conclusions based on the results of the application of the criterion.

If the criterion is still deemed vulnerable to charges of implausibility, consider the following.¹⁸ When in an individual case like, for example, Abū Ḥamzah al-Jurabī (no.68), all the negatives cluster in his profile, and thus vindicate the negative grade he merits according to the present criterion; what else can be concluded other than the validity of the criterion, and that this specific profile must be classified in a category of total obscurity!¹⁹ If this is an extreme example, it is not one of a kind, nor one of a few. The validity and significance of this criterion would be even more readily appreciated, through analytical comparisons and correlations between the relevant criteria, as applied to the collective profile of the listed membership. The majority of those who merit lower grades according to this criterion will be found to score poorly in other indicatively related but independently devised and graded criteria.²⁰ The inescapable conclusion is that the results reflect a remarkable measure of the degree of social and personal recognizability these men possessed in the contemporary wider social surroundings.

¹⁸ One must keep in mind that all the Criteria employed in this study have been devised and applied independently from one another, except where one was devised to specifically gauge another, as in the case of Name Recognition, which has been devised to gauge the name combinations.

¹⁹ Whether read al-Jarabbī, al-Jurbī, or al-Jurabī (cf. Sam'ānī, II: p. 39), he earns the lowest name recognition (grade 8); his ethnicity is undetermined; he is not placed in a known locality (unless we assume Jarabbah in Yaman), nor attached to a specific tribe (unless we assume Jurayb of Hudhayl); he merits the negative grade according to the present Criterion (grade 4). Moreover, even in the context of the Organization, he remained an incognito.

²⁰ See figures no.4, p. 269, and no.5, p. 270.



I.O.H.R.

Data from Tables III.B.9-13

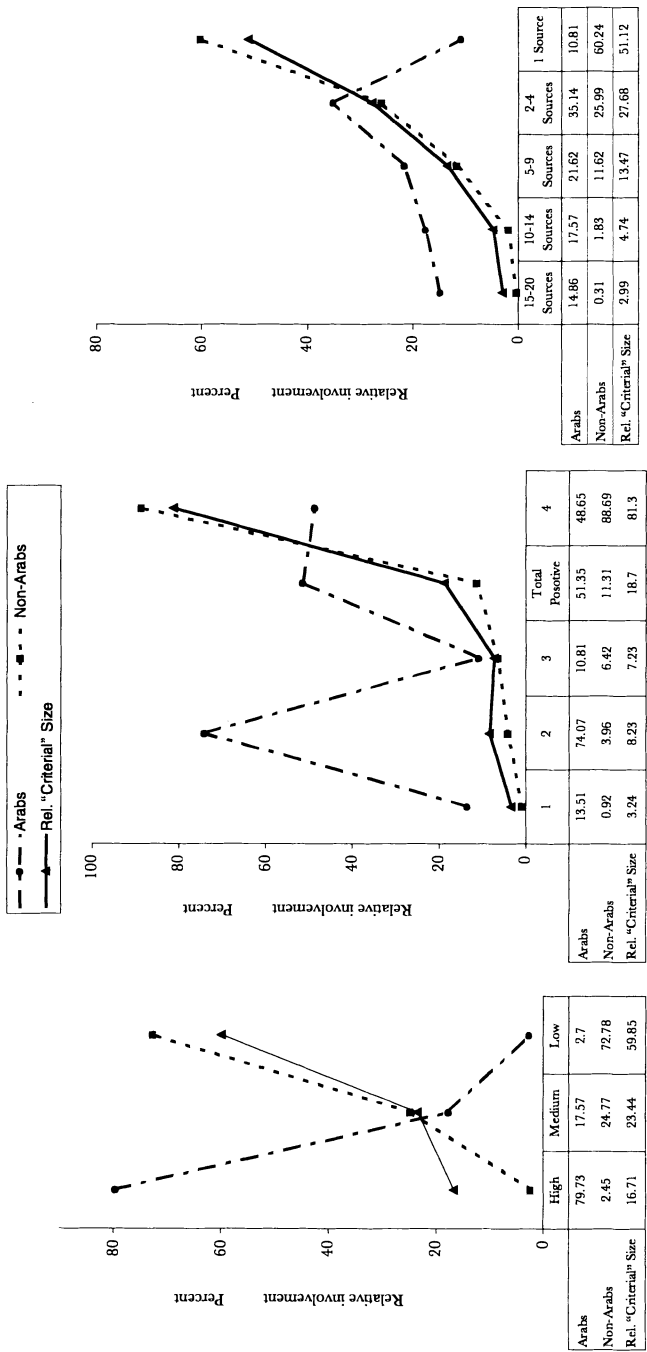
E.O.H.R. Grades

Data from Tables III.B.4-8

NAME RECOGNITION

Data from Tables III.B.1-3

Figure No. 4
Comparative Collective Recognizability of the Three Ethnic/Socio-Religious Groups



NAME RECOGNITION

Data from Tables III.B.1-3

E.O.H.R. Grades

Data from Tables III.B.4-8

I.O.H.R

Data from Tables III.B.9-13

Figure No. 5
Comparative Collective Recognizability of the Two Ethnic Groups

The following table shows the collective Recognizability of the two Chapters and the entire Organization.²¹

Grades of Recognizability	Kūfah Chapter	Khurāsān Chapter	The Organization
Grade 1 (highest)	9.84%	2.06%	3.24%
Grade 2	1.64%	9.41%	8.23%
Grade 3	22.95%	4.41%	7.23%
Total positive Grades 1-3	34.43%	15.88%	18.70%
Negative Grade 4	65.57%	84.12%	81.30%
Total	100%	100%	100%

It is worth noting that the Kūfah Chapter scores higher Visibility than the Khurāsān Chapter. This is only to be expected, in view of the preponderance of *mawālī* over converts in its ranks. But it still scores only around a third positive Visibility, in view of the very small proportion of its Arab membership. The Kūfan score improved the poor overall score of the Organization, but only slightly over the dismal Khurāsānite tally. For, even if Kūfah had scored positively, the sheer size of the incognito Chapter in Khurāsān would have absorbed the margin without showing a reasonably healthy score. Although, when it comes to comparing these results with Naṣr's testimony, it is the Khurāsān Chapter which matters; it does not hurt the results of this appraisal to base the analysis on the slightly better score of the overall Organization. The margin in favor of Naṣr's objectivity is so overwhelming, and can well sustain the generosity.

III. *Internal Concordance of the Criteria*

The application of all three Criteria of Visibility and Recognition (N.R., I.O.H.R., and E.O.H.R.), separately and together, yields the same general results, and produces a concordance of evidence supporting the assertion that, ethnically, the Organization and the Revolution were predominately non-Arab. The intimate relation between 'social visibility' and ethnic identity, in the context of the Umayyad imperial

²¹ Data from tables B.4-8 of the series I, II, and III, for Kūfah, Khurāsān, and the whole Organization, consecutively, in Agha, 'Agents,' pp. 599-608, 684-93, 784-93.

structure, which Naṣr established in his poem, is only confirmed by these results.

If Naṣr's perceptual portrait of the movement could be depicted in a graph, it will be found in figure no.5; and his further distinction between the recognizable *ṣamīm al-mawālī*, and the alien converts who came from God knows where (*mimman ta'ashshaba lā dīnun wa lā ḥasabu*), is quantified in figure no.4.

In figure no.5, the curves representing the collective profile of the Organization and that of the non-Arabs run almost parallel, in all three graphs, from very low positive recognizability positions to sky-rocketing obscurity. The curve representing the Arabs behaves in exactly the opposite fashion, intersecting with the previous ones only on its way down to very low scores on obscurity.²² The same applies to figure no.4. But the distinction between the *mawālī* and the converts, which is introduced in this figure 4, produces the graphic illustration of the identity of the Group responsible for the dismal profile. The general tendency of the *mawālī* curve is to run higher (or very slightly lower) than the curve representing the collective profile on positive positions, and lower on positions of obscurity. The converts' curve behaves in the opposite direction.²³ The *mawālī* display a mediocre profile. The converts display a profile decidedly shrouded in obscurity.

Whether or not these results do justice to the constituent masses who made up the backbone of the Revolution, the self-evident answer must be affirmative. If the results were to demonstrate a leadership enjoying a high social profile, it would have been difficult to draw decisive conclusions regarding the recognizability of the base. But, if the results show, as they do, a collectively obscure leadership; it is rather absurd to postulate a more prominent base.

The only tenable conclusion is that the overwhelming majority of these Revolutionaries, moving from anonymous obscurity into the ranks of the Organization and the elevated platform of making history, remained in obscure anonymity. Faceless were they when they mobbed the ruling Establishment, and faceless they remained after their victory. For this is the lot of most of those who belong to the masses, even when they momentarily rise to the forefront of historic tidal waves. Upheavals do raise some of them aloft, as this Revolution indeed did. But it is also

²² All three curves behave in a slightly different fashion in the E.O.H.R. graph in figure no.5. The stringent criterion results with lower positive recognizability positions and higher obscurity positions; and the presence of the cumulative position results with a conceptual disruption.

²³ The anomaly seen in the first position of the I.O.H.R. graph is attributable to the singular case of Abū Muslim.

in the nature of upheavals, once the commotion settles, to nestle into the domains of established social patterns. Only select individuals and groups would have bought their newly acquired positions; the rest would be left where they came from.

Given the characteristic tendency of Arabic historiography to position individuals within tribal structures, whether the identification is indigenous or acquired, real or fictitious, the continued anonymity of this majority, especially where a tribal connection is missing, places them unequivocally outside the tribal structures and the *mawālī* establishment. Once again, Naṣr ibn Sayyār's contemporaneous poetic testimony is vindicated.