Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry, and the *ʿAyyār* Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World

D. G. Tor

Orient-Institut Istanbul

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When first this order was ordain'd, my lords,
Knights of the garter were of noble birth,
Valiant and virtuous, full of haughty courage,
Such as were grown to credit by the wars;
Not fearing death, nor shrinking for distress,
But always resolute in most extremes.
He then that is not furnish'd in this sort
Doth but usurp the sacred name of knight,
Profaning this most honourable order …

– Henry IV, Part 1

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1. Defining the *ʿAyyārs*

> Indeed, without [the] aid [of historical cross-examination], every time the historian turned his attention to the generations gone by, he would become the inevitable prey of the same prejudices, false inhibitions, and myopias which had plagued the vision of those same generations … Even those texts … which seem the clearest and the most accommodating will speak only when they are properly questioned …
> – Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft

The *ʿayyārs*, one of the most prominent paramilitary groups of the medieval Eastern Islamic world, affected the larger course of Islamic history to a far greater extent than has hitherto been acknowledged by modern scholars. Yet, despite the central role the *ʿayyārs* played in some of the major developments of classical Islamic civilization, they have been not only thoroughly neglected historiographically but, worse, misunderstood. Traditionally, the *ʿayyārūn*[1] are generally familiar to scholars from two contexts: as warriors on the side of the Caliph al-Amīn in the Fourth Fitna (811-813), the civil war between the sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd;[2] and as the founders of a dynasty (the Ṣaffārid) ruling over a vast realm stretching from the Hindu Kush to the borders of Iraq.[3] Although the phenomenon of an *ʿayyār* kingdom soon passed, the *ʿayyār* bands themselves continued to play a pivotal role in the politics of the time, across the entire eastern Islamic world, over the course of the ninth through the eleventh centuries. In fact, *ʿayyārī*/*ʿiyāra* was one of the most characteristic social phenomena of the classical Islamic world.

Thus, for generations scholars have encountered in their sources various people and groups to whom the term "*ʿayyār*" is applied, and have not known quite what to make of them. They were only too glad to follow without much question in the footsteps of the earliest nineteenth century scholars who first dealt with the problem, so that they could then get on with what they considered to be the more important research that the *ʿayyārs*, in typical fashion, had so rudely and unexpectedly interrupted.

---

1 The Persian and Arabic plural forms of the word will be used in accordance with the primary source context in which the *ʿayyārs* appear; that is, *ʿayyārūn* will be employed when the primary source is in Arabic and *ʿayyārān* when the source is in Persian.

2 Contrary to popular belief, this was not their first historical appearance, which occurred, rather, in Sīstān; *vide infra*, Chapter Two.

3 On the *ʿayyār* origins of the Ṣaffārids see Anon., *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Baḥār, Tehran, 1935, pp. 193, 194-195. See also C. E. Bosworth, *The History of the Ṣaffārids of Sistan and the Maliks of Nimruz*, Costa Mesa, CA, 1994, p. 72.

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In essence, Theodor Nöldeke's brief "sketch" of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, the first Ṣaffārid ruler and most famous historical *ʿayyār*, has defined the nature of *ʿayyārī* for all subsequent generations of Islamologists until the present.[4] In his article Nöldeke, having embraced Ibn Khallikān's vehemently negative view of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, assumed that the word *ʿayyār* must be some sort of derogatory epithet. In addition, since contemporary nineteenth-century linguistic usage of the term in Arabic and Persian did indeed connote "brigand" or "outlaw," Nöldeke may also simply have anachronistically applied the modern meaning to Yaʿqūb's time.

There are several problems, however, with letting Nöldeke and his followers remain the last word on the subject, not the least of them being that Nöldeke's definition was more a makeshift attempt to get past the unknown word, *ʿayyār*, than a considered and researched definition. More importantly, a word does not necessarily retain the same denotation over the span of a thousand years. The gravest problem with Nöldeke's *ʿayyār*-as-bandit paradigm, though, is that his source base was extremely limited; not only had many works not yet been discovered, but Nöldeke also did not read Persian, nor did he attempt to broaden his source base in order to try to find a greater diversity of literary contexts (for instance, belles-lettres or repentance literature) when attempting to derive a contextual definition of the word *ʿayyār*.

As a result of Nöldeke's article, the role of the *ʿayyārs* has traditionally been viewed by scholars as a negative one. Bosworth, for instance, writes of *ʿayyārān* in the 1030s as "brigands who were carrying on a guerilla warfare against the representatives of Ghaznavid authority."[5] Even more forcefully, he refers to *ʿiyāra* as "turbulent mob behaviour, lawlessness and banditry,"[6] and to the *ʿayyārs* as a "lawless and anti-social element."[7] Lapidus states that "The *ʿayyārūn* of Iraq and Iran were often gangs of criminals who sometimes served as strong-arm men for local notables, quarters and religious sects, sometimes acting as criminal predators … ,"[8] while Lambton asserts that "The general tendency was for the *ʿayyārs*

4 Theodor Nöldeke, "Yakub the Coppersmith and His Dynasty," *Sketches from Eastern History*, tr. John Sutherland Black, Beirut, 1963, pp. 176-206. His mistaken evaluation of Yaʿqūb seems to have been based on his interpretation of only two lone sources – Ibn al – Athīr's chronicle and Ibn Khallikān's fiercely anti-Ṣaffārid sketch, in his biographical dictionary, of the dynasty's founder; yet Nöldeke's rather impromptu explanation of the term set the definitional framework for all subsequent writings touching on the subject. Nöldeke's view of *ʿayyārs*, however, was more nuanced than those of some of his successors and followers; he, for example, realized that they had originally formed as "volunteer bands … for defence against the Kharijites." (p. 177)

5 C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040*, Beirut, 1973, p. 90.

6 *Ibid.* p. 167.

7 *Ibid.* p. 168.

8 Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 178.

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to degenerate into bands of robbers … By Saljūq times the *ʿayyār* were mostly undisciplined mobs who took up arms, robbed and murdered the population, and spread terror among them when the opportunity offered."[9] In short, the general tendency has been to view the *ʿayyārs* as the medieval Islamic equivalent of some sort of gang-like organization.

Given their extraordinary importance and ubiquity in the literature of the pre-Mongol period, it is also remarkable that so little research has been undertaken on the subject. The scattered attempts to define the *ʿayyārs* have come about somewhat fortuitously; researchers whose aim lay elsewhere were forced to deal, however briefly, with this important phenomenon because it persistently kept cropping up in their sources. In fact, until very recently Claude Cahen and Simha Sabari were virtually the only scholars whose focus and primary research interest lay in *ʿayyārs* – and even in their case, *ʿayyārs* interested them not *per se* but rather as one of a number of manifestations of what they axiomatically took to be "popular movements" or "urban phenomena."

What has been specifically lacking is a thorough examination of the *ʿayyār* phenomenon in and of itself, separate from other phenomena designated by other terms that researchers have hitherto groundlessly assumed are equivalent to the term *ʿayyār*.[10] A thorough examination, moreover, should study the specific phenomenon represented by the term *ʿayyār* across the chronological and geographical spans of its occurrence in order to ascertain what the phenomenon actually meant; whether that meaning changed over time (i. e. did the word possess the same meaning in the ninth century that it did in the eleventh); and whether the word *ʿayyār* signified something different in different regions of the Islamic empire. This examination should also involve a source-critical analysis to see if different kinds of sources contain different portrayals of *ʿayyārs* (e. g. if there are differences between Persian and Arabic accounts; chronicles and more popular literature; *ʿulamāʾ*-generated writings and those composed in courtly or other circles, and so forth).

Until now, virtually all scholarly inquiry into the subject has been based wholly on Arabic annals, dating largely from a specific time and place and generated by a specific milieu: namely, the Baghdadi religious clerics (*ʿulamāʾ*) of the late-eleventh through fourteenth centuries.[11] This is despite, as von Grunebaum

9 A. K. S. Lambton, "The Internal Structure of the Saljuq Empire," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1968, p. 274.

10 M. R. Najjār, *Ḥikāyāt al-shuṭṭār wa'l-ʿayyārīn fi'l-turāth al-ʿArabī*, Kuwait, 1989, is a particularly egregious example of the unsupported conflation of terms.

11 The only earlier (i. e. pre-late tenth century) sources which appear to have been consulted are the highly enigmatic accounts of Ṭabarī and Masʿūdī treating what is traditionally viewed as the first recorded appearance of the *ʿayyārūn* of Baghdad during the fourth fitna. Mohsen Zakeri's work (which we shall be discussing presently) constitutes an exception to this rule.

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has already pointed out, the inherently antagonistic posture of these clerics toward the ʿ*ayyārs*.[12] After uncritically adopting the definition derived from the censorious epithets of these later clerical sources, researchers projected this theoretical definition of ʿ*ayyārs* forwards and backwards in time to any other ʿ*āyyār* manifestation they subsequently encountered.

This is one explanation of why Nöldeke's negative conception of the ʿ*ayyārs* has proven tenacious, despite the perceptions of some of the scholars who have encountered ʿ*ayyārs* in the course of their research that there must have been a deeper dimension to the whole phenomenon. Lambton and Mottahedeh, for example, view the phenomenon as an expression of ʿ*asabiyya* or corporate feeling.[13] Sabari, whose work constitutes the lengthiest treatment before Zakeri's, states that the ʿ*ayyār* movement began over religious questions in the ninth and tenth centuries. However, Sabari holds that the phenomenon became in the tenth century a sort of paradigmatic Marxist "people's liberation movement" whose main objective was to operate against the twin oppressive forces of landowners and merchants on the one hand and state functionaries and the military on the other:[14]

> [ʿ*Iyāra*] represented, in its motivations and its activities, one of the manifestations of the antagonism among urban classes, and served as an expression of the spirit of revolt on the part of the poor layer of the city's population, deprived of goods and rights … ʿ*Iyāra* therefore was the revolt of the urban poor against the existing order, a revolt … that was expressed in action and not in doctrine.[15]

Yet this theory – and particularly her insistence that the ʿ*ayyārūn* were a solely lower class phenomenon – sits uneasily with some of the facts Sabari herself has pointed out. As Sabari notes,

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12 Von Grunebaum cautions, in this context, of "the spiteful unreliability of the historical accounts." (G. Von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History 600-1258*, tr. Katherine Watson, New York, 1996, p. 104.)

13 Lambton, *op. cit.* , p. 273; Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, revised ed. , London, 2001, pp. 157-158.

14 Thus, she writes of ʿ*iyāra* and ʿ*ayyār* activities as part of supposed "general protests" over "the iniquities of the existing order … This fundamental characteristic of the popular struggle was the inevitable result of the tyrannical and military character of the regime." (Simha Sabari, *Mouvements populaires à Baġdad à l'époque ʿAbbasside IXe-XIe siècles*, Paris, 1981, p. 72) She returns to this idea again: " … From its beginnings, this movement was conspicuous above all for its combative nature and popular solidarity for the defense of Baghdad and the Caliphate; from the beginning … of the tenth century, it is the sociopolitical element that dominates. It appears that it was during this period that the movement crystallised. From that point onwards, through al-Burjumī in the eleventh century until Ibn Bakran in the twelfth century, there were no marked changes in the tendencies of [ʿ*ayyār*] activity, although one can establish a certain evolution." (p. 97) Sabari is one of the few scholars to have given any consideration to the developmental aspect.

15 *Ibid.*

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> There were likewise *ashrāf* among the ʿ*ayyārūn* , descendants of the family of the Prophet – that is, if we suppose that the terms "ʿAbbāsid" and "ʿAlid" designate familial origin. This could explain the existence of a certain pride among the ʿ*ayyārūn*.[16]

Sabari also wonders about the demonstrated ties between ʿ*ayyārūn* and high-ranking people; she attempts to explain this by hypothesizing that perhaps officialdom received a cut of the ʿ*ayyār* loot.[17] Perhaps her surmise is correct; but certain texts we shall be examining below, in conjunction with her own evidence, suggest, rather, that the ʿ*ayyārūn* comprised more than lowborn rabble. Indeed, this idea of their base social origin (which was originally Massignon's) has been seriously challenged by Cahen. He points out that the ʿ*ayyār* bands could not have been composed entirely of the disinherited; there are too many cases, even in Baghdad, where we know them to have been middle class professionals or even notables.[18]

The second problem with Sabari's work is her assumption that "the ʿ*ayyār* movement was not coloured by any particular politico-religious ideology."[19] She notes, however, that whenever the ʿ*ayyārūn* were Sunni, they appeared to have been "under the political and religious inspiration of Ḥanbalism."[20] The difficulty here arises, first, from the fact that every ʿ*ayyār* appearance in Baghdad she herself subsequently mentions is apparently related to religion, involving either Sunni-Shiʿite *fitnas*; a defense of the ʿAbbāsids against perceived menaces of one form or another (e. g. in 251/865 to defend the beleaguered caliph from his Turkish army[21]and in 334/945 to fight the heterodox Daylamites[22]); or a mobilization for the Jihād against the Byzantines.[23]

Furthermore, the few cases she adduces of what she maintains to be Shiʿite ʿ*ayyārūn* are highly problematic. In one instance she interprets "ʿ*ayyārūn* ʿAlides" to mean Shiʿite ʿ*ayyārs*; but why would Shiʿite ʿ*ayyārs* want to pillage the Barāthā mosque, which was a notoriously Shiʿite shrine (ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was said to have prayed at the site on his way to the battle of Nahrawān)?[24] It is far more

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16 *Ibid.* p. 88.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Cahen, *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen age*, Leiden, 1959, p. 53.

19 Sabari, *op. cit.* p. 90.

20 *Ibid.* p. 124.

21 *Ibid.* p. 79.

22 *Ibid.* p. 68.

23 *Ibid.* p. 80.

24 G. Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, London, 1924, p. 154; Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, Detroit, 1970, p. 97. In fact, it was so notorious as a center of Shiʿite activity that the Caliph al-Muqtadir actually had it razed at the beginning of the fouth/tenth century. Although its rebuilding was permitted in 328/940, the mosque continued to be a hotbed of Shiʿite agitation well into the eleventh century; see, for example, the incident found in ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi'l-ta'rīkh*, ed. Tornberg, Beirut, 1399/1979, vol. 9, pp. 393-394; Abū'l Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *al-Munṭaẓam fi ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-*

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likely that "ʿAlid" is being employed in this context in its normal sense of "descendants of the Prophet" – who in this case were Sunni *ʿayyārs*. Moreover, all of the *ʿayyār* raids in the ongoing Baghdadi internecine civil warfare between Sunnis and Shiʿites, the *fitnas*, appear to afflict Shiʿite neighborhoods such as al-Karkh; where the perpetrators are given a specific neighborhood affiliation, it is invariably to outstandingly Sunni neighborhoods such as Bāb al-Baṣra.[25] In short, this writer has yet to see convincing evidence that there really was a Shiʿite *ʿayyār* phenomenon.

The strong religious element inherent in the *ʿayyār* phenomenon has been noted by other writers as well, even when they remained committed to the paradigm of the *ʿayyār*-as-ruffian. Occasionally, these scholars have simply discounted this religious element, as in the case where Barthold holds that Gardīzī's having employed the term *ʿayyār* in a particular instance where Muqaddasī is inveighing against certain *mutaṭawwiʿa* (volunteer warriors for Islam) is due not to any general equivalence between the two terms, but solely to the unruly nature of the activities in which those particular *mutaṭawwiʿa* were engaging.[26] That is, Barthold asserts that despite appearances to the contrary, there was not really any equivalence between *ghāzīs/mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ʿayyārs*; Gardīzī just applies the term as a derogatory epithet when the *ghāzīs* are behaving badly. In Barthold's words: "It is not without reason that Gardīzī replaces the terms quoted above by the word *ʿayyār* ('scoundrel')."

Mottahedeh discusses the *ʿayyārūn* only within the context of factionalism generally; while he mentions the religious elements of many of the *fitnas* he dismisses the religious motivation as insufficient explanation for factionalism, stating that:

> The *aḥdāth* and *ʿayyārūn* … played an important role in the local factionalism that was nearly universal … Factions often had a religious identification. In Baghdad, for example, the two great factions were the Shiʿites and the Sunnis; in many places they were based on schools of religious law. Nevertheless, there are enough places with non-religious factions to indicate that the law school or sect was not the true basis of faction, even if it provided a convenient focus for factional loyalties …[27]

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umam, ed. M. ʿA. ʿAṭā *et alii*, Beirut, 1412/1992, vol. 15, p. 198; and Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, Aleppo, no date, vol. 12, p. 30. There is another, even clearer incident where Sunnis plunder Barāthā during Sunni-Shiʿite riots (Ibn al-Jawzī, *loc. cit.* pp. 330-331). This is discussed at greater length *infra*, Chapter Eight, including Shiʿite *faḍāʿil* of the mosque.

25 Sabari, *op. cit.* p. 80; see also *infra*, Chapter Eight; and D. Tor, *The Status of the Shiʿa in ʿIraq in the Late Buwayhid Period*, Jerusalem, Unpublished M. A. Thesis submitted to The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996.

26 V. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, tr. T. Minorsky, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Taipei, 1968, p. 215.

27 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 158-159. It would be interesting to see if the *ʿayyārūn* were as significant a force in towns in which factional warfare was non-religiously based. The issue of factionalism is more extensively treated by him in his review of Rich-

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Cahen himself details numerous incidents where there is obviously a religious element to ʿ*ayyār* activities. He quotes Muqaddasī as saying that in the Iranian town Nasā, "All is ʿ*ayyār*, such that ʿ*asabiyya* [between Sunnis on the one hand and Shiʿites on the other] has ruined it."[28] Elsewhere he notes the difficulty in drawing "a very firm line of demarcation among ʿ*ayyārūn*, *ghāzīs*, and *muṭṭawwiʿa*."[29] One of the most striking cases Cahen mentions is of certain ninth century individuals – Nūḥ of Nishapur the ʿ*ayyār* and Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh the Sufi [d. 240/855].[30] This particular reference is important not only because it brings into relief the close ties between ʿ*ayyārān* and sufis, and by implication the religious affiliations of ʿ*ayyār* groups; but also because one of the people Cahen mentions in this context is a great merchant – another unlikely candidate for a lower-class brigand.[31]

C. E. Bosworth is another scholar who has perceived that there must have been some kind of religious component or motivation to the ʿ*ayyārān*. For instance, even at the time when he was influenced by Cahen's earlier writings, Bosworth nevertheless noted that ʿ*ayyārān* functioned as *ghāzīs* and *mutaṭawwiʿa*, volunteer fighters for the faith, both in Sīstān against the Khawārij and on the borders against non-Muslims.[32] Among the many different statements he has made about the ʿ*ayyārs* (not all of which suggest the same view, since his conception of this phenomenon developed over time), he defines the ʿ*ayyārān* as a group which basically professed one thing (the ideal of religious warfare) but actually – and seemingly invariably – spent its time engaged in an entirely different fashion: " … the ʿ*ayyārs* and their leaders the *sarhangs*, active in the towns of Sīstān as ostensible upholders of the Sunni cause … often behav[ed] more like brigands."[33]

In his later writing, Bosworth became more convinced of the *ghāzī* element of the ʿ*ayyārān*, although he still tried to reconcile this with the bandit image:

> The aetiology of ʿ*ayyārī* is perhaps clearer for Sīstān and Bust than for other parts of the Islamic world. There, the ʿ*ayyārs* were in origin anti-Khārijite vigilantes, ostensibly having the maintenance of the Sunna as their watchword. But since such corporate groupings as ʿ*ayyār* bands had no legal or social role assigned to them as such in traditional Is-

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ard Bulliet's *Patricians of Nishapur* (*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 [1975], pp. 491-495).

28 Cahen, *Mouvements populaires*, p. 29.

29 *Ibid.* p. 48.

30 This incident is taken from Abū'l Ḥasan ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān al-Hujvīrī al-Ghaznavī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, ed. V. Zhukovskii, Tehran, 1380. For more on the incident and these figures *vide infra*, Chapter Seven.

31 Cahen, *Mouvements populaires*, p. 35. In his *futuwwa* article in EI² Cahen says of the ʿ*ayyārūn* that they were "clearly humble people, but more exalted people mixed readily with them."

32 C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 167-168.

33 Bosworth, *Sīstān Under the Arabs: From the Islamic Conquest to the Rise of the Ṣaffārids (30-250/651-864)*, Rome, 1968, p. 90.

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> lamic society, their membership was ill-defined by socio-legal norms and consequently attracted to itself irresponsible and even anti-social characters; hence ʿ*ayyār* groups were a turbulent element in the life of such towns as Zarang and Bust and were at times little distinguishable from brigands … [This] must lie behind the ambivalent attitudes shown towards the ʿ*ayyārs* in later Persian literature.[34]

For much of his career, however, Bosworth appears to have been foremost a disciple of Bāstānī Pārīzī's view of the ʿ*ayyārān* in the East as a sort of local patriotic resistance to outside rulers.[35] According to Bosworth, this accounts for the positive characteristics attibuted to the ʿ*ayyārān* by certain Persian sources. Thus he writes that " … the ʿ*ayyārs* were the core of local resistance. As a result, to the author of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ʿ*ayyārī* is a term of praise, to be equated with *muruwwa*."[36] In his more recent writing, though, Bosworth, in light of Cahen's later ruminations, modified his definition to include "'strong, resolute man' … 'generous, chivalrous person,' the equivalent of Arabic *fatā* and Persian *jawānmard*."[37]

Interestingly enough, the German scholars have not perceived any religious element in the ʿ*ayyār* phenomenon. Bertold Spuler, for example, barely mentions *mutaṭawwiʿa*, and never mentions ʿ*ayyārs*. He, in fact, refers to the former quite fleetingly when discussing the Ṣaffārids and the rise of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, writing of:

> In Seistan gelang es seit 851/52 von der Burg Qarni(n) bei Zarang aus dem Jaʿqub ibn Laiṯ … Truppen und freiwillige Glaubenskämpfer (*Mutaṭawwiʿa*), die zu Kämpfen gegen die zur Landplage gewordenen Ḫariǧiten und Šurāt (deren Extremisten) dort stationert waren und die bisher teils Ṭāhir II. , teils aber einem gewissen Ṣāliḥ (ibn Nāṣir) al-Mutaṭawwiʿī und seinem Nachfolger Dirham ibn (Naṣr) al-Ḥusain unterstanden hatten, an sich zu ketten.[38]

Nowhere does Spuler state that *mutaṭawwiʿa* and ʿ*ayyārūn* are related terms; in fact, he ignores the latter epithet entirely. Again, when writing about military groups, he states the following:

> Daneben [die Palast-Wache] bestand ein besonderes 'Gefolge' aus Berittenen, die, über die 'Militär-Bezirke' des Staates verteilt, in Garnison lagen. Ihr Kommandant hieß *Sipāhsālār* … Dazu kamen die. . (Wächter)-Truppen (vielleicht Festungsbesatzungen?) und religiöse, freiwillige Grenzkämpfer (*Mutaṭawwiʿa*, später *Ġāzī's*).[39]

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34 Bosworth, *History of the Ṣaffārids*, *op. cit.* , p. 69. He cites Hanaway's *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry as his source of reference.

35 Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī, *Yaʿqūb-e Lays*, Tehran 1344/1965-6, pp. 42-3.

36 Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, *loc. cit.*

37 Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids of Sistan*, *loc. cit.*

38 Bertold Spuler, *Iran in Früh-Islamischer Zeit: Politik, Kultur, Verwaltung und öffentliches Leben zwischen der Arabischen und der Seldschukischen Eroberung 633 bis 1055*, Wiesbaden, 1952, pp. 69-70.

39 *Ibid.* p. 490. Note that his footnote here merely refers back to Taeschner's "Islamisches Ordensrittertum zur Zeit der Kreuzzeuge," *Welt als Geschichte* 5, 1938, pp. 382-408.

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Another important German scholar who does not see a religious element in the *ʿayyār* phenomenon (although he has noted the chivalric aspect in passing) is Jürgen Paul, who specifically and clearly differentiates between *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ʿayyārān*. Nowhere does he connect "volunteers" and "religiously motivated groups" with *ʿayyārān*, even when he cites the example of Yaʿqūb al-Ṣaffār, where the identification would be most apparent. While he is aware of the strong connection between the Sāmānids and religiously motivated volunteer fighters, he does not seem to posit such an ongoing and persistent connection in the Ṣaffārid case; Paul therefore treats incidents such as the support of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *fuqahāʾ* of Nishapur for ʿAmr b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār as mere isolated cases due to reasons other than the identification of the Ṣaffārid state as *ghāzī/mutaṭawwiʿī/ʿayyār*.[40]

This non-identification between *mutaṭawwiʿ* and *ʿayyār* becomes even clearer in his section on *ʿayyārs*, who are placed in the category of "nicht legitimierte Gewalt: *ʿAyyār*-Wesen."

> *ʿAyyār* groups appear for the most part as such: they are cognates of robbers, that is, armed groups which were not controlled by any ruler [lit. , lordship=Herrschaft]. "Usurpers" were so named; men who, even if for the most part only for a short time, controlled an area, without having been appointed by an overlord … Also under them there is a broad spectrum, from "robber-knight" to "social-brigand."
>
> The "robber-knight" type is perhaps best epitomized in ʿAlī Quhandizī. He had a fortress in the area of Balkh, from which he undertook [his] robberies, attacking villages and caravans. Hardships overtook him [at the hands of] Masʿūd the Ghaznavid, who fulfilled his duties as sultan by smoking out the nest ([in the] year 429).[41]

Paul did not, however, rest content with the unmodified bandit definition. He realized that, to a certain extent, the *ʿayyārān* must have had, at least occasionally, some kind of respectable state connection; and, second, that the authors of certain sources may have been subject to particular biases in writing about these groups:

> There are indications, and that is really the most interesting, that groups described as *ʿayyār* were a military potential above all in rural regions, whose various pretenders could [employ the *ʿayyārān* to] serve themselves, if suitable arrangements were arrived at. It was possibly for this reason, therefore, that these armed villagers were portrayed in the sources as "robbers," because the authors had both a state-oriented [staatstragende]

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40 Jürgen Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit. Beiruter Texte und Studien*, Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Band 59, Beirut, 1996, pp. 113-117. See also p. 136, where he clearly demarcates the various groups: "Aus diesem Reservoir [of armed rustics] konnten für verschiedene Zwecke Kämpfer rekrutiert werden. Es steht zu vermuten, daß die soziale Herkunft sowohl vieler gazi – Kämpfer als auch des 'Massenaufgebots' (*raǧǧāla* oder *ḥašar*), der 'Freiwilligen' (*muṭṭawwiʿa*) und der 'jungen Männer' (*aḥdāṯ*), aber auch der *ʿayyār*, der `Räuber' under anderer bewaffnete Haufen, doch recht ähnlich war …"

41 *Ibid.* p. 127.

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> as well as an urban outlook on things. Occasionally one also encounters state militias in situations in which they [i. e. the militias], even if they did not have to rely on the support of the ʿ*ayyār* groups, did though call upon [or: enlist] them. At the same time, whether one should therefore go so far as to see in these groups a proper militia is another question.[42]

On the other hand, Paul does not see any regular connection between *javānmardān* and ʿ*ayyārān*.[43] Note as well that in contrast to Cahen and others, who have always defined the ʿ*ayyārān* as an urban element, Paul defines the ʿ*ayyārān* as a rural peasant element (ein ländliches bewaffnetes Element).[44] To a large extent, this is due to the difference in source material upon which these scholars based themselves: while Cahen and Sabari were examining Baghdadi Arabic chronicles from primarily the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Paul was basing himself upon the local Persian histories such as *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, and so forth.[45]

Again, while holding to his mainly negative image of the phenomenon, Paul, too, realizes that there must also have been an element of chivalry to these bands, at least occasionally:

> The image of the ʿ*ayyār* is in any case not so bad, that they could always be only robbers. They are regarded as brave lads [kühne Burschen]; they have their own code of honour, which approached that of the "knightly" ideal of *javānmardī*; even people who think them miscreants [Missetäter], admire their steadfastness [Standhaftigkeit]. Not only usurpers and figures such as Yaʿqūb are ʿ*ayyārs*, but also rather more legitimate men went through a phase of "errant knighthood," such as the progenitor of the Sāmānids.[46]

He emphasizes, however, that this does not exclude the possibility of their having been robbers as well: "[Even] if they were so, it should not be ruled out that others – or even the same – groups of the described kind also were frequently robbers as well. As such were the ʿ*ayyārs* often enough and explicitly described … It belonged to the tasks of a *shiḥna*, to do away with them."[47]

Paul ends on a somewhat ambivalent note; he places all the various "non-legitimized" movements together and then says of them all (*aḥdāth*, *mutaṭawwiʿa*, *duʿʿār* and so forth) as one undifferentiated group:

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42 *Ibid.* p. 128.

43 *Ibid.* There he writes: "Weiter oben begegnete schon der Anführer der 'jungen Männer' von Samarkand, der auch als 'Haupt der ʿ*ayyār*' bezeichnet wird. Das könnte ein Fall sein, wo es doch eine besondere Organisation der ʿ*ayyār* gegeben hat, unterschieden von einem 'Massenaufgebot.'"

44 *Ibid.* p. 130.

45 Paul himself, it should be noted, attributes these differences to regional divergence in the phenomenon itself. (*Ibid.* p. 131)

46 *Ibid.* pp. 129-130.

47 *Ibid.* p. 130.

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> Einmal werden natürlich die entsprechenden Gruppen als 'Räuber' und `Rebellen' bekämpft. Aber das scheint nicht immer die hauptsächliche Form der staatlichen Beschäftigung mit ihnen gewesen zu sein. Es gab eine Reihe von Formen, in denen dies militärische Potential für staatliche Belange eingesetzt werden konnte: etwa für Polizeiaufgaben, im Massenaufgebot, bei der Verteidigung von Städten, als Freiwillige bei Feldzügen, die gegen Nicht-Muslime gerichtet waren oder als gegen Nicht-Muslime gerichtet dargestellt werden konnten.[48]

In short, Paul realizes that these groups, at least sometimes, must have been viewed as legitimate; but he holds that to be the case by exceptional force of circumstance, rather than the inherent nature of these associations, which, in the end, are somewhat fuzzily differentiated from one another.[49] In summation, although many eminent researchers have been aware that there was more to the *ʿayyār* phenomenon than has yet been explored in the scholarly literature, they, paradoxically, have never challenged the underlying, Nöldeke-inspired assumption of *ʿayyārān* as fundamentally some kind of criminal element.

This brings us to another aspect of the *ʿayyārs* that has – as we have just seen – given pause to even the most ardent proponents of the bandit idea. *ʿAyyārī*, at least from the tenth century onwards, obviously included some ideological element of chivalry, *futuwwa/javānmardī*. While Taeschner was the first to point out this connection,[50] several other scholars have also noted it. Cahen in particular has grappled repeatedly with this element of the *ʿayyār* phenomenon, in the end reaching the conclusion that these terms were largely fungible. In Cahen's words:

> The texts … make it clear beyond question that many of the *fityān* … called themselves or were called *ʿayyārūn* … while many of the *ʿayyārūn* on the other hand called themselves *fityān* or followers of the *futuwwa*. An at least partial equivalency is therefore indisputable, and the only question is to know if this is or is not absolute and, insofar as it is confirmed, to understand its significance.[51]

Von Grunebaum, too, writes that "In a manner not yet made clear in detail, the *fityān* and the *ʿayyārān* amalgamated in the ninth century …"[52] In fact, he even combines this element with the religious Sunni and holy-warrior aspects:

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48 *Ibid*. p. 137.

49 See *ibid*. pp. 138-139.

50 Franz Taeschner, s. v. *ʿAyyār*, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (EI²), where he defines the word to mean, "Literally 'rascal, tramp, vagabond' … From the ninth to the twelfth century it was the name for certain warriors who were grouped together under the *futuwwa* … Occasionally, the term is used to mean the same as *fityān*."

51 *S. v.* "*Futuwwa*," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. He stated this conclusion elsewhere as well: "Entre paisibles *fityān* … et les violents *ʿayyārūn* … on peut se demander quel rapport il y a. Cependant … des textes non equivoques attestent **que les deux termes sont peut-etre toujours et en tous cas souvent employes comme equivalents."** [Emphasis added] (*Mouvements populaires*, *op. cit.* , p. 251)

52 Von Grunebaum, *op. cit.* p. 105.

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> *Futuwwa* [chivalry] made contact with Sufism … one of the most important points of contact was the organized holy war at the frontiers of the *dār al-islām*, and also at the 'inner' frontiers; in Damascus, for instance … a *futuwwa* organization combated the terror of the Assassins with a counter-terror.[53]

He admits himself, however, stymied by the "names suggestive of the mob or rabble", such as *ʿayyārs*, which they were given.[54] One solution, of course, is that there is nothing pejorative in the term *ʿayyār* in the pre-Mongol period – but we shall return to this point presently.[55]

Yet another blow to the brigand theory was dealt by Claude Cahen offhandedly when discussing the question of the *ʿayyārs'* imposition of protection money upon the merchants. He pointedly refers to the *khifāra* and *ḥimāya* "which, *following the example of certain great men*, they extended over the markets for the sake of the spoils that fell to them." [emphasis added][56] This statement is significant because it places our understanding of the more dubious pecuniary activities of the *ʿayyārs* within their specific social milieu. Such an understanding is, of course, crucial for interpreting the significance and meaning of any given social conduct; in one time and place, for instance, eating with one's hands may be *de rigeur*, while in a different culture, it would be considered boorish and ill-bred, and probably indicative of a marginal social standing.

Western medievalists have long perceived the importance of historical context in understanding and interpreting occurrences or actions that are apprehended rather differently by the modern sensibility. Georges Duby, for example, discusses certain behavior which is strikingly evocative of *ʿayyār* activity, but which involves, rather, one of the premier representatives of Western chivalry: William Marshal (c. 1145-1219), the man whom the Archbishop of Canterbury called "the greatest knight that ever lived." We are told that William Marshal robs a monk and the woman with whom he is eloping after William learns that the two are planning to lend their money out at interest in order to earn a livelihood:

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53 *Ibid.* p. 196. Mohsen Zakeri combines these aspects as well; he writes of *futuwwa:* "The concept came to summarize the moral ideal and standard rule of conduct of, among others … Muslim 'chivalry' … urban militias (*ʿayyārān-fityān*), warriors for the faith (*ghāzīyīn-mujāhidūn-murābitūn*) … and even certain brigands." (Zakeri, *Sasanid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society – The Origins of ʿAyyārān and Futuwwa*, Wiesbaden, 1995, p. 1)

54 Particularly in view of the fact that in the twelfth century the *fityān* in Baghdad included the governor as well as members of viziers' and sultans' families!

55 Hartmann at least partially recognized this nearly a hundred years ago, when he wrote of Qushayrī's description of an "*ʿayyār shāṭir*" that "both words can be employed with a positive or a negative connotation." (R. Hartmann, "Futuwwa und Malāma," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 72, 1918, p. 195.) The present author intends to show that there was, at least during the period under examination, no dichotomous meaning, but rather one meaning viewed rather differently by two social groups with diverse interests and outlooks: the courtly circle and the clerics.

56 Cahen, "Futuwwa," *loc. cit.*

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> William therefore loots the monk with a clear conscience … Taking anything more would be 'brigandage. ' But this particular distraint seems honourable to him, as to those who for his glory propagated the memory of his good actions. As for the woman, he has not touched her either. He has treated this wicked creature according to the laws of chivalry.[57]

What Duby is suggesting is that we must study the texts and accounts of a specific period and place in order to arrive at their definition of such concepts as "chivalry," "honor" and "brigandage," which may differ sharply from modern notions of these same concepts. In fact, one may even discover, as in Duby's examination of William Marshal, that different social milieux belonging to the very same time and place entertained radically divergent notions of the same concepts. This would seem to be a fairly obvious historiographical point, yet it has been singularly absent from much of the scholarly literature on *ʿayyārs* until now. To state the case simply: in a medieval society, not everybody who distrains by force is a brigand – on the contrary, apart from brigands, it was, paradoxically, only very elite people who engaged in such activities.

Furthermore, there has been virtually no attention paid to the question of how these definitions changed or developed over time. For, as at least one philologist has pointed out, the form of a word can remain the same over the years or centuries, yet the meaning can alter radically:

> … At any moment without any change in phonetics 'the meaning' of a 'word' may change. Quite suddenly (as far as the evidence goes) *yelp*, which meant 'to speak proudly', and was especially used of proud vows (such as a knight vowing to do some dangerous deed), stopped meaning that and became used of the noise of foxes or dogs![58]

For another brief illustration of the importance of this point, one need look no further than the dramatic changes in meaning undergone within a mere half-century by the word "inverted," which in 1920s English meant "homosexual," and a scant fifty years later conveyed not even a hint of such a meaning. Unfortunately, many of the authors discussed here neglected to examine their evidence chronologically in order to ascertain whether or not the meaning of the word – or the manifestation of the phenomenon – changed over the centuries.

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57 George Duby, *William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry*, tr. Richard Howard, New York, 1985, pp. 44-46. There is a very strong parallel with what Cahen noted of the behaviour of Islamic chivalry, the *fityān*: "In fact they freely professed the legitimacy of theft, provided that it was executed with chivalry ..." Cahen, "Tribes, Cities and Social Organization," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume IV: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye, Cambridge, 1975, p. 320. The present author disagrees with Cahen's subsequent characterization of what precisely chivalry would entail in this context; *vide infra* Chapters Seven and Eight.

58 J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter, Boston, 2000, p. 268. G. Halsall remarks in an historical context that "Especially over long periods, the same words ... need not necessarily have had the same meanings." (G. Halsall, "Violence and society in the early medieval west: an introductory survey," in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. G. Halsall, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1998, p. 6).

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This is most glaringly apparent in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry under *ʿayyār*. The first part of the article, written by Cahen, skips from the early ninth to the late eleventh century, without so much as a hint that development may have taken place during that period of time. The author of the second part of the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry, W. L. Hanaway, also espouses a monochronic view, and is therefore forced to conclude that there were three, sometimes mutually contradictory, concurrent definitions of the term *ʿayyār*:

> In a neutral or negative sense … *ʿayyār* can mean irregular fighter, rogue, highwayman, robber, troublemaker. (2) In a sense ranging from somewhat negative to somewhat positive … it can mean strong, fast or rough; a night-prowler, a deceiver or a coquette. (3) In a wholly positive sense it can mean a noble-minded highwayman, or a generous, clever, brave, modest, chaste, hospitable, generally upright person.[59]

Hanaway accounts for these antithetical definitions he has deduced by attributing them to the different social perspectives of various elements in the populace. While this may well be true, it could also be only one component of a simpler explanation: the word changed subtly in meaning as the phenomenon changed over the course of the centuries, even as different social milieux viewed the phenomenon quite differently. The possibility that there was a historical development of the phenomenon and a corresponding shift in the meaning of the term should at least be examined.

Another time-related question involves the issue of *ʿayyār* origins. Specifically, is it an Islamic or pre-Islamic phenomenon? Here, too, Cahen evinces a change of heart, evident in his *futuwwa* entry, in his refutation of the idea that the *ʿayyārs* and *futuwwa* were Sasanian holdovers. Whereas in his earlier writings Cahen appears to have been influenced by certain peculiar "arische männerbund" theories[60] (thus stating, for instance, that in Sasanian cities there were young men called *javānmardān* living together communally),[61] he later repudiates Wikander's ideas specifically, stating that the *ʿayyārs* could not have been a holdover from Sasanian times because they were too important not to have been mentioned by the sources for hundreds of years.[62]

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59 *S. v.* "*ʿAyyār*," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, London, 1982, vol. 1, p. 161.

60 These were formulated in the 1930s under the obvious influence of certain German racial and cultural theories by Stig Wikander, *Der Arische Männerbund: Studien zur Indo-Iranischen Sprach – und Religionsgeschichte*, Lund, 1938.

61 Cahen, "Tribes, Cities and Social Organization," p. 320. In the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Cahen writes that "On the one hand, there can be little doubt as to their pre-Islamic origin, not only because in later times they were said to have distinctively Iranian customs, but above all because in the Islamic period up to the Mongol invasion they were only to be found in territories which had once belonged to the Sasanian empire. On the other hand, our scanty documentation on that empire does not appear to contain anything about them."

62 Cahen, *Mouvements populaires*, p. 72. He restates this is in his *EI*^{2} entry *s. v. "Futuwwa."*

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In part, Cahen originally found Wikander's theories attractive because they provided an easy explanation for what he considered to be the fact that groups termed *ʿayyārūn* are found only in the former Sasanian lands. However, their apparent origin in the Eastern lands could be just as easily attributed to the special social and other conditions prevailing in that area a century and a half after the coming of Islam and the Arab Conquest, rather than to any institutional continuity with a hypothetical Sasanian institution. Moreover, the phenomenon of *ʿayyārī* actually does appear occasionally in the West under that name,[63] but probably even more frequently occurs under a different name in those geographical areas (first *fityān* and, later, *aḥdāth*).[64]

This idea of the *futuwwa*/*ʿayyārān* as a Sasanian holdover has recently been revived by Mohsen Zakeri. In his work he maintains that

> The socio-economic institution known as *futuwwa* has been subject [*sic*] of many inquiries since the mid-nineteenth century. These inquiries have confirmed on the one hand the importance of the adherents of *futuwwa* for the development of several medieval Muslim corporations, on the other the fact that it has been heavily influenced by the legacy of ancient Persia. However, if someone asks for details regarding the origin of this institution and the processes whereby the Persian influence exercised itself, he would find no answers.[65]

His evidence for pre-Islamic origins is rather shaky, however. First he cites Taeschner and Cahen.[66] Cahen, as we have already seen, adduced no evidence in the earlier writings in which he hazarded this conjecture; moreover, he himself later abandoned this position. Taeschner, in his most famous article on *futuwwa*, does indeed hold that there were certain pre-Islamic roots to the *futuwwa* – but those roots, for him, lie in the common Hellenistic legacy of classical antiquity, not in mystical Iranian brotherhoods.[67] Zakeri then makes an unfortunate comparison between his own methodology and Massignon's now discredited tracing of "artisan guilds" to the alleged *futuwwa* of the Sasanian period.[68]

In his search for pre-Islamic Iranian roots to the *ʿayyārān* Zakeri relies on three fatally flawed elements: the myth of "Arian brotherhoods" propagated by Stig

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63 *Vide infra*, Chapter Eight, for accounts of *ʿayyārs* in Syria.

64 See both Taeschner, *s. v.* "*ʿAyyār*," *EI*^{2} ; and Cahen, *ibid.*

65 Mohsen Zakeri, *op. cit.* , p. xi.

66 *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

67 Franz Taeschner, "Das *Futuwwa*-Rittertum des Islamischen Mittelalters," *Beitrage zur Arabistik, Semitistik und Islamwissenschaft*, ed. R. Hartmann and Helmuth Scheel, Leipzig, 1944, pp. 340-341.

68 For the refutation of Massignon see S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden, 1968, pp. 267-271; S. M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*, ed. A. H. Hourani and S. M. Stern, Oxford, 1970, pp. 36-47; also Cahen, "Y a-t-il eu des corporations professionnelles dans le monde musulmane classique?" *ibid.* , pp. 51-64.

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Wikander and followed by Widengren;[69] Pahlavi etymologies; and an untenable reading of the Arabic texts. The Arabic prop of Zakeri's theories has already been demolished by Patricia Crone;[70] let us therefore turn to examine the first two.

His etymological argument rests on Widengren's fanciful tracing of linguistic developments from the Pahlavi to the Persian.[71] While this author is not qualified to comment on their accuracy, the experts who were consulted on this issue[72](both of whom Zakeri cites at certain points) did not feel that Zakeri's (or, more correctly, Widengren's) conjectures were tenable. Additionally, what Zakeri – and the Iranian scholars whom he cites – do not seem to have asked themselves is whether, even if a word had Pahlavi roots – indeed, even if it had actually existed in that precise form during Sasanian times (which it did not, by Zakeri's own admission) – it was nevertheless being used to describe a completely new thing.

A classic example of this continuity in usage but discontinuity in meaning (also regarding a socio-military phenomenon) is the unbroken use of the word *miles* in Western Europe from antiquity through the Middle Ages. The word is identical, but the Roman *miles* and the High Medieval *miles* signify and connote very different things. In other words, even if one were to prove that the linguistic derivation of the word is from Pahlavi (for neither Zakeri nor any of his sources claim that the word itself existed in Sasanian times in its Islamic-era form), there is no indication that the phenomenon of *ʿayyārī* as it appears in Islamic times was not something entirely new.[73]

Even more damaging to Zakeri's argument is Mary Boyce's article refuting Widengren and his model Stig Wikander.[74] She notes that Wikander's specula-

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69 Geo Widengren, *Der Feudalismus im alten Iran*, Köln, 1969. It is largely from Widengren (and Soviet scholars from the most politically rigid times) that Zakeri has borrowed his untenable theories about and definition of feudalism. Zakeri's knowledge of Western feudalism seems to be somewhat limited (for example, he never once mentions the *bannum*). For Western feudalism, see Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society,* vol. I, trans. L. A. Manyon, Chicago, 1961; F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson, Toronto, 1996; Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, trans. Howard B. Clarke, Ithaca, 1974; *idem. The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, forward by Thomas N. Bisson. Chicago, 1978; Pierre Bonnassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe*, trans. Jean Birrel, Cambridge, 1991, particularly chs. 1, 5, and 9. Frye has also rejected the idea of Iranian "feudalism" (R. Frye, "Feudalism in Sasanian and Early Islamic Iran," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 [1987], pp. 13-18).

70 Patricia Crone, "ʿAbbāsid *Abnāʾ* and Sassanid Cavalrymen," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 8 (1998), pp. 1-20.

71 Cited in Zakeri, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-91.

72 The author wishes to thank P. Oktor Skjaervø for personally sharing his expertise on the subject, and Michael Zand for having consulted with Shaul Shaked on the author's behalf.

73 The Persian literary expert Moḥammed Reẓā Shafiʿī Kadkanī has concurred on this point in several conversations held with the author.

74 Mary Boyce, "Priests, cattle and men," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50:3 (1987), pp. 508-526.

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tions about "socio-religious male societies, set apart by special initiation ceremonies and possessing their own particular worship and religious rites" are themselves based on the equally unsound work of earlier scholars who have already been severely criticized. Above all, she accuses Wikander of having no supporting evidence for his conjectures.[75] Among the more creative aspects of Wikander's theories are his positing of special houses for young men, where sexual license and promiscuity reigned, and his outright peculiar theory that initiated members "acquired the capacity to become a werewolf (What he in fact held this to mean he does not explain)."[76] Boyce concludes:

> … In arguing … the earlier existence of cultic male societies, with special rites and freedoms, Wikander was superimposing alien usages on known Indo-Iranian ones, presumably not willfully, but because the pattern of the "Männerbund" was so vivid in his thought that it came between him and the data … In general Wikander's theory of the existence of the proto-Indo-Iranian 'Männerbund' remains wholly unsubstantiated, since it rests not on acceptable evidence but on analogical and ill-based assumptions.[77]

In short it remains, at best, unproven that the *ʿayyārān* were a form of proto-Iranian social organization. So what were they?

In the beginning of this introduction we noted the problems inherent in relying solely upon the mostly later, Arabic, clerically-authored chronicles. And, in fact, even a cursory look at other types of primary-source literature suggests that a revision of our definition of *ʿayyārān* is in order. The most obvious place to begin looking in order to discover how the medieval Muslims defined what *ʿayyārs* were is the Arabic lexicons, which predate the Persian ones by several centuries.

Etymology[78]

The Arabic lexicons, a highly informative type of source traditionally underutilized by historians, enable us to ascertain what the contemporaries of the *ʿayyārūn* had to say about them; always, of course, bearing in mind that the dictionaries were not supposed to reflect the living language around them but rather the theoretically ideal and pure state of *Jāhilī* and early Islamic Arabic – or at least, what the men of a later day imagined that to have been. Particularly in-

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75 *Ibid.* p. 513.

76 *Ibid.* p. 515. One cannot help being reminded here of John Allegro (*The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity Within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East*, London, 1970) and his bizarre fantasies of orgiastic fertility cults which supposedly revolved around the ingestion of a sacred psychedelic mushroom (which, incidentally, never grew in Judea or ancient Israel), for which "Jesus" was a code word rather than an actual person.

77 *Ibid.*

78 The author wishes to thank Wolfhart Heinrichs for his suggestions and comments on this section.

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structive is the fact that this form of the root *ʿayn-yāʾ-rāʾ* does not appear at all in any of the lexicons we possess prior to the fourth Hijri century.[79]

This suggests two possibilities: either the lexicographers did not include the word, even though it was already in popular usage, due to their knowledge that it was not an ancient *Jāhilī* word; or else the term itself (at least during the earlier part of this period) did not yet exist in Arabic.[80] We cannot decide between these two alternatives, due to the peculiar conceit of the Arabic etymologists that they were merely reflecting classical usage; as we shall see presently, when a word lacked the proper pre – or early-Islamic origin, a suitable pedigree was simply manufactured. Thus, the absence of the word from pre-fourth/eleventh century dictionaries may mean at any point simply that the word was not yet sufficiently antiquated to convincingly allow the "discovery" of its actual existence in *Jāhilī* sources. In any case, its omission from the earliest dictionaries is a good indication that the word was *muwallad*, and did not originate in early Islamic times.

The first dictionary in which the form *ʿayyār* appears is the *Kitāb jamharat al-lugha* of Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933): "A man [who is an] *ʿayyār* does much coming and going, and sometimes the lion is called "*ʿayyār*" because of his frequent comings and goings in search of his prey." [*wa rajulᵘⁿ ʿayyārᵘⁿ: kathīrᵘ'l-majīʾ wa'l-dhahab wa – rubbamā summiya al-asad "ʿayyārᵃⁿ" li-taraddudihi fī ṭalabi ṣaydihi*][81] Note that there are, above all, no bandits in this definition.

The next lexicon, in chronological order, is al-Fārābī's *Diwān al-adab*.[82] Here the epithet "*ʿayyār*" is limited to horses: "*wa-farasᵘⁿ ʿayyarᵘⁿ bi-awṣālⁱⁿ* [a horse (that is) an *ʿayyār* in limb]: that is to say: [it] wanders hither and thither from liveliness." On the succeeding page, under the word *ʿayyāl*, we find, however, the following:

> *Wa-farasᵘⁿ ʿayyālᵘⁿ bi-awṣālⁱⁿ* [a horse having a proud gait in his limbs]: that is, he walks in a stately gait due to his noble nature, and [Aws b. Ḥajar] said in describing a lion: 'A lion upon whom are particles of papyrus reeds/ As the broad-shouldered one [*ka-*

79 For example Khalīl b. Aḥmad's *Kitāb al-ʿayn*, Baghdad, 1980-1985, which was written quite early (al-Khalīl lived from 718-786) and is full and detailed, does not know of this form of the root (Vol. II, pp. 235-240). In fact, even so late an author as Abū'l-Qāsim Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbād (*al-Muḥīṭ fī'l-lugha*, Beirut, 1414/1994, vol. II pp. 143-144), who lived between 936 and 995, does not include this form despite the fact that it certainly existed already (presumably he omitted it because he knew it was a *muwallad* – i. e. post-classical – word). Interestingly enough, he does have the form *ʿiyār* for the actions of a wandering horse or dog. It should be noted that there is an eighth-century use of the form *ʿayyār* in Abū ʿAmr Isḥāq b. Mirār al-Shaybānī's *Kitāb al-jīm* Cairo, 1395/1975, vol. II, p. 242. It is, however, so opaque, and seems so completely unrelated to the *ʿayyār* phenomenon with which we are dealing, that it has been omitted.

80 The word itself does not seem to appear in any Arabic source before the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.

81 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Durayd, *Kitāb jamharat al-lugha*, Cairo, 1993, vol. II, p. 391.

82 Abū Ibrāhīm Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Fārābī (d. 350/c. 961), *Diwān al-adab*, ed. A. M. ʿUmar, Cairo, 1396/1976, vol. III, p. 358.

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mazbarānī],[83] having a proud gait in his limbs. [*ʿayyālᵘⁿ bi-awṣālᵢⁿ*]'[84] And it is also recited: *ʿayyārᵘⁿ*.

Al-Fārābī has here cited the poem (at least in its crucial aspect) correctly. For when we check the sixth-century Aws b. Ḥajar's poem, we find that there are no *ʿayyārs* in it; only the word *ʿayyāl*. Rudolf Geyer laboriously compiled Aws b. Ḥajar's works from a wide range of sources, many of them quite early; al-Fārābī's *Diwān* seems to introduce the first appearance of the variant with *ʿayyār*.[85]

Note that the variant is, however, clearly indicated by al-Fārābī to be the less preferred form, almost an afterthought – and no earlier source knew of this version. In other words, someone – from whom al-Fārābī learned this variant – was at work trying to find an ancient and respectable *Jāhilī* pedigree for the word *ʿayyār*. As we shall see below, by the fifth/eleventh century the variant form had become the primary form; the reversal can probably be attributed to the lexicographical urge to find "pure" origins for *muwallad* words such as *ʿayyār* which had crept into dictionaries.[86] This mutation of the poem, with the consequent insistence on the *Jāhilī* origin of our word, may in turn have been one of the elements which misled certain scholars into looking for earlier roots for the *ʿayyār* phenomenon than is actually warranted.

Al-Fārābī's lexicon is nearly contemporaneous with Al-Azharī's *Tahdhīb al-lugha*. In that work al-Azharī cites Ibn ʿAbbās as transmitted by Ibn al-Aʿrabī:

> He said: The Arabs [use the term] *ʿayyār* both to praise and to blame. It is said: So and so is an *ʿayyār*: [he is] energetic in acts of disobedience [enthusiastic in rebellions]; and an *ʿayyār* youth [*ghulāmᵘⁿ ʿayyārᵘⁿ*]: energetic in the obedience of Allah [*nashīṭᵘⁿ fī ṭāʿati' llāhi*]; and *farasᵘⁿ ʿayyārᵘⁿ wa-ʿayyālᵘⁿ* [having a proud gait]: active.[87]

He also gives the meaning of "one who goes back and forth much in his comings and goings." One interesting point to be considered is what the author meant

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[83] Lane notes that *al-mazbarānī*, "the broad-shouldered one," is an epithet of the lion. The "as" would, however, appear to be somewhat superfluous if it were being used in that sense. Geyer (see *infra*) solves this problem by reading, with al-Aṣmaʿī, "*ka'l-marzubānī*" – "like a satrap." If this alternate reading is correct, and does indeed mean "satrap," it would also provide internal evidence for the correctness of the reading *ʿayyālᵘⁿ* and not *ʿayyārᵘⁿ*, in view of the rest of the verse. Satraps in particular would not necessarily be "sprightly in [their] limbs;" they would logically, however, be "proud in their gait."

[84] Lane translates *ʿayyārᵘⁿ bi-awṣālᵢⁿ* as "A horse that goes away hither and thither, by reason of his sprightliness" or a lion "that goes away with the joints, or whole bones, of men to his thicket."

[85] Aus b. Ḥajar, *Gedichte und Fragmente des Aus Ibn Ḥajar*, edited and translated by R. Geyer, Sitzungsberichte der Kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-historische Klasse, Bd. 126, Abh. 13, Vienna, 1892, p. 23. The German translation, p. 84, reads in English as follows: "A lion upon whom (as a result of his sojourning in the bushes) little bits of cotton stick [die Baumwollflocken anhaften], (who) like a Satrap prides himself in his swaying joints [Gelenken wiegend]."

[86] The author is indebted to Wolfhart Heinrichs for suggesting this possibility.

[87] Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Azharī (d. 370/c. 980) *Tahdhīb al-lugha*, Cairo, 1967, vol. III, p. 164.

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here by "youth." One of the words, of course, explicitly connected to *ʿayyār* is *javānmard* (Arabic *fatā*) – "youth." This term, intriguingly, bears strong terminological resemblance to that employed in western Europe – "*juvenes*" – for bands of errant knights who led a vagabond life in search of noble adventure.[88]

Al-Azharī returns to the form *ʿayyār* later in the entry in relation to both horses and locusts, saying: "A horse is [called] *ʿayyār* if he wanders, or … if he is lively." He then cites an obscure passage of poetry:

> Surely you have seen horsemen of our kindred/ they grieved you greatly [in the same manner as] *jarādat al-ʿayyār*.

Al-Azharī gives two differing interpretations regarding what *jarādat al-ʿayyār* actually means: "It is said: he wished for *jarādat al-ʿayyār*: a locust which he placed in his mouth, but it escaped from his mouth. And it is said: *jarādat al-ʿayyār* is the name of a horse and *'al-ʿayyar'* is the name of a man [i. e. a personal name], this is what Ibn al-Aʿrabī said."[89]

Ibn Fāris, (d. 395/c. 1004) al-Azharī's near contemporary, cites al-Farrāʾ: "A man is an *ʿayyār* if he [engages in] much movement, much cunning going back and forth [*kathīra'l-taṭwāf dhakiyy*^{an}] … and '*al-ʿayyār*': the name of a man. And *'al-ʿayyār*: the lion."[90] Here we have left the locusts and horses, returned to lions, and, above all, added "cunning/sharp-witted" to our definition.

Another lexicographer working during the latter part of the fourth/eleventh century was Al-Jawharī[91] (d. 398/c. 1007). He, too, cites al-Farrāʾ (and his definition is, at least in part, very close to Ibn Fāris's): "A man is an *ʿayyār* if he engages much in sharp-witted wandering and roaming [*rajul*^{un} *ʿayyār*^{un} *idhā kāna kathīra'l-taṭwāf wa'l – ḥaraka dhakiyy*^{an}]." The section on *ʿayyār* ends here, but it is possible that the next section relates to it as well: "And it is said: "the man wandered [*ʿāra*] among the people smiting them; like *ʿathā* [which means: to act mischievously or cause havoc]." [*ʿāra al-rajul fi'l-qawm yaḍribuhum, mithl ʿathā*] If this description did relate to the preceding entry, it would be our first hint of arbitrary oppression. It is not at all clear, though, that this is meant to relate to the actual form *ʿayyār* which came before. One should also note that other lexicographical works of that time, although they do indeed contain the root *ʿayn-yāʾ-rāʾ*, still do not contain the form *ʿayyār*.[92]

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88 See Georges Duby, "Youth in Aristocratic Society," *The Chivalrous Society*, Tr. Cynthia Postan, Berkeley, 1977, pp. 112-123; this point is examined at greater length *infra*, Chapter Eight.

89 Al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 3,. p. 168. This idea of escape is intriguing to anyone who has ever encountered *Samak-i ʿayyār*'s endless Houdini-like exploits.

90 Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Fāris al-Qazwīnī, *Mujmal al-lugha*, Kuwait, 1405/1985, vol. III, p. 428.

91 Ismāʿīl b. Ḥammād al-Jawharī, *Tāj al-lugha wa siḥāḥ al-ʿarabiyya*, Beirut, 1399/1979, vol. II, p. 764.

92 E. g. Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Qazzāz's (d. 412) *Kitāb al-ʿasharāt fi'l-lugha*, Amman, 1984, pp. 215-216.

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The Spaniard Ibn Sīda (d. 458/1066) gives the following definition:

> An *ʿayyār* [*rajulᵘⁿ ʿayyarᵘⁿ*]: [one who engages in] much coming and going and sometimes the lion is called this on account of his frequent peregrinations in search of his prey.[93]

He goes on to repeat the Aws b. Ḥajar poem, but with a twist:

> A lion upon whom are particles of papyrus reeds/ As the broad-shouldered one [*al-mazbarānī*], sprightly in his limbs. [*ʿayyārᵘⁿ bi-awṣālᵉⁿ*] That is to say, he goes with them and he comes. And it is related: "*ʿayyālᵘⁿ* [having a proud gait]," but its explication will come in its [proper] chapter.

As mentioned above, we see here that by Ibn Sīda's time, at least among the grammarians, *ʿayyālᵘⁿ* had definitely been replaced by *ʿayyārᵘⁿ*. In other words, the transformation is complete: our lexicographers have finally covered over the *arriviste* origins of the word *ʿayyār*, and managed – with just a little stretching – to find "proof" of its authentic ancient lineage.

The definitions then repeat one another[94] until we come to al-Muṭarrizī (d. 610/c. 1213).[95] He first quotes Ibn Durayd, then supposedly from Ibn al-Anbarī: "The *ʿayyār* is of those men who gives free reign to his soul's desire [*yukhalli nafsahu wa – hawāhā*], not restraining it and not checking it. ' And in the *Ajnās* of al-Nāṭifī: 'one who goes to and fro without work' [*bilā ʿamal*] and this is taken from their saying: 'a horse that goes to and fro in a lively manner' …" This is certainly a more negative definition; note, however, that this is a different negative definition from al-Jawharī's of 200 years previously. In other words, the main, neutral definitions we have encountered are the same; only the negative ones have differed. It is curious that none of the earlier writers with the neutral definitions seems to have heard of these other, darker definitions, particularly if they were found in well-known early works.

We then have a brief and original definition in al-Saghānī's *al-Takmila wa'l-dhayl wa'l-ṣila*:[96] "*al-ʿayyār*: the name of the horse of Khālid b. al-Walīd, may God be pleased with him. And *al-ʿayyār*: a proper name of people." Khālid b. al-Walīd is obviously a new element. It is hard to believe that, some six hundred years after the event, al-Saghānī has discovered a new fact about Khālid b. al-Walīd that was unknown to his predecessors (despite the title of his work, he was, it should be remembered, working off the same sources as earlier lexicographers). Appar-

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93 ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl b. Sīda, *al-Muḥkam wa'l-muḥīt al-aʿẓam fi'l-lugha*, Cairo, 1377/1958, vol. II, p. 169.

94 E. g. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Barrī (d. 582/1186) *Kitāb al-tanbīh*, Cairo, 1980, vol. II, p. 175.

95 Abū'l-Fatḥ Nāṣir al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Sayyid al-Muṭarrizī, *al-Mughrib fi tartīb al-muʿrib*, Aleppo, 1979, vol. 2, p. 92.

96 Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Saghānī (d. 650/1252), *al-Takmila wa'l-dhayl wa'l-ṣila li-kitāb tāj al-lugha wa-siḥaḥ al-ʿarabiyya*, Cairo, 1973, vol. III, p. 133.

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ently, though, al-Saghānī was using the *kutub al-khayl* literature; at least one of those works – though by no means all of them – does indeed list Ibn al-Walīd's horse as having been named ʿAyyār.[97] Even if this is a piece of third/ninth-century classicization rather than an accurate reflection of the actual seventh-century horse's name, it is still informative; for it corroborates what we saw in the earliest dictionary definitions: namely, that *ʿayyār* meant errant, and was an epithet applied to brave, noble creatures such as lions or the steed of the greatest of the Muslim conquerors.

Our next author, Ibn Manẓūr,[98] (d. 711/1311) cites al-Azharī, but not precisely: "A horse is called *ʿayyār* when he behaves mischievously [*idhā ʿātha*], and he is the one who is bolting, running off and away." This is important, first, because it is a classic illustration of how many of our authors claim a prior authority for what they write, when the original author actually said nothing of the kind.[99] Second, the author may possibly have been transferring thoughts he may have had about people who are *ʿayyārs* to animals (i. e. causing havoc, traveling far and wide), although this is admittedly conjectural on our part. Ibn Manẓūr then covers virtually all of the previous definitions we have seen: his following sentence is something of an amalgamation of Ibn Sīda and al-Azharī: *faras*^{un} *ʿayyār*^{un} *bi-awṣāl*^{in}; after which we have sprightly horses; the horse/locust poem we saw in al-Azharī;[100] the reputed poem of Aws b. Ḥajar, and so forth.

We are once again back to neutral definitions when we come to al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 814/c. 1411):[101]

> The *ʿayyār*: one who [engages in] much coming and going, and the cunning one who does much going to and fro, and the lion, and the horse of Khālid b. Walīd.

On the next page the dictionary repeats the passage we have already encountered: "A man who is an *ʿayyār* does much coming and going, and sometimes the lion is called *ʿayyār* because of his coming and going in search of his prey …"

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97 Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Munammaq fī akhbār Quraysh*, Beirut, n. d. , p. 54. The author is indebted to Shady Hekmat Nasser for this reference. Note that this piece of information is not contained in other early works of this kind by Abū ʿUbayda (Abū ʿUbayda Muʿamar b. al-Muthannā al-Taymī, *Kitāb al-khayl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad. Cairo, 1986), Ibn al-Kalbī (Abū'l-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad b. al-Kalbī, *Ansāb al-khayl fī al-Jāhiliyah wa'l-Islām wa-akhbāruhā*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī, Cairo, 1965), and Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Kitāb asmāʾ khayl al-ʿArab wa-fursānihā*, in G. Levi della Vida, ed. , *Les "Livres des Chevaux" de Hišām Ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad Ibn al-Aʿrabī*, Leiden, 1928.

98 Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Cairo, 1981, pp. 3185-3189.

99 For what al-Azharī actually wrote, *vide supra*.

100 Now that he finally cites something verbatim from al-Azharī he gives credit solely to Ibn al-Aʿrabī.

101 Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*, Beirut, 1415/1995, vol. II, p. 98.

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Finally, we have the very late (fourteenth/eighteenth century) work *Tāj al-ʿarūs*,[102] which is truly a composite definition of everything that came previously – errants, eager holy warriors and rebels, and so forth – and adds nothing new.

These definitions reveal much. First, that the word *ʿayyār* was *muwallad*. It did not appear in the earliest sources, and we have absolutely no record from before the ninth century in any type of literature that the word existed. There is one possible exception we must note here, however, regarding the antiquity of the word in Arabic: some Islamic-era biographical dictionaries do maintain that "*ʿayyār*" was used as a personal name in olden times. Thus Ibn Mākūlā, for instance, names a certain al-ʿAyyār b. Mihraz [?] b. Khālid, "one of the proud men of the Arabs [*Aḥad shayāṭīn al-aʿrāb*], and their poets" and some others, whose time period would appear to be *Jāhilī*.[103] Ibn Mākūlā was, however, writing in the fifth/eleventh century, and it is therefore unclear whether or not there is any historical basis for maintaining that the word *ʿayyār* was used as a proper name in *Jāhilī* or early Islamic times, particularly in light of the fact that such a usage does not appear in the earlier dictionaries.

Second, it is not until the fourth century that the word was old enough to be safely spirited into the lexicons as a good "classical" word. Together with this, there has been a retrospective projection of the word back into pre – and early Islamic times in order to give it what a medieval Arabic lexicographer would consider a respectable pedigree; the meaning obviously changes over time. Third, the early meanings of "*ʿayyar*" are virtually all neutral or positive. We see both from the ninth-century dictionary definitions and the lone *kitāb al-khayl* literature reference to Ibn Walīd's horse that the word meant "errant," and was applied to creatures, such as lions and war stallions, considered by Muslims to be strong, virile, and noble. Fourth, it is not until the end of the fourth century (i. e. the later Buwayhid period), from which time we begin having accounts in the chronicles of *ʿayyār* involvement in Baghdadi *fitnas* and other violent activities, that one finds anything at all negative. In other words, so far, the best definition we could give the word for pre-fourth/eleventh century times is "errant."

A similar survey of the Persian lexicons is unfortunately not very helpful in this context, for several reasons. First, even the earliest of the surviving Persian lexicons (Asadī Ṭūsī's late eleventh-century *Lughat-i Furs*) is actually later than the quite elaborate and precise definitions found in passages in Persian literature which describe the phenomenon; and all the other lexicons date from the post-Mongol period – nearly half a millenium after the phenomenon first appears in

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102 Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿarūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, Kuwait, 1394/1974, vol. XIII, pp. 172-181.

103 al-Amīr al-Hāfiẓ Abū Naṣr ʿAlī b. Hibat Allāh b. Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl fī rafʿi'l-irtiyāb ʿan al-muʾtalif wa'l-mukhtalif min al-asmāʾwa'l-kunā wa'l-ansāb* , ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā Muʿallimī, Hyderabad, 1967, vol. 6, pp. 286-287.

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our historical and literary texts.[104] Second, these lexicons treat only a very few words, and ʿ*ayyār* is not among them.[105]

In summation, we have thus far seen the theoretical – and surprisingly neutral – meaning of the word. The dictionary definitions we have seen, though, do not begin to capture the role the ʿ*ayyārs* played in society, and the actual picture that the word must have evoked in the minds of contemporaries. For a greater understanding of the actual historical part played by the ʿ*ayyārs*, and of what was really meant when someone was called or defined himself as an ʿ*ayyār*, we must turn to the literary and historical sources and try to extrapolate a definition from the critical analysis of these texts.

Methodologically, therefore, this work proposes to examine the range of written sources, in both Persian and Arabic, in chronological order, for the purpose of arriving at a definition. Chronology in this case involves two separate but related aspects. The first, of course, is the chronology of the people and events our sources are discussing. Equally important, however, is the chronology of our sources themselves. All too often, historians have given equal weight to works written, say, one hundred and eight hundred years respectively after the event they are describing – but in the case of a word whose meaning changes and develops over time, this can be highly problematic. We shall pay special attention to the chronological, geographic and linguistic provenance of our historical sources, as well as to the milieux in which they originate, and the particular biases of the author, both individually and as part of a larger social group. The reader will see all of these issues discussed more closely throughout the work.

The main conclusions that arise from this study are as follows:

1. The meaning of the word ʿ*ayyār* when it first appears in the very early ninth Christian/late second Hijri century is clearly that of *ghāzī* or, more specifically, *mutaṭawwiʿ*; that is, a volunteer Sunni (or proto-Sunni) warrior for the faith.
2. The ʿ*ayyārs'* emergence upon the historical stage was part of a larger phenomenon of what one could call the formation of a militant Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿ* trend, founded in the late eighth century by the most famous *mutaṭawwiʿ* of all, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak. In fact, as we shall see, the most renowned and successful of all ninth-century ʿ*ayyārs*, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, had very close ties with figures whose connections can be traced di-

104 For the relevant passages, *vide infra*, Chapter Seven. For a review of the medieval Persian lexicons, see C. A. Storey's *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, Leiden, 1984. , vol. 3, part 1, pp. 3-20.

105 E. g. Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Asadī Ṭūsī, *Lughat-i Furs*, ed. Paul Horn and Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī, Tehran, 1957; the published fourth part of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Fakhrī Iṣfahānī's *Miʿyār-i jamālī*, ed. C. Salemann, St. Petersburg, 1887; and Hindū Shāh b. Sanjar al-Ṣāḥibī al-Nakhjuvānī's *Ṣaḥāḥ al-ʿAjam*, ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Baygdilī, Tehran, 1361/1083.

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rectly back to ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, and to the circles around Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. The *mutaṭawwiʿa*, moreover, constituted an independent source of military power, loyal to their own ideals and interests rather than to those of the political authorities.

3. During the ninth century another meaning accrued to the word *ʿayyār*, one which would by the eleventh century become the primary meaning of the word, while never completely eclipsing the Sunni volunteer holy warrior one: chivalric person, *fatā/javānmard*, one possessing *courtoisie*. At this time we also see the *ʿayyārs* intimately connected with the Sufis through their common practice of certain ideals of *futuwwa*.
4. The connections among *ʿayyārān*, *fityān*, and Sufis began in the ninth century – much earlier than the eleventh century date that Cahen regarded as marking the fusion of these elements.
5. Even the Arabic clerical authors of the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, whose chronicles have been so heavily relied upon in modern attempts to define the *ʿayyār* phenomenon, were aware of these holy warrior and chivalric meanings of the word.
6. Wherever our sources enable us to discern the social and political context of the *ʿayyārs*, the *ʿayyārs* appear as a well-connected elite paramilitary force, forming an integral part of society, with close connections, both of friendship and rivalry, to other segments of the military elite.
7. Once the term *ʿayyār* comes in the eleventh-century to signify a predominantly chivalric meaning, the opposition of the religious clerics to the phenomenon strongly parallels the identical clerical antipathy towards the courtly which can be found in Western Europe in the High Middle Ages. Much of this antipathy stemmed from the clash between the clerics' love of internal social order and the military elite's violent pursuit of its own goals, even when the goals themselves must have appeared laudable (i. e. the suppression of Shiʿites and other non-Sunni religious groups).

Structurally, this work is arranged as follows: Chapter Two is devoted to tracing the rise of the Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿ* phenomenon, its founders, their vision and practices. Personages are important because as we follow the history of the *ʿayyārs* – and, in particular, of history's only *ʿayyār* dynasty, the Ṣaffārids – we shall see that many of the Ṣaffārid supporters from among the religious class were students of the *mutaṭawwiʿ* founders. The end of the chapter discusses the first historical appearances of the *ʿayyārs* at the turn of the ninth century, fighting infidels and heretics in eastern Iran, in Sistan.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five deal with the controversial career of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, the first Ṣaffārid ruler, who, along with his brother ʿAmr, is inarguably history's most famous and most thoroughly documented *ʿayyār*. Moreover, much of the confusion regarding the meaning of the term has sprung from a mistaken nineteenth-century understanding of the Ṣaffārids, which then deter-

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mined how the ʿ*ayyār* phenomenon as a whole was subsequently viewed. Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr are crucial to our understanding of the earliest manifestations of the ʿ*ayyār* phenomenon because the interrelations among various groups – ʿ*ayyārān*, Hanbalites, *fityān* and Sufis – are documented only in relation to the Ṣaffārids. The primary texts treating the Ṣaffārids provide, in other words, not only our fullest evidence, but also in many respects our key evidence, precisely because of the relative abundance of the documentation

Chapter Six begins with a treatment of the reign of ʿAmr. It discusses at length ʿAmr's connections with the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and with the early Sufis, and examines ʿAmr's fall and his successors, focusing on what the sources reveal about the nature of the support for the Ṣaffārid ʿ*ayyārs*.

Chapter Seven documents the close ʿ*ayyār*-Sufi connection, particularly around the common cultivation by both of *futuwwa/javānmardi*, that first clearly comes to light in ʿAmr's reign but continues long after that reign ended. It discusses the chivalric meaning of ʿ*ayyārī* which began to become prominent in the tenth century, analyzing the meaning of chivalry (*futuwwa/javānmardī*) for both the Sufis and the ʿ*ayyārs*, by means of both literary definitions and specific examples scattered throughout the literary corpus.

Chapter Eight examines the connection between chivalry and violence, drawing parallels between the medieval European experience of violent chivalry and the Islamic experience. The chapter also documents the close working relationship between the ʿ*ayyārs* and the ruling elites, and the extremely frequent connection between ʿ*ayyār* violence and sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiʿites in Baghdad.

This work does not attempt a complete chronicling of every ʿ*ayyār* manifestation occurring during the years 800-1055; the labor and the length of such a task would render its product irremediably tedious for both reader and author. The author's methodology has been, therefore, to chronicle the most important and revealing instances of ʿ*ayyār* activity, particularly those individual cases and whole genres (i. e. ʿ*ayyārs* in Sufi literature) which hitherto have been neglected by other writers on the subject.

In contrast to previous studies, the present work is deliberately limited to only those people specifically referred to as ʿ*ayyārs*, on the grounds that we cannot simply assume that terms are fungible without a great deal of explicit evidence indicating that this is the case. This study is also limited to one geographical area, albeit a large one: namely, those parts of the Islamic empire that belonged to the old Iranian world, stretching from Iraq to the borders of India, and which constituted the cultural heartland of the ʿAbbāsid polity. The author has also made sure to include many of the examples of ʿ*ayyār* activity that have been used by others in support of what the present writer views as an inaccurate interpretation of the ʿ*ayyār* phenomenon, in order to show that there is a better, more contextual understanding that can help illuminate those very episodes.

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Above all, in order to comprehend any historical phenomenon, one must first understand the more important aspects of its historical context. To fully place the word *ʿayyār* in its ninth century context of volunteer warfare for emergent Sunni Islam, therefore, we must understand the evolution of the *ghāzī/mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition at that time. Let us, then, proceed to investigate the evidence regarding *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ghāzīs* in the eighth century.

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2. The Volunteer Warriors for the Faith (*Mutaṭawwiʿa*)

> He who the sword of heaven will bear
> Should be as holy as severe;
> Pattern in himself to know,
> Grace to stand, and virtue go;
> More nor less to others paying
> Than by self-offences weighing.
>
> – *Measure for Measure*

The central task of the early Islamic state was to establish God's rule on earth through the two complementary coercive duties of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* within the Islamic polity, and Jihad outside of its borders. This chapter explores how, in the eighth and ninth centuries, control over this dual obligation, particularly the Jihad component of it, was transferred from the government to private, volunteer religious warriors. The transference of authority and leadership in these key governmental functions to the non-state sector led, first, to the rise of private militias, among them the *ʿayyārs*; and, second, to the weakening of ʿAbbāsid authority and the subsequent passing of actual political power into the hands of volunteer warriors such as the *ʿayyār* Ṣaffārids.[1]

According to Islamic tradition, the early Islamic body politic was, from the beginning, built around the Qurʾānic duty of "*al-jihād fī sabīl allāh*" – military striving in the path of God. Verses enjoining battle upon the believers are quite unambiguous and abundant: "Let those fight in the path of God who sell the life of this world for the hereafter; and whoever fights in the path of God, whether he is killed or triumphs, we shall give him a great reward;"[2]

> Allāh has bought from the believers their lives and their wealth in return for Paradise; they fight in the way of Allāh, kill and are killed. That is a true promise from Him … and who fulfills his promise better than Allāh? Rejoice then at the bargain you have made with Him; for that is the great triumph;[3]

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1 This dynasty is dealt with in subsequent chapters.

2 Qurʾān 4:74. For a discussion of the Qurʾānic injunction see R. Firestone, *Jihād: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*, Oxford, 1999, especially Part II. In Vecchia Vaglieri's words, "Islam … instilled into the hearts of the warriors the belief that a war against the followers of another faith was a holy war, and that the booty was a recompense offered by God to his soldiers." (L. Veccia Vaglieri, "The Patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphates," *The Cambridge History of Islam. Volume 1a: The Central Islamic Lands from Pre-Islamic Times to the First World War*, ed. P. M. Holt *et alii*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 60) See also Fred Donner's thoughtful refutation of the tendency of some Western scholars to dismiss the traditional Muslim view of the religious motivation underlying the Islamic Conquests (Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, Princeton, 1981, p. 270).

3 Qurʾān 9:110.

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Or:

> Those believers who stay at home while suffering no injury are not equal to those who fight for the cause of Allāh with their possessions and persons. Allāh has raised those who fight with their possessions and persons one degree over those who stay at home; and to each Allāh has promised the fairest good. Yet Allāh has granted a great reward to those who fight and not to those who stay behind,[4]

and so forth. This injunction to fight against the unbelievers was put into effect from the time of the Prophet onwards, and resulted in the creation of a vast Islamic Empire by the end of the seventh century.[5]

The chief enemy of the early Muslim state during the seventh through ninth centuries was unquestionably the Byzantine Empire, which was not only the major military opponent of the Muslims, but also posed the only serious ideological and religious challenge to Islam.[6] Thus, an important element in the classical apocalyptic literature of Islam is the capture by the Muslims of both New Rome – and Old Rome – as one of the signs of the Last Days.[7] Likewise, there exist traditions extolling warfare against the Byzantines above all other infidels, even pagan ones.[8] Moreover, the Islamic state by the end of the seventh century seemed – at least to the Muslims – well on the way toward realizing this goal of Roman conquest: it had taken from the Roman Empire in a space of less than seventy years all of Syria, Egypt and North Africa, in addition to having swallowed virtually the entire Sasanian Empire.[9]

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4 Qurʾān 4:95. The translation for these verses is Majid Fakhry's, *The Qurʾān: A Modern English Version*, Reading, U. K. , 1996.

5 On the religious elaboration of the idea and its early practical execution see David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley, 2005), Chapter 1.

6 Hugh Kennedy therefore rightly characterizes "the campaigns of the Muslims against the Byzantines" as "the focus of the military activities of Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid Caliphs." (Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, New York and London, 2001, p. xiv). See also D. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihād*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), p. 83.

7 *Vide* Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād b. Muʿawiya b. al-Ḥārith al-Khuzāʿī al-Marwazī, *al-Fitan*, Beirut, 1418/1997, pp. 295-301, the chapter entitled "*al-Aʿmāq wa-fatḥ al-Qustantīniyya*," particularly the long tradition #1163; Abūʾl Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Jaʿfar b. al-Munādī, *Malāḥim*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿUqaylī, Qumm, 1418/1998, pp. 145-148; 210. One alternative apocalyptic vision (e. g. Ibn al-Munādī, *Malāḥim*, pp. 105, 242) simply envisions the conversion of "the Romans" (and the "*saqāliba*") to Islam.

8 E. g. Abū Dāʾūd Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-Sunan*: *Sunan Abī Dāʾūd*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwwāma, Beirut, Jidda, and Mecca, 1998, vol. 3, pp. 204–205, in the section "*Kitāb al-jihād*," chapter 8, "In praise of fighting the Byzantines above all other nations," tradition #2480.

9 For accounts of the conquests, see Fred Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, *passim*; for Africa, M. Brett, "The Arab Conquest and the rise of Islam in North Africa," *Cambridge History of Africa. Volume 2: From 500 BC to AD 1050*, ed. J. D. Fage, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 505-513; and for central Asia H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, London, 1923, pp. 15-58.

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The Muslim wave of expansion met with a real check only at the Siege of Constantinople of 717, some ninety years after the first conquests. This check effectively resulted in a halt to the centrally-directed, massive warfare that had been the hallmark of the Islamic state virtually from the time of its inception.[10] The expansionist campaigns on the Byzantine front subsequently assumed a somewhat different form from before. Instead of the large-scale wars conducted by whole armies, the Jihad now focused solely on the smaller-scale state-sanctioned raid known as the *ghazw*, and in particular the summer raid, or *ṣā'ifa*, both of which had been in existence since early Islamic times.[11]

While these resulted in some notable successes, they were campaigns that seemed to have relinquished the hope of an immediate conquest of the Byzantine Empire, and focused on a long-term war of attrition instead.[12] Moreover, this policy collapsed entirely in the 740s due to the internal disorders of the Caliphate and the huge Berber revolt that marked the end of effective caliphal rule

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10 See Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads*, Albany, 1994, *passim*. In the Byzantine context, Bosworth notes the fixing of the frontier in the wake of 717: "After the high point of Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik's abortive attack on Constantinople in 97-99/715-717, the frontier became stabilized." ("Byzantium and the Syrian frontier in the early ʿAbbāsid period," reprinted in *The Arabs, Byzantium, and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture. Variorum Collected Studies Series*, Aldershot, 1996, Article XII, p. 56) That the conquests had a centralized nature even before the establishment of Umayyad rule is persuasively argued by Fred M. Donner, "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests," *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. Vol. 3: States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron, Princeton, 1995, pp. 337-360.

11 On this change in tactic see Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State*, p. 118. On the Eastern front the state of things was even worse from a Muslim standpoint; from 724 until circa 740 the Muslims were in a precarious defensive position (H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, pp. 65-86). As for the raids: The Prophet himself conducted raids (see Abū ʿAmr Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ b. Abī Hubayra al-Laythī al-ʿUṣfurī, *Taʾrīkh Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ*, ed. Muṣṭafā Fawwāz *et alii*, Beirut, 1415/1995, e. g. pp. 38, 60), as did the representatives of the Rāshidūn caliphs-e. g. Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī's *ghazw* during ʿUthmān's caliphate (*ibid.* p. 113). In fact, ʿUthmān is the first caliph for whom we have a list of the commanders appointed to lead the *ṣā'ifa* raids upon Byzantium (*ibid.* pp. 134-135). *Pace* Bonner's assertion (Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*, American Oriental Series, vol. 81, New Haven, 1996, p. 57) that ʿAbbāsid interest in the summer raids – and in particular the appointing of ʿAbbāsid princes to lead them – was something novel, we see the Umayyads sending their relatives on *ghāzī* raids – and particularly the *ṣā'ifa* – constantly; e. g. Muḥammad b. Marwān's leading of the *ṣā'ifa* in the years 75/694 (Khalīfa, p. 209) and 83/702 (*ibid.* p. 256, where it is also mentioned that al-ʿAbbās b. al-Walīd raided); the raids of the year 114/732, one of which was led by Muʿāwiya b. Hishām, and which joined up with the forces of the legendary *ghāzī* ʿAbdallāh al-Baṭṭāl, and the other of which was commanded by Sulaymān b. Hishām (*ibid.* p. 271).

12 Apart from Blankinship, it seems that only Byzantinists, ironically, have fully appreciated this point (e. g. W. Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival 780-842*, Stanford, 1988, p. 18: "Fortunately for the Byzantines, the caliphs no longer showed much interest in trying to conquer the whole empire.")

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in North Africa west of Tunis.[13] The immediate result of this collapse was that the Byzantines went on the offensive: in 740 the Emperor Leo defeated and killed the famous *ghāzī* ʿAbdallāh al-Baṭṭāl and broke the Muslim siege of Akroinon; and in the following years the Byzantines repeatedly brought the conflict into Muslim territory, capturing several towns.[14] The ʿAbbāsid Revolution further distracted the central authorities; even after the official establishment of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, for many years the numerous ʿAlid – and other – revolts kept the Caliphal armies tied up within the Dār al-Islām itself.[15] As a result, throughout the 750s as well, "the Arabs were generally on the defensive."[16]

The effective halting of the Jihad – and, even worse, the reversal of the offensive into Muslim territory – must have posed an unprecedented crisis for the Faithful; for one of the central tenets of their faith, which had constituted the main focus of the Caliphate's endeavours from the very beginning, was now in abeyance. Obviously, such a situation, with its moral and military vacuum at the frontier, could not last – and, indeed, it did not. Into this vacuum there stepped a new force with a new and militant leadership: the *mutaṭawwiʿa*.[17]

The *mutaṭawwiʿa* were volunteer border warriors for the faith. Fiercely religious Sunnis (or proto-Sunnis),[18] they hailed mostly from the eastern Iranian world, but migrated to the Byzantine frontier in order to uphold the Jihad and pursue the spiritual life generally – and, incidentally, purely as a natural outcome of their activity, snatched the moral and religious highground from the Caliphate. The privatized, independent nature of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, together with their uncompromising piety and total disregard for worldly trappings and glory, was one of the elements which served to exert pressure on the caliphs and caliphal policy, and helps explain why caliphs from al-Manṣūr through Hārūn al-Rashīd

13 On the Berber Revolt see M. Brett, "The Arab Conquest and the rise of Islam in North Africa," pp. 516-521. For an account of the internal turmoil in the central lands of the Caliphate see Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East II. Revolt: The Social and Military Aspects of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, Jerusalem, 1990, chapter 1.

14 Bosworth, "Byzantium and the Syrian frontier," p. 56; also, for this period of Byzantine advantage, R. -J. Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber: Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinischen Staates im 7. und 8. Jahrhunder*, Munich, 1976, pp. 143-162. On the various reforms and developments which facilitated the Byzantine resurgence, see both Lilie, *ibid.* , chapter 6 (pp. 287-338), and Treadgold, *The Byzantine Revival*, *passim*.

15 Thus Bosworth ("Byzantium and the Syrian Frontier in the Early ʿAbbāsid Period," p. 58) notes that it was not until the 760s, when "the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, under the vigiorous direction of al-Manṣūr, achieved a greater degree of internal stability … [that] a more activist policy along the frontier was … pursued." On the ʿAlid rebellions, *vide* H. Kennedy, *The Early ʿAbbasid Caliphate: A Political History*, London, 1981, pp. 198-213.

16 *Ibid.* , p. 57.

17 For a concise exposition of the phenomenon, *vide* D. G. Tor, "Privatized Jihad and Public Order in the Pre-Saljuq Period: The Role of the *Mutaṭawwiʿa*," *Iranian Studies* 38:4 (2005), pp. 555-574.

18 Perhaps best defined during this period as strict-constructionist Qurʾān-revering Traditionists who abhorred speculative theology. For a fuller discussion of the term, and for more on their integral role in the early Ḥanbalite movement, *vide infra*, chapter 4.

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were so concerned with leading members of the movement; it is no accident that Hārūn al-Rashīd's pattern of Jihad one year, Hajj the next mirrors exactly the behavior attributed to the greatest volunteer warrior of this type, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak.[19] As one of our sources tells us, the volunteer warriors were known for "speaking/defending the truth, not fearing the authority [or power] of the great;"[20] and indeed, we shall encounter several stories demonstrating *mutaṭawwiʿ* indifference to Caliphal rank and to established governmental authority generally.

This independence of conscience is captured in Samʿanī's definition of the *nisba* "*al-muṭṭawwiʿī*" :

> This is the *nisba* for the *muṭṭawwiʿa*. They are a group who have devoted themselves entirely to the *ghazw* and the Jihad [*farraghū anfusahum li'l-ghazw wa'l-jihād*], stationed themselves on the frontiers [*rabaṭū fi'l-thughūr*] and supererogated [*taṭawwaʿū*] in the *ghazw*, and sought the *ghazw* in the lands of the infidels when it was not incumbent upon them and present in their land.[21]

Another work defines the *muṭṭawwiʿa* as "those who supererogate in the Jihad."[22] Yet a third well-known author defines the *muṭṭawwiʿa* as "those who set themselves aside for the Jihad [*arsadū anfusahum li'l-jihād*].[23] These definitions, of course, all stem from authors who were writing much later than the eighth and ninth centuries, and they were writing about the phenomenon as it developed after the great transformation of the mid-eighth century had taken place.

The term *mutaṭawwiʿ* does appear sporadically in reference to earlier, seventh-century volunteer Jihad forces.[24] Those early volunteers differ fundamentally

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19 Thus Farouk Omar notes that "A great part of al-Rashīd's fame was due to his interest in the wars against the Byzantines. In waging *Djihād* against the infidels, Hārūn was in fact fulfilling one of the important duties of the Caliph in the eyes of Muslims. Border attacks and counter-attacks occurred with almost annual regularity, but the interesting aspect of al-Rashīd's expeditions was his personal participation in a number of them." Omar also notes the apparent ineffectuality of these campaigns, which we shall presently examine: "It might seem surprising that by the end of al-Rashīd's reign the situation on the frontiers was virtually unchanged …" Farouk Omar, "Hārūn al-Rashīd," *ʿAbbāsiyyāt: Studies in the History of the early ʿAbbāsids*," Baghdad, 1976, p. 25.

20 Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Beirut, 1418/1997, vol. 6, p. 146.

21 ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Samʿanī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Beirut, 1419/1998, vol. 5, p. 213.

22 Jārallāh Maḥmūd b. ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāgha*, ed. Mazyad Nuʿaym *et al.* , Beirut, 1998, p. 514.

23 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Lubb al-lubāb fi taḥrīr al-ansāb*, ed. Petrus Johannes Veth, Leiden, 1851, p. 247.

24 Although it is debatable whether or not the sources which mention such groups are not anachronistically projecting the term back in time, since the earliest of those sources dates to the ninth century. The earliest references this author has been able to find occur in the late-ninth century, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, ed. Maḥmud al-Firdaws al-ʿAẓm, Damascus, 1997, vol. 6, pp. 420-422; and the tenth-century works of Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Beirut, no date,

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from the movement which arose in the late Umayyad/early ʿAbbāsid period in several essential respects, however: First, they seem to have received state stipends, and to have worked in close cooperation with the government. Second, they are found mainly on the Eastern Iranian border and, interestingly, in Spain – not on the Byzantine frontier. Nor are there, before the late Umayyad period, any biographies of individual *mutaṭawwiʿa*, *mutaṭawwiʿ* chains of *ḥadīth* transmission from one generation to the next, or any special religious ideology; religious volunteering in the Jihad, like the Jihad itself, was still a state enterprise. All of this changes dramatically in the late Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid period when, in the process of their assuming leadership in the Jihad, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* came to signify a religious movement with its own ideology.

The founding figures of the movement – men such as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUmar al-Awzāʿī, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, Ibrāhīm b. Adham, and Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī[25] – were those figures whom Michael Bonner has referred to as "scholars and saints of the frontier."[26] They were much more than a group of pious individuals, however; for under the influence of these figures, *mutaṭawwiʿa* became a term denoting a socio-religious movement; that is, a group unified by both social ties and, above all, a cohesive ideology, a shared religious outlook and lifestyle, and the joint pursuit of common goals. Among the many religious and ideological characteristics the *mutaṭawwiʿa* shared were the following: They were deeply ascetic, both in their behavior[27] and in their associa-

vol. 6, p. 532, and the anonymously composed *Akhbār majmūʿa fī fatḥ al-Andalus wa-dhikr umarāʾihā*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, Cairo and Beirut, 1989, p. 14, which ends with the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Nāṣir (d. 961). ʿAlī b. Hāmid b. Abī Bakr al-Kūfī, *Fatḥ-nāmah-i Sind*, ed. N. B. Balūch, Islamabad, 1403/1983, poses a special dilemma. The surviving Persian version is an early thirteenth-century translation of – and avowed embroidery upon – a far earlier (eighth – or ninth-century) Arabic text dealing with the Umayyad era. Thus, although the text overflows with supposed Umayyid-age *mutaṭawwiʿa* (e. g. pp. 22, 27, 28, 36, and so forth) one cannot even be certain in which century the original text was composed – let alone when the term appeared in the version we now possess.

25 Most of the leaders of this groups came from the Iranian East, with the possible but notable exception of al-Awzāʿī; it is unclear where he was born. The number of conflicting traditions that al-Mizzī reports (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Yūsuf b. al-Zakī al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, Beirut, 1418/1998, vol. 11, pp. 314–315) regarding the *nisba* would suggest that the attempts to explain its origin were simply guesswork on the part of the biographers; although, significantly, one of the traditions claims that his origins were to be found in Sind (p. 315). This, of course, would mean that, like nearly all the other founding figures, he, too, came from the Iranian East.

26 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, Chapter 4, 107–130.

27 Thus, to give just a few of the more spectacular examples, Ibrāhīm b. Adham is said to have subsisted on clay alone for 20 days while on the Hajj (al-Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 7, p. 435); at another point, during Ramaḍān, he tormented himself by hard physical labor and sleep deprivation: "[He] harvested the crop during the day and prayed at night, so that he lived for thirty days, sleeping neither at night nor during the day."(*Ibid.* , p. 439).

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tions;[28] they were profoundly committed to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* Traditionist camp; loathed speculative theology; and played a crucial role in the consolidation of Sunnism at this time. In short, in their religious world-view they belonged to what has been termed "Islam's first orthodox, or proto-Sunnites."[29] Indeed, many of these figures taught Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and some of his closest associates, and a large proportion of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* of the next several generations who appear in the biographical literature are directly traceable back to these founders. Indeed, many of Ibn Ḥanbal's associates engaged in such warfare themselves; apart from the figures treated at length *infra* in succeeding chapters, note that Abū Bakr al-Marrūdhī is said to have been seen off to the *ghazw* by 50,000 persons (al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, Cairo, 1349/1931, 4:424). The author is indebted to Christopher Melchert for this reference.

There was one additional and most salient religious feature of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, though, which was not present among the proto-Sunna in general: an unwavering commitment to what they viewed as one's personal obligation to engage in warfare for the faith, irrespective of the directives of the caliph or the government. In this respect, one can classify these people as a very specific and militant subset of the proto-Sunna; their hallmark activity was pursuing the Jihad while keeping themselves free of worldly encumbrances and ties with those whom they considered to be impure – first and foremost, the government.

Religiously, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement brought about a revolution regarding the proper role of the political authorities in the Jihad. Certain scholars have already noted that the concept of Jihad being formulated by these proponents of border warfare was fundamentally different from the concept of Jihad being articulated at the same time in the Hijaz (most notably by Mālik).[30] In the ideological conflict between these two views – i. e. do political leaders have religious control over the Jihad or is it, rather, a religious obligation incumbent upon all believers, irrespective of the political authority – it was the latter view, the view of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, which won (at least in ʿIrāq), and was adopted by both the Shafiʿite and Ḥanbalite schools.[31]

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28 Associating, for instance, with such proto-Sufis as Junayd, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Shaqīq al-Balkhī. Note that they they composed not only the first books of Jihad in Islam, but also the first books of *zuhd*; e. g. ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd waʾl-raqāʾiq*, ed. Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī (Beirut, no date).

29 G. H. A. Juynboll, "An excursus on the *ahl al-sunna* in connection with Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, vol. IV," *Der Islam* 75 (1998), p. 330. Juynboll points out (p. 321) that the first definition of a *ṣāḥib sunna* is given by ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak in Ibn Abī Yaʿlā's *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-Ḥanābila*.

30 J. Chabbi, "Ribāṭ," *EI²*, vol. 8, p. 495, although she is not able to identify who was advocating this new understanding of Jihad; Chabbi refers, rather, to "circles yet to be identified, [which] began to stress the meritorious aspect of military service on the frontier", and calls this a "new type of activism."

31 See Roy Mottahedeh and Ridwan al-Sayyid, "The Idea of *Jihād* in Islam before the Crusades," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki

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The consequences of this *mutaṭawwiʿ* victory were immense. The *mutaṭawwiʿ* emphasis on the individual responsibilities of the believer before God – particularly concerning the Jihad – and on guidance by the Prophetic Sunna weakened the religious role of the Caliph; it marked, if not the beginning, certainly one of the most significant steps in the process Crone and Hinds have described as the transition from Caliphal to Prophetic *sunna*, and also accords well with the timeline they present.[32] Thus, the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, the militant arm of the proto-Sunni Traditionists, played a significant role in Sunnism's victory through the religious prestige they acquired in their role in leading the Jihad.[33]

To examine all the ramifications of the activities of the founders of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement, unfortunately, is beyond the scope of this study. What is important for our aims is to understand the religious values and milieu from which the *ʿayyārs* grew; for many of the *ʿayyārs* we shall examine, and all of the *ʿulamāʾ* who supported the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* dynasty, were connected to the leading figures of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement. Let us, then, turn to examine the values of this movement and of the men who founded it.

As mentioned before, all of the founding figures were ascetics, but Ibrāhīm b. Adhām[34] was possibly the most extreme in his asceticism, and there are many

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Laiou and Roy Mottahedeh, Washington, D. C., 2001, pp. 26-27. On one important point the present author disagrees with the article: Mottahedeh and Sayyid attribute the obvious doubt manifested in the questions to Mālik regarding the legitimacy of participating in border warfare led by the Umayyads to reservations about the legitimacy of Umayyad rule. The present author believes, rather, that the question at that time – particularly in light of the ideological competition, which we shall explore presently – was whether or not it was legitimate *at all* for a volunteer warrior to place himself under the political establishment. This would recast the debate from being one about the nature of Umayyad rule into one about the nature of *taṭawwuʿ*, which seems a far more likely topic for religious discussion in the context of this time.

32 P. Crone and G. M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious authority in the first centuries of Islam*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 82-93.

33 Some idea of the religious stature of these people can be gleaned from the following tradition: "Whoever acts as vanguard before the Muslims in the path of God as a *mutaṭawwiʿ*, without a ruler [*sulṭān*] having taken him [i. e. voluntarily, not as part of an official campaign], shall never see the Fire with his own eyes except [enough] to satisfy the conditions of the [Qurʾānic] oath; for God, may He be praised, who has no partner, says: 'There is none of you but he is coming to it. '" Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Muthannā Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī al-Ḥanbalī, *Musnad Abī Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī*, ed. Ḥusayn Asad, Damascus, 1404/1984, vol. 3, #1490. In the translation of the phrase *taḥillata al-qasami* the author has followed Lane's explanation (*Arabic-English Lexicon*, p. 620). See also #1486, "Whoever fasts one day in the path of God while a *mutaṭawwiʿ*, without its being Ramaḍān, is kept away from the Fire for a hundred years …"

34 Whose biography can be found, for example, in the following works, beginning on the pages listed: Abū'l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyan wa-anbāʾ abnāʾ al-zamān*, ed. Yūsuf ʿAlī Ṭawīl, Beirut, 1419/1998, vol. 1, pp. 58-59; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 56; ʿUmar b. al-Ḥasan Samarqandī, *Muntakhab-i rawmaq al-majālis va bustān al-ʿārifīn wa-tuḥfat al-murīdīn*, ed. A. Rajāʾī, Tehran, 1354/1975, p. 71; Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr, *Mukhtasar taʾrīkh Dimashq*, Beirut, 1996, vol. 4, pp. 17, 18; al-Balkhī's *Faḍāʾil Balkh* repeats Qushayrī (Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh b.

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traditions demonstrating how deeply committed he was to that ideal. Poverty was an important value for him; he is said to have stated: "Poverty is stored up in Heaven; it is on a par with Martyrdom in God's eyes, [who] does not bestow it except upon him whom He loves."[35] His penchant for self-torment through work and sleep deprivation, particularly during Ramadan, has already been mentioned, as has his spectacular feat of living off clay alone for weeks on end while on the Hajj.[36]

In fact, he was generally quite sparing regarding food, and preferred to "eat of the labor of his [own] hands."[37] One (unintentionally) rather humorous anecdote recounts what appears to be an ascetic match between al-Awzāʿī and Ibrāhīm regarding who could eat less food when at dinner together; and, just as Ibrāhīm refrained from eating more than the bare minimum, so he refrained from speech, according to the ascetic Bishr the Barefoot. Some of Ibrāhīm's other ascetic practices are described by others who knew him:

> He would wear in the winter a skin without a shirt, and in the summer two pieces of a four-dirham garment [*shiqqatayn bi-arbaʿ dirāhim*], putting on one and wrapping himself in the other, and fasting both while journeying and while abiding, and not sleeping at night … When he was finished harvesting he used to send one of his friends to settle the account with the owner of the crop; [the friend] would bring the dirhams but [Ibrāhīm] would not touch them with his hand.[38]

Like all the other *mutaṭawwiʿ* figures, Ibrāhīm devoted much of his life to the Jihad on the Byzantine border. Time and again we see Ibrāhīm adding difficulties to his Jihad experience in order to enhance its religious merit. In one such episode, a mounted raiding expedition was being conducted, with Ibrāhīm on foot. The leader of the expedition, Abū'l-Walīd, swore an oath that he would not ride until Ibrāhīm sat upon a saddle. Ibrāhīm promptly complied, then stated "you have fulfilled your oath," got down again, and proceeded to walk thirty-six miles with the military expedition. Other highlights of Ibrāhīm's jihad-cum-asceticism include his spending the night outside in a blizzard while his raiding compan-

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ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Dāʾūd al-Balkhī, *Faḍāʾil Balkh*, tr. into Persian by ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī Balkhī, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, Tehran, 1350/1971, pp. 113-115; Abū'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-tasawwuf*, Beirut, 1419/1998, p. 30); Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*, *Biblioteca Islamica, Das Biographische Lexikon des Ṣalāḥaddīn Ḫalīl ibn Aibak aṣ-Ṣafadī*, vol. 5, ed. Sven Dedering, Wiesbaden, 1970, pp. 209-210; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Yūsuf b. al-Zakī al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, Beirut, 1418/1998, vol. 1, p. 313; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 10, p. 44; cf. Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Maṣrī b. al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Beirut, 1419/1998, p. 38.

35 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyāʾ*, p. 39.

36 *Vide supra.*

37 Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣufiyya*, p. 35.

38 Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 10, p. 49.

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ions stayed in a tent;[39] dedicating his entire patrimony to the Jihad;[40] and his refusal to accept any earthly reward – or even to touch with his own hands any such remuneration – as compensation for his efforts in Jihad.

Ibrāhīm practiced this latter precept to such a degree that he even extended it to include food:

> Aḥmad b. Bakkār told me: Ibrāhīm b. Adhām raided with us two raids, each one more difficult than the other … He did not take any portion [of the spoils] or loot, and he would not eat of the good of al-Rūm; even when we came upon rare things [*al-ṭarā'if*] and honey and fowls, he would not eat of it, but said: 'It is permitted, yet I shall renounce it;' he would eat from what he had brought with him, and he would fast …"[41]

One final point we must note about Ibrāhīm is that he did not have much use for the established political authorities; according to one tradition, one of the three signs by which Ibrāhīm claimed one could recognize the End Time approaching was "the speaking of truth in the presence of a Caliph." [or: "ruler" – *sulṭān*^{in}][42] He died while on the course of a raid and was, according to some sources, buried in Tyre in 161/777f. ;[43] according to a different version, he died (also *fī sabīl Allāh*) in the following exemplary fashion:

> He raided by sea with his companions, but had to frequent the bathroom twenty-five times during the night in which he died; every time [he relieved himself] he would restore his ritual purity. And when he sensed death [approaching] he said: "String me my bow," took hold of it, and died with it in his hand. He was buried on an island in the sea in the land of Rūm.[44]

According to the hagiography, then, he died as he had lived: bow in hand, ritually pure, ready to do battle for the Faith with his last breath. We begin to obtain, then, a profile of a leading volunteer holy warrior of the late Umayyad/early ᶜAbbāsid period: devout, ascetic, hailing from Eastern Iran, transmitting *ḥadīth*, and uncompromisingly devoted to the battle against the Infidel, particularly the Christian one, free of any governmental oversight.

As we have just seen from the contest over who could eat less, one associate of Ibrāhīm b. Adhām's was another prominent founder of the *mutaṭawwiᶜ* tradition: ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAmr Abū ᶜAmr al-Awzāᶜī, "the non-pareil of his time, the imam of his age and his era. He was among those who do not fear any critic's

39 Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 7, pp. 444-445.
40 Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtasar*, vol. 4, pp. 24-25.
41 Abū Nuᶜaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 7, p. 446. This culinary aspect was surely also part of what can only be called Ibrāhīm's obsession with "the true Ḥalāl."
42 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 316.
43 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 39.
44 Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 5, p. 310; Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 317.

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blame before God,[45] a speaker/defender of the truth, not fearing the authority [or power] of the great."[46]

Born in the year 80/699f. ,[47] al-Awzāʿī transmitted *ḥadīth* from an extremely long list of people – among them al-Zuhrī – and transmitted in turn to such luminaries as Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak.[48] He is described as having been "of the *fuqahāʾ* of the people of Syria, and among their *qurrāʾ*, their ascetics [*zuhhādihim*] and their fighters stationed on the enemy frontier [*murābiṭīhim*]."[49]

The disregard of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* for earthly authority and power can be clearly seen in al-Awzāʿī's relationship to the caliph Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr. Al-Awzāʿī does not hesitate to take the Caliph to task religiously; when al-Manṣūr refuses to redeem Muslim captives from the Byzantines, al-Awzāʿī sends him a letter excoriating his behavior; "And when his letter reached [al-Manṣūr] he ordered the redemption [of the captives]."[50] Al-Manṣūr, of course, was the ruler who really established the ʿAbbāsid dynasty (among other measures, by brutally quelling any threat, actual or potential); it was in his interest to maintain good relations with pious and widely revered Sunni figures, particularly in view of the ʿAbbāsid need at this time to distance themselves from their original Shiʿite *daʿwa*.[51] Also, at least one associate of al-Awzāʿī's, Sulaymān b. Mihrān Aʿmash,

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45 A reference to Qurʾān 5:54 regarding the Muslim's behavior in the Jihad: " … humble toward believers, stern toward unbelievers, fighting the Jihad in the path of God and not fearing any critic's blame …"

46 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, p. 146.

47 Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-Zuhrī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Beirut 1417/1995, vol. 7, p. 226. As noted above, it is unclear where he was born.

48 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 11, p. 313.

49 Al-Samʿanī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 1, p. 237; Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 11, p. 317. He died in the year 157/773f. as the result of an unfortunate fall in the bathtub. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwat ʿUkashah, Cairo, 1960, p. 497, states merely that "he died in Beirut in the year 157, when he was seventy-two years old." If the latter statement is correct, then al-Awzāʿī was obviously born in the year 85/704 rather than the year 80/699f. According to Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubra*, vol. 7, p. 226, al-Awzāʿī was born in the year 88/707.

50 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 146-147.

51 The revolt of Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya had made clear that there was no way the ʿAbbāsids could beat the ʿAlids on Shiʿite grounds, such as those of the original Hāshimiyya movement which the ʿAbbāsids had ridden to victory. For a discussion of this problem *vide* D. G. Tor, "An Historiographical Re-examination of the Appointment and Death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *Der Islam* 78: 1 (2001), pp. 1-26. Cf. Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran*, Albany, NY, 1988, pp. 23-24: "It must seem most striking that a religious movement arising among the descendants of the revolutionaries who had brought the ʿAbbasids to power and who continued to back their caliphate most solidly repudiated the religious motives of that revolution … Political considerations soon led the ʿAbbasid caliphs to distance themselves more and more from the small ʿAbbasid Shīʿa that remained loyal after the schism of the supporters of Abū Muslim."

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from whom al-Awzāʿī related traditions,[52] was declaiming *ḥadīths* stating that obedience, even to legitimate political authority, was owed only so long as that authority was "commanding the right."[53] Obviously, such a doctrine would make it highly expedient for a caliph to win over to his side the charismatic figures espousing it.

Perhaps this helps explain why al-Manṣūr was so willing to accept censure and personal disrespect from someone such as al-Awzāʿī. According to one anecdote, al-Manṣūr summoned al-Awzāʿī to come to him and instruct him. At a certain point, one of al-Manṣūr's people was so offended by al-Awzāʿī's attitude towards the caliph that he drew his sword against the *ʿālim*, but was stopped by the caliph, who then sat patiently through a rather long homily delivered by the cleric.[54]

Al-Awzāʿī's influence upon the caliphate continued, moreover, long after his own death in 157/774, during the caliphate of al-Manṣūr.[55] After the death of the caliph al-Hādī in the year 170/786f. (some 13 years after al-Awzāʿī's own death)

> … al-Khayzurān[56] said: "We were already informed that on this night a caliph would die, a caliph would be raised, and a caliph would be born;" for al-Hādī died, al-Rashīd became ruler, and al-Maʾmūn was born. Al-Khayzurān had obtained [this] knowledge from al-Awzāʿī.[57]

ʿAbbāsids were, of course, not the only people who had relations with al-Awzāʿī. We have already seen the links between al-Awzāʿī and Ibrāhīm b. Adham; but al-Awzāʿī also had close relations with another of the founding figures of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement; namely, Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī. This relationship is particularly intriguing because several of the traditions adumbrating al-Awzāʿī's personal credo are transmitted by al-Fazārī, and also shed some light on the nascent idea of Sunnism at this time, particularly of Sunnism as a performance-based creed.[58] Additionally, al-Fazārī transmits traditions about al-Awzāʿī showing not only the crystallization of the Sunni ideal,[59] but also al-Awzāʿī's strong emphasis upon both the emulation of the *Saḥāba* and the value of Jihad:

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52 *Vide* Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, Beirut, ed. Shuʿayb Arnāʾūṭ, 1419/1998, vol. 6, p. 227.

53 Ahmad b. Muḥammad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, ed. A. M. Shakir, Cairo, 1950-1956, vol. 2, pp. 47-48, no. 622. In this tradition, the Prophet himself has appointed a particular commander over a group of the Anṣār, and enjoined that they obey him. When the commander orders the troop to cast themselves into a fire, however, they balk and inquire of the Prophet, who says to them: "If you had entered [into] it you would never have left it forever, for obedience is only in [what is] good [*al-maʿrūf*]."

54 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 147-151.

55 Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 7, p. 226.

56 Mother of the caliphs al-Hādī and al-Rashīd.

57 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 99. On the role of Khayzurān in ensuring that this prediction would be fulfilled, see R. Kimber, "The Succession to the Caliph Mūsā al-Hādī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001), pp. 433-437.

58 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 154-155.

59 Juynboll, "Excursus," p. 324, notes al-Awzāʿī's contribution to early Sunnism.

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> … Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī related to us about al-Awzāʿī, saying: He used to say: In five good deeds the Companions of Muhammad, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, and the Followers were expert: cleaving to the community [*luzūm al-jamāʿa*], adherence to the Sunna [*ittibāʿ al-Sunna*], building mosques, reciting the Qurʾān, and the Jihad in the path of God."[60]

Even more strongly militant is the tradition which al-Awzāʿī related on the authority of al-Zuhrī, according to which someone asked the Prophet: "'O Messenger of God, which is the best of works?' He replied: 'The Jihad in the path of God …'"[61]

Like the other figures we are here examining, al-Awzāʿī was considered "*Imām* of the people of Syria in his time in *ḥadīth* and fiqh."[62] One tradition even claims that al-Awzāʿī was used as a litmus test for religious acceptability or orthodoxy: " … Whoever mentioned [al-Awzāʿī] to the good, we knew that he was a *ṣāḥib sunna*; and whoever calumniated him, we knew that he was a *ṣāḥib biḍʿa*."[63] Other traditions about al-Awzāʿī are related through ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, demonstrating the high regard in which the *mutaṭawwiʿa* figures were held in early Ḥanbalite circles.[64]

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60 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānīʾ, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, p. 153. An older source (which does not relate the tradition through al-Fazārī, however) lists the five in a slightly different order: "adherence to the Sunna, reciting the Qurʾān, cleaving to the community, the building of mosques, and the Jihad in the path of God." Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī, *al-Maʿrifa waʾl-taʾrīkh*, ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr, Beirut 1419/1999, vol. 2, p. 227.

61 Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Rawḍat al-ʿuqalāʾ wa-nuzhat al-fuḍalāʾ*, al-Shāriqah, United Arab Emirates, 1416/1995, p. 101. The tradition continues with the questioner further inquiring: "'Then what [after jihad]?' [The Prophet] responded: A man on a mountain path fearing God, and calling the people to put aside their wickedness. '" This tradition in praise of Jihad appears in all the Sunni canonical *ḥadīth* works as well.

62 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 11, p. 311. Additional traditions state that "The *imāms* in *ḥadīth* were four: al-Awzāʿī, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawrī, and Ḥammād b. Zayd," and "There was no one in Syria more learned in the *sunna* than al-Awzāʿī" (*Ibid.* , p. 315).

63 Al-Fasawī, *al-Maʿrifa waʾl-taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 238.

64 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, p. 154. Al-Awzāʿī is also most interesting to us because the name of one of his pupils involved the first known use of the term *al-ʿayyār* as an epithet – and it is very significant for our argument that this occurs in relation to the known *mutaṭawwiʿ* milieu. This pupil, called one "of the greatest of the companions of al-Awzāʿī," [*min kibār aṣḥāb al-Awzāʿī*] is named as "Salama b. al-ʿAyyār b. Ḥiṣn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū Muslim al-Fazārī al-Dimashqī: And *'al-ʿayyār'*" is a *laqab*; his name is Aḥmad." (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 22, p. 109) At another point in the text, we are told more clearly that his name was "Abū Muslim Salama b. Aḥmad al-Fazārī; he settled in Damascus, and in it his offspring and his house were known as Ibn al-ʿAyyār; and 'al-ʿAyyār' is a *laqab*. He heard from Mālik b. Anas and Abū ʿAmr al-Awzāʿī." (*Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 22, p. 111, restated on p. 112). Ibn al-ʿAyyār is given a sterling religious reputation: " … The companions of al-Awzāʿī who heard [traditions] from him … are: Yazīd b. al-Simṭ, and Salama b. al-ʿAyyār, and those two were pious [*wariʿayn*], superior [*fāḍilayn*] …" Another tradition confirms Ibn al-ʿAyyār's pious reputation: "Abū'l-Faḍl al-Muqaddasī related about Abū Ḥātim b. Ḥibbān that he said [of Ibn al-ʿAyyar]: He was of the best of the people of Syria [*min khiyār ahl al-Shām*] and their pious ones [*ʿubbādihim*]; however, although he died when he was old, [of] everything he related in the

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Our next founding figure, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥārith b. ʿUthmān b. Usāma al-Fazārī,[65] was a Kufan who moved to al-Miṣṣīṣa to station himself on the frontier [*murābiṭ*^{an}],[66] and produced a work on Jihad.[67] He both heard from and transmitted to Sufyān al-Thawrī, ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, and al-Awzāʿī.[68] As a transmitter he is termed "*thiqat*^{un} *thiqat*^{un}"[69]; and "among the imams of *ḥadīth*,"[70] although according to another source

> He was reliable [in hadith transmission], excellent [*fāḍilan*]; a master of sunna and raiding against infidels [*ṣāḥib sunna wa-ghazw*];[71] but prone to many errors in his *ḥadīth*. He died in al-Miṣṣīṣa in the year 188 [804], during the caliphate of Hārūn.[72]

Here again we see the special double interest of the early *mutaṭawwiʿa*: the Sunna and the Jihad.[73] Al-Fazārī practiced both Jihad against the infidel and *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* among the Muslims;[74] we shall see later in this chapter that the complementary duty of concern with proper order inside the *Dār al-Islām* appears, too, to have been characteristic of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* – quite reasonably so; after all, the whole idea behind *taṭawwuʿ* is that it is incumbent upon every Muslim to ensure that God's rule is universally upheld.

Like the other figures here examined, al-Fazārī had scant use for the government; Bonner notes that he would eject all Qadarites and "all those who had dealings with the government" from his *majlis*.[75] Although Bonner views al-

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world there do not exist 10 traditions." (*Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 22, p. 112) According to Ibn ʿAsākir he died in the year 168/784f. Ibn Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl*, vol. 6, pp. 287-288, elaborates on Ibn al-ʿAyyār's longevity, stating that he lived more than one hundred years.

65 Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 7, p. 227; the names are given slightly differently in Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 403.

66 Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 6, p. 69, although according to some sources he was born in Wāsiṭ and grew up in Kūfa (*vide* M. Muranyi, "Das *Kitāb al-Siyar* von Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 [1985], p. 67).

67 Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī, *Kitāb al-siyar*, ed. Fārūq Ḥamāda, Beirut, 1987.

68 His uncle Marwān b. Muʿāwiya al-Fazārī transmitted to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal; "Imams such as Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn considered him trustworthy [*waththaqahu*] … reliable [*thiqa*] in what he transmitted from well-regarded people [*al-maʿrūfīn*], but weak in what he transmitted from unkown ones [*al-majhūlīn*]." (Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 4, p. 357, #7918) The elucidation of the family relationship is in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 405.

69 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 405.

70 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 540. For further encomia, *vide* Muranyi, "Das *Kitāb al-Siyar*," pp. 68-69.

71 Called merely "*ṣāḥib sunna*" in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, p. 405 – but, then again, al-Mizzī was apparently completely uninterested in the military exploits of any of these figures; he never once mentions their *ghazi* activities.

72 Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 7, p. 227. According to al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 6, p. 69, however, he died in the year 185/801.

73 For further documentation of al-Fazārī's holy warrior credentials, *vide* Muranyi, "Das *Kitāb al-Siyar*," p. 69.

74 Bonner (*Aristocratic Violence*, p. 110) notes that he used to have thrown out of the *thaghr* anyone guilty of *biḍʿa*.

75 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 110.

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Awzāʿī's and al-Fazārī's attitudes towards the government as fundamentally contrasting (al-Fazārī in his view was the founder of the view that authority resides in the *ʿulamāʾ* rather than the government or the caliph, whereas al-Awzāʿī was supposedly more respectful of Caliphal authority),[76] what we have just seen of al-Awzāʿī's irreverence toward al-Manṣūr, and of Ibrāhīm b. Adham's expressed critical stance toward the central authorities, contradicts this theory. All of the early *mutaṭawwiʿa* figures, concerned as they were with the individual's responsibility before God and with strict adherence to the ways of the Prophet, belonged to the new proto-Sunni trend and its individualized view of the Jihad.[77] Moreover, as we have seen, al-Fazārī's name is closely associated with al-Awzāʿī's; several traditions even explicitly compare them: "al-Ḥarbī said: al-Awzāʿī was the most excellent of the people of his time, and after him Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī …"[78] Arguably the most important associate of al-Fazārī's, however, was the greatest of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* founders: ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, the man who "united *ʿilm* and *zuhd*."[79]

ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak b. Wāḍiḥ is described as "Champion [*alīf*] of the Qurʾān, the Hajj, and the Jihad"[80] – or, in more high-flown language:

> that adornment of the age [*zayn-i zamān*], that pillar of shelter, that Imam of the Sharīʿa and the Way, that master of the Two Jihads in truth,[81] that prince of the pen and the Indian sword [*balārak*], ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak-God's mercy be upon him – whom they call the emperor of religious clerics [*shāhanshāh-i ʿulamā*ʾ][82]

He was born in the year 118/736 and began seeking religious knowledge when he was twenty years old.[83] His birth was humble; according to the (lost) history of Marv, "The mother of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak was a Khwarazmian, and his father [was] a Turk, a slave of a merchant from Hamadhān, of Banū Ḥanẓala." Despite his parents' humble status, Ibn al-Mubārak never became too proud or fa-

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76 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 115-119.

77 In this there is an interesting parallel with the 16th and 17th century Puritan and other more radical Protestant movements in England.

78 Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 6, p. 69.

79 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyan*, vol. 3, p. 22.

80 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 172. Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, pp. 378-379, calls him: "the *imām*, Shaykh al-Islām, the cleric of his time [*ʿālim zamānihi*], and the prince of the God-fearing [*amīr al-atqiyāʾ*] of his era, … al-Marwazī, *al-Ḥāfiẓ*, *al-Ghāzī* …"

81 Either referring to the Jihad against the Byzantines and against the Turks; or, since this is a Sufi source dating from a later period, when the concept of *jihād al-nafs* had already developed, referring to the Jihad of the Sword and the Jihad of the Spirit.

82 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, *Persian Historical Texts*, vol. 5, Leiden, 1907, p. 211.

83 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 32, pp. 300-301; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, pp. 378-379. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is later (p. 382) given as the authority for this date.

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mous for them, but remained imbued with filial piety.[84] After hearing *ḥadīths* from his first teacher, Ibn al-Mubārak began journeying in the year 141/758f. , and kept up a wandering life "until he died in pursuit of religious knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), and the *ghazw*, and commerce [*al-tijāra*], and supporting the brethren in God [*al-infāq ʿalā al-ikhwān fi'llāh*] …"[85]

The list of those to whom Ibn al-Mubārak transmitted covers several pages, and includes many of the most illustrious names in both Traditionist Islam and Sufism.[86] One source notes, regarding Ibn al-Mubārak's *ḥadīth*, that "Sufyān al-Thawrī transmitted from him, and Abū Isḥāq al-Fazārī … and ʿAffān … His *ḥadīths* [are classified as] proof according to the consensus ("*ḥujja bi'l-ijmāʿ*"), and he is in the *musnads* and the *uṣūl*."[87] His *ḥadīths* are repeatedly said to be *ṣaḥīḥ*; he is held to have been not only an impeccable transmitter, but even "the Caliph in the field of *ḥadīth*" [*amīr al-muʾminīn fi'l-ḥadīth*].[88]

He is also lauded in the sources for his outstanding moral and spiritual qualities, to the point where it is said of him "There is none on the face of the Earth like unto ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak; I do not know of any good qualities God has created that he has not placed in ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak."[89]

Like his colleagues whom we have already examined, Ibn al-Mubārak also practiced asceticism. Ibn al-Mubārak, however, is called the "Lord of Ascetics"

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84 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 32, p. 402; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 381. According to an alternative story, surely legendary, Ibn al-Mubārak's father was indeed a slave, but his master was so impressed with his bondsman's honesty and integrity that he gave his own daughter in marriage to the slave (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyan*, vol. 3, pp. 22-23). Note that the authority for this story is given as Ibrāhīm b. Adham.

85 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 378. Later on Dhahabī elaborates, stating (p. 381) that "Ibn al-Mubārak traveled to the Two Holy Places, and Syria, and Egypt, and ʿIrāq and the Jazīra, and Khurāsān." There is a tradition to the effect that he kept up his cloth trade only in order to be able to go visit Sufyān al-Thawrī, Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, al-Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, and others on a regular basis (Abū'l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Abī Yaʿlā al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-Ḥanābila*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, Cairo, 1419/1998, vol. 1, p. 153). On the use of the term "brother" in a metaphorical, religious sense, see Roy Mottahedeh, "Brother and Brotherhood," *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Leiden, 2001, vol. 1, especially pp. 261-263.

86 *Vide* e. g. al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, pp. 469-471; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 32, pp. 397-398. It is very interesting to note that many early Sufis and Sufi works are prominent in traditions in praise of Jihad: e. g. Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 93. Aḥmad b. al-Hawwārī, a famous ascetic closely associated with Sufyān b. ʿUyayna and al-Fazārī's uncle Marwān b. Muʿāwiya, is reported to have said: "In *ribāṭ* and *ghazw* lie the blessings of the one who is resting. When the servant tires of service/worship, he can take a rest [through *ribāṭ* and *ghazw*] without disobedience."

87 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 380.

88 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, pp. 391-392; 397; similarly, p. 384. On the Sunni import of the term *vide* Juynboll, "Excursus," p. 320. Abū'l Qāsim Ḥamza b. Yūsuf al-Sahmī, *Taʾrīkh Jurjān*, Hyderabad, 1950, p. 283, calls him "The treasurer of *ḥadīth*" [*ṣirāf al-ḥadīth*].

89 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 384; the speaker is Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh.

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[*sayyid al-zuhhād*],[90] and is also credited with having authored one of the earliest Islamic works on asceticism.[91] Whereas al-Awzāʿī seems to have wanted others to adopt his own rigorous practices, Ibn al-Mubārak seems to have demanded more of himself than of others. On a journey from Egypt to Mecca, for example, "he would give [his companions] to eat *khabīṣ*,[92] but the whole time he [himself] was fasting."[93] He is depicted as deploring the love of the sinful world,[94] stating that worldly people [*ahl al-dunyā*] leave the world without ever having "'tasted the best of what is in it. ' It was said to him: 'What is the best of what is in it?' He replied: 'The knowledge of God most high. '" He is also said to have remarked that "If a man knew his own measure [*qadr nafsihi*] he would become humbler than a dog."[95]

He seems, though, to have believed in some level of moderation in ascetic practices; we never hear of his eating clay like Ibrāhīm b. Adham, for example, and one tradition shows him encouraging *darwīshes* not to starve themselves utterly:

> It is related that one year he would make the Hajj, one year a *ghazw*, and one year he would trade [*tijārat* {*kardī*}], and he would distribute his profit among [his] companions. He would give dates to the *darwīshes* and count the pits. Whoever had eaten the most, for each pit he would give a dirham.[96]

This last tradition is also important for highlighting the way in which Ibn al-Mubārak balanced his life among the three duties of *ḥajj*, *jihād*, and *zakāt*, to which (along with *ḥadīth*, of course) he appears to have completely devoted himself.[97] There are, indeed, many stories which relate his acts of charity and generosity,[98] including remitting 100,000 dirhams annually to the poor, and anony-

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90 Al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 117.

91 ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa'l-raqā'iq*, *op. cit.* He is also cited in various Sufi works as an authority on *zuhd*; *vide* e. g. al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p. 184, where he defines *zuhd* as "Trust in God together with love of poverty."

92 A sweet made of dates, cream, and starch.

93 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, pp. 384-385.

94 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, p. 177; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 399.

95 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, pp. 177 and 179 respectively.

96 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 212.

97 Note that this order of priorities is echoed in at least one of the traditions of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: "The Prophet … was asked: 'What is the most praiseworthy of works?' He replied: 'Faith in God and His Messenger.' [The inquirer] said: 'Then what?' He responded: 'The Jihad in the path of God.' It was said: 'Then what?' [The Prophet] replied: 'Then the righteous Hajj [*ḥajjun mabrūrun*].'" (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 14, pp. 23-24, tradition #7580)

98 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, pp. 385-386. Ibn al-Mubārak was very wealthy; he was not only a trader himself (when not fighting the Jihad or making the Hajj), but had also inherited 100,000 dirhams from his father (Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 72).

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mously getting debtors out of jail.[99] He was, moreover, scrupulously honest with other people's possessions. One story claims that he borrowed a pen in Syria, with the understanding that he would return it; when he reached Marv and realized that the pen was still with him, he returned to Syria forthwith, solely in order to restore the pen to its proper owner.[100]

Ibn al-Mubārak, like the other figures we have examined, also exemplifies the new attitude toward Prophetic *sunna*, which exalted Prophetic tradition, incidentally magnifying the religious authority of the Traditionists and scholars at the expense of Caliphal authority.[101] In one tradition regarding Ibn al-Mubārak's reverence toward the Prophet and his companions we are given a glimpse of the emotional attitude of the Traditionists:

> Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād[102] said: "ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak used to sit in his house a lot, and it was said to him: 'Do you not get lonely?' He replied: 'How could I get lonely, when I am with the Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, and his Companions?'"[103]

Given that Ibn al-Mubārak spent his time in such exalted company, it comes as no surprise that his opinion of worldly authorities and princes was correspondingly low: "It is said that Ibn al-Mubārak was asked: 'Who are the notables [*al-nās*]?' He replied: 'The *ʿulamā'*'. It was said: 'And who are the kings [*al-mulūk*]?' He replied: 'The ascetics [*al-zuhhād*]. '"[104] In another tradition, he contrasts the importance of the *ʿulamā'* with that of worldly leaders – to the detriment of the latter: "Ibn al-Mubārak said: 'Whoever scorns the *ʿulamā'*, loses his Next World, while whoever scorns princes, loses this world; and whoever scorns the Brethren [*al-ikhwān*], loses his *muruwwa*. '"[105]

The implications this outlook had for Ibn al-Mubārak's relationship with the caliph are made fairly explicit. One tradition, for instance, relates how an ad-

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[99] Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 476; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, pp. 386-387. Cf. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima fi'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Ḥusayn Amīn, Baghdad, 1984, p. 337.

[100] Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 213; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 395.

[101] Crone and Hinds, *God's Caliph*, p. 58.

[102] This famous apocalyptist was also important in the consolidation of early Sunnism (*vide* Juynboll, "Excursus," p. 325). Interestingly, Ibn al-Mubārak is found relating traditions of doom, gloom and *fitna* in apocalyptic works as well (*vide e. g.* Ibn al-Munādī, *al-Malāḥim*, pp. 155, 196).

[103] Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 382.

[104] Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 399.

[105] Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 408. *Muruwwa* was, of course, one of the terms later used to describe the chivalric code of the *ʿayyārūn*. On p. 397 Dhahabī describes how a group of prominent *ʿulamā'* got together and enumerated a broad range of areas in which Ibn al-Mubārak excelled: "*ʿilm*, *fiqh*, *adab*, grammar, vocabulary [*lugha*], *zuhd*, eloquence [*faṣāḥa*], poetry, night vigils [*qiyām al-layl*], worship [*ʿibāda*], the Ḥajj, *ghazw*, courage, horsemanship [possibly "knighthood" *-furūsiyya*], strength [*quwwa*] …" This tradition is also found in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 474.

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mirer of Ibn al-Mubārak was so afraid of the caliph's being offended by what Ibn al-Mubārak would say that he was willing to lie and besmirch the latter's reputation in order to prevent a meeting from transpiring between the two of them:

> Ibrāhīm b. Nūḥ al-Mawṣilī said: "al-Rashīd came to ʿAyn Zarba, and ordered Abū Sulaym to bring him to Ibn al-Mubārak." He said:" … I did not feel safe lest he hear Ibn al-Mubārak in something that he hates and kill him, so I replied: 'O Commander of the Faithful, he is a churlishly tempered man [*ghalīẓ al-ṭibāʿ*], boorish [*jilf*]. ' So al-Rashīd refrained [from meeting Ibn al-Mubārak]."[106]

Apparently, the admirer was justified in trying to forestall such a meeting; according to one Ḥanbalite tradition, Ibn al-Mubārak's nephew, Ismāʿīl, while visiting with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, began to speak with the latter about visiting the caliph. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said to him: "your maternal uncle – that is, Ibn al-Mubārak – already said: 'Do not go near them, for if you come to them you must speak the truth to them; and I, I fear [the consequences of] speaking the truth to them."[107] Obviously, Ibn al-Mubārak did not have much good to say of the ʿAbbāsid government.

The counterpart of this disrespectful attitude on the part of Ibn al-Mubārak can be found in the stories which imply that Hārūn and his officials were, for their part, deeply concerned about what Ibn al-Mubārak might be saying about the caliph, and how the caliph's subjects might regard him in consequence. Hārūn's vizier, in fact, was at one point convinced that Ibn al-Mubārak was completely opposed to Hārūn, and Hārūn had to reassure him that Ibn al-Mubārak helped bolster the legitimacy of the Caliphal government by emphasizing its necessity to the Islamic religion. According to this story, a letter arrived from Hārūn's chief of intelligence, reporting that ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak had died (on his way back from a *ghazw*, naturally).[108] When Hārūn's vizier expresses astonishment at the caliph's regarding Ibn al-Mubarak as an important prop of the regime, Hārūn replies:

> "You dimwit! For it is ʿAbdallāh who says:
> 'God repels disaster from our faith by means of the ruler / out of mercy and grace on His part
> If not for the *imāms*, the roads would not be safe for us/ and the weaker among us would be prey for the stronger. '
> Who could hear such speech from the likes of Ibn al-Mubārak, with his excellence, [his] asceticism, and his stature in the minds of the people [*fī ṣudūr al-ʿāmma*], without acknowledging our right [to rule]?"[109]

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106 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 406.

107 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 162.

108 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyan*, vol. 3, p. 24; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 32, p. 403.

109 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, p. 174. The author thanks both Wolfhart Heinrichs and David Cook for their suggestions regarding the translation of this passage.

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This is a somewhat ambiguous text, but the meaning appears to be that Ibn al-Mubārak regarded government as a necessary evil, as it were, although his other statements make clear that he held the *ʿulamā'* to be far more important to the general populace as instruments of salvation. Hārūn, for his part, considers Ibn al-Mubārak's endorsement of the government as politically significant. That is, while Ibn al-Mubārak was indifferent toward the government and the caliph, Hārūn and his officials, on the contrary, placed great weight on the attitudes and pronouncements of Ibn al-Mubārak.

One can understand why al-Rashīd would be uneasy regarding the high esteem in which ascetic warrior-scholars were held; first, because their primary allegiance obviously did not lie with the government, and they were willing to defy, confront, or ignore the government rather than vitiate their principles. Second, they were held in great popular esteem; at least one story contrasts the reverence and love people felt toward Ibn al-Mubārak and toward their caliph:

> al-Rashīd came to al-Raqqa, but the people ran away after Ibn al-Mubārak, so that their shoes were cut up and the dust was raised. Umm Walad [Khayzurān] was watching the Commander of the Faithful from a tower of the wooden fortress [*qaṣr al-khashab*], and she said: "What is this?" They replied: "A Khurāsānī *ʿālim* has arrived." She said: "This, by God, is kingship [*mulk*], not the kingship of Hārūn, for whom the people do not gather except by means of the police and guards [*bi-shuraṭ*^{in} *wa-aʿwān*^{in}]."[110]

This attitude, which demonstrates a diminution of the religious stature and role of the caliph, was to culminate in the kinds of traditions we find rampant in the latter part of the ninth century, as well as in the disregard many pious people – particularly in the two categories of *mutaṭawwiʿ* associates and Ḥanbalites (not surprising, considering the *miḥna*) – showed for Caliphal opinion. One such tradition recounts how Hārūn al-Rashīd exclaimed to Ibn al-Mubārak's friend Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ one day:

> "What an ascetic you are!" [Fuḍayl] replied: "You are more of an ascetic than I!" [Hārūn] said: "How so?" [Fuḍayl] said: "Because I renounce pleasure in this world [only], whereas you renounce pleasure in the Next World; this world is transitory, whereas the Next World is eternal."[111]

Obviously, a certain religious contempt and feeling of superiority toward the caliph is being expressed here; the Commander of the Faithful is in no way any longer a religious *imām* in the eyes of these figures.[112]

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[110] That is, they do so only under compulsion, when prodded by armed troops. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyan*, vol. 3, p. 23; Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 476; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 384.

[111] Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 206.

[112] For this last point see also e. g. the anecdote in Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, pp. 136-137, according to which the caliph al-Muʿtaḍid sent the Ḥanbalite figure Ibrāhīm b. Isḥāq al-Ḥarbī 10,000 dirhams. Ibrāhīm refused to accept this money, and sent the Caliphal messenger back. The messenger returned, saying, "The Commander of the Faithful asks that you distribute this among your neighbors

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The reservation, verging at times on disdain, felt by the traditionist *ʿulamā'* toward their ruler was not, however, reciprocated. We already noted above al-Rashīd's preoccupation with Ibn al-Mubārak's pronouncements regarding the government. Hārūn also acknowledges Ibn al-Mubārak's religious stature in the statements he is said to have made after Ibn al-Mubārak's death, calling him the "lord of the *ʿulamā'*"[113] In fact, Ibn al-Mubārak's stature was fairly universally acknowledged, particularly among the many religious figures with whom he fraternized[114] -some of whom we have already examined. Thus he is called by al-Fazārī the "Imam of the Muslims" [*Imām al-muslimīn*][115] and by another "an *imām* to emulate; he was of the most reliable of people in the *sunna*; if you see someone slandering Ibn al-Mubārak, then suspect [that person]'s Islam."[116] Islamic religious luminaries who praise him include Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād, Shaqīq al-Balkhī,[117] and al-Awzāʿī;[118] Ibn ʿUyayna even goes so far as to state: "I have looked into the matter of the *Ṣaḥāba*, and the matter of ʿAbdallāh, and I have not seen that they had any advantage over him except their companionship to the Prophet, and their fighting [*ghazwihim*] together with him."[119]

In fact, his only rival in reputation seems to have been the great ascetic Sufyān al-Thawrī. Several traditions debate the relative merits and stature of the two,[120] though the issue seems to be finally resolved by producing traditions in which Sufyān himself pronounces Ibn al-Mubārak's superiority. There is one, for instance, in which Sufyān is made to declare that his wish is to be like Ibn al-Mubārak for just one year, but that he is not capable of emulating him for even three days.[121]

[*jīrānuka*]." Ibrāhīm, however, again refused to touch the money, charging the messenger: "Say to the Commander of the Faithful: Leave us alone, for we turn away from your protection."[*jiwārika*]

113 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, pp. 390 and 418.

114 Al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 117, although the assertion on the following page that he associated with Abū Ḥanīfa seems highly unlikely, and probably designed by someone who was trying to impart extra religious legitimacy to the Ḥanafis.

115 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, p. 173; Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 473. Hujvīrī (*Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 117) calls him "*imām-i vaqt-i khūd*." Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 390 has the even more emphatic "*Imām al-muslimīn ajmaʿīn.*"

116 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 395.

117 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, pp. 397, 398 and 405. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's praise appears also in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 473.

118 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, p. 172.

119 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 390. Ibn Ḥanbal himself is reported by his son and biographer, Ṣāliḥ b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, to have tried to attend Ibn al-Mubārak's majlis, but was told upon his arrival there that Ibn al-Mubārak had just left for Tarsus (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 5, p. 265).

120 Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, pp. 173-174; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 472; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 388.

121 An even stronger version has it that Sufyān al-Thawrī made his best effort to be like Ibn al-Mubārak for just one day, but that he was unable to do so (al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, p. 472). There are also variant traditions in which either someone declares in Sufyān's

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The tradition that would have been really difficult for Sufyān al-Thawrī's partisans to outdo, however, is the one which makes Sufyān al-Thawrī appear posthumously to reveal his and Ibn al-Mubārak's relative fates in heaven:

> They saw Sufyān al-Thawrī – May God have mercy on him – in a dream. They said: "What did God most High do with you?" He said: "He was merciful." They said: "What is the state of ʿAbdallāh-i Mubārak?" He replied: "He is of that group who twice daily go into the presence of God."[122]

In another tradition, ʿAbdallāh himself is stated to have appeared posthumously[123] to several people in their sleep in order to reveal his august heavenly position in the good graces of both the Prophet and God Himself:

> al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī said: "I heard Abū Ḥātim al-Barbarī saying: 'I saw Ibn al-Mubārak standing at the gate of Heaven with a key in his hand, so I said: 'Why are you standing here?' He replied: 'This is the key to Heaven, which the Messenger of God, may the prayers and peace of God be upon him, gave to me, saying: 'In order that I can go visit the Lord, be [now] my trustworthy one [*amīn*] in heaven, as you were my faithful one on earth. '"'
>
> Muḥammad b. al-Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ said: "I saw Ibn al-Mubārak in my sleep, and I said: 'Which work is the best?' He replied: 'The matter in which I was engaged. ' I said: '*al-ribāṭ wa'l-jihād*?' He replied: 'Yes. ' I said: 'What has your Lord done with you?' He responded: 'He forgave me [with such] a pardon that there is no pardon after it … '"[124]

This last tradition brings us to Ibn al-Mubārak's role in the Jihad, to which he devoted a great deal of his time and energies. Ibn al-Mubārak, of course, like al-Fazārī and al-Awzāʿī, also authored one of the earliest books of Jihad.[125] His preoccupation with Jihad began almost immediately after his initial repentance as a youth; after journeying in pursuit of the religious life, he returned to Marv, where the people would ask him about both *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*: "And he at that time made two *ribāṭs*: one for the sake of Ahl-i Ḥadīth, and one for Ahl-i Ra'y."[126]

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presence, or Sufyān al-Thawrī himself proclaims Ibn al-Mubārak to be the nonpareil of "the East, the West, and everything that lies between," Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 389; Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 211, has Sufyān al-Thawrī declare him the most exalted in the East, and Fuḍayl [b. ʿIyāḍ] add "and the Maghrib and that which is between the two."

122 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 221.

123 More alarmingly, it is stated that ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak opened his eyes after his own death, spoke, and gave directives. (Muʿīn al-Dīn Abū'l-Qāsim Junayd al-Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār fi ḥaṭṭ al-awzār ʿan zawwār al-mazār*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī and ʿAbbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1328/c. 1950, p. 17)

124 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 419.

125 ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, Beirut, 1409/1988.

126 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* pp. 211-212. The story seems more indicative of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's values than of Ibn al-Mubārak's, however, in at least one respect: it is difficult to imagine Ibn al-Mubārak wanting to do anything for the benefit of *Ahl al-Ra'y*. He was, to state the case mildly, not a theological pluralist. He harboured violently anti-Jahmiyya sentiments, and is reported to have said that "whoever thinks this [the Qur'an] is created [*makhlūq*], has already blasphemed God almighty." (Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 8, pp.

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Many of the legends regarding Ibn al-Mubārak's life accordingly focus on his prowess or role in the Jihad, and the beneficial effects which his participation had, including inspiring Infidels to convert by his own personal example of piety and probity,[127] and defeating in single combat hitherto undefeated Byzantine champions.[128] Ibn al-Mubārak's own writings show us that Jihad held pride of place in his theology, and that martyrdom – when undertaken for pure motives – was considered the expiation for sins:

> The slain [in *jihād*] are three [types of] men: a believing man, who struggles (*jāhada*) with himself and his possessions in the path of God, until when he meets the enemy he fights them until he is killed. This is the tested *shahīd* [*al-shahīd al-mumtaḥan*]; [he is] in the camp of God under His throne; the prophets do not surpass him except by the dignity of prophecy. [The second type of] believing man has ill-treated himself [*qaraſa ʿalā nafsihi*] with offenses and sins, [yet] struggles with himself and his possessions in the path of God, to the point where when he meets the enemy he fights until he is killed. This cleansing erases his offenses and his sins – for lo! the sword is the eraser of sins; and he will be brought into heaven from whichever gate he desires ... [And the third type is] a hypocritical man who struggles with himself and his possessions in the path of God, until when he meets the enemy [in battle] he fights until he is killed. This one is in the Fire, for the sword does not erase hypocrisy.[129]

Although Ibn al-Mubārak, as noted above, died during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the *mutaṭawwiʿī* spirit by no means ended with the death of Ibn al-Mubārak and the founding generation. The literature recording the questions being asked of religious scholars of the succeeding generation show that the private-enterprise Jihadist spirit was common at the time, particularly among the most Traditionist of the proto-Sunnis.[130] One purportedly eyewitness account, for example, relates how Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was consulted by a Khurāsānī man regarding the latter's desire to fight for Islam:

> I was with Abū ʿAbdallāh Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal when a Khurāsānī man asked him: "My mother has permitted me to go on a *ghazw*, and I want to go out to Tarsus. What do

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402-403) In any case, it would seem from what we are told elsewhere that Ibn al-Mubārak built only one *ribāṭ* in Marv; we are told of his student, "Abū Muḍar Muḥammad b. Muḍar b. Maʿn al-Marwazī al-Ribāṭī, from among the people of Marv, author of *akhbār* and stories [*ḥikāyāt*]. He was called al-Ribāṭī because he dwelled in Marw in the Ribāṭ of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak …" (al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 44).

127 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 217.

128 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 8, p. 394.

129 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-jihād*, pp. 17-18, no. 7.

130 This attitude was not limited to responsa literature only. We catch glimpses of strong religious support for the *mutaṭawwiʿa* being expressed generally in Traditionist writings: Abū Ṣāliḥ Shuʿayb b. Ibrāhīm b. Shuʿayb al-Bajli al-Bayhaqī, for example, a pupil of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's close friend Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (*vide infra*, chapter 4) and a renowned *ʿālim* in his own right, had a son, Imam Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Shuʿayb al-Bayhaqī (d. 324), "muftī of the Shāfiʿīs", who wrote a work praising the *muṭṭawwiʿ* life. (Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Zayd Bayhaqī [Ibn Funduq], *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, Tehran, 1960, p. 158)

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> you think?" [Ibn Ḥanbal] replied: "Raid the Turks," and I reckon that Abū ʿAbdallāh went to the words of God, may He be honoured and exalted: "Fight those of the infidels who are near you."[131]

This anecdote reveals two important developments taking place in the early ninth century. First – and this development was to have a decisive impact on the *ʿayyārān* when, as we shall see later in this chapter, they emerged as a sub-group within the volunteer holy warrior movement – the Jihad in the East was assuming increasing importance. In the previous century, one finds the opposite ruling to that of Ibn Ḥanbal being issued to an aspiring freelance Jihadist: There is a tradition according to which al-Fazārī asks ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak the opposite question; namely, why did he have to come all the way to the Byzantine border to battle Infidels when there were plenty of Turkish ones close at hand in Eastern Iran? Ibn al-Mubārak answered that whereas the Turks were only fighting about worldly power, the Byzantines were battling the Muslims over their faith, "So which is the more worthy of defense: our world or our faith?"[132] Obviously, volunteer holy warrior attention had finally been turned to the East at this point – although, as we shall presently see, this attention was at least as focused upon combating the Kharijites within the Dār al-Islām as it was toward conquering the Infidels without.

The second development one can glean from the above anecdote is the emergence of the city of Tarsus during the eighth and ninth centuries as a kind of headquarters of *mutaṭawwiʿa* activity on the Byzantine frontier. The city had been rebuilt as a Muslim fortress, on the orders of al-Mahdī, by Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba in 181/797, "with an army of the men of Khurāsān and the men of Mawṣil and Syria, troop reinforcements from Yemen and *mutaṭawwiʿa* from ʿIrāq and the Ḥijāz."[133] It became an ever-stronger magnet for *mutaṭawwiʿa* until its capture by the Byzantines in the tenth century, and we find traces of the attraction it exerted upon Khurāsānī holy warriors not only in the tradition cited above, but throughout many other different kinds of sources. The local history of Bayhaq, for instance, speaks of the prominent family known as the Salāriyān, founded by "the Salār Abū'l-ʿAbbās al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Muṭṭawwiʿī … *salār* of the ghāzīs," who used frequently to accompany "the *muṭṭawwiʿa*" to Tarsus in order to go raiding.[134] One geographer's glowing description of the city – and its warm support of volunteer warriors – also emphasizes the religious pull it exerted on volunteer border warriors from across the Empire:

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131 Qurʾān 9:123. The source of the anecdote is Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 87.

132 Cited in D. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihad*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), p. 98; the source is Ibn al-ʿAdīm's *Bughyat al-ṭalab*.

133 Cited in Bosworth, "The city of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine frontiers," *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture. Variorum Collected Studies Series*, Aldershot, 1996, Article XIV, p. 271.

134 Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, p. 124.

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> … there was no great city from the borders of Sīstān, Kirmān, Fars, Khūzistān, Khurāsān, al-Rayy, Iṣfahān, al-Jibāl, Ṭabaristān, the Jazīra, Azerbaijān, Iraq, the Hijaz, Yemen, the Syrias, Egypt and the Maghrib but in [Tarsus] it had for its citizens a dwelling and a *ribāṭ* in which the *ghāzīs* of that place would dwell, stationing themselves [as border warriors] [*yurābiṭūna*] in it. …[135]

Tarsus was not alone in serving as a locus of the Jihad in this period, of course; volunteer warriors – particularly Traditionist-minded ones – flourished and multiplied virtually everywhere in the next several generations following that of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* founders. We shall examine just a few of the individual *mutaṭawwiʿa* of the next generation before turning to the larger historical role and manifestations of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

One of the most obvious places in which to search for early volunteer warriors for the faith is among the students and friends of the four founders whom we have examined – without including those who are described as *ghāzīs* rather than *mutaṭawwiʿa*.[136] One such student was Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr b. Manṣūr Abū Isḥāq al-Sūrīnī, known as al-Sūrīnī al-Faqīh al-Muṭṭawwiʿī al-Shahīd. Sūrīn was a locale in Nishapur, and this *mutaṭawwiʿ* journeyed from Iran to Syria, in typical *mutaṭawwiʿ* fashion, to pursue the spiritual life of the *sunna* and the Jihad. While in Syria he heard *hadith* from such *mutaṭawwiʿa*-affiliated luminaries as Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, and al-Fazārī's uncle Marwān b. Muʿāwiya.[137] He is also called in one tradition "Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr the Sunnī the martyr," which is particularly interesting, in view of the connection we are positing between the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the coalescence of Sunnism.

His values are exemplified in a tradition related by him, according to which a Jew was so taken with an answer that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib gave him to a theological question, that he became a Muslim on the spot, "made the Ḥajj once, and went on a *ghazw* once, until he was killed in the land of Rum in the time of Muʿāwiya."[138] These two activities – Hajj and Jihad, the two favorite activities of Ibn al-Mubārak – obviously constituted for Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr (or at least for the narrator of the tradition) the essence of Islam.

Also in typical volunteer warrior fashion, Ibrāhīm was a good pious collector of *ḥadīth* to boot. One of the projects Ibrāhīm apparently tried to undertake was the gathering of a *musnad* that he thought should be included among the writings of his teacher ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak. According to another tradition, "I heard Abū Zurʿa lauding Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr, saying: He was a man famed [for being] vera-

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135 Abū'l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J. H. Kraemers, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 2, Leiden, 1939, vol. 2, p. 184.

136 Al-Awzāʿī, for instance, had a pupil who was both a *ghāzī* and one of the important religious figures in Spain – "*al-imām shaykh al-Andalus*," Abū Muḥammad al-Andalusī al-Ghāzī (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 9, pp. 322-323).

137 Al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 358; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 7, pp. 236, 238.

138 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 7, p. 237.

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cious … Abū Muḥammad said: I saw his knowledge, and I did not see in him any *munkar*, and he was of little error [in hadith transmission – *qalīl al-khaṭa'*]."[139] Most importantly, Abū ʿAmr al-Mustamlī[140] is one of the transmitters of a tradition crediting Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr with being "The first who proclaimed *madhhab al-ḥadīth* in Nishapur."[141] Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr was killed in the year 210/825f., fighting against the heretic Bābak.[142] As we shall soon see, there was a *mutaṭawwiʿ* contingent fighting alongside the anti-Bābak forces sent by the caliph.

Another student and emulator of Ibn al-Mubārak was Aḥmad b. Tawba al-Ghāzī al-Muṭṭawiʿī al-Zāhid,

> … of the people of Marv … He is one of the *zuhhād*, and he transmitted from ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak … and it was said that he was one whose prayers are answered.[143] He conquered Isfījāb with 40 men;[144]in the town their children, known as "the children of The Forty," are pointed out … He settled in Paykand, and died in it, transmitting [traditions] from Ibn al-Mubārak, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mughīra, [and Sufyān] b. ʿUyayna …[145]

Another early *mutaṭawwiʿ* was one of the companions of Ibn al-Mubārak: "Rizām b. Abī Rizām al-Muṭṭawwiʿī al-Rizāmī, who raided together with ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, and became a martyr [*ustushhida*] several years before the death of Ibn al-Mubārak…"[146] In fact, among the more religiously prominent *mutaṭawwiʿa* Traditionists of the next few generations we find many who studied either with the founders or with the students of the founders.[147] Usually, we do not possess much information about them: for example, about al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Makhlad al-Naysābūrī al-Muṭṭawwiʿī (again, a Khurāsānī), we know only that he died in the year 299/911f. , and that one of his teachers was Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq b. Ruhawayh, who studied in turn with ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak.[148]

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139 Abū Zurʿa in turn also transmitted from Ibrāhīm b. Naṣr (Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 358).

140 Who will be figuring prominently in chapter 6 below.

141 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 7, p. 238.

142 *Ibid.* , vol. 7, p. 239. On Bābak's revolt *vide* G. Sadighi, *Les Mouvements religieux iraniens au IIe et IIIe siecle de l'hegire*, Paris, 1938, pp. 229-286.

143 Amending the text to read "*mustajāb*."

144 Amending *fataḥa istījāb* to *fataḥa Isfījāb*. On the location of Isfījāb see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 1, pp. 179-180.

145 al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 5, p. 213.

146 al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 64.

147 We find students of students as well continuing the tradition; e. g. Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamdawayh al-Mutaṭawwiʿī al-Marwazī (ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, *al-Qand fī dhikr ʿulamā' Samarqand*, ed. Yūsuf al-Hādī, Tehran, 1999, p. 495). One should also note that although Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was not a *mutaṭawwiʿ* himself, he did hear traditions from one of Ibn al-Mubārak's students; vide e. g. Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 177.

148 On al-Ḥasan, *vide* Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 22, p. 129; on Isḥāq b. Ruhawayh, the lengthy biography in *idem. Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 11, pp. 358-383, where he is lauded as "the great Imām, *shaykh al-mashriq, sayyid al-ḥuffāẓ*."

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About one such student of a student, however, we possess abundant data. This figure, Ibrāhīm [b. Muḥammad] b. ʿArʿara al-Mutaṭawwiʿī[149], is perhaps the clearest and most outstanding example of connections between the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the Sunni tradition, since not only did he study with many students of an early *mutaṭawwiʿ*, but he himself taught many important Sunni Traditionist figures. An unusually large number of Ibrāhīm's major teachers studied directly with ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak: ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām; Muʿtamir b. Sulaymān; Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān[150]; Jaʿfar b. Sulaymān al-Ḍubaʿī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī[151] in fact, out of the ten names listed in Dhahabī as having taught Ibn ʿArʿara, fully half of those named studied with Ibn al-Mubārak. Ibrāhīm b. ʿArʿara died in the year 231/845f.,[152] but before his demise he taught many important early Sunni religious figures: Muslim, Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Dunyā, Abū Zurʿa ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāzī; and Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Rāzī.[153] He is rated "*ṣadūq*" as a traditionist; and, although Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was not convinced that one of the ḥadīths he reported was genuine, at least one source claims that Ibn Ḥanbal slandered Ibrāhīm.[154]

Not all *mutaṭawwiʿa* Traditionists, naturally, studied with one of the four founding fathers or their students. Even among those who did not, however, we see the same hallmark characteristics of the progenitors of the movement: strong proto-Sunni Traditionist connections, a tendency toward asceticism, and ties with proto-Sufis. One outstanding example of such a person is "Ḥamsh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Rutakī [also listed as "al-Turaykī" or "al-Turkī"] al-Zāhid, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Mutaṭawwiʿī al-Naysābūrī,[155] master of the monk's cell and the mosque [*ṣāḥib al-ṣawmaʿa wa'l-masjid*], by means of which he is blessed."[156] He studied with Aḥmad b. Yūnus al-Yarbūʿī,[157] a student of Sufyān al-Thawrī, who also taught traditions to al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Zurʿa, Yaʿqūb al-Fasawī, and Abū Ḥātim.[158] Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mutaṭawwʿī in turn taught Abū ʿAmr Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak

149 Thus termed by Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 13, p. 385.

150 Ibrāhīm reported as having transmitted from them: al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 1, p. 413; Ibn al-Mubārak reported as having taught them: *ibid.* , vol. 10, pp. 470-471.

151 Ibn ʿArʿara is listed as having studied with them in Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 11, p. 480; they are listed as Ibn al-Mubārak's students in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 10, pp. 469, 470.

152 Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 7, p. 173.

153 Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, v. 17, pp. 69-70 for Ibn ʿArʿara's death date and a partial list of his students; *idem.* , *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 11, p. 480; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 1, pp. 413-414; death date on p. 415.

154 Al-Mizzī, *ibid.* , vol. 1, pp. 414-415; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 17, p. 70.

155 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 54, p. 116; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 20, p. 342.

156 Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nīshāpūr*, ed. M. Rezā Shāfiʿī Kadkanī, Tehran, 1375/1996, p. 85, #373.

157 According to Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 20, p. 342.

158 *Ibid.* , vol. 10, p. 457.

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al-Mustamlī.[159] Abū ʿAbdallāh is called an ascetic by every author who accords him an entry (not to mention his "monk's cell"), and was closely associated both with other ascetics and with Sufis, including one Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ṣūfī, who was himself a pupil of Ibrāhīm b. ʿArʿara al-Mutaṭawwiʿī.[160]

Unfortunately, his military activities for the faith are not described in any detail; the most specific description of his *mutaṭawwiʿī* endeavours states merely that "He was among those who go to Byzantium as frontier warriors [*murābiṭūn ilā al-Rūm*] and his time of abode in Tarsus was long …"[161] The one biographer who does not call him "*al-mutaṭawwiʿī*" describes him as "*mujāhidᵃⁿ ghāzīyᵃⁿ ʿābidᵃⁿ*."[162] Abū ʿAbdallāh died in Shawwāl of the year 275/889, at around eighty years of age.[163]

By the mid-ninth century, some of the most prominent figures among the proto-Sunni Traditionists were producing *mutaṭawwiʿ* students. Ibn Māja, for instance, author of one of the canonical Sunni hadith collections, studied in Nishapur with Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, a very close associate of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal from the days when both studied with Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, himself a student of Ibn al-Mubārak, and whom we shall be examining at some length in chapter four. Ibn Māja numbered among " … the most famous [of his students] … Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿIsā al-Muṭṭawwiʿī.[164] There were, unsurprisingly, many known *mutaṭawwiʿa* connected with the circles around Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, that staunchest of *ahl al-ḥadīth* Sunnis.[165] One such person, who died in the year 287/900, was Abū Bakr Yaʿqūb b. Yūsuf b. Ayyūb al-Mutaṭawwiʿ, a student of Aḥmad.[166] This exceedingly devout person is supposed to have stated that in his youth it was his custom to recite "Say: He is God" 31,000 – or even 41,000 – times a day.[167]

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159 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 54, p. 114. As mentioned previously, this last individual plays an important role, *infra*, in Chapter 6.

160 Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*, p. 584; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 54, pp. 114-115. On Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ṣūfī's connections with Ibrāhīm b. ʿArʿara, see the entry on the latter in al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, and Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, both cited *supra*.

161 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 54, p. 115.

162 Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 20, p. 342.

163 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 54, p. 116; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 20, p. 342.

164 ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Muḥammad al-Rāfiʿī al-Qazwīnī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, Beirut, 1408/1987, vol. 2, pp. 49-50.

165 This connection among Sunni traditionists and the *mutaṭawwiʿa* founders is particularly evident when we examine the Ḥanbalites. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself had numerous connections going back to the early *mutaṭawwiʿa*. The list of his teachers includes, in addition to al-Fazārī's uncle Marwān b. Muʿāwiya, many prominent people who heard hadith from ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak, including Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, Muʿtamir b. Sulaymān al-Taymī, ʿAffān b. Muslim, ʿAbd al-Razzāq b. Hammām, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī.

166 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 548; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 21, p. 338.

167 Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdad*, Beirut, no date, vol. 14, p. 289; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, pp. 414-415.

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So organized and established were the *mutaṭawwiʿa* by the late ninth century that when they set forth in companies to battle we hear that they brought their own resident *faqīh* with them: under the biography of Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Yazdādh al-Mudhakkir al-Muṭṭawwiʿī al-Khabbāz al-Rāzī, for instance, we are told the following:

> … He settled in Bukhārā and transmitted there, and many heard from him. Abū Isḥāq heard from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī … and Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Nāṣiḥ al-Dāmghānī, and he journeyed to remote lands. Al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāfiẓ … and Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghunjār al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bukhārī heard from him, and al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbdallāh mentioned him in the History, and said: Abū Isḥāq al-Khabbāz, came to us in Nīshābūr among the army of the *muṭṭawwiʿa* going out to Tarsus; their amīr was ʿAbdallāh b. al-Ashkam al-Khwārizmī, and Abū Isḥāq was their *faqīh* and their preacher …"[168]

Similarly, we know that by the mid-third/ninth century there was a *raʾīs al-muṭṭawwiʿa* in Bukhārā; thus implying a very organized, perhaps even officially recognized presence there – and Bukhārā may not have been the only city with a person so titled.[169]

We noted previously that *mutaṭawwiʿ* activity flourished in the ninth century on the eastern borders against "the Turks." One exemplar of this type, Abū'l-Qāsim ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad b. Idrīs al-Salār al-Mutaṭawwiʿī al-Nasafī, who died in the year 264/877f. , may or may not have had a connection to the figures we have already examined, but is in any case said to have "set a fine example [*la-hu āthar jamīla*] in the paths of goodness and Jihad."[170] Abū'l-Qāsim's son apparently followed in his father's holy warrior footsteps; he was taken prisoner by the Turks "and his traces were never found."[171] Characteristically for this group, Abū'l-Qāsim appears in our source as a transmitter of Prophetic *ḥadīth* – about the holiness of ascetic behaviour, no less. He quotes the Prophet as having said "Behold, the people of paradise [*ahl al-janna*] in this world have disheveled heads [and] soiled clothing; … they do not enter [into the presence of princes]; and … they do not marry …"[172]

In summation, our sampling of individual *mutaṭawwiʿa*, both from the founding generation and from that of their students and students' students, reveals certain shared characteristics, apart from their devotion to Jihad: they were overwhelmingly of Khurāsānian origin; most of them practiced some form of asceti-

168 Al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 2, p. 365.
169 Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 18, p. 33; Ibn Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl*, vol. 1, p. 21.
170 Al-Nasafī, *al-Qand fī dhikr ʿulamāʾ Samarqand*, p. 329. The author was unable to locate this figure in any of the standard biographical dictionaries. There are other examples of individual *mutaṭawwiʿī muḥaddithūn* in Samarqand at this time – e. g *ibid.* , pp. 386, 400 (no dates given but the list of transmitters is of the right length).
171 *Ibid*, p. 329.
172 *Ibid.*

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cism; and they all belonged firmly to the Traditionist camp. There is a limit, however, to what information about specific individuals – however valuable and informative that information might be in enriching one's understanding of the personal, religious and social characteristics of volunteer warriors – can reveal about the historical role of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* in the aggregate in Islamic society; for this one must examine the accounts, not of individuals, but rather of groups of *mutaṭawwiʿa*, acting as a concerted body. This is particularly important for ascertaining how and when *ʿayyār* groups arose in connection with this phenomenon.

Historical Manifestations of the Mutaṭawwiʿa

It is not easy to gather information about the *mutaṭawwiʿa* from the time of the founders until the mid-ninth century, the relevant years for our purposes; for we are not told of every raid they undertook. Worse, even when a particular raid is mentioned in our sources, the forces taking part are not necessarily identified – but this does not, of course, mean that no *mutaṭawwiʿa* participated in the raid.[173] It is not until the time of the caliph al-Mahdī (r. 775-785) that the *mutaṭawwiʿa* either suddenly begin to interest writers deeply or, alternatively, their activity became important enough and massive enough to draw the attention of the chroniclers. At this time, in the wake of al-Awzāʿī, Ibn al-Mubārak, and their friends, *mutaṭawwiʿa* activity on the Byzantine frontier becomes important enough to be included among the main events of the chronicles.

In this the chroniclers were simply following the lead of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, who obviously must have felt at this time that one important way of confirming their own religious legitimacy and manifesting religious leadership was through holy warfare against Christian infidels. While, as we have seen, the Umayyads (at least until decline set in) did make a practice of appointing their relatives to conduct raids against the Infidel, the scale of such raids, their frequency, and the prominence of the people involved – including the caliph himself – was something new and qualitatively different from what came before.

This intensity of caliphal involvement in the *ghazw* is especially marked in the period extending from the caliphate of al-Mahdī through that of Hārūn al-Rashīd (al-Maʾmūn notoriously looked elsewhere for religious legitimacy).[174]

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[173] See for example below, in the episode of the Afshīn fighting Bābak – the *mutaṭawwiʿa* are not mentioned except when they become relevant, well into the anecdote.

[174] Although al-Maʾmūn campaigned as well, he seems to have realized that he was fighting a losing battle to reclaim the lost religious luster from the *ʿulamāʾ*, hence his courting of groups that he thought would counterbalance the Traditionists: first the Shiʿites and then the Rationalists. For his Shiʿite experiment, *vide* D. G. Tor, "A Re-examination of the Appointment and Death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *op. cit.*

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Thus we read, in the biography of one Damascene who commanded various Jihadi raids, that during the 150s/mid-760s-mid-770s

> al-Mahdī, the Commander of the Faithful, entrusted his son Hārūn with the *ṣā'ifa*, and there were [on this raid] people from Syria and Khurāsān, and Kūfa and al-Baṣra, and the *muṭṭawwiʿa* of the people of the Ḥijāz [*al-muṭṭawwiʿa min ahl al-Ḥijāz*] …"[175]

This is not to say, of course, that *ghāzī* – and *mutaṭawwiʿ* -activities in the East were completely absent; but in the late-eighth century the attention of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs, like that of the leading *mutaṭawwiʿa*, was definitely focused on Syria; no ʿAbbāsid prince joins expeditions against the Zunbīl, for example.[176] That they did not neglect the eastern border of Dār al-Islām entirely, however, can be seen from the large raid al-Mahdī sent to India in the year 159/775f.

> In this year al-Mahdī sent ʿAbd al-Malik b. Shihāb al-Mismaʿī by sea to the land of India [*bilād al-Hind*]. He allocated to him 2,000 of the people of Baṣra from among all the soldiers, and dispatched them with him, and sent with him 1,500 men from among the *muṭṭawwiʿa* who were permanently manning [*yalzamū*] the frontier companies [*al-murābaṭāt*]. He also sent with him a commander … called Ibn al-Ḥubāb al-Madhḥijī with 700 of the people of Syria; and 1,000 men of the *muṭṭawwiʿa* of the people of Baṣra went out with him on their own money [*bi-amwālihim*] … And ʿAbd al-Malik b. Shihāb appointed al-Mundhir b. Muḥammad al-Jārūdī over the 1000 *muṭṭawwiʿa* from among the people of Baṣra.[177]

Al-Mahdī also appointed Ghassān b. ʿAbd al-Malik over the Baṣran conscripts, "set ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. ʿAbd al-Malik over the 1500 *mutaṭawwiʿa* of the frontier companies [*muṭṭawwiʿa al-murābaṭāt*], and set apart Yazīd b. al-Ḥubāb [al-Madhḥijī] with his companions and they set out … until they reached the Indian city of Bārbad in the year 160 [/776f.]."[178]

This account would seem to imply that al-Mahdī had control over one of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* groups (otherwise, he could not have 'sent' them), but not over the Baṣran *mutaṭawwiʿa*, who obviously decided on their own to "go out with him" and to contribute all their resources to their Jihad – although even in the Baṣran case, it should be noted that al-Mahdī's commander was able to appoint a subcommander over the *mutaṭawwiʿa*. Perhaps this unusual case – of a caliph having control over volunteers – arose due to the fact that they manned a fixed station in existing frontier positions {*yalzamū al-murābaṭāt*). Alternatively, it is possible that al-Mahdī commissioned the India raid from ʿAbd al-Malik b. Shihāb al-Mismaʿī simply because the latter *already was* a powerful *mutaṭawwiʿ* figure, one

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175 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 59, pp. 444-445.

176 Note also the intense preoccupation of Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's chronicle with *ghāzī* affairs in Syria, to the total exclusion of the eastern front, *Ta'rikh Khalīfa*, e. g. pp. 346-357, including the entire reign of al-Mahdī.

177 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 116-117. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, p. 227, states: "al-Mahdī sent ʿAbd al-Malik b. Shihāb al-Mismaʿī by sea to India with a large company and they arrived in India in the year [1]60."

178 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, p. 117.

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perhaps whom al-Mahdī wished to either co-opt or see well out of his own dominions.

Moreover, in another account of the same events, it is not explicitly stated that al-Mahdī also sent the *mutaṭawwiʿa* who accompanied the army; merely that he sent "an army by sea, commanded by ʿAbd al-Malik b. Shihāb al-Mismaʿī, to the land of India [*bilād al-Hind*], with a large army comprised of both soldiers and *mutaṭawwiʿa* [*jamʿ kathīr min al-jund wa'l-mutaṭawwiʿa*], among them al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ."[179] Yet another report contains only an abbreviated version of these events, but should be noted because it gives marked prominence to the role of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, thus stating that "ʿAbd al-Malik … reached the land of the Infidels with a great company of the *muṭṭawwiʿa* and others …"[180]

At any rate, whatever the precise degree of *mutaṭawwiʿa* prominence in the expedition, they were part of the Muslim force that successfully reached India:

> They went until they alighted at Bārbad [?], and when they had landed there they encompassed it from its surrounding districts. Some of the people urged the others to *jihād*,[181] and they besieged its people [*wa-ḍāyaqū ahlahā*]. Allah gave to them in this year the victory over [the city] by force; its population defended themselves in the temple of the Buddha [*budd*] which they had, but the Muslims burned it down upon them. Some of them were burned, and the remainder were killed.[182] Of the Muslims, twenty-odd men became martyrs …[183]

After the victory, however, the expedition suffered disaster. The sea was too rough for the Muslims to return home, so they had to remain in India, where they became sick with scurvy and about a thousand of the fighters died, including al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ. Then, after they had finally managed to set sail, and were already off the coast of Fārs, a gale struck them, their vessels foundered, and many more of the men were lost.[184]

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[179] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 46. al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ's *mutaṭawwiʿ* credentials are confirmed in a different source, which states the following "ʿAbbād b. Kathīr and al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ came to me with a group of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* who were raiding by sea; they were *wujūh al-nās*, they had wealth and station [*la-hum aqdār wa-akhṭār*] …" and also remarks on their great devotion to the *sunna* (Abū ʿUbaydallāh Muḥammad b. ʿImrān al-Marzubānī al-Khurāsānī, *Akhbār al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī*, ed. Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī, Najaf, 1385/1965, p. 26. This account is particularly interesting because al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣabīḥ transmitted hadith to both Sufyān al-Thawrī and ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak; see al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 6, p. 143). Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, according to Ibn Ḥanbal's son, said of al-Rabīʿ that "There was no harm in him; he was an upright man [*rajulun ṣāliḥun*] (*Ibid.*, p. 144; cf. Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*).

[180] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, pp. 236-237.

[181] Ṭabarī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 6, p. 128) says that they "urged one another on with the Qurʾān and the remembrance of God [*tadhkīr*]."

[182] Cf. the raid on Qandahār in the year 53/672f. , when the Muslims gathered the Hindus into their temple and killed them there (Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 166).

[183] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 46.

[184] Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, p. 128; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 46.

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In any case, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* needed no caliphal command in order to fight Infidels wherever they found them. Masʿūdī's description of the relationship between Qazwīn and Daylam, for instance, makes clear that in any border area during the mid-eighth through tenth centuries there was constant volunteer Jihad activity going on;[185] this was the very nature and essence of *taṭawwuʿ*:

> Islam came, Allah conquered the land for the Muslims, and Qazwīn became for the Daylam a border area [*thaghr*], she and other [places], of [those] which surrounded the country of Daylam and al-Jabal. The *muṭṭawwiʿa* and the *ghāzīs* headed for it, and *rābaṭū* [i. e. stationed themselves (there)] and raided [*ghazaw*] … from it.[186]

Over the next several years, al-Mahdī continued to vie with the border warriors by sending out border raids into Byzantium.[187] These government-appointed raids, as we have already seen in previous episodes, at least occasionally joined forces with the *mutaṭawwiʿa*. In 162/779, for instance,

> Al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba raided the *ṣā'ifa* raid with thirty-thousand salaried soldiers, apart from the *muṭṭawwiʿa*, reaching the hot springs of Adhrūliyya, and brought much destruction and burning into the land of Byzantium, without [however] capturing any stronghold.[188]

One of the best indications of the moral pressure that *mutaṭawwiʿī* activities exerted on caliphal policy is the aforementioned participation of ʿAbbāsid princes and heirs apparent, with great fanfare, in the summer raids. In 163/780, for instance, the Caliph al-Mahdī sent his son Hārūn on the summer raid.[189] In 165/782, Hārūn returned to the Byzantine theater of operations, launching a spectacular raid that reached the Sea of Marmara, and succeeding in extracting tribute payments (which the Muslims interpreted as the *jizya*) from the Empress Irene and the Byzantines. In this raid, obviously important for the great symbolic significance the imposition of the tribute payment must have held for the Muslim psyche, we are told specifically that *mutaṭawwiʿa* also took part:

> [al-Mahdī] sent to raid the summer raid [*ṣā'ifa*] his son Hārūn b. al-Mahdī with 100,000 of the salaried soldiers apart from the *muṭṭawwiʿa*, the camp followers [*al-atbāʿ*], *ahl al-*

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185 Thus Ibn Funduq's *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq* (p. 220) laconically mentions under the biography of al-Imam Abū Dharr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Muṭṭawwiʿī al-Nīshābūrī, who died in the year 401/1010f. , that "all of the ancestors of this Abū Dharr were *ʿulamā'* of the *ghāzīs* and *muṭṭawwiʿa*" [*jumla-i islāf-i īn Abū Dharr ʿulamā-ī ghuzāt u muṭṭawwiʿa būdand*].

186 Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 424. We see again the pressure this kind of volunteer warrior activity exerted on the ʿAbbāsid caliphs to compete with them in the Jihad, if the caliphs wished even to attempt to wrest back religious leadership from the volunteer warriors: al-Mahdī's sole visit to Qazwīn took place in the course of raids against Daylam (Ḥamdallāh b. Abī Bakr b. Aḥmad b. Naṣr Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī, Tehran, 1339/1960, p. 789).

187 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 116, 128, 136.

188 *Ibid.* , p. 146; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 58; a less informative version can be found in Khalīfa, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 355; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 10, p. 11, dates the raid to the year 161/778, calling it "a raid whose like had never been heard of [before]."

189 Khalīfa, *loc. cit.* ; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, p. 148; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 10, p. 14.

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> *aswāq*[190] and the *ghāzīs*, and they killed 45,000 of the Byzantines. They acquired so much spoil [*māl*] that the price of a workhorse was one dirham, [as was the price] of a hauberk [*dirʿ*] and of twenty swords [i. e. each of these items was supposedly obtainable for one dirham]. And they forced [the Byzantines] to pay as the *jizya* every year 70,000 dīnārs …"[191]

Here we clearly see the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the *ghāzīs* listed as two separate, discrete groups. This tends to confirm the conjecture that the double *nisba* "*al-ghāzī al-mutaṭawwiʿī*" is actually two separate *nisbas*, awarded to someone who engaged, at different points in time, in two different, albeit related, types of activities, one governmentally sanctioned and the other a private sector initiative.

Serious caliphal preoccupation with the Jihad continued when Hārūn became caliph. One should note here that, coming as it did at the height of Ibn al-Mubārak's career, Hārūn's reign was notably preoccupied, not only with the Jihad, but with projecting an aura of proto-Sunni piety generally. It has been remarked by previous researchers that "al-Rashīd stressed the religious character of the Caliphate," by taking a hard-line against ʿAlids and *dhimmis*, destroying churches along the Muslim-Byzantine frontier, and so forth.[192] The heart of this proto-Sunni piety, however, was Jihad, and it was there that Hārūn focused his primary efforts.

There is, for instance, Hārūn's dedication of his son al-Qāsim to God in the year 188/804, apparently through pledging him to border warfare: "In [this year] Hārūn al-Rashīd sent his son al-Qāsim to raid the summer raid [*ṣā'ifa*]; and he gave him to God, making him a sacrifice [*qurbān*^{an}] to Him and an entreaty

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190 On the face of it, this phrase should mean "the merchants," presumably referring to the mercantile suppliers who tended to congregate around army encampments; however, since the phrase "*sūq al-ḥarb*" refers to the thick of battle, there may perhaps have been some military significance to the term.

191 Al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-bad' wa'l-Ta'rīkh*, vol. 6, p. 96; repeated in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 152-153; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 8, pp. 277-278; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islam*, vol. 10, pp. 18-19. .

192 Farouk Omar, "Hārūn al-Rashīd," p. 24. Michael Bonner also noted Hārūn's Jihad preoccupation in his article "Al-Khalīfa al-Marḍī: The Accession of Hārūn al-Rashīd," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108:1 (1988), pp. 79-91. It should be noted that al-Rashīd cultivated an ostentatious public piety despite his apparently dissolute private practices. Farouk Omar, for one, is puzzled by this, stating: "Opinion on [al-Rashīd's] character are contradictory. He has been represented by various chroniclers as pious and dissolute … at the same time." [*Ibid*, p. 26] The solution the present author is positing here is that Hārūn cultivated in public a religious image based upon Ibn al-Mubārak's, in the hope of countering the latter's religious prestige and accruing something of the same aura himself. It is therefore also unsurprising that one finds poetry in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* being written for al-Rashīd which awards him the quasi-messianic title of "al-Riḍā b. Muḥammad." (cited by Farouk Omar, "A Note on the Laqabs (Epithets) of the Early ʿAbbāsid Caliphs," *ʿAbbāsiyyat: Studies in the History of the early ʿAbbāsids*," Baghdad, 1976, p. 146) For the significance of the term "al-Riḍā," *vide* Patricia Crone, "On the Meaning of the ʿAbbāsid Call to al-Riḍā," ed. C. E Bosworth *et. al.* , *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 95-111.

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[unto Him], and appointing him governor over the frontier districts [*ʿawāṣim*]."[193] Raids on Byzantium were continually led from the frontier districts from the beginning of al-Rashīd's reign,[194] but the *mutaṭawwiʿa* are not mentioned until Hārūn's conquest and destruction of Heracleia in the year 190/806: "He had besieged it for thirty days, and took its populace captive. He had entered the country with 135,000 salaried soldiers [*murtaziqa*], in addition to the camp followers [*al-athāʿ*], the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, and those who do not have a dīwān [*man lā dīwān la-hu*]."[195]

Confirmation of the presence of *muṭṭawwiʿa* in Hārūn's raid on Heracleia is found in a detailed anecdote in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, recounted by an anonymous "shaykh from among the shaykhs of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and those stationed in the marchlands [*shaykh min shuyūkh al-muṭṭawwiʿa wa mulāzimī'l-thughūr*], called ʿAlī b. ʿAbdallāh." This story, while almost certainly legendary and literary rather than historical, seems to preserve the memory both of *mutaṭawwiʿa* participation in the raid and, more important, a glimpse of what the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were actually like. Our anonymous shaykh relates that during the siege of Heracleia, the Muslims were on the verge of victory, and had already won the gate to the city, when a man from among the besieged "like the most perfect of men, came out with perfect weapons," challenging the Muslims to engage in combat with him, two against one. He kept increasing the number of men he was willing to fight single-handedly, "until he reached twenty men, but none answered him, so he went in and closed the gate of the fortress."[196]

Al-Rashīd, we are told, had been asleep at the time all this took place; when he discovered what had transpired he furiously rebuked his attendants and slaves for not having awakened him, but was told that the man had announced that he would reappear and repeat his challenge upon the morrow. Al-Rashīd accordingly awoke the next morning "like someone who is waiting for it [to arrive]," and witnessed the man reissuing from the gate and challenging the Muslims afresh, twenty to one. Hārūn then asked for volunteers – but

> before any of the great ones from among his commanders, such as Harthama [b. Aʿyan], Yazīd b. Mazyad, ʿAbdallāh b. Malik, Khuzayma b. Ḥāzim [*et alii*] … could decide upon going out [to fight], the *mutaṭawwiʿa* raised a clamour, so that [al-Rashīd] heard their clamour, and permitted twenty of them [to come to him]; they asked permission for a consultation [*al-mashūra*],[197] and he allowed it. Their spokesman said: "O Commander of the Faithful, your commanders are famous among the important people

193 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, p. 302; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 189. Khalīfa (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 375) and al-Yaʿqūbī (*Taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 297) do not speak of the dedication to God and sacrifice.

194 For a summary of the raiding activity between 170/786 and 189/804, see Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, pp. 89-95.

195 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 196.

196 Abū'l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, Beirut, 1412/1992, vol. 18, p. 251.

197 Thus vocalized in the text.

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> [*al-nās*] for bravery, high renown, and skill in wars [*mudāwasat al-ḥurūb*],[198] such that if one of them should go out and kill this Infidel [*ʿilj*], it would not be significant [for him]; but if the Infidel were to kill him, the ignominy upon the army would be great, and a gap that could not be closed up. We are commoners [*ʿāmma*], none of us shall gain prestige except as is fitting for commoners. If the Commander of the Faithful were to decide to allow us [to fight], we would choose a man and send him out [alone] to fight [the *ʿilj*]; if he is victorious the people of the fortress will know that the Commander of the Faithful defeated their mightiest with a commoner … but if the man is killed then he has become a *shahīd*, and his going will neither affect the army nor sully it[s honour].[199]

Hārūn agreed to this plan, so the *mutaṭawwiʿa* chose from among themselves a man named Ibn al-Khazarī, "known in the borderlands [*thaghr*] for strength and courage." Al-Rashīd then ordered that Ibn al-Khazarī be given "a horse, a spear, a sword and a shield," to which the *mutaṭawwiʿī* responded that "I [already] have my trustworthy horse, and my strongest spear is in my hand; however I hereby accept a sword and shield." Ibn al-Khazarī accordingly battled the Infidel, and in the end used a stratagem [*ḥīla*] to defeat the enemy, feigning flight and then turning upon and beheading the man.[200] There are many intriguing aspects to this story. First, of course, the fact that the *mutaṭawwiʿa* define themselves as "commoners." We see from the story, however, that this certainly does not mean poor people, any more than the word "commoner" did in the pre-twentieth-century English House of Commons; no poor person could have owned a battle horse and been adept at riding it. Another point that immediately grabs one's attention is the *mutaṭawwiʿī*'s use of a trick – *ḥīla* – to gain the advantage; this, as we shall presently see, is a characteristic practice of the *ʿayyārīn*.[201]

Before leaving the *mutaṭawwiʿa* of the Byzantine frontier, we should note that their activities continued unabated throughout the ninth century. In the year 283/896, for example, we see them involved with warfare and ransom negotiations on the Byzantine frontier; the Muslim commander rides out with "the important people of the area [*wujūh al-balad*], the *mawālī*, the commanders [*quwwād*], and the *mutaṭawwiʿa*;"[202] and in the year 290/903 when the new governor of Tarsus went out to the city to assume his duties, "there went out with him a group of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* to the *ghazw*."[203]

198 The editor defines this as "*al-mirān ʿalayhā*."
199 Al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, vol. 18, pp. 251-252.
200 *Ibid.*
201 *Vide* e. g. Farāmarz b. Khudādād, *Samak-i ʿayyār, passim*; also Ibn al-Layth's use of stratagems, *infra*, chapter four. M. Canard, "La Prise de Héraclée et les relations entre Hārūn ar-Rashīd et l'empereur Nicéphore Ier," *Byzantion* 32 (1962), p. 365, in his brief summary of this passage, does not mention the *mutaṭawwiʿa*.
202 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 46.
203 *Ibid.* , p. 98.

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Mutaṭawwiʿa during the ninth century, moreover, were active not only in the northern and eastern parts of *Dār al-Islām*, but also in its uttermost west. Thus we read that in the year 191/806f.,

> … Louis the Pious[204] [written: Ludhriq= Hludovic], King of the Franks, fitted out [an army] in Spain, and gathered his armies in order to march to Ṭarṭūsha and besiege it. [News of] this reached [the Spanish Umayyad ruler] al-Ḥakam, so he gathered the armies and sent them with his son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. They gathered into a mighty army, and many of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* followed them; they went and met the Franks on the border of their land before they had taken anything from the land of the Muslims. They battled, and each one of the sides bestowed its efforts, and spent all its strength; but Allah, may He be exalted, bestowed his victory upon the Muslims. The Infidels were routed; there was great killing and taking prisoner amongst them, their goods and their baggage were plundered, and the Muslims returned, victoriously plundering.[205]

Our area of interest, however, lies not with Spain but rather with the ʿAbbāsid provinces, particularly the Eastern ones, and there we see that the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were important players in Eastern affairs throughout the reign of Hārūn's son al-Maʾmūn as well. In the year 205/820f. al-Maʾmūn appointed Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn governor over the entire eastern Caliphate, "from Baghdad to the furthest provinces of the Mashriq."[206]

> It is said that the reason for his appointment was that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muṭṭawwiʿī gathered many troops in Naysābūr in order to fight the Kharijites [*al-Ḥarūriyya*] with them,[207] without the command of the governor of Khurāsān, and they [i. e. the power players in al-Maʾmūn's court – Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, Aḥmad b. Abī Khālid, *et alii*] were scared that this would be the foundation of [the bestowing of] the vicegerency upon him …[208]

The court figures therefore manipulated al-Maʾmūn into appointing one of their own, instead of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān.

Here we note several characteristics of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* as they existed in the ninth century – characteristics which the *ʿayyārūn* were to share when they begin to appear in our sources shortly before this time. First, the volunteer warriors operated with apparent complete disregard for established authority (in this case the governor of Khurāsān); they had a mandate from on high, and obviously felt that they needed no other. Note that this did not, as we have already seen, preclude cooperation with governmental armies in a common pursuit of the Jihad; but this

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204 Carolingian Emperor (r. 814-840), son of Charlemagne. On his reign see R. McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987*, New York, 1983, pp. 106-139 (his Spanish campaigns while King of Aquitaine are discussed on pp. 107-108). He had been anointed king of Aquitaine in 781; originally, his older brother Pippin III was supposed to have inherited the bulk of Carolingian lands.

205 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 202.

206 *Ibid.* , p. 360.

207 Ḥarūra was the name of the place where, according to tradition, the Kharijites disavowed ʿAlī. See L. Veccia Vaglieri's article "Ḥarūra," *EI²*.

208 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 361.

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cooperation should not be mistaken for subordination to governmental aims or unconditional control. Second, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were very active in fighting the Kharijites, particularly at this time. Third, this ideological position must have held widespread appeal – for the most prominent figures in al-Maʾmūn's court are worried that pursuing such a course will win ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the most powerful role in the government.

In fact, from the time of al-Maʾmūn we see the energies of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* increasingly prominent in two areas of endeavour, apart from the Byzantine frontier: the infidel East, and the commanding of the good and enjoining of the forbidden inside Muslim society. Both of these aspects, of course, can be seen from the earliest days of the founding figures of the movement; but they become ever stronger, and the *mutaṭawwiʿa* seem to be far more important in these two arenas from the later years of Hārūn's reign onward. Also, this element of disregard for figures in authority, from the caliph on down, when their injunctions seem not to be in accordance with religious dictates, becomes increasingly noticeable.

During the war against the heretic Bābak the Khurramī,[209] for example, in the year 222/837, the Caliphal general, the Afshīn, was annoyed with one of the Muslim commanders, Jaʿfar b. al-Khayyāṭ, for a comment he had made, and therefore deliberately refrained from going to Jaʿfar's aid in battle. A "group of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*," however, when they saw what was happening, simply went to Jaʿfar's aid, "without the command of Afshīn."[210] In other words, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were determined to fight their heretics and succour the Muslims even against the direct orders of legitimately constituted authority.

This *mutaṭawwiʿī* obedience to religious imperative over political authority held true even when the caliph was the authority in question. In several reported cases, the conflict between a *mutaṭawwiʿ*'s religious position and caliphal authority led to the death of the former. We read, for instance, that in 231/845f.

> Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khuzāʿī al-Shahīd was killed. He was among the descendants of the *amīrs* of the ʿAbbāsid state [*min awlād umarāʾ al-dawla*]. He rose in religious knowledge and godliness, wrote [traditions] from Mālik and a group [of others] … and used to disparage himself. Al-Wāthiq killed him with his own hand because he refrained from saying that the Qurʾān was created, and because of his speaking rudely to al-Wāthiq in public addresses … He was a leader in commanding the good and forbidding evil. There arose with him a group of the *muṭṭawwiʿa* and their power became excessive [*istafḥala amruhum*]. The ʿAbbāsid state feared [*fa-khāfathu al-dawla*] that a schism would be accomplished by this.[211]

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209 On the Khurramiyya and Bābak's revolt *vide supra*; and also B. S. Amoretti, "Sects and Heresies," *Cambridge History of Iran*, *op. cit.* , vol. 4, pp. 503-509. Amoretti describes what is known of Bābak's doctrines as "Bābak shall seize the earth, kill the tyrants, and restore the religion of Mazdak." (p. 506)

210 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, pp. 465-466.

211 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān al-Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar fi khabar man ghabar*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munjjid and Fu'ād Sayyid, Kuwait, 1960, vol. 1, p. 408. In this same year,

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This is a truly revealing statement, one which combines all of the elements we have been discussing – the growing disorders inside the Dār al-Islām, particularly with regard to the Caliph's position; the religious independence of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and their insistence upon adhering to religious principles and positions as they understood them; and the newly found power of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* themselves and the political challenge that this constituted. The outcome of this ideology was the following:

> Waging war against the "infidels" was the concern not only of rulers and their military apparatus, but also an endeavour which Muslims could voluntarily choose to participate in, particularly in order to gain the other-worldly rewards connected with it. This alone should suggest that activity in this field was not an affair controlled by the state to the exclusion of others, was not a monopoly of the ruler; on the contrary, conflicts over control of volunteer armies and legitimizing purposes seem much more likely.[212]

It comes as no surprise, then, when we see that by the mid-ninth century many *mutaṭawwiʿa* had for all intents and purposes begun to ignore the caliphs, who had fallen from "God's shadow on earth" to mere shadow figures controlled by their Turkish handlers. The most outstanding example of this trend is how the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, whenever we read of them, are fighting for rulers such as Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn and Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, virtually autonomous rulers, rather than for the caliphs. Thus in the case of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, for instance, when he set out from Egypt in the year 264/878 for the *ghazw* on Byzantium (since the caliph had virtually abandoned this task), we hear that he is accompanied by *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ghāzīs*.[213]

Another, related issue highlighted by the aforementioned incident of Aḥmad b. Naṣr, the volunteer warrior *shahīd* of 231/845f. , is the extent to which the *mutaṭawwiʿa* took upon themselves the responsibility of commanding right and forbidding wrong – "*al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*,"[214] always irrespective of the political authorities and sometimes in direct opposition to them.[215] This anti-caliphal trend becomes most prominent in the aftermath of the Fourth Fitna, which had shaken the ʿAbbāsid government to its foundations. During the

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231845f., a ship full of *mutaṭawwiʿa* broke up in the Persian Gulf and some of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were injured. (Khalīfa, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 395)

212 J. Paul, *The State and the Military: The Sāmānid Case. Papers on Inner Asia*, 26, Bloomington, 1994, p. 13.

213 Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 239. Note once again that *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ghāzīs* constitute two separate groups.

214 This aspect of a *mutaṭawwiʿ*'s activities is frequently mentioned in the biographies; *vide* e. g. Al-Qazwīnī, *al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, vol. 2, p. 2, where the three activities mentioned in this category are the learning of *hadīth* and *fiqh*, *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*, and the defense of Qazwīn.

215 This independent upholding of the right has long been considered an important duty of Muslims. As Gardet notes, "Chaque musulman dans sa sphère, et en tant que musulman, sera donc, lui aussi, un homme qui 'commande le bien et interdit le mal,' *amīr bi'l-maʿrūf wa nāhin ʿan al-munkar*;'" L. Gardet, *La cité musulmane: vie sociale et politique*, Paris, 1961.

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several succeeding years (813-819), al-Maʾmūn remained in the remote eastern part of the Muslim empire, experimenting with various religio-political innovations and leaving the central lands to deal with an unending succession of revolts and disturbances as best they could.[216]

Baghdad was left to the apparently inept misrule of various members of the ʿAbbāsid family, who, according to our sources, failed to provide even minimal public order. Therefore, in the year 201/816f. , so we are told,

> … the *mutaṭawwiʿa* devoted themselves to commanding the good and forbidding evil. The reason for this was that the dissolute of Baghdad [*fussāq Baghdād*] and the *shuṭṭār* troubled the people greatly, manifested evildoing [*aẓharū al-fisq*], cut off the road, and seized women and youths openly. They would seize a man's son and his family, without his being able to prevent them from doing this; and they would plunder the villages without there being any ruler to prevent them and take them in hand, for he [i. e. the ruler] would egg them on, and they were his intimate associates. They would seize passersby on the road, and no one aided against them, so that the people were in great affliction because of them.[217]

Note that al-Maʾmūn's governor was considered in this case to be part of the problem rather than the solution: it is his cronies and henchmen who are terrorizing the populace.

Finally, in the face of the aforementioned outrages, the law-abiding[218] began discussing how they should join together in order to restore some order. A man called Khālid al-Daryūsh

> summoned his neighbours, his household, and the people of his quarter, to aid him in commanding the good and forbidding evil, and they responded to him in this [matter]. He [then] attacked whomever was near him of the evil-doers and the *shuṭṭār*, restrained them from their doing [evil deeds] … and jailed them, and delivered them to the authorities, but he was not looking to force any change upon the authorities [*Annahu kāna lā yarā an yughayyira ʿalā al-sulṭān shayʾan*].[219]

Several days later,

> … there arose after him a man from al-Ḥarbiyya[220]called Sahl b. Salama al-Anṣārī from among the people of Khurāsān, with the *kunya* of Abū Ḥātim. He summoned the people to command the good, and forbid evil, and to act according to the Qurʾān and the *sunna*. [He] hung a copy of the Qurʾān around his neck, commanded the people of his

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216 On this period and its numerous disturbances see D. G. Tor, "An Historiographical Re-Examination of the Appointment and Death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *op. cit.*

217 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 324; with slight variations, Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, p. 551; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 10, pp. 92-93.

218 Ibn al-Jawzī calls them *al-ṣulaḥāʾ* – note the earlier connection we saw, *supra*, between *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ṣulaḥāʾ*.

219 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, p. 552; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 325.

220 One of the northern quarters of Baghdad, originally settled by the Khurāsānī supporters of the ʿAbbāsids and containing the barracks of al-Manṣūr's domestic slaves (*vide* Le Strange, *Baghdad During the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, pp. 108-135).

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> quarter [to do good] and prohibited them [from evil], and they obeyed him. He summoned all the people, [both] the noble and the plebeian, from among the Banū Hāshim and others, and a great crowd arrived at him and pledged allegiance to him in this [*fa-bāyaʿūhu ʿalā dhālika*], and on fighting with him against those who opposed him …[221]

> He roved about in Baghdad and its markets … making sure that everything functioned properly and that no protection money was imposed by ruffians and unscrupulous operators.
> When news of these risings reached Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī and ʿIsā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālid, "this shattered them [*fa-kasarahumā dhālika*], for most of their companions were the *shuṭṭār* and those who had no good in them [*man lā khayra fihi*]."[222]

According to the sources, there were a number of further intrigues against and assassination attempts upon Sahl by the ʿAbbāsid authorities, but the (temporary) outcome of all this was that "the people of Baghdad wanted what was good [ruling] over them [*fa-raḍiya ahl Baghdād bi-mā ṣāliḥ ʿalayhi*], so Sahl remained responsible for that which was [already] upon him of commanding the good and prohibiting the forbidden."[223]

Sahl b. Salama did not fare so well during the time of the revolt of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, however.[224] In 202/817f. , Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī "was victorious over

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221 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 325.

222 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 552-553; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 326. Madelung, on the basis of one eleventh-century Zaydī work, claims that Sahl b. Salama was a Muʿtazilite Zaydī (W. Madelung, "The Vigilante Movement of Sahl b. Salama al-Khurāsānī and the Origins of Ḥanbalism Reconsidered," *Journal of Turklish Studies* 14 [1990] pp. 331-337). The present author finds Madelung's argument thoroughly unconvincing, for several reasons: 1) No other source knows anything of any Zaydī conspiracy in Baghdad at this time, let alone of Sahl b. Salama's being part of one. 2) Sahl b. Salama, by Madelung's own admission (p. 335) does not appear in any other Zaydī work, *ṭabaqāt* or otherwise. 3) His known affiliations (with the Ḥarbiyya quarter and Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn) and actions (his call to follow the Qurʾān and the *Sunna*, his refusal to recognize ʿAlī al-Riḍā, and his declaration that he was not trying to overthrow the ʿAbbāsids) seem much more in accordance with Lapidus's placement of Sahl within the context of proto-Ḥanbalism (M. Lapidus, "The Separation of state and religion in the development of early Islamic society," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 6 [1975], pp. 372-378), particularly in view of the fact that all the other *mutaṭawwiʿa* we have seen have clear Sunni, particularly proto-Ḥanbalite, connections. It also seems most peculiar that the people of Baghdad would have chosen a Muʿtazilite Zaydī when looking for a pious leader, and while in a righteous uproar over the appointment of the Shiʿite ʿAlī al-Riḍā as heir apparent. Finally, even if Madelung is right to give credence to this sole Zaydī source, one must ask oneself what the significance of Sahl's alleged "secret" beliefs really was. That is, if Sahl managed to masquerade as a good pious Sunni for such a long period, maintaining so well his proper *mutaṭawwiʿ* pose to the point where no contemporary, but only one secret Zaydi work, ever uncovered the "truth" about his hidden beliefs, then his behaviour and stated beliefs should still be examined for what they show about ***mutaṭawwiʿa***, not what they show about crypto-Zaydīs: his external life, even according to Madelung, was not Zaydī at all.

223 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 326.

224 This revolt was the direct result of al-Maʾmūn's decision to appoint ʿAlī al-Riḍā, who became the eighth Shiʿite Imam, as his heir to the throne. For a treatment of Ibrāhīm b. al-

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Sahl b. Salama al-Mutaṭawwiʿī, and jailed him and punished him."[225] Despite – or, rather, because of – Sahl's having won – and kept -the allegiance of the people of Baghdad by "summoning to command the good and prohibit evil," Ibrāhīm's general ʿIsā b. Muḥammad b. Abī Khālid and his cronies felt a compelling need to get rid of Sahl b. Salama, "because he used to remind them of the vilest of their deeds, and term them the evil-doers [*al-fussāq*];" finally, with the help of a little judicious bribery, they managed to seize him. When accused by the ʿAbbāsid Isḥāq b. al-Hādī of incitement against the ʿAbbāsids, Sahl replied: "My *daʿwa*[226]has been ʿAbbāsid; indeed, I was summoning to action in accordance with the Qurʾān and the *Sunna*; and I, being [in authority] over that which I was over, shall summon you to it at this very moment." After Sahl refused to renounce his program publicly, Isḥāq b. al-Hādī and his cronies beat Sahl, shackled him "and reviled him," then sent him to Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in al-Madāʾin, who further abused him and had him jailed. Interestingly, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī gave out that Sahl had been killed, "from fear of the people [*aẓhara annahu qutila, khawfan min al-nās*], lest they find out his location and bring him forth."[227] This statement indicates that Sahl must still have enjoyed very strong popular support.

Ibrāhīm eventually released Sahl in an attempt to buy Baghdad's loyalty when al-Maʾmūn's forces were approaching the city; it is noteworthy that people still felt allegiance to Sahl, even after his many months of absence.[228] The story of this particular *mutaṭawwiʿ* ends with al-Maʾmūn's rewarding him with approval and gifts – and commanding him to remain at home.[229] Al-Maʾmūn apparently best appreciated an upright and zealous conscience when it acted as watchdog over others, but not over him.

This whole episode is significant because it is our first detailed account of what pious, orthodox people did when the government failed them in the most basic way. It shows us that, while theories of authority and how to behave toward political authorities are all very well, most human beings, when faced with physical threat, economic ruin, and a situation of rampant lawlessness and injus-

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Mahdī's revolt in its political context see, again, D. Tor, "An Historiographical Re-examination of the Appointment and Death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā."

225 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, p. 562; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 6, p. 345.

226 For an elaboration of the meaning of this term, and particularly its meaning in ʿAbbāsid ideology, see Moshe Sharon, *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the ʿAbbāsid State – Incubation of a Revolt*, Jerusalem, 1983, chapter 1, *passim*.

227 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 562-564; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, pp. 345-346. Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 34, has only a very abbreviated account of these doings, in which he, interestingly, conflates the evil-doers with the *mutaṭawwiʿa*: "Baghdad was in turmoil in the days of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, and the wicked [*ruwaybiḍa*] became stirred up, and they called themselves *mutaṭawwiʿa* – they are the leaders of the commonalty [*al-ʿāmma*] and the followers [*al-tawābiʿ*]." The conflation seems rather impossible, given the details of Ṭabarī's story, in which we clearly see the *mutaṭawwiʿa* opposing the evil-doers.

228 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 571-572.

229 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, p. 573.

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tice abetted by those same legitimate political authorities, will throw theory to the wind and do whatever they must to protect their possessions, their families, and their lives. If the government was not going to uphold the basic Islamic precepts for the right ordering of the world, through Jihad outside of the Islamic oecumene and *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* within it, the Muslim community was not thereby absolved of the obligation to do so; good Muslims would simply have to enforce God's rule themselves. As we shall presently see, this development was precisely what led to the political prominence of the *ʿayyārān*.

The Mutaṭawwiʿa *in the East and the Emergence of the* ʿAyyārān

One of the most fertile fields for the practice of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* for *mutaṭawwiʿa* inside the Abode of Islam was among the heretical Kharijites of eastern Khurāsān. We know of *mutaṭawwiʿa* in eastern Khurāsān, of course, from the time of the founders of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement, although we are not informed what the scope of *mutaṭawwiʿa* activities were there. Thus we read, among the accounts of those who died in the years 161-170/777-787, of one of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak's fellow citizens of Marv, Shaybān b. Abī Shaybān, "al-Mutaṭawwiʿī al-Marwazī al-Ghāzī," who was both a hadith transmitter, and "… among the chiefs of the holy warriors in Khurāsān."[230] We see once again from the *nisbas* that the *mutaṭawwiʿ* and the *ghāzī* were not identical – although the two forms of Jihad were closely related, and sometimes the same people would, at different points in their career, function in both capacities; but the *mutaṭawwiʿ* was, apparently, much more privatized than the *ghāzī*.[231]

It is clear that there were throughout the ninth century – and beyond – volunteers against the "Turks" on the borders,[232] but our concern here is with the internal Islamic function of *mutaṭawwiʿa* activity in the East, beginning in the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, against the proliferation of Kharijite revolts,[233] since it is during these struggles against the Kharijites that the *ʿayyārān* first appear in our sources.

In the year 176/792f. , Hārūn replaced his governor of Sīstān, who had been unable to quell the serious Kharijite revolt of al-Ḥuḍayn in the province (but who had been extremely active with the *ghāzīs* against the Turks), with Dāʾūd b.

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230 "*kāna min ruʾūs al-mujāhidīn bi-Khurāsān*," Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 10, pp. 267-268.

231 This is also Lapidus's point in "The separation of state and religion," *passim.*

232 E. g. during the early Sāmānid period, in the year 291/904, we read that Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad together with "*min al-muṭṭawwiʿa nās kathīr*" attacked a huge Turkish army on the march against the Muslims (Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 116).

233 Note that the problem of heretics – and *mutaṭawwiʿa* efforts to combat this problem – were not limited to the eastern borders of the Empire, however; in the year 287/900 the *mutaṭawwiʿa* of Baṣra go out to fight the Qarmatians – unsuccessfully (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 499; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 77-78).

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Bishr al-Muhallabī; and Dāʾūd accordingly advanced in the following year to fight al-Ḥuḍayn and the Kharijites with "a large army of the soldiers of the *muṭṭawwiʿa* and the *ghāzīs*" and defeated them.[234]

There followed a respite from Kharijite activity of barely a year, during which time the next governor of Sīstān could happily occupy himself with campaigning against the Turks, then raiding Kabul. While he was away raiding, however, another Kharijite arose at home and the governor returned to fight him "with the *ghāzīs*."[235] The next governor appointed by Hārūn al-Rashīd, Sayf b. ʿUthmān al-Ṭārābī (appointed 196/811f.), was literally unable to enter the city of Zarang, which was barred against him by the Kharijite Muḥammad b. al-Ḥuḍayn, son of the erstwhile rebel.[236] Sayf thereupon retired to Bust, where he assembled an army and came to Sīstān, together with one "Abū al-ʿUryān … and this Abū al-ʿUryān was an *ʿayyār* [*mardī ʿayyār būd*] from Sīstān, one of the troop commanders, and the commonalty were his friends [*va-ghawghā' yār-i ū būdand*]."[237] Thus, the first time *ʿayyārān* appear in the sources – in the year 191 or 192/807, during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd and not, as commonly thought, in Baghdad during the Fourth Fitna – they appear in exactly the same context in which we have already seen *ghāzīs* and *mutaṭawwiʿa*: namely, fighting the Kharijites.

In the event, this army was defeated by the Kharijites, as was a subsequent Caliphal army sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd's favorite general, Harthama b. Aʿyan, at which point Hārūn determined he would have to come to Khurāsān himself.[238] Hārūn first, however, sent the most important Kharijite leader, Ḥamza, a letter, which was rejected offhand by Ḥamza; but Hārūn's death in Ṭūs and the return of the army to Baghdad cut short any campaign he might have contemplated. Upon hearing the news, Ḥamza the Kharijite said:

> "'God battled for the believers.'[239] Since it was thus, it has become incumbent upon us that we go attack the idolaters in India [*Sind u Hind*], China [*Chīn u Māchīn*], and [the land of] the Turks, Byzantium and [the land of] the blacks." [Ḥamza's followers] re-

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234 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 153-154. As Bosworth points out (*Sistan Under the Arabs*, p. 85), while the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* claims that al-Ḥuḍayn was killed, Ibn al-Athīr states that he was merely defeated, and fled to the Kharijite stronghold of the Herāt region (on the Kharijite tendencies of this area, *vide infra*, chapter 4). Note that, once again, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the *ghāzīs* are listed as two separate bodies.

235 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 154.

236 He was only one of the Kharijite rebels active at this time; the great Ḥamza b. ʿAbdallāh was the main Kharijite leader in Khurāsān during this period. See Bosworth, *Sistan Under the Arabs*, pp. 91-104.

237 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 161. While in Arabic the term "*ghawghā'*" possesses the negative connotation of "riffraff" or "lowlife," in Persian, as Bahār notes, it invariably means simply "commonalty," the equivalent of the Arabic term *ʿāmma* (*vide Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 179, note 1).

238 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 161-162.

239 Qurʾān 33:25.

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plied: "That which God Almighty utters through your tongue, that is the right way for us."[240]

Accordingly, some of Ḥamza's troops set off to "protect the weak from the tyrants" in Khurāsān, Sīstān, Fārs and Kirmān, while he himself sallied forth to India, took to sea in Ceylon, "and carried out many raids" [*bisyār ghazvhā kard*], supposedly in China, Turkestan, and Byzantium, finally returning to Sīstān by way of Makrān; "and in all of these places he made *ghazwas*."[241] Obviously, militant zealots – both Sunnī and heterodox – were not lacking in Sīstān.

Perhaps also we can begin to understand the lure of Kharijism for many in Sīstān at this time; a man such as Ḥamza, for instance, is specifically portrayed as having practiced many of the virtues that would have appealed to orthodox Muslims as well: asceticism, piety, respect for the Qurʾān and "the *Sunna* of [God's] Prophet,"[242] and a great deal of *ghāzī* activity. This pious persona must have contrasted strongly with the Caliph's representatives – the often venal strongmen sent from Baghdad. It is therefore not surprising that when a Sunnī figure appeared on the scene who matched heresiarchs such as Ḥamza in piety and *ghāzī* zeal, he was able to attract many of the former admirers and adherents of Ḥamza and his successors to his cause.[243] The mass of the Kharijite followers were most probably, if one looks at the evidence, not joining the cause due to any deep-seated theological beliefs, but rather to the force and charisma of pious personal example.

We next read about *ʿayyārs* in Sīstān during the governorship of al-Maʾmūn's appointee, the extremely pragmatic al-Layth b. al-Faḍl, known as Ibn Tarassul, who arrived in Zarang in the year 200/815; instead of fighting the Kharijites, he made peace with both sides of the religious divide, treating the Kharijites well on the one hand, and spending all the revenues of the province in order to invite the *ʿayyārān* to banquets on the other.[244]

We read nothing further about Sīstānī *ʿayyārān* in the sources until shortly before the accession of al-Mutawakkil in the year 232/847, with the exception of a very brief episode around the year 211/827, at which time – we do not know why or for what reason – one of the *ʿayyārān* led a revolt in Bust, which was joined by the common people. This revolt was put down by one of a long line of governors who followed swiftly upon one another's heels at this time.[245] It is impossible to comment on or contextualize this revolt, its nature or reasons, justification or lack thereof, since we know nothing further about it.

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240 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 169.
241 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 169-170.
242 See the supposed text of Ḥamza's extraordinary letter written in reply to Hārūn al-Rashīd, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 164-168. Ḥamza employs the phrase '*sunnat nabiyyihi*' on p. 165.
243 *Vide infra*, chapter 3. Bosworth notes that Kharijism all but vanished as a problem in Sistan from the time of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth.
244 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 175-176.
245 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 179.

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It is worth noting, however, that if the *ʿayyārān* had indeed been merely brigands, as is commonly supposed by modern scholars, one would have thought that conditions were excellent during these confused years of ephemeral governorships for their engaging in destabilizing or brigandish activities; yet we have no record that they did so. On the other hand, in these nascent years of the *ʿayyārān* there are not many generalizations one can make, except that these earliest appearances of the *ʿayyār* warriors in the East take place within religious contexts; in fact, within the same context in which we have already seen *mutaṭawwiʿa* operating. That the *ʿayyārān* grew out of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* milieu – possibly as sworn brotherhoods of *mutaṭawwiʿa* – becomes much clearer when we examine the most famous historical *ʿayyār* of all, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār. When investigating Yaʿqūb's case, we must keep in mind that

> ... leaders of *ghāzī* troops enjoyed varying, but mostly significant degrees of independence; they felt responsible to the groups of fighters rather than to the dynasty. Their loyalty was to their community and to the purpose of fighting the infidels, not to the state, not even to an individual ruler.[246]

As we shall see in the following chapter, the ʿAbbāsids were no exception to this rule.

In conclusion: in both the Eastern and Western marcher lands of the early ninth century there was a culture of volunteer warfare for Islam. This particular type of Islamic military volunteerism, moreover, operated independently of any government; it saw its mandate as coming from a higher authority, and its primary allegiance belonged to that higher authority. The independent, private nature of religious military volunteerism (*taṭawwuʿ*), whether directed toward imposing God's rule outside the Dār al-Islām (through Jihād) or inside of it (through *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*), was frequently perceived by governmental figures as undermining their authority, and even resulted in violent clashes between the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the political authorities. The *ʿayyārān* first appear in the early ninth century in the Iranian border region of Sīstān, where heretical Kharijite groups were extremely active. In the next chapter, we shall see that they were, in effect, *mutaṭawwiʿ* bands.

246 Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 15.

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3. ʿAyyār Activity in Sīstān and the Rise of the Ṣaffārids

> "Guarding one night in the path of God [i. e. the Jihad], may He be exalted, is more praiseworthy than a thousand nights [during which] one maintains nightly vigils and daily fasting."
>
> – Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, no. 433[1]

> Virtue he had, deserving to command:
> His brandish'd sword did blind men with his beams:
> His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings;
> His sparking eyes, replete with wrathful fire,
> More dazzled and drove back his enemies
> Than mid-day sun fierce bent against their faces.
>
> – Henry VI, Part 1

In the last chapter, we saw how an independent, fervently Sunni movement of volunteer warriors for the faith arose in the border areas of the central Islamic lands. We also saw that it was in this milieu, of Sunni warfare for the faith against both Infidels and Khārijite heretics, that *ʿayyārān* first appear in the sources. It is very difficult to extract from the material dealing with the early ninth century, though, precisely what the connection was between volunteer warfare and the *ʿayyārān*. Fortunately, this situation changes dramatically with the mid-ninth century appearance of the most famous historical *ʿayyār*, and the one about whom we possess the most abundant information: the founder of the Ṣaffārid Dynasty, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār.[2]

In order to understand the nature of this first of the autonomous dynasties in the Eastern Islamic lands, but also *ʿayyārī*, one must first comprehend the political situation of the Islamic heartlands in the mid-ninth century. By the 860s, the ʿAbbāsid caliphs had become shadow figures in Sāmarrāʾ, prisoners of their own Turkish soldiers.[3] In that same decade, after having unified Sīstān, riven for many decades by internal religious and factional struggles,[4] Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār

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1 See also no. 558: "*Ribāṭ* of one day in the path of God …" etcetera.

2 For a more concise overview of Yaʿqūb's career than that laid out in this and the following two chapters, *vide* D. G. Tor, "Historical Representations of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth: A Reappraisal," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* Series 3, 12:3 (2002), pp. 247-275.

3 On this period of ʿAbbāsid decline, see Fārūq ʿUmar, *al-Khilāfa al-ʿabbāsiyya fī-ʿaṣr al-fawḍā al-ʿaskariyya 247-334 A. H. 861-946 A. D.* [*sic*], Baghdad, 1977), *passim*, and Roy P. Mottahedeh, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Iran," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume IV: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 76-78.

4 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 156-200.

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emerged from his native province to take possession of one ʿAbbāsid territory after another. By his death in 265/879, he was the most powerful ruler in the Islamic world.[5]

The importance of the establishment of the Ṣaffārid dynasty in the mid-ninth century has in many respects long been recognized by historians. The formation of the Ṣaffārid realm, for instance, is seen as having ended the political unity of the caliphal heartland, and for inaugurating in the Central Islamic lands the appearance of autonomous dynasties whose power was obtained by force of arms and then given post-facto caliphal legitimation.[6] This was an innovation which henceforth became the normative pattern of accession to power followed by all the great medieval dynasties – Sāmānids, Ghaznavids, Būyids, Saljūqs, and so forth – which stepped forward to assume and wield the power that had been lost by the caliphs.[7]

The Ṣaffārids also possess yet another significance and uniqueness in Islamic history: they were the first dynasty to spring from the ʿ*ayyārs*. Not only did Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth begin his career as the member of an ʿ*ayyār* band dedicated to fighting heretics in the province of Sīstān; the backbone of his army consisted of ʿ*ayyār* forces.[8] While we have indications that ʿ*ayyār*s constituted a significant

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5 Not only did Yaʿqūb's empire stretched from the borders of India and Central Asia in the east to the borders of ʿIrāq in the west, but the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān,* p. 233, says that the *khuṭba* had been said in his name in Mecca and Medina; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 516, states that Yaʿqūb commanded "the *shurṭa* in Madīnat al-Salām." Ibn Khallikān, too, relates that Yaʿqūb was deputed "Khurāsān, Fāris, Kirmān, al-Rayy, Qumm, and Iṣbahān … and the two shurṭas of Baghdād and Samarraʾ …" Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, Tehran, 1363/1984, p. 109, states that he held at least theoretical lordship in Central Asia as well.

6 The Ṭāhirids do not qualify for this title because they were from the beginning Caliphal appointees. In the words of C. E. Bosworth: "The establishment of a vast if transient empire in the Islamic east, based on Sīstān, was the first great breach in the territorial integrity of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, for whilst the Ṭāhirid governors in Khurāsān ruled with a Caliphal approval which had been bestowed in a fairly spontaneous manner, the grudging and sporadic recognition which the Caliphs were at times compelled to grant to Yaʿqūb … was exacted …" C. E. Bosworth, *Sīstān Under the Arabs,* p. 109. The Zanj do not qualify for this position either for several reasons. First, their rebellion began later (in 255/868). Second, they wished to replace the caliphate, not control it. Third, their rebellion was, however much of a nuisance, purely local, never enjoyed wide popular support, and in all its fourteen years never managed to spread beyond southern ʿIrāq; see Popovic, *La révolte des esclaves, en Iraq au III-IX siecle*, Paris, 1976, *passim*.

7 On this point *vide* D. G. Tor, "Privatized Jihad and Public Order in the Pre-Saljūq Period: The Role of the *Mutaṭawwiʿa*" , *Iranian Studies* 38:4 (2005), pp. 555-573.

8 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 193, 194-195, and 198; Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Maḥmūd Gardīzī, *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, Tehran, 1363/1944, p. 355; Mustawfī Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzida*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Navāʾī, Tehran, 1339/1960, p. 370; Bahāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabarīstān*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl, Tehran, 1942, p. 245; and, in the secondary literature, C. E. Bosworth, *The History of the Ṣaffārids*, pp. 70-73.

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part of other rulers' armies – for example that of the Sāmānids[9] – these indications are more in the nature of fragmentary bits of information than detailed descriptions. The Ṣaffārid-ʿ*ayyār* alliance is uniquely well-documented, largely but not wholly due to a remarkable local history, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*.

Despite all the above, in some ways the Ṣaffārid dynasty has been little understood by modern historians. They have failed to discern any ideology motivating the Ṣaffārid state, and have viewed Ṣaffārid activities instead as exemplifying nothing more than brute force and the lust for power. In espousing this view, historians have in effect chosen one of two competing stances found in the primary sources themselves. The goal of the next several chapters will be to examine the road not taken – the view of the Ṣaffārids, and in particular of the dynasty's founder, Yaʿqūb, which is not the one that has traditionally been embraced by scholars. In short, we shall explore the possibility that Yaʿqūb was a *mutaṭawwiʿ* – a religious warrior for Sunni Islam.

For the moment, however, let us consider the first position, the one that has until now been commonly accepted. Modern historians have traditionally regarded the founder of the Ṣaffārid dynasty, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, as a self-seeking adventurer. Thus, to cite only a few examples, the nineteenth-century German historian Nöldeke speaks of Yaʿqūb's prime motivation as having been "love of conquest."[10] Likewise, Busse contrasts "Governors and local rulers in the eastern part of the empire [who] founded their political independence on armed force, such as the Ṣaffārids," with those who founded their power "on religious conceptions, such as the Zaydites."[11] The contemporary scholar C. E. Bosworth refers to Yaʿqūb's "unashamed proclamation of the superiority of force over the ethical values which were supposed to underpin the temporal authority delegated by God to man;" concluding that Yaʿqūb's "dominant motive … in addition to … hatred of the ʿAbbāsids, seems to have been a sheer love of military conquest."[12]

Yet, while negative views about the Ṣaffārids in general and Yaʿqūb in particular are rife among modern Orientalists, when one examines closely this seeming wall of consensus he is surprised to discover that it rests upon a very meager foundation of research. In fact, before the several re-evaluations of the later twentieth century, no extensive research at all was ever done on the Ṣaffārids;

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9 Al-Qāḍī al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr [attributed], *Kitāb al-dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf* , Kuwait, 1959, pp. 145-148; and *infra*, chapter 8. Jürgen Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit*, p. 116, is aware of the crucial role of *mutaṭawwiʿa* in the Sāmānid army, but not of that of the ʿ*ayyārān*.

10 Th. Nöldeke, "Yakúb the Coppersmith and his Dynasty," *Sketches from Eastern History,* tr. John Sutherland Black, London, 1892, p. 187.

11 H. Busse, "The Revival of Persian Kingship under the Buyids," D. S. Richards, ed. , *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, London, 1973, p. 48.

12 Bosworth, "The Armies of the Ṣaffārids," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968), p. 536.

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most historians simply repeated the (somewhat disparaging) tone taken by Nöldeke in the previous century.[13] Until recently there were only four articles and no monographs devoted to the early Ṣaffārids. Three of the four articles were written before the mid-1930s, and therefore utilized a much more limited source base than that which we have today.[14] Moreover, one of the three articles is actually a numismatic rather than an historical work.

The fourth article, written by S. M. Stern, not only utilized very few of the available sources, but also based its entire thesis upon one poem which only one source claims was written while the author was at the Ṣaffārid ruler Yaʿqūb's court.[15] From the evidence of this lone poem Stern formulated the idea that Yaʿqūb was a proponent of Persian nationalism.[16]

This article had an influence disproportionate to the amount of research involved in it. Stern's Persian nationalist thesis was taken up in the late twentieth century by the two authors who produced the first book-length studies on the dynasty: Muḥammad Bāstānī-Pārīzī, who wrote a non-scholarly, quasi historical novel specifically about Yaʿqūb;[17] and C. E. Bosworth. Bosworth is, in fact, the only person who has ever consulted almost the full range of source material on the Ṣaffārids available to the modern scholar, and in particular the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, the most important primary source extant.[18] He has produced the only scholarly monograph and several articles dealing with the Ṣaffārids.

Unfortunately, even this most recent scholarship has remained under the strong influence of previous writings, following one stream – the wrong stream, we shall argue – in the primary sources to the detriment and exclusion of the other. In particular, these more recent works have continued to neglect the persistent and repeated statements in the sources regarding Yaʿqūb's religious motivation, probably in large part due to the phenomenon so perspicuously observed by Bernard Lewis:

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13 Nöldeke, "Yakúb the Coppersmith," *op. cit.* , pp. 176-206. A good example of the dismissive view faithfully repeated can be found in Barthold, "Zur Geschichte der Ṣaffāriden," in *Orientalische Studien zu Theodor Nöldeke gewidmet*, ed. C. Bezold, Giessen, 1906, vol. I, pp. 171-191, *passim*, and *idem.* , *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed. , trans. T. Minorsky, ed. C. E. Bowsorth, Taipei, 1968, pp. 215-218.

14 Namely, the two aforementioned articles by Nöldeke and Barthold; and R. Vasmer's "Über die Münzen der Ṣaffāriden und ihrer Gegner in Fārs und Ḫurāsān," *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, Neue Folge 23: 63 (1930), pp. 131-162.

15 Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-udabā'*: *Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, ed. ʿUmar al-Fārūq al-Ṭabbāʿ, Beirut, 1420/1999, vol. 1, p. 262. It should be noted that even this source never states that Yaʿqūb ever actually had knowledge of or even saw the poem – let alone approved it; merely that it was written while the author was staying with Yaʿqūb's entourage ("*ʿinda Yaʿqūb*").

16 S. M. Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian national sentiment," in *Iran and Islam, in memory of the late Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 535-55.

17 M. Bāstānī-Pārīzī, *Yaʿqūb-i Layth*, Tehran, 1367/c1988.

18 Bosworth himself notes this in *The Ṣaffārids of Sīstān*, p. 8.

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> … When Europeans ceased to accord first place to religion in their thoughts, sentiments, interests, and loyalties, they also ceased to admit that other men, in other times and places, could have done so. To a rationalistic and materialistic generation, it was inconceivable that such great debates and mighty conflicts could have involved no more than 'merely' religious issues. And so historians … devised a series of explanations, setting forth what they described as the 'real' or 'ultimate' significance 'underlying' religious movements and differences.[19]

The syndrome described by Lewis is very much in evidence in the late-twentieth century re-evaluations of the Ṣaffārids. Thus, various historians have accordingly constructed the ingenious explanations of Yaʿqūb's alleged "Sīstānī nationalism"[20] or "Persian national pride;"[21] yet no one seems to have explored the many, repeated statements in the most important histories of the time that Yaʿqūb was a warrior with a religious cause.[22]

In short, the scholarly secondary literature in general has, for various reasons, by and large accepted one particular, negative view of Yaʿqūb found in certain late accounts. Thus, Yaʿqūb suffered the same fate as did the *ʿayyārs* in general at the hands of modern historians. A sort of vicious circle has been at work here: Due to preconceptions, derived from a late and limited source-base, regarding the nature of *ʿayyārs*,[23] historians have from the first looked askance at Yaʿqūb. Their negative view of Yaʿqūb, in turn, served to reinforce historical misconceptions regarding the early *ʿayyārs*. But this negative view of Yaʿqūb is, as we shall see, inherently problematic. For when one examines our primary sources with an historiographical eye, he notices immediately that the primary sources upon which the negative view of Yaʿqūb relies have an ingrained bias against the Ṣaffārids. Indeed, previous researchers have already noted the anti-Ṣaffārid bias of some of these materials,[24] yet they have still read the sources as though this awareness did not exist.

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19 B. Lewis, "The Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953), p. 44.

20 See M. Bāstānī-Pārīzī, *Yaʿqūb-i Layth*; and C. E. Bosworth, *The History of the Ṣaffārids of Sīstān*.

21 S. M. Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," p. 545, claims that Yaʿqūb had "adopted the ideology of Persian national restoration," and speaks of "the strength of Persian national sentiment."

22 Bosworth even goes so far as to state that "The early Ṣaffārids seem personally to have had no strong religious feeling." (Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids of Sīstān*, p. 15.)

23 For other reasons for this bias, *vide infra*, chapter 8 and Conclusions.

24 Bosworth explicitly remarked "the hostility of almost all the … sources," (Bosworth, *Sīstān Under the Arabs*, p. 111; also *idem.* , "The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume IV. From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye, Cambridge, 1975, p. 107: "It has not been easy to form a balanced picture of the early Ṣaffārids and their achievements. The standard historical sources on the eastern Iranian world … are generally hostile to them") yet, inexplicably, failed to factor this animosity into his historical analysis. In fact, in a circular argument he adduces the hostility in some of the sources as further evidence of the fact that Yaʿqūb must have been at best areligious and at worst heretical. Even Nöldeke, with his limited source base, noted that the sources were riddled with

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In fact, as stated above, there are essentially two alternative and diametrically opposed views of Yaʿqūb to be found in the primary sources: one, which we have just seen, that he was a religiously suspect rascal; the other, that he was a volunteer warrior for Sunni orthodoxy – a *mutaṭawwiʿ*. It is with this latter view that we shall concern ourselves here. Scholars, even while suspecting the veracity of the violently anti-Yaʿqūb portrayal, reacted by merely toning down that view, without, apparently, realizing that the wildly divergent statements about him were irreconcilable and that there were, therefore, essentially two alternative, discrete depictions being presented. As a result, no one has yet weighed the alternative depiction of Yaʿqūb as a volunteer Sunni holy warrior, or conducted a source-critical analysis to try to determine who had a motive for portraying Yaʿqūb in a particular manner – or, on the most elementary level, even evaluated the provenance, reliability and chronology of the sources.

When one does conduct such an analysis, one realizes that the aversion to the Ṣaffārids had a political origin arising from several factors, the first of which is the ʿAbbāsid attitude toward the Ṣaffārids. In 262/875f. Yaʿqūb marched on the Caliph al-Muʿtamid, blatantly challenging the latter's power; and the historians inform us that the caliph subsequently took extraordinary measures to blacken Yaʿqūb's reputation, in particular his religious credentials.[25] An even more important factor, though, in the historiographical treatment of the Ṣaffārids was the Sāmānid attitude. This latter dynasty became known in the subsequent Islamic historical tradition as the archetypal Sunni Persian dynasty. Conveniently enough, much of the Persian historiographical tradition was created under their rule.[26] Since many of the histories we have today, particularly the Persian ones, were written either during or after Sāmānid times, they are filtered through Sāmānid lenses. It has recently been suggested, in fact, that the Sāmānids consciously fostered Persian historical writing specifically in order to provide themselves with legitimacy through propagandizing history.[27]

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contradictions, without however elaborating further. Barthold (*Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*, p. 225) has observed that "The sympathy of the historians from whom we derive our information on the struggle between the Sāmānids and the Ṣaffārids is unquestionably on the side of the first." Again, despite having noted this bias, Barthold fails to realize its implications for the reliability of these writers' depictions of the Ṣaffārids.

25 According to Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 518-519, the Caliph actually went to the trouble of having a missive composed and read out to the general public, in which Yaʿqūb was condemned and, among other things, charged with flying pennants bearing crosses (this, of course, was an accusation designed in order to impugn Yaʿqūb's religious reputation). This was an unusual step for a caliph to take, and suggests that Yaʿqūb undermined the caliph's legitimacy in a way that mere rebels did not.

26 See E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge, 1964, vol. 1, pp. 355-358.

27 In the words of Julie Scott Meisami, to lend "support to the Sāmānids' … legitimizing enterprise." (J. S. Meisami, "Why write history in Persian? Historical writing in the Sāmānid period," *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth Volume II. The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand, Leiden, 2000, p. 358).

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It is this author's contention that since the Sāmānids were competing with the Ṣaffārids on the same grounds (*ghāzī* Sunni[28] Islam), and essentially usurped the latters' realm, they sought to blacken the Ṣaffārids' name in order to boost their own legitimacy.[29] This contention finds support in the fact that the Persian sources, with the sole exception of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, are uniformly more hostile toward the Ṣaffārids than are the Arabic ones. This is true both for earlier works of the ninth and tenth centuries (for instance Gardīzī versus Yaʿqūbī or Ibn Ḥawqal) and for later, post-eleventh-century ones (compare especially Ibn al-Athīr as opposed to Jūzjānī). Interestingly, while both earlier and later Persian sources have preserved much positive material on the Ṣaffārids, the later sources adopt overall a far more detractory tone.

One likely explanation for this phenomenon is that during Sāmānid times themselves events were too recent for contemporary historians to be able to distort those events. If Yaʿqūb really was a very popular devout *mutaṭawwiʿ*, or holy warrior figure, people in Gardīzī's or Balʿamī's time would very probably still remember for what he had stood. His name could therefore never be so thoroughly blackened as the Sāmānids might have wished. Indeed, this is quite possibly the reason why Balʿamī's history, which was composed in the Sāmānid court during the tenth century, is completely silent on the subject of Yaʿqūb: he had nothing bad to say about the Ṣaffārids, and therefore refrained from saying anything about them at all in order not to displease his Sāmānid master.[30] ʿAbbāsid and Sāmānid hostility to the Ṣaffārids, in these cases, led to their complete omission from these works.[31]

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28 The author here accepts Juynboll's premise (G. Juynboll, "Some new ideas on the development of *Sunna* as a technical term in early Islam," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 [1987], p. 117) that by the 220s/late 830s or early 840s "*sunna* comes to stand for 'orthodoxy,' never to acquire another nuance again." Melchert, as well, holds that "Sunni orthodoxy crystallized in the third Islamic century/ninth century CE. At the center of the new orthodoxy lay the Traditionalist creed of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his followers …" Christopher Melchert, "Sectaries in the Six Books: Evidence for Their Exclusion from the Sunni Community," *Muslim World*, 82:3-4 (1992), p. 287. See also J. Füch, "Die Rolle des Traditionalismus im Islam," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 93 (1939), pp. 1-32.

29 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 254, says of the Sāmānid ruler who was the al-Manṣūr, as it were, of the Sāmānid dynasty, having both established Sāmānid power and laid the ideological foundations of the dynasty: "Ismāʿīl was a *ghāzī*, and all of his army, likewise, were such men as day and night said their prayers and read the Qurʾān."

30 Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Balʿamī, *Taʾrīkh nāmah-i Ṭabarī*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshān, Tehran, 1366/1987, vol. 2, pp. 1284-1295. Balʿamī was actually a minister at the Sāmānid court of Manṣūr I, and undertook his "translation" of Ṭabarī at the express command of his lord (E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 1, pp. 368-369). This political sensitivity is probable the reason for his terse overall treatment of the later period covered by Ṭabarī.

31 The *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, for instance, includes only the briefest mention of Yaʿqūb, under its Sāmānid section, describing him as a rebel – but then contradicting itself in the very next paragraph when it makes clear that the *khuṭba* was said in his name by right, and admits

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When one does begin to examine the historical portrayal of the Ṣaffārids in a source-critical fashion, one immediately notices that the sources closest to this time, as well as those known to have incorporated early sources stemming from the pre-Mongol era,[32] all seem to use the word *ʿayyār* as a fungible term for *mutaṭawwiʿ* or *ghāzī*; that is, a warrior fighting for orthodox Islam,[33] be it on the borders against infidels or within the body politic against heretical (in Sunni eyes) Khārijites and Shīʿites. Moreover, as we shall soon see, the sources employ this interchangeability specifically in the context of Yaʿqūb's career. We have already seen in the previous chapter that there was an active and vital *mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition with the most unimpeachable Sunni credentials; we shall soon discover as well that the Ṣaffārids had close and intimate connections with religious scholars who were, both in terms of their religious pedigree and their behaviour, direct descendants of that proud tradition.

Perhaps most important, once we understand that the word *ʿayyār* meant at this time essentially *ghāzī* or holy warrior, Yaʿqūb's career no longer appears as a disorganized and somewhat haphazard series of seemingly unconnected campaigns, but rather falls into place logically as a determined and coherent string of military activities in service of the faith. This becomes most apparent if one examines Yaʿqūb's doings chronologically in order to determine which issues most pre-occupied him at particular times. One immediately perceives that, far from being a freebooter whose "dominant motive … in addition to … hatred of the ʿAbbāsids, seems to have been a sheer love of military conquest,"[34] Yaʿqūb began his career fighting the Khārijites in Sīstān, then he was slowly but inexorably drawn into *mutaṭawwiʿ* activities in adjacent provinces as well. Yaʿqūb was, in other words, untiringly and unceasingly devoting himself to the ideals of the Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition we have detailed above.[35]

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that the Sāmānids did not receive Caliphal appointment to the city until after the Caliphal-Ṣaffārid break in 262 (pp. 108, 109). It also mistakenly refers to al-Muwaffaq, in a Freudian slip, as the caliph.

32 E. g. Ibn al-Athīr's use of al-Sallāmī's lost *Taʾrīkh wulāt Khurāsān*. See W. Barthold's discussion of the subject, "Zur Geschichte der Ṣaffāriden," pp. 174-175.

33 Sourdel has defined "orthodox" Islam during the early ninth century as follows: "Cependant se développait … un mouvement rigoriste de défense de l'orthodoxie qui n'admettait aucune compromission, ni avec les méthodes de la philosophie grecque ni avec les prétensions des ʿAlides. Connu surtout pour avoir condamné, au contraire de la doctrine muʿtazilite, la thèse de la 'création' du Coran, il avait été soutenu notamment par l'imam Ibn Ḥanbal … et se présentait comme le mouvement 'grandissant,' qui défendait la mémoire de Muʿawiya contre ʿAli …" ("La politique religieuse des successeurs d'al-Mutawakkil," *Studia Islamica* 13 [1960]). One should add, of course, that it championed the reliance upon Prophetic tradition in place of the process of logical deduction favoured by the rationalist party, particularly the Muʿtazilites and section of the Ḥanifites; see Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs," pp. 317-318.

34 Bosworth, "The Armies of the Ṣaffārids," p. 536.

35 See *supra* Chapter 2.

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Yaʿqūb appeared upon the *ghāzī* scene at a crucial moment; immediately prior to and during the period of the rise of the Ṣaffārids, the emerging Traditionist version of Islam which we have come to characterize as orthodox (best symbolized by the figure of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal) was in sore need of a champion. The most obvious area of Islamic political weakness was in the Caliphate, which was now entering a period of "*fainéance* of the caliphal office and disintegration of the caliphal state."[36]

Moreover, the political state of those lands still within the caliphal orbit was disturbed; at the time of Hārūn's death the entire East was aflame with the revolt of Rāfiʿ b. al-Layth,[37] followed by unrest, revolts and civil wars under his three sons al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn, and al-Muʿtaṣim, who held the caliphal office successively.[38] This last-named caliph, who removed to the new military city Sāmarrāʾ, was in fact the last ʿAbbāsid for many years to come who possessed any semblance of control over the now ubiquitous Turkish slave troops and generals. Under al-Wāthiq and al-Mutawakkil, caliphal power continued its downward spiral, and from the time of al-Mutawakkil's assassination until the reign of al-Muʿtaḍid, the caliphs were mere cyphers.

The crumbling of the caliphate found its ultimate expression, of course, in the successive depositions and murders of a series of caliphs, beginning with al-Mutawakkil in 247/861.[39] "He and his three successors, al-Mustaʿīn, al-Muʿtazz,

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36 P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, Cambridge, 1980, p. 82. Although the loss of territorial integrity was a drawn-out process; since the time of Hārūn the caliphate had been slowly breaking up. Sourdel has already noted that under Hārūn "The distant Maghrib had become completely detached from the ʿAbbāsid empire." It was soon to be followed by the province of Ifrīqiya, which Hārūn basically alienated to the hereditary government of the Aghlabids; "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate," *The Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. 1a*, ed. P. M. Holt *et al.* , Cambridge, 1995, pp. 117-118

37 Mottahedeh, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Iran," p. 71; E. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurāsān under ʿAbbasid Rule 747-820*, Chicago, 1979, pp. 170 – 175; on previous religious unrest and revolts during Hārūn's reign see M. Rekaya, "Le *Ḫurram-Din* et les mouvements *Ḫurramites* sous les ʿAbbāsides: Réapparition du mazdakeisme ou manifestation de ghulāt musulmanes dans l'ex-empire sasanide au VIII et IXe siècles après J. C." *Studia Islamica* 60 (1984), pp. 35-38.

38 Indeed, it has been said of this third son that "there were revolts against [him] almost everywhere." Osman Ismail, "The founding of a new capital: Sāmarrāʾ," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31:1 (1968), p. 4. Al-Amīn, of course, was violently overthrown by the Khurāsānī armies of his brother al-Ma'mūn. For the serious revolt of Bābak, which lasted virtually throughout the entire reign of al-Ma'mūn and included the defeat of numerous caliphal armies, see Mottahedeh, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate," p. 75; Rekaya, "Le *Hurram-din*, pp. 38-47, and Sadighi's lengthy chapter on the revolt, *Les Mouvements religieux iraniens au IIe et au IIIe siècle de l'hégire*, Paris, 1938, pp. 229-280. Muʿtaṣim's reign witnessed the serious revolt led by Mazyār; *vide* M. Rekaya, "Mazyar: Résīstānce ou intégration d'une province Iranienne au monde Musulmane au milieu du IXe siècle ap. J. C." *Studia Iranica* 2:2 (1973) pp. 143-192. There were also two major messianic Sufyānid revolts, in 810 and 841; see R. Hartmann, "Der Sufyāni," *Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen Dedicata*, Copenhagen, 1953, pp. 141-151.

39 For the murder of al-Mutawakkil, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 95-100.

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and al-Muhtadī, reigned in all only about nine years, and the three last were all in turn done to death, generally with circumstances of great brutality, by the Turks, who were now paramount."[40] Yet even more crippling than the murders and depositions was the caliphs' powerlessness in the hands of their own officers;[41] quite simply, they were so completely neutralized that they were no longer able to fulfil their function of protecting Islam and enforcing God's will on earth, and no one else was taking up the slack. Furthermore, the infighting between contending Turkish factions led to great public disorder, including several *fitnas* in Baghdad and Sāmarrāʾ.[42]

For someone with strict traditionalist convictions, however, caliphal weakness may have been something of a boon during this period; for from the time of al-Maʾmūn onward there was also the problem of Caliphal attitude toward non-orthodox belief. While al-Mutawakkil himself espoused certain positions dear to hardline Sunnis – he abolished the *miḥna*, was ardently anti-Shīʿite and actively anti-dhimmī[43] – it has been noted that he was "hardly a sponsor of traditionalism. At most, rather, it was his policy to promote a moderate rationalism."[44] This is a position which would have been anathema to the rigorist *ahl al-ḥadīth*, who would not have been pleased with al-Mutawakkil's appointments to the religious courts either.[45]

Moreover, it has been shown that all of al-Mutawakkil's successors down to the time of al-Muʿtaḍid were of this same bent, with the sole exception of al-Muhtadī, who was an outright Qurʾānic creationist.[46] Equally bad (from the or-

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40 E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. I, p. 345. For the deposition of Mustaʿīn see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 167 (an account of his murder can be found on pp. 172-173).

41 See Sourdel, "La politique religieuse des successeurs d'al-Mutawakkil," p. 5.

42 See e. g. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 139; 173 (which involved a *fitna* between the Turks and the North African troops [*maghāriba*]); Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 392-393, and so forth.

43 For his commendable intolerance of infidels and heterodoxy see e. g. Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabarīstan*, p. 224; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 171-174 for his anti-*dhimmī* regulations; on his destruction of the grave of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, see *ibid.* p. 185; on his anti-Muʿtazilite activities see *ibid.* pp. 190-191. It should be emphasized, however, in regard to the creationist controversy, that "the caliph's point was not to affirm traditionalist orthodoxy, that the Qurʾān was increate, but rather to quieten the whole controversy," Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A. H. 232-295/A. D. 847-908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3:3 (1996), p. 322. This lukewarm attitude must have provided scant satisfaction to the orthodox; and, indeed, there are several indications that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, for one, was not very happy with this caliph (Melchert, *ibid.* pp. 326-327).

44 Melchert, *ibid.* p. 318.

45 Melchert,"Religious Policies," pp. 328-329.

46 Melchert, "Religious Policies," pp. 318-320; 336. There is an entire chapter on the *Jahmiyya* in Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath Abū Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī's *Masāʾil al-Imām Aḥmad*, Cairo, 1420/1999, pp. 353 – 363. Its general tenor can be gathered from the following tradition: "I said to Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal]: 'Is someone who says "The Qur'ān is created" an infidel?'

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thodox point of view), the caliphs al-Muntaṣir and probably also al-Mustaʿīn harboured pro-ʿAlīd sympathies, according to some modern scholarship, much in the fashion of the earlier, pro-Muʿtazilite caliphs, such as al-Ma'mūn, of the early ninth century.[47] Thus, those who adhered to the more traditionalist schools must have felt a certain amount of alienation from a series of successive caliphs, largely politically impotent though the latter may have been.

For someone of ardently Sunni religious persuasions, of course, one crucial aspect of caliphal dysfunction was that the central authorities were, at best, unenthused regarding militant Islam, particularly independent *ghāzī* raids. Worse, "the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate … was rather on the defensive in those parts of the empire which were directly under the rule of the Caliph, i. e. in ʿIrāq, Syria, Armenia and Egypt."[48] The waning Islamic militancy of the government not only resulted in great, heretical revolts (such as Bābak's and Mazyār's), but also emboldened the neighbouring infidels outside of the Dār al-Islām, who, encouraged also by the growing political weakness of the central government, seized the military initiative on the borders.[49] Furthermore, whereas during the reign of al-Muʿtaṣim Byzantine incursions would incur reprisals, officially directed and planned by the caliph (see for instance the Byzantine raid of 223/838 and Muʿtaṣim's energetic and aggressive response to it),[50] already by the time of al-Mutawakkil this was no longer so.[51] In fact, we find the border campaigns being led almost entirely by private *ghāzīs*,[52] and the Byzantines striking back hard at the Muslims.[53]

He replied: 'I say he is an infidel [*kāfir*]. '" (*ibid.* p. 353) ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak is reported to have said: "Verily, let us relate the words of the Jews and Christians, but let us not be capable of relating the words of the *Jahmiyya*." (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'* , vol. 8, p. 401).

47 See Sourdel, "La politique religieuse," pp. 8-11. This claim is, however, disputed by Melchert ("Religious Policies," pp. 330-331).

48 Ismail, "Sāmarrā'," p. 10.

49 For instance, in the year 241/855f Egypt was raided by Christian Nubians; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 77; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 203-206.

50 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 55 and pp. 56-71 respectively.

51 See e. g. the enormous Byzantine attack of 238/852f (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 193-195), which caused great damage but was not responded to at all, at least by the authorities (one jailed patriotic Muslim did break his bonds, gather some fighters and kill some Byzantines, but this was by no means a coordinated – and certainly not a governmentally sponsored – reprisal).

52 See for instance the raids of several Muslim *ghāzīs* in 246/860 (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 219); these *mutaṭawwiʿa* appear to be trying to compensate for Muslim weakness at the center. The major exception was Waṣīf's *ṣā'ifa* campaign of 248/862f (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 240-244) which was, however, ordered by al-Muntaṣir not for religious purposes, but rather in order get Waṣīf out of the way and detached from his supporters in the army camps (this is stated outright by Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 240). The sole exception to this general lack of caliphal involvement in *ghāzī* activities seems to have been the summer raids led by Balkājūr, a Turkish general who was active at the same time that ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī, one of the famous *ghāzīs* of the time, was carrying out his activities (See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 89, 93), during the 240s and 250s/850s and 860s. It seems, however, that his job was designed more for public show than for serious raiding activity. This

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The sources depict a definite sense of frustration among the Muslim populace at the several defeats of Muslim border raids in these middle years of the ninth century,[54] the most stinging of which occurred in 249/863 when a coordinated Byzantine effort trounced the Muslims and killed several very prominent *ghāzīs*. As a result of this particular defeat, the outraged populace rioted in Baghdād:

> When news concerning the death of ʿUmar b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Aqṭaʿ and ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā al-Armanī reached the people of Baghdād, Sāmarrāʾ and the rest of the nearby Muslim cities – the two were strong defenders of Islam, men of great courage who elicited enormous praise along the frontier districts they served – people became exceedingly distressed. Their hearts were heavy, especially because one had died so quickly after the other. Moreover, they had already been appalled by al-Mutawakkil's death at the hands of the Turks and by the way [in which] the latter assumed control over the affairs of the Muslims. The Turks killed any caliph they desired to kill and appointed in his stead whomever they wished, without reference to the religious authorities and without eliciting the opinion of the Muslims. The populace (*al-ʿāmma*) of Baghdād gathered, shouted out in protest and called for action …
>
> At that time, the wealthy people of Baghdād and Sāmarrāʾ spent great amounts of their money to supply those setting out for the frontiers to fight the Byzantines. Masses of people came forward from al-Jabal, Fārs, al-Ahwāz and other districts in order to participate in the raids against the Byzantines. We received no information that the central authorities were prepared to send a military force against the Byzantines on their own account in those days, despite the actions of the latter against the Muslims.[55]

In short, the government was perceived as failing in one of its primary religious obligations; and private citizens were obviously not successful in taking up the burden.[56]

Furthermore, not only infidels, but also non-Sunni versions of Islam were flourishing. The Shīʿites were engaged in active unrest – in 250/864 there was a

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view finds support in two salient facts: first, his summer campaigns do not seem to have accomplished much; and, second, the fact that we find him involved in political activity rather than raiding after the death of ʿAlī b. Yaḥyā. A good case in point is Balkājūr's excursion to the *thughūr* in 251/865, not primarily in order to raid (although he is said to have conquered "a cave" [*matmūra*] and to have returned with much booty and a group of Byzantine prisoners; see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 164), but rather to coerce the citizenry to switch their allegiance from al-Mustaʿīn to al-Muʿtazz; see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 149.

53 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 207, 261; Mutawakkil does in the former case send his general – in 244 – to avenge the damage the Byzantines inflicted (p. 210), but, again, this raid does not seem to have accomplished much.

54 See e. g. the failed raid of 253/867 related in Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 19, p. 11, in which many of the Muslim participants are captured or killed.

55 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 262; tr. George Saliba, *The Crisis of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, pp. 10-11. On al-Armanī and his death see also al-Yaʿqūbi, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 2, p. 496.

56 See e. g. the raid of 253, when Muḥammad b. Muʿādh led a *ghazw* in area of Malatya, was beaten and imprisoned (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 183).

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major Zaydī revolt in Kūfa,[57] followed closely by the ascendance of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd in Ṭabaristān.[58] As the 250s/860s progressed, the situation with the Zaydīs became ever more grave. In 250/864 the Zaydīs had taken over the major city of Rayy after beating a caliphal army;[59] although the Ṭāhirids succeeded the following year in driving the Zaydīs out of Rayy,[60] the very next year the latter returned to attack the city, killing and taking prisoners; they left only upon the payment of a danegeld of 1,000,000 dirhams.[61] Simultaneously, another ʿAlid revolt was taking place in Qazvīn, adjacent to the Caspian areas.[62] To put the finishing touch on all this turmoil, the caliphate was at that time embroiled in a fierce civil war, after the Turks had deposed al-Mustaʿīn and appointed al-Muʿtazz as caliph in his place. Al-Mustaʿīn, however, had managed to flee to Baghdād, where he received the strong support of most other groups – the *abnā'*, the Ṭāhirid ruler, and many others.[63] The situation deteriorated still further when yet another series of ʿAlid revolts occurred: one again in Kūfa,[64] another in Mecca,[65] and a third in Qazvīn and Zanjān; the Qazvīnī revolt succceeded in expelling the Ṭāhirids from the area.[66]

The most long-lasting and threatening heterodox revolt, however, was undoubtedly that of the Zanj, the black slaves of the ʿIrāqī salt marshes, which came very close to – and whose declared aim was – annihilating the ʿAbbāsid caliphate.[67] This uprising, which began in 255/869 and ended only in 270/883f, saw at

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57 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 266-269; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 126-130; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, pp. 61-62; this last author, however, is not sure whether the revolt occurred in 250/864 or 248/862.

58 For the beginnings of his rise, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 130-134; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 271-276; Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 224-245; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 66. According to Ṭabarī, al-Ḥasan found such a warm welcome in Ṭabaristān due to widespread hatred of the brutality and misrule of the Ṭāhirid provincial governor, Sulaymān b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir, and his cronies. (p. 261)

59 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 134; Masʿūdī, vol. 5, p. 67. On the defeat of the army see Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 265.

60 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 163.

61 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 177; 2,000,000 according to Ṭabarī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 372). See also George Miles, *The Numismatic History of Rayy. Numismatic Studies No. 2*, New York, 1938, pp. 129-130.

62 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 67.

63 On the civil war see Ṭabarī, the entire entry for the year 251/865f; civil disorder continued under al-Muʿtazz – see al-Yaʿqūbi, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 2, p. 502. On the *abnā'*, see P. Crone, "ʿAbbāsid *Abnā'* and Sassanid Cavalrymen," *passim*. There had also been tensions between the Turks and the *abnā'* regarding al-Mustaʿīn's appointment as well; see al-Yaʿqūbi, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 2, p. 494.

64 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 328-329; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 164-165; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, pp. 67-68.

65 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 346-347; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 165-166.

66 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 346. The timing of the Qazvīnī revolt is somewhat unclear – it may be identical to the one cited *supra*.

67 Although according to Masʿūdī the opinions of the leader were Khārijite rather than ʿAlid (*Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 103); he claims that they used the characteristic Khārijite cry, "*la ḥukma*

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various times the lion's share of the province of ʿIrāq and parts of Khūzistān, including the major cities of Baṣra, Wāsiṭ and al-Ahwāz, under rebel control.[68]

The aftermath of the civil war over the deposition of al-Mustaʿīn in the early 250s/860s was also marked by widespread disorders on the part of the army, who engaged in looting, pillage, infighting, and outright rioting.[69] Positions were bought and sold by bribes to the Caliph's Turkish handlers.[70] Shortly thereafter, in 253/867, a serious Khārijite revolt began in the Jazīra, and the Turkish general sent to put it down was instead killed by the rebels.[71] This revolt proved in the end a long-drawn out affair, and debilitating for both the caliphal and Ṭāhirid reputations: "[Musāwir] defied the government, such as it was, for a decade."[72]

This was, in fact, not the first Khārijite revolt in the Jazīra during these troubled years; already in 248/862f. a man named Muḥammad b. ʿAmr al-Shārī had rebelled in the Mawṣil area.[73] But by the time of Musāwir's revolt the frequency of the various heterodox revolts, together with their increasing success, must have been viewed by Sunnis with positive alarm. By 253/867 Musāwir had defeated yet another Caliphal army.[74] It is perhaps not coincidental that this is the same year in which Ibn al-Athīr begins his account of the Ṣaffārid dynasty, and in which the Ṣaffārids begin to intervene in Ṭāhirid dominions in which Khārijites were active.[75] Yaʿqūb was preoccupied with Khārijites, and as we shall soon see spent much of his career, particularly his early career in Sīstān, fighting them.

Obviously, all of the above-mentioned ailments of the Islamic body politic – civil wars, ʿAlid and Khārijite revolts, incursions by Infidels, unruly behaviour on

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illā li'llāh" (for the association of this phrase with the Khārijites, see G. R. Hawting, "The significance of the slogan *lā ḥukm illā li'llāh* and the references to the *ḥudūd* in the traditions about the fitna and the murder of ʿUthmān," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41 (1978), pp. 453 – 463).

68 See A. Popovic, *La révolte des esclaves en Iraq au IIIe/IXe siècle*, particularly chapters 3 and 4, on the actual course of the fighting and the military achievements of the rebels. Apparently, more extreme Shīʿite groups were also becoming active from the time of Muʿtamid; see Massignon's somewhat alarmist article, "Recherches sur les Shiʿites extrémistes à Bagdad à la fin du troisième siècle de l'Hégire," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938), N. F. 17, pp. 378 – 382, which, though exaggerated in its estimate, does nevertheless make a valid point.

69 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 353-354; 356-360; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 173-174.

70 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 372.

71 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 374-376; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 174; 179-180. For Khārijite revolts during the third/ninth century, see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Le Vicende del Haragismo in Epoca Abbaside," *Revista degli Studia Orientali* 24 (1949), pp. 31-44, *passim*, but especially pp. 41, 43.

72 W. Thomson, "Kharijitism and the Khārijites," *The MacDonald Presentation Volume: A Tribute to Duncan Black MacDonald*, Princeton, 1933, p. 379.

73 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 255; it seems that this man was not finally killed until 252/866 (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 176), although he is also reported as having been killed and crucified under the year of his rebellion (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 160).

74 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 184; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, pp. 94-95.

75 See *infra*.

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the part of governmental troops – can also be found in other periods. What is unique to this time is how concentrated and severe all of these problems were; their magnitude and combination, occurring simultaneously and in conjunction with growing political weakness at the center, and coupled with the general perception that the caliph was not free and that anarchy reigned at the heart of government, was both quantitatively and qualitatively different from everything that had come before since the ʿAbbāsid revolution.[76]

This rising tide of ills – particularly caliphal and Ṭāhirid weakness in the face of the Musāwir rebellion and ʿAlid activities – must surely have alarmed all pious Muslims, including the militantly Sunni *Mutaṭawwiʿa*. If Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth did indeed belong to that group, as we are positing, then these social, religious, political, and military ills go a long way towards explaining why Yaʿqūb began to be active outside Sīstān and the border marches where and when he did. Yaʿqūb's career, as we shall see, demonstrates that he was not the man to let Khārijites and ʿAlids operate unchecked. Moreover, we must always keep in mind that the rise of the Ṣaffārids was simply a more spectacularly successful example of a process that was transpiring all over the Islamic empire as a result of the disintegration of caliphal power: "The collapse of the ʿAbbāsid government … forced many local Islamic communities to work out ways of dealing with the near anarchy which accompanied this collapse."[77]

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[76] Notwithstanding Ṭayyib al-Ḥibrī's attempt to interpret the post-Mutawakkil events as some kind of literary construction (*Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashid and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 208-215), it is difficult indeed to avoid characterizing the Sāmarrā' period as "the abyss of political chaos and financial breakdown …", as indeed he himself does (*ibid.* , p. 214). In the present writer's judgment, although it is certainly helpful to try to reconstruct the possible biases of the sources, it is doubtful that the authors of those sources were consciously striving for literary effect and symmetry to the extent that they actually falsified historical occurences on a truly grand scale. There is a fundamental fallacy in attempting to apply modern French theories of literary criticism to medieval historical writing, however tendentious that writing may be, which is, quite simply, that those who consciously see themselves as attempting to write history cannot be equated with or compared to avowed writers of fiction, because there is an underlying framework of empirical fact to which they must more or less adhere. In other words, al-Mutawakkil was indeed murdered, and there were in reality Turkish commanders who exercised a great deal of power at this time; unfortunately it seems as though al-Ḥibri assumes a priori that any negative report about the behaviour of the foreign Turkish soldiery must be false. That is, he assumes, with no empirical basis for doing so, that the Turks must be receiving unwarranted negative treatment in the sources solely because of all the nasty traditions about and prejudice against them, rather than exploring the possibility that they did indeed contribute materially to the destruction of the early Islamic caliphate and that the negative treatment and apocalyptic traditions (which latter Ḥibri almost completely omits, incidentally) arose *as a result* of their destructive social role at this time.

[77] R. Mottahedeh, "Administration in Būyid Qazwīn," D. S. Richards, ed. , *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, p. 33. Mottahedeh is referring the early fourth century A. H. rather than the mid-third; but the description is even more apposite for the earlier period, when the political disorder was both unprecedented and more glaring.

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The place that witnessed the most Khārijite activity during the years of ʿAbbāsid weakness was undoubtedly Sīstān. As we have already seen,[78] the Khārijites had long been active in Sīstān. Trouble erupted again in Sīstān due to the appeasement-oriented policies of the Sīstānī governor appointed in 230/844f, Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Bashīr b. Saʿīd al-Qūṣī. We are told of him that he was "conflict-averse; he never warred upon the Khārijites and agreed with everyone, so that the Khārijites grew in power during his reign."[79] It was possibly for this reason – Ibrāhīm's tolerance of Khārijites, and the general problem of the government's not taking action against them – that several revolts began against Ibrāhīm's governor in Bust, either in that year or the following one (231/845f); first, one led by Ghassān b. Naṣr (whose brother, at any rate, was an *ʿayyār*);[80] subsequently,

> … another man from Bust revolted, called Aḥmad Qawlī. And the *ʿayyārs* and heroes [*mardān-i mard*] gathered to him – those from Bust and from Sīstān – and made war upon Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī [son of the governor Ibrāhīm al-Qūsī], but Aḥmad Qawlī was defeated.[81]

Of course, another possible cause of these revolts could have been simple misrule, particularly given the sequel: "Ibrāhim recalled his son from Bust and sent Yaḥyā b. ʿAmr there … and he treated the people kindly, so that they were quiet towards him [*ārām giriftand*]," thus implying that they had previously been unquiet due to poor behaviour on the part of the governor. In any case, Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī soon made the error of sending his unpopular son back to Bust, where he was promptly ejected by a man named Bashshār b. Sulaymān, who behaved none too well himself. This Bashshār was then in turn defeated by a seemingly widespread revolt led by the *ʿayyār* brother of our first insurrectionist, Ghassān b. Naṣr:

> Then Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr – the brother of Ghassān b. Naṣr b. Mālik – revolted in Bust; many people gathered to him from Sīstān and Bust, and Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and the *ʿayyārs* of Sīstān strengthened him … They killed Bashshār, and Bust and its environs submitted to Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr.[82]

Subsequent to this event, "Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr became powerful in Bust, with regard to weapons, soldiers, treasure and men; but all of his military strength derived from Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and the *ʿayyārs* of Sīstān."[83] Note that it is now *all* of Ṣāliḥ's strength, not just a portion of it, that comes from Yaʿqūb and his *ʿayyārs*.

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78 *Vide supra*, Chapter 2.
79 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 190.
80 Ghassān himself was quite probably a religiously motivated fighter as well; we are told that he was killed by the Khawārij, against whom, given his sibling's track record, he may very well have been fighting (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 197).
81 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 191-192.
82 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 192.
83 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 193.

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It is worth pausing here for a moment to ask ourselves: Who were these *ʿayyārs*? What was their aim and motivation? It would appear from our sources, both in their usage of the term and from the context, that in this period and place the word *ʿayyār* was virtually equivalent to the word *mutaṭawwiʿ*. That is, Sunni religious warriors fighting for the faith, apparently in organized bands; as it were, private, non-governmental brotherhoods of *ghāzīs*. The context supports this theory: the *ʿayyārs* first appear fighting the Khārijites, and are always subsequently seen battling either what from a Sunni point of view would be considered heresy (i. e. Khārijism, Shiʿism), outright infidels or outrageously bad (what in Islamic legal parlance would be called "oppressive" – *ẓālim*) government; which last, moreover, inevitably involved encouragement of the first two elements as well.

It is important to understand that in Islamic thinking the elements just mentioned are complementary aspects of one goal: the establishment of God's rule, the only legitimate rule, on earth, by force if necessary. Whereas Jihad is the struggle to impose God's rule outside of the Dār al-Islām, its necessary complement is the imposition of God's rule within the Dār al-Islām. This continual proper ordering of Islamic society itself is the duty known as *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar* – the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil.[84] In short, the *ʿayyārs* and the *mutaṭawwiʿa* shared an identical function and goal: working towards the triumph through armed struggle of God's rule on earth as interpreted by Sunni Islam, both within and outside of the borders of Islamdom; and, as we saw earlier and shall see again further on in this work, neither the *ʿayyārs* nor the *mutaṭawwiʿa* limited themselves to one or the other kind of pursuit to the exclusion of its complement. Both *ʿayyārān* and *mutaṭawwiʿa* engaged extensively in both *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* **and** Jihad, no doubt viewing the two as one and the same activity.

More convincing, however, than the demonstrable equivalence of function is the specific equation of the two terms *ʿayyār* and *mutaṭawwiʿi* in many of our sources. Ibn al-Athīr makes this connection explicit on several occasions when writing of Yaʿqūb al-Ṣaffār and his brother ʿAmr, both of whom were, of course, *ʿayyārān*. Thus he states, for instance, when Yaʿqūb took control of the Sīstāni *ʿayyārs* from Dirham,[85] that he "became the one in charge of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*'s

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[84] The inextricability of the two duties, *Jihād* and *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*, has been noted by Michael Cook (*Commanding Right*, p. 490), who calls striking "the frequency with which the scholars yoke forbidding wrong to holy war," noting that many *ʿulama'* subsume these two duties under the same category – for instance, "For Ibn Taymiyya, the 'completion' of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* is by *jihād*." (*ibid.* , p. 491, n. 179)

[85] Who is described as "Dirham b. al-Ḥusayn, of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*," Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 64. One of our earliest sources also refers to Dirham as "a man of the *Mutaṭawwiʿa*," Abū ʿAbdallāh Ḥamza b. al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahāni, *Taʾrīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ waʾl-anbiyāʾ*; Beirut, 1961, p. 169. This source, according to the author (p. 172), was written in 351/962, during the Sāmānid period. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Nūḥ is named by al-Iṣfahānī as the

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affairs" (*mutawallī amr al-mutaṭawwiʿa*).[86] Masʿūdī, too, writes that Yaʿqūb was a *mutaṭawwiʿ*, and also confirms that he was fighting the Khārijites:

> We have already related in [Masʿūdī's lost work] *Akhbār al-zamān* Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's beginnings in Sijistān; his being a coppersmith in his youth; his going out with the volunteer fighters [*mutaṭawwiʿa*] of Sijistān to fight the Khārijites [*ḥarb al-shurāt*]; his joining Dirham b. Naṣr; and his [attacking] Shādraq [? *sic*], the city of the Khārijites from among those bordering Sijistān …[87]

One of the more intriguing sources to draw this equivalency is Ibn Khallikān, whose account is on the whole extremely hostile toward the Ṣaffārids (in the very heading of his entry he accuses Yaʿqūb of being a Khārijite;[88]and even claims that Yaʿqūb carried banners with crosses on them in battle against the caliph[89]), but who obviously lifted whole passages unchanged from earlier historians whose views of the Ṣaffārids were somewhat more positive:

> Abū Yusuf Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār al-Khārijī:
>
> Historians have already written many accounts of this man and of his brother ʿAmr, the countries which they ruled, the people whom they killed, and their battles with the Caliphs, so I have chosen from this [corpus] that which I have set down on these pages … The beginning of his career [was] that he and his brother ʿAmr were coppersmiths in their youth, and they manifested asceticism [*al-zuhd*]. There was a man from among the

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most recent ruler of Khurāsān. True to our theory, this source is very brief and carefully neutral in its description of the Ṣaffārids

86 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 185.

87 Masʿūdī, *Muruj*, vol. 5, p. 227. It is rather strange that if Yaʿqūb's epithet "al-Ṣaffār" so clearly meant that he had previously been a coppersmith, Ibn Khallikān should feel it necessary in his biographical entry to write that "Yaʿqūb was called al-Ṣaffār because he used to work copper." This raises the interesting question of whether the term "al-Ṣaffār" could possibly have meant anything else at the time – for instance, whether it could not have been some sort of religious designation. One's doubt regarding the alleged copper-working meaning of the epithet is strengthened by other factors: 1) The fact that being a coppersmith or (as imputed to ʿAmr) a mule-driver was clearly meant to be highly denigrating; this can be seen from Ibn Khallikān's story (*loc. cit.*) in which a Ṣaffārid partisan is asked what ʿAmr's profession was, and refuses to answer. He reveals that ʿAmr had been a muleteer only after the latter's death. 2) It is peculiar, if these professional affiliations are indeed accurate, that this was apparently not widely known at all – otherwise, why does anyone need to inquire? 3) There are too many *ʿulamāʾ* with the epithet "al-Ṣaffār" who crop up in the *ṭabaqāt* literature for the period of the third-fifth Islamic centuries – almost exclusively Ḥanbalite or Shāfiʿite, and frequently Sufi to boot; *vide* e. g. Abūʾl-Barakāt Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī, *Nuzhat al-alibbāʾfī ṭabaqāt al-udabāʾ*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Samarraʾī, Baghdad, 1970, pp. 217-218; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 57, 77, 134, and so forth.

88 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 345. The word could, of course, also mean rebel or, as Martin Hinds has shown ("Kufan Political Alignments," p. 3), "one who goes out and acquires *sharaf* on his own account, without his having possessed a long-standing [*sharaf*]."

89 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 358. This is the passage we mentioned *supra*. Note how closely it follows Ibn al-Athīr's account, *infra*, with the significant omission of the religious terms employed by the latter to describe Yaʿqūb.

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> people of Sijistān who was famous for *taṭawwuᶜ* in fighting the Khārijites, called Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naḍir [*sic*] al-Kinānī al-Mutaṭawwiᶜī, from Bust. [After Yaᶜqūb and ᶜAmr] became his companions and gained his favour, the *khawārij* who are called *shurāt* killed the brother of the afore-mentioned Yaᶜqūb. [Afterwards] Ṣāliḥ made Yaᶜqūb his deputy, then Ṣāliḥ perished, and Dirham b. al-Ḥusayn was appointed in his place, also from among the *Mutaṭawwiᶜa*; Yaᶜqūb became with Dirham as he had been with Ṣāliḥ [i. e. his deputy].[90]

This passage makes clear that not only were these *ᶜayyārs* volunteer fighters; they also seem to have practiced asceticism of some sort. This latter observation is confirmed by further information which Ibn Khallikān relates of the *ᶜayyār* leader Dirham b. Naṣr, information that would seem to indicate the latter's religious devotion:

> Then the lord of Khurāsān [i. e. the Ṭāhirid ruler] strove with Dirham until he overcame him; he was carried to Baghdād, and imprisoned there. Then he was freed and served the central authorities, and [afterwards] stayed at home practicing religious duties [*nusk*], the Ḥajj, and self-denial [*al-iqtiṣād*].[91]

This idea of religious asceticism is further reinforced by Ibn al-Athīr's description of Yaᶜqūb and his brother ᶜAmr:

> Yaᶜqūb and his brother ᶜAmr were both coppersmiths in Sijistān. They manifested abstemiousness and asceticism (*al-zuhd wa'l-taqashshuf*).[92] In their day there was a man from among the people of Sijistān who proclaimed volunteer fighting for religion (*taṭawwuᶜ*) in fighting the Khawārij, who was called Ṣāliḥ al-Mutaṭawwiᶜī. Yaᶜqūb became his companion (*ṣāḥabahu Yaᶜqūb*), fought by his side, and enjoyed his favour, so that he made him his deputy. Then Ṣāliḥ died, and another man, Dirham, took his place; Yaᶜqūb became with Dirham what he had previously been with Ṣāliḥ before him. [i. e. his deputy][93]

Ibn al-Athīr's description is significant, for it is highly unusual for him to describe political figures in religious terms.[94] Furthermore, Ibn Khallikān confirms the volunteer fighter portrait further in his entry, when he quotes from a different, earlier source, which – though silent on the question of Yaᶜqūb's ascetic practices – confirms the basic *ghāzī* picture: "Yaᶜqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār re-

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90 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aᶜyān* , vol. 5, p. 345.

91 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aᶜyān* , vol. 5, p. 345.

92 These are both notoriously difficult terms to translate or closely define. For a discussion of *zuhd*, see L. Kinberg, "What is meant by *zuhd*?" *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985), pp. 27-44. Muḥammad al-Fāḍil b. ᶜĀshūr's *al-Taqashshuf fi'l-Islām*, Tunis, 1383/c. 1963, never manages to arrive at a definition at all.

93 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 184-185. Note the similarity in the final phrases to Ibn Khallikān's work; the latter freely admits that he lifted this part from Ibn al-Athīr.

94 Note, for instance, that in his euology of the Sāmānid ruler Ismāᶜīl b. Aḥmad (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 5), he does not use this religious terminology; Ismāᶜīl is described as "intelligent, noble, well-behaved toward his subjects, forbearing [*ḥalīman*]. …" In other authors as well, the phrase "*zuhd wa-taqashshuf*" is normally applied to religious figures – see e. g. al-Dhahabī's biography of the *faqīh* Ismāᶜīl b. Yaḥyā b. Ismāᶜīl b. ᶜAmr b. Muslim al-Faqīh (*Taᶜrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 67).

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mained stationed in Sijistān, fighting the Khārijites and the Turks, and manifesting that he was a *mutaṭawwiʿ* …"[95] Yet another author employs a description in which both the ascetic and the holy warrior aspects are explicitly referred to: "[Yaʿqūb] and his brother ʿAmr used to work in copper, but then they became ascetics [*fa-tazahhadā*] and waged *jihād* together with Ṣāliḥ the *muṭṭawwiʿī* who was fighting the Khārijites."[96]

There are also further, early accounts from the mid-tenth century which both use "*mutaṭawwiʿ*" as an equivalent term for *ʿayyār*, and expressly attribute a religious mission to these people:

> There was a man in this area, known as Dirham b. Naṣr, who had with him a large group which manifested the religious merit of *ghazw* and combating the Khārijites. So these brothers [i. e. Yaʿqūb and his siblings] went with the group of [Dirham]'s companions and made for Sijistān, whose governor on behalf of the Ṭāhirids, Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn [al-Qūṣī], was feeble. And he [presumably, Yaʿqūb] alighted at the gate of the city, where Dirham b. Naṣr was proclaiming that he was of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, and that he aimed to fight the Khārijites as a pious deed [*muḥtasib*^{an}]. So he won over the people and they submitted to him [Iṣṭakhrī: until they inclined toward him]. He entered the city, then went out of it to one of the outlying areas and did not cease [his activities] until he had taken possession of the countryside.[97]

Perhaps the most precious account of Yaʿqūb which has come down to us is that of Yaʿqūbī, who actually lived during Yaʿqūb's time and whose chronicle ends just before Yaʿqūb's rift with the Caliph. What we have in his account, therefore, is a vision of Yaʿqūb and his *ʿayyārs* as viewed by Yaʿqūb's exact contemporary, before the ʿAbbāsids and Sāmānids blackened the Ṣaffārid name. Yaʿqūbī writes the following:

> A group of the Khārijites and others in Khurāsān revolted, and the *shurāt* in Khurāsān grew strong until they were on the point of taking over Sijistān; but Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth arose, who is known as al-Ṣaffār, a man of courage and intrepidity, and asked Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir to permit him to go out [to fight] the *shurāt* and gather the *mutaṭawwiʿa*. [Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir] gave him permission to do this, so he went to Sijistān, and expelled those Khārijites who were in it …[98]

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95 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 345.

96 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 513. See also *idem. Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 203, where he states that both Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr "manifested *zuhd*. Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naḍir the *muttawwiʿī* was renowned for fighting the Khārijites, and the two [brothers] became his companions until he died. Then Dirham b. al-Ḥusayn the *muttawwiʿī* took his place, and Yaʿqūb remained with him."

97 Abū'l-Qāsim b. Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, part 2, pp. 419-420. This is the exact wording used in al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Masālik al-mamālik*, p. 246, upon whom Ibn Ḥawqal based his own report (see Miquel's entry "Ibn Ḥawqal" in EI^2, vol. III, pp. 786-788). For an evaluation of the position of both see Johannes Kramers, "L'influence de la tradition iranienne dans la géographie arabe," *Analecta Orientalia*, Leiden, 1984, vol. 1, pp. 151-156.

98 al-Yaʿqūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. II, p. 495.

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This account – the sole contemporary account – is valuable on several fronts. First, it demonstrates that Yaʿqūb was at this time viewed as a legitimate ruler rather than a usurper. Yaʿqūbī's prettification of his rise to power is evidence of this: the issue is not whether or not governors or sub-governors asked permission before or after seizing power; the point is that someone considered to be a legitimate ruler is always presented as having been given a priori sanction for his seizure of control.[99] Second, this source confirms that before Yaʿqūb's rift with al-Muʿtamid, he was viewed not only as a legitimately appointed political leader, but also as a religious warrior. Indeed, even his enemies seem to have recognized this quality in him; thus the ousted Ṭāhirid subgovernor of Herāt, the Sāmānid Ibrāhīm b. Ilyās b. Asad, describes Yaʿqūb as possessing "a *ghāzī* nature" [*ghāzī tabʿ*].[100]

In fact, there are only two accounts of Yaʿqūb's *ʿayyār* beginnings[101] – both problematic for various reasons – which give a negative view of those origins:

> Layth was a Sīstānī coppersmith [*ravgar*] lad.[102] When he became proud, he did not think much of copper-smithery, but entered into the exercise of arms and *ʿayyārī* and highway robbery [*rāhzanī uftad*]. But in that road he travelled the path of justice; [he] would never take anyone's money wholly, and sometimes he gave some of it back. One night he picked the treasury of Dirham b. Naṣr b. Rāfiʿ b. Layth b. Naṣr b. Sayyār [*sic*] who was governor of Sīstān, and took out an unparalleled amount of money. Then something lustrous fell. He imagined that it was a gem. He picked it up and touched it with his tongue: it was salt. The claim of the salt before him overcame the grasping for money, and he left the money.[103] In the morning, the treasurer was struck with wonder, and called upon Dirham b. Naṣr. Dirham proclaimed an amnesty for the thief, in order for him to appear. Layth al-Ṣaffār went before him. Dirham asked him: "What was the

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99 *Vide infra*, Chapter 6, for the parallel whitewashing of the Sāmānid rise in Transoxiana.

100 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 209.

101 Muḥammad b. Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Khwāvandshāh Mīrkhwānd's *Taʾrīkh rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, Tehran, 1959-1960, vol. 4, p. 11, contains a very negative account, but since it never acknowledges Yaʿqūb as having been an *ʿayyār* at all, the fact that it omits this term from its clearly anti-Yaʿqūb discussion actually militates in favour of attributing a positive denotation to the term.

102 The irresolvable question of Yaʿqūb's social origins will not be dealt with here. Suffice to say that while he was almost certainly not a descendant of old Persian royalty, as the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* would have us believe (pp. 200-202), he also was probably not the impecunious ragamuffin that some of the more negative accounts try in belittlement to depict him as being (e. g. *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī*, p. 354). Skladanek has offered an ingenious explanation for the Sasanian descent tradition; namely, that Sulyamān b. Hamūn b. Kaykhusraw, an actual member of the Sasanian royal family, was in business with Yaʿqūb's father (Skladanek, "External Policy and Interdynastic Relations under the Ṣaffārids," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 36 [1974], p. 134). A more likely explanation is the tendency, already noted and disparaged by al-Bīrūnī, to invent glorious ancestors for one's self or one's heroes; see J. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Edinburgh, 1999, p. 21.

103 According to Middle Eastern social norms, once one has tasted of another's salt, he is that person's guest and is therefore bound by the rules of hospitality. Al-Layth's sense of honor, therefore, would not have allowed him to rob Dirham after having tasted of his salt. The author is indebted to Roy Mottahedeh for this elucidation.

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> cause, when you had power over the money, that you did not take it?" Layth related the story of the salt and its claim [*ḥaqq-i ān*]. He pleased Dirham, so [Dirham] gave him the status of a *chāvashi* at his court. He became next to him in rank and place, and was the army commander [*amīr-i lashkar*] …[104]

This account, however, is suspect as a work of history for several reasons. First, it relates obviously apocryphal anecdotes.[105] Second and far more importantly, it is riddled with factual errors – Yaʿqūb is the one whom all other sources report as having had dealings with Dirham b. Naṣr, not al-Layth; the account mistakenly places Dirham before Ṣāliḥ, whom it then erroneously makes into Dirham's son; Dirham is confused with Naṣr-i Sayyārī, the actual governor of Sīstān in the 220s/late-830s, and then further confounded – and compounded – with the famous rebel Rāfiʿ b. al-Layth, and so forth. Third, the source itself is post-Mongol. This means not only that it therefore very strongly toes the ʿAbbāsid – Sāmānid line, without apparently transmitting any earlier material, but also that its view and definition of *ʿayyārī* may very well derive from much later social conditions not applicable to our period.[106] It seems, though, more likely that the author was simply pro-Sāmānid and anti-Yaʿqūb, in view of the little-known fact that he describes Sāmān, the eponymous founder of the Sāmānid dynasty and an important political figure, as having himself been an *ʿayyār* before becoming governor of the town of Ashnās.[107]

The second negative account is really more of an admixture; on the one hand, Gardīzī was unapologetically pro-Sāmānid, writing in the Ghaznavid court (which had taken over – literally, including administrative personnel[108] – from the Sāmānids in the mid-11th century,[109]) and basing himself upon a work written by Sallāmī, a Sāmānid courtier.[110] On the other, he attempts to give an accurate historical account together with his pro-Sāmānid stances; thus, while denigrating Yaʿqūb (referring, for instance, to Yaʿqūb's entire rule as "the *fitna* of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth"), the author seems forced to acknowledge the latter's outstanding personal qualities:

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104 Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfi Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzida*, p. 270.

105 This tends to be a problem generally with the *Tārīkh-i guzida*, whose author's literary taste and historical method seems to bear much in common with Notker the Stammerer's. Note, though, that if this account were correct, Yaʿqūb would have been a courtier's son.

106 Unlike in the case of Ibn Khallikān, for example, who not only cites earlier authors but actually informs us whom he is citing and when he is doing so. In fact, the traditions about Yaʿqūb themselves became so distorted over the ages that by the time we reach Mīrkhwānd, in the fifteenth century A. D. , he does not mention *ʿayyārī* at all; Yaʿqūb has been fully transformed into a mere highway robber. (*Ta'rīkh rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 11)

107 *Tārīkh-i guzida*, p. 376.

108 See Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 57. He notes that "These former Sāmānid officials strengthened the continuity in traditions and techniques between the Sāmānid and Ghaznavid administrations."

109 See *EI*^{2}, *sv* "Gardīzī" (Barthold), vol. II, p. 978.

110 Barthold, "Zur Geschichte der Ṣaffāriden," *op. cit.* , in his discussion of sources.

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> Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth b. Muʿaddil was a low-born man from the villages of Sīstān, from Dih Qarnayn. When he came to the city he chose the craft of copper-smithery and learnt it, and was a hired labourer for the pay of fifteen dirhams a month. The reason for his rise in importance was this: that he was a devoted and professed *javānmard*[111] and associated with gentlemen [*bā mardomān khurdī*]; moreover he was prudent and manly, and treated all his relatives respectfully. In every occupation that he found himself, among the practitioners of that occupation he was a leader. After being a coppersmith he became an *ʿayyār*; after that he turned to robbery and highway banditry; then he became a *sarhang*,[112] and a mounted soldier, and in this manner by degrees he arrived at the amirate. He acquired the first *sarhang*-ship of Bust from Nāṣir b. Ṣāliḥ, then acquired the amirate of Sīstān.[113]

Note that even here, *ʿayyārī* is not equated with banditry; on the contrary, it is explicitly listed as a profession different from that of robbery, although Gardīzī gives no definition of what the profession entails.

To continue with Yaʿqūb's activities, however: after joining Ṣāliḥ's band, Yaʿqūb then set about fighting the Khārijite threat in Sīstān, which had flared up yet again in an insurrection led by a man called, appropriately, "ʿAmmār the Khārijite."[114] Yaʿqūb's boss Ṣāliḥ soon ran into trouble with the actual governor of Sīstān, who sent troops to fight him. It is not clear from our sources whether the conflict between the governor and the *ʿayyārān* stemmed from an understandable alarm on the part of the governor at having such a large and autonomous militia roaming freely about his province – which actually seems to have been a quite normal situation in this time and place, odd as that may seem to a modern reader; or whether there was not, rather, a more fundamental underlying tension between the two sides due to the governor's friendly attitude toward the Khārijites.[115]

After several battles, in each of which the victory went to a different side, a dramatic confrontation took place in 234/854 in Sīstān's capital city, Zarang:

> Ṣāliḥ, at night, came into the city with Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and [the latter's] two brothers, ʿAmr and ʿAlī; Dirham b. Naḍir [*sic*]; and Ḥamīd b. ʿAmr … and the *ʿayyārs* of Sīstān [*ʿayyārān-i Sīstān*] were with them … The next morning, Ṣāliḥ came out, and the party which he had gathered to him in Sīstān – and there were many men there – assembled. Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī gathered the *shaykhs* and the *fuqahā'* and armed the soldiers of the army – both infantry and cavalry – then sent [three of the elders] to Ṣāliḥ to ask, "For what business did you come here?" … Ṣāliḥ replied: "I have come to fight the Khārijites. Today or tomorrow I shall go; there is no war between Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī and me."[116]

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111 Best translated as "chivalrous person." For an excellent definition of this word, written in the century after Gardīzī's description, *vide* Kaykāvūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Vashmgīr b. Ziyār, *Kitāb-i naṣīḥat nāma, maʿrūf ba-Qābūs nāma*, ed. Amīn ʿAbdulmajīd Badavī, Tehran, 1963, pp. 179-183, discussed *infra*, Chapter 7.

112 A position of military commander; *vide* Bosworth's definition, *s. v.*"Sarhang," *EI²*.

113 Gardīzī , *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī*, pp. 354-355.

114 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 193.

115 *Vide infra*.

116 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 194-195.

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Thus, we see an insistence on the part of the *ʿayyār* leader that he is trying to go about his business of fighting heretics, and has no desire to become entangled with the governor, although his group obviously had poor relations with the governor to begin with. Nevertheless, Ṣāliḥ apparently began to evacuate his militia from the city at the behest of the religious leaders.

Matters did not end here, however; on his way out of Zarang Ṣāliḥ ran into the fully armed forces of Ibrāhīm, which were obviously preparing to attack him. Although this entire army fled at the sight of the *ʿayyārs,* barricading themselves into the citadel, this attempted surprise attack opened hostilities; Ṣāliḥ ordered the *ʿayyārs* to enter the citadel and kill the would-be attackers.[117] Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī, the governor, now showed his true colors (and perhaps the true source of the tension between himself and the *ʿayyārs* of Sīstān) by promptly fleeing to ʿAmmār the Khārijite, "with whom he had an agreement."[118]

In reaction, Ṣāliḥ seized Ibrāhīm's treasury and was consequently in danger of being killed by an infuriated mob. At this point, we see the first of many connections between *ʿayyārs* and prominent Sunni *ʿulamā*'; Ṣāliḥ's reaction to the chaotic situation was to visit the prominent juriconsult ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān,[119] who told him, "You should not have done this." Ṣāliḥ explained that he had wanted to avenge the blood of his brother, who had been killed by the Khārijites, and, tellingly, adds "I therefore thought that you would help me in this."[120] In other words, he must previously have had enough contact with the scholar both to have cared what the latter thought and to be under the impression that the juriconsult would be on his side; he would also seem to be implying that he had no doubt that ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān would support anti-Khārijite enterprises of this type.

Ibrāhīm promptly returned to the city with a Khārijite army; Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and two other commanders were sent out to battle them with the black banners of the ʿAbbāsids prominently displayed, while the erstwhile governor and his Khārijite supporters carried the white banners of religious dissent.[121] When the populace, both notables and the common people, saw those white banners, on account of the Khārijites they assisted Ṣāliḥ and the *ʿayyārān* rather than their official governor, fighting a fierce battle; many people from both sides

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117 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 195-196.

118 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 196.

119 See *infra*, Chapter 4, for biographical information on ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, who was one of the leading religious figures in Sīstān at this time.

120 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 196-197.

121 On the ʿAbbāsid meaning attached to the color black see Khalīl ʿAthāmina, "The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Banners and Slogans in Medieval Islam," *Arabica* 36 (1989), pp. 307-326. Regarding the color white, Farouk Omar has noted that "white was a symbol of resentment and defiance to [*sic*] the authority of the *Musawwida.*" ("The Significance of the Colours of Banners in the Early ʿAbbāssid [*sic*] Period," *ʿAbbāsiyyāt: Studies in the History of the Early ʿAbbāsids*, Baghdad, 1976, p. 149)

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were killed. In the end, ʿAmmār and Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusayn al-Qūṣī retreated in defeat, and Ṣāliḥ's power grew.[122] The salient point of this encounter is the light it sheds on the politico-religious motivation of the *ʿayyārān*, for it not only explains why the *ʿayyārān* had been fighting this governor, but also shows that it was the *ʿayyār* force of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, rather than the Ṭāhirid-appointed governor, who represented religious orthodoxy in Sīstān at this time.

The Ṭāhirid ruler of Khurāsān, Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh, continued supporting Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī, while Yaʿqūb continued battling the Khārijites and Ibrāhīm's forces in general. According to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, quarrels broke out, however, between Yaʿqūb and the Sīstānī *ʿayyārs* on the one hand, and Ṣāliḥ and his supporters from Bust on the other.[123] As a result of the clash between the two sides, Dirham b. Naṣr took control of the province, "and the army of Sīstān also at this time swore allegiance to Dirham b. Naṣr. Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and Hamīd-i Sarnavak became his commanders (*sipāhsālārān*), and they continually battled against the Khārijites and his [i. e. Dirham's] opponents."[124]

Again according to the same source, Dirham's mind then became poisoned with jealousy of Yaʿqūb, "when he saw the valour [*mardī*] and bravery of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, and the reverence toward him in the hearts of the people." Dirham therefore plotted to kill Yaʿqūb, who, however, got wind of the plot and launched a preventive *coup d'etat* against Dirham. And thus it was that Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth became the ruler of Sīstān in 247/861.[125]

This is one of the versions of events which ascribes the most active role to Yaʿqūb in the deposition of Dirham; many alternative versions, while agreeing with the basic outline of this story, attribute the ousting of Dirham to others. According to the early author Ibn Ḥawqal,[126] for instance, Yaʿqūb ended up assuming leadership not through a military coup but rather because Dirham's companions, the leadership of the militia, deposed Dirham in favour of the more talented Yaʿqūb. Note that Dirham, according to this account, maintained good relations with Yaʿqūb until much later, after he had spent several years in

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122 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, *loc. cit.*

123 Although the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* attributes the break between Yaʿqūb and Ṣāliḥ's bands solely to rivalry (p. 197), the fact that Ṣāliḥ had no qualms shortly thereafter about seeking refuge with the pagan Zunbil and inciting him to war against the Muslims (p. 205) suggests that there may have been a deeper underlying cause for the rift. Also, note that Mīrkhwānd's account seems to mix up the Ṭāhirid campaign to oust Dirham with a campaign to oust Ṣāliḥ; in this latter scheme of events, there was no falling out between Ṣāliḥ and Yaʿqūb (*Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 11).

124 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 198-199.

125 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 199-200.

126 Ibn Ḥawqal wrote in the mid-tenth century, but based himself largely on the even earlier writer al-Iṣṭakhrī. Uniquely, he claims that Yaʿqūb began his career as "a slave to one of the coppersmiths of Sīstān." (Ibn Ḥawqal , *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, vol. 2, p. 419) As far as the present author has been able to ascertain, this imputation of a slave origin to Yaʿqūb is probably an original invention intended to denigrate.

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Baghdad (at which time, as we shall see, he apparently joined the Caliph's side in the latter's imbroglio with Yaʿqūb):

> Dirham b. Naṣr would proclaim that he was of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, and that he aimed to fight the Khārijites as a pious deed [*muḥtasib*^{an}]. So he won over the people and they submitted to him and he entered the city. He then went out of it to one of the outlying areas and did not cease until he had taken possession of the countryside. The Khārijites fought him; they had a chief known as ʿAmmār b. Yāsir. He [Dirham] entrusted Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth with the task of fighting him, so he fought him and ʿAmmār was killed. No important matter would befall them without its being entrusted to Yaʿqūb, [such that] this power increased to him in accordance with his wishes [*ʿalā mā yuḥibbuhu*],[127] and he won over the companions of Dirham b. al-Naṣr to the point where they appointed him to the leadership, and rule became his. Dirham b. Naṣr after this became one of Yaʿqūb's band and his companions, and he [Yaʿqūb] remained friendly towards Dirham b. Naṣr until the time when [Dirham] asked permission of [Yaʿqūb] to go on the Ḥajj; [Yaʿqūb] permitted him to do so, so he went on the Ḥajj and remained in Baghdad for a while, then returned to ʿAmr [b. al-Layth] as a messenger of the Commander of the Faithful, and Yaʿqūb killed him.[128]

Ibn al-Athīr, interestingly, presents two accounts of the transfer of power from Dirham to Yaʿqūb, both of which portray Yaʿqūb in a most favourable light. Ibn al-Athīr's first rendition is as follows:

> And in [this year – 237/851f.] a man from among the people of Bust, named Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naṣr al-Kinānī, gained mastery over Sijistān, and with him Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth. Then Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir became commander of [*amīr*] Khurāsān and recovered it [i. e. Sīstān] from his hands.
>
> Then there appeared someone there [i. e. in Sīstān] named Dirham b. al-Ḥusayn [*sic*],[129] of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, and gained mastery over [Sijistān]; but he was not the captain of his army, rather Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth was the commander of his army. When Dirham's companions saw his weakness and his impotence [as a military leader], they agreed upon Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, and they transferred the rule over them to him, because of what they saw of his organizational skills, his good policy, and his concerning himself with their affairs. When this became clear to Dirham, he did not contend with [Yaʿqūb] for rule, but rather surrendered it to him, and was deposed from [power]. So Yaʿqūb alone possessed power; he had command over the country, his might grew, and troops from every area sought him out [in order to join him]; and we shall, God willing, relate what became of his rule.[130]

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[127] The alternative understanding of this phrase would be, "*against* his wishes," in which case the passage would imply that Yaʿqūb had no active role at all in undermining Dirham.

[128] Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, vol. 2, pp. 419-420, more or less quoting from Iṣṭakhrī, pp. 246-247. The *Taʾrīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, p. 169, also agrees closely with this version of affairs.

[129] Ibn al-Athīr appears to be confusing Dirham's genealogy with that of the pro-Khārijite governor Ibrāhīm. Note, though, that the early *Taʾrīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ* (p. 169) also gives Dirham this paternity.

[130] Ibn al-Athīr, *loc. cit.* , pp. 64-65; repeated by Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 513, and *idem*, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 204. Even the anti-Ṣaffārid *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, vol. 4, p. 11, has preserved this version of events.

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Subsequently, however, the author gives us yet another recounting of these events, one in which Dirham is said to have lost his position simply due to his having been imprisoned by the stratagems of the Ṭāhirid governor of Khurāsān and removed from the scene:

> Then the lord of Khurāsān beguiled Dirham, when his rule had grown strong and his followers many, so that he defeated him, and sent him to Baghdād and imprisoned him there, then released him, and he served the Caliph in Baghdād.
>
> Yaʿqūb's rule grew strong after the taking of Dirham; he became the leader of the volunteer warriors for the faith (*mutawallī amr al-mutaṭawwiʿa*) in place of Dirham, and he undertook to war against the *shurāt*. He vanquished them, and killed many of them, so that he all but annihilated them, and he destroyed their villages. His companions followed him because of his cunning (*makrihi*), the excellence of his condition (*ḥusn ḥālihi*), and his opinions, with an obedience with the like of which they had never obeyed anyone before him. His might grew great, so that he made himself master of Sijistān; and he scrupulously obeyed the Caliph, corresponding with him, and acting upon his command. He made clear that it was his command to fight the *shurāt*, and he ruled Sijistān, regulated the roads and guarded them, and commanded the good and forbade that which is abominable [*amara bi'l-maʿrūf wa – nahā ʿan al-munkar*]; and the number of his followers grew.[131]

We see here both elements of Ibn Ḥawqal's story preserved – in the first version, that it was Dirham's own band which decided that Yaʿqūb was better fitted to lead the *mutaṭawwiʿa*; and in the second, the tradition that Dirham somehow ended up in Baghdad, either voluntarily or involuntarily.[132] Interestingly, even *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, which, like most later Persian works, is not very positively inclined toward the Ṣaffārids, has preserved elements of the traditions we just examined: namely, that Yaʿqūb was extremely successful in defeating the Khārijite *fitna*, and that "his companions and servants carried out his orders [so meticulously] that an obedience greater than that could not be imagined."[133] The most significant fact to be gleaned here, however, is that Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth is once again specifically declared to have been a *mutaṭawwiʿ*, occupied with commanding right and forbidding wrong.

In any event, in 247/861 Yaʿqūb became master of Sīstān, and aside from having to suppress the attempted coup d'etat of a disgruntled former associate, and possibly the deposed Dirham, he devoted himself to combating the Khārijites; indeed, we are told that "he would fight the Khārijites every day." Moreover, "he

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131 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 185; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 204. Ibn Khallikān as well (see *supra*) attributes Dirham's imprisonment to the Ṭāhirids, as does al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 204: "Then the *amīr Khurāsān* was victorious over Dirham, and sent him to Baghdād and jailed him, then freed him and he served the Caliph; then he became pious [*tanassaka*] and kept performing the Ḥajj, and remained in his house."

132 According to Ṭabarī, by the year 262/875f the caliph was using Dirham as his personal messenger to Yaʿqūb (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 516).

133 *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 11.

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summoned all the people [presumably, to proper Islam], and freed the prisoners and gave them robes of honor …"[134]

Yaʿqūb then sent a message to ʿAmmār the Khārijite which has given rise to a variety of interpretations.[135] In this message, which would appear to have been a masterly political manoeuvre, he states that the Khārijites had been able to thrive in Sīstān for so long a) on account of their opposition to the injustices of the governors sent to the province; b) due to their never having molested the Sīstānī inhabitants; and c) the pre-occupation of certain of the governors with *ghazw* against the neighboring infidels. Yaʿqūb then extends to the Khārijites a very remarkable appeal, one which is reminiscent both of the tactics of Abū Muslim in winning over opponents[136] and, even more, of the Prophet's strategy at Ḥudaybiyya (i. e. buying time from those he planned to destroy in order to consolidate his own power to the point where he could successfully do so).[137]

Yaʿqūb then proceeded to inform ʿAmmār that "Now the situation is entirely different; if you want to remain in peace, get out of your head the [idea of] the commandership of the faithful." Yaʿqūb then enjoins ʿAmmār: "Arise with your army and make one cause with us; for we have arisen with true faith [presumably, in contrast to the previous governors of Sīstān], so that we shall never give Sīstān to be trampled again under anyone." In other words, Yaʿqūb is appealing to the Khārijites on the grounds of piety and good government, the lack of which had formed the most common complaints against previous governors of Sīstān and fueled Khārijite appeal among the broader populace. Although the meaning is ambiguous and lends itself to more than one interpretation, it would seem that Sīstān is mentioned in this context not because of local particularism, but merely as the part of the Dār al-Islām in which these men hold power; this seems all the more likely because ʿAmmār, far from being a Sīstānī particularist, is specifically stated to have been aspiring to the universal caliphate, and Yaʿqūb is trying to talk him out of his delusions of grandeur. That there are actually pan-Islamic undertones in this missive seems all the more likely in view of Yaʿqūb's

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134 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 202.

135 Thus, for instance, Bosworth (*The History of the Ṣaffārids of Sīstān*, p. 78) again understands Yaʿqūb to have been motivated by Sīstāni particularism: "both he and ʿAmmār represented, in different ways, the interests of the people of Sīstān against the officials of the alien Ṭāhirids and ʿAbbāsids, whose rule had been tyrannical and directed at financial exploitation."

136 See M. Sharon, *Revolt: The Social and Military Aspects of the ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, p. 110. Like Yaʿqūb, Abū Muslim appealed to pious sentiments; according to the *Akhbār al-dawla al-ʿabbāsiyya* many contemplated defecting to him "because [Abū Muslim]'s support for the Qurʾān and the *sunna* was far stronger than Naṣr [b. Sayyār]'s." Yaʿqūb and Abū Muslim are also alike, of course, in their use of "*divide et impera*" strategies.

137 Even the Prophet himself adopted on that occasion, as has been noted, an "apparently lenient position" in which he accepted conditions which ran directly counter to "the very essence of his prophetic mission." M. Lecker, "The Ḥudaybiyya-Treaty and the Expedition against Khaybar," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984), p. 1.

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next statement: "If God gives [us] victory, we shall add to the province of Sīstān as much as we can. And [even] if this does not please you, do not bother anyone in Sīstān, but rather follow the custom of all the previous Khārijites [by not harassing the inhabitants of Sīstān]"[138]

Thus, although all of these statements could indeed be interpreted as an appeal to Sīstānī particularism – which interpretation, even if correct, begs the question whether an appeal to local particularism expressed Yaʿqūb's own philosophy or was merely a ruse used by Yaʿqūb because he thought such a sentiment would appeal to ʿAmmār – it could also very well be a simple statement of program. Yaʿqūb is announcing to ʿAmmār that he intends to set up a proper pious government in Sīstān – not because he is a local nationalist, but because that is the part of the Dār al-Islām in which he finds himself and for which he is therefore responsible – and he then intends to add presumably infidel territory to it, little by little. Furthermore, even assuming that Yaʿqūb was indeed appealing directly to Sīstānī particularist sentiment here, and that such an appeal arose from his own personal convictions rather than from a desire to appeal to ʿAmmār's, this in no way negates the fact that the rest of his discourse is religious. He is trying to convince the Khārijites to acquiesce; obviously, he will use more than one argument to that end. Moreover, it would appear to be an argument specifically tailored to his opponents in this particular case; as we shall see, this is a unique instance in Yaʿqūb's career of his making a Sīstānī appeal.[139]

The letter had its desired effect; not only did ʿAmmār promise to refrain from molesting anyone, but (aided by the fact that "Yaʿqūb's greatness began to become apparent, and he won many victories"[140]) thousands of Khārijites began defecting to Yaʿqūb en masse when they saw that he would not only give them an amnesty but even let them fight in his forces.[141] While penitent ex-Khārijites

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138 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 202-203.

139 Note that the reports of Ibn Mamshādh's poem do not pretend to any kind of Sīstānī (as opposed to Persian) particularism and, more importantly, are never claimed by any source to have been recited to Yaʿqūb. For a full discussion of this point, *vide infra*, Chapter 5.

140 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 204.

141 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 205. The repentance of the Khārijites was probably not so unlikely as it sounds; the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* tells us previously of a Khārijite man who of his own volition turned renegade and swore to "chase away all the Khārijites." (p. 184) The fact that so many of them were willing to defect merely strengthens the likelihood that, somewhat akin to contemporary followers of officially Marxist movements in obscure parts of the world today, many of whom turn to Communism without ever having heard of, let alone read, Karl Marx, the Sīstānī Khārijites were protesting against the corruption and irreligiosity of their rulers. Yaʿqūb's statement regarding his own "correct faith" seems to strengthen that hypothesis. It was, of course, also incumbent upon a good Muslim when fighting the *jihād* to invite his enemies to repent or convert. If the enemy acknowledged the error of his ways, he was to be welcomed (or welcomed back) into the Muslim fold (See e. g. Sulaymān b. al-Ashʿath Abū Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb al-sunan*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAwwāma, Mecca, 1419/1998, pp. 261-262; and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 68, no. 67: "The Prophet … said: I was commanded to fight the people until they would say: There is

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were acceptable, Yaʿqūb had apparently always aimed at finally defeating the die-hard Khārijites. By 251/865f. Yaʿqūb finally felt strong enough and secure enough to move against ʿAmmār the Khārijite, whom he killed and whose army he put to the sword. The remaining Khārijites, "broken-hearted," fled to the mountains of Isfizār and the Hindqanān valley.[142]

Thus, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's first activities concentrated on establishing order, particularly religious order, inside his home province, and on waging *jihād* against religious deviants, particularly Khārijites. From there it was a natural progression of events for a *mutaṭawwiʿ* to venture into nearby infidel areas, as well as adjoining Muslim areas which had come under Khārijite influence, most notably Herāt and Būshanj.

Indeed, throughout all of Yaʿqūb's history as Amīr of Sīstān, he continuously fought Khārijite heretics and non-Muslims, mainly in the areas known in the Islamic sources as Zābulistān and Kābulistān, ruled by the dynasties of the Zunbils[143] and the Kābul-Shāhs. These religiously benighted areas (at least from the Islamic standpoint) – part Buddhist, part Hindu, part old pagan, and even in parts already under Khārijite influence[144] – had long been a magnet for *ghāzī*s aspiring to fight for the faith and extend the borders of Islam. Whereas the Islamic histories tend to dwell on Yaʿqūb's activities within the borders of *Dār al-Islām*, frequently mentioning his activities among the infidels only cursorily, these infidel-oriented activities were at least until the mid-250s/early 870s unquestionably the primary focus of his career. Indeed, one source sums up Yaʿqūb's entire early career as follows:

> He urged the people of Sijistān to fight the Turks who were on the borders of Khurāsān with the Rutbil [*sic*] … so he raided them and was victorious over the Rutbil and killed him, and killed three [other] kings of the Turks, then returned to Sijistān. He brought back with him their heads together with thousands of other heads of them; and the kings who were around him feared him: the king of Multān, the king of al-Rukhkhaj, the king of al-Ṭabasayn and the kings of Sind.[145]

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no God but God, and when they said this their blood was protected from me, and their possessions …"). This is probably the best explanation for Yaʿqūb's otherwise inexplicable patience with people such as Muḥammad b. Wāṣil (*vide infra*), towards whom *realpolitik* and common sense would have dictated a less forbearing course of action; unlike in the case of Khārijite rank and file who, after repenting, could contribute to his war effort, it is difficult to see what Yaʿqūb's motivation could have been in leaving someone such as Muḥammad b. Wāṣil alive and free other than that of executing the religious obligation.

142 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 207.

143 This was apparently the title of the ruler of Zābul and Kābul. See M. Forstner, "Yaʿqūb b. al-Lait und der Zunbil," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 120 (1970), pp. 69-83.

144 Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids*, p. 103.

145 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 204*; idem. Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, pp. 513-514. The accounts go on to enumerate the magnificent presents Yaʿqūb sent from the plunder to the Caliph al-Muʿtazz.

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Even after he was drawn more heavily into the events transpiring in the central Islamic lands, campaigns in the East always remained an important part of his life; we are told that until the end, "Every year he would go on *ghazw* campaigns in the Land of the Infidels." After his disappointment in the ʿAbbāsids in the 260s/870s, in fact, he seems to have simply gone back to devoting himself full-time to raiding infidels.[146] Moreover, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, our most detailed source of information on Yaʿqūb, informs us that he raided in some very intriguing places, such as Byzantium and Ceylon, possibly in his earlier years, about which no other record is preserved in the Muslim sources.[147]

Yaʿqūb, therefore, as ruler continued to follow in the time-honoured tradition of border warfare for the greater Islamic good, beginning in the area around Bust (al-Rukhkhaj) in 249/863, whither Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr, who had been causing trouble in Sīstān in the previous year and had made an alliance with the pagan Zunbil, had fled. Yaʿqūb won a tremendous victory against the Zunbil's forces, but, supposedly, piously refused to take the elephants as booty, saying "I shall not take the elephants-for they are not fortunate: God remembers Abraha with an elephant."[148] He was, at least to some degree, successful in the subjugation and Islamization of these areas; in the words of one writer, he was active in the marcher areas ("*hind wa sind*") adjacent to Sīstān, "and [he] controlled these border areas and part of them were Islamized by Yaʿqūb."[149] The next few years were occupied with the afore-mentioned war against ʿAmmār the Khārijite (in 251/865), then with suppressing the governor Yaʿqūb himself had appointed in al-Rukhkhaj, who had revolted against Ṣaffārid authority (252/866).[150]

One should note that even at this early juncture, Yaʿqūb's career was in many ways remarkable. He had manifested a singular lack of interest in the trappings of

146 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 232.

147 See *infra*, Chapter 5.

148 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 206. Yaʿqūb is referring to Sūrat al-Fīl (Qurʾān 105:1-5), in which the *aṣḥāb al-fīl* are clearly not models that any good Muslim would want to emulate. The sūra has been interpreted as referring to a legendary expedition by a king or viceroy of Abyssinia, Abraha, to attack Mecca, supposedly in A. D. 570; there is very little historical evidence to support this legend (See Irfan Shahid, "Two Qurʾānic Sūras: al-Fīl and Quraysh," *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān ʿAbbās on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, Beirut, 1981, p. 435), especially in its chronological particulars (for revised dating see also M. J. Kister, "The campaign of Huluban: a new light on the expedition of Abraha," *Le Muséon* 78 (1965), pp. 425-428, *passim*; and L. I. Conrad, "Abraha and Muḥammad: Some Observations apropos of Chronology and Literary *Topoi* in the Early Arabic Historical Tradition," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50:2 [1987], pp. 225 – 240). The image presented here, in other words, whether true or not, is that Yaʿqūb did not want to commit any action in any way reminiscent of those impious ones, and therefore refused to take the animals to use in war. He also was not, as we shall see, the type of ruler who would be likely to keep elephants as a personal luxury item.

149 Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fārisī al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l–mamālik*, ed. M. J. De Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 1, Leiden, 1967, p. 247.

150 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 207-208.

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power – he minted no coins,[151] built no buildings (or at least none that the sources tell us about),[152] and pushed himself physically with constant campaigning. According to virtually all the information we have on Yaʿqūb's early career inside Sīstān, until this point, at least, Yaʿqūb had been fighting only those whom the Sunni Islamic mainstream of his time would have deemed to be religious deviants or infidels and their allies, either in his home province or in debatable marcher lands. If his career had ended here, he would undoubtedly be remembered only as he is portrayed by al-Yaʿqūbī, our sole surviving source dating from before Yaʿqūb's break with the caliph: as a pious and steadfast volunteer Sunni warrior; and, concomitantly, the *ʿayyārān* would also be defined as such by modern scholars. In 253/867, however, a new stage in Yaʿqūb's career began when he set out for Herāt and began to come into conflict with some of the major political figures of the central Islamic lands.[153]

In short, the sources for Yaʿqūb's early career present him and his *ʿayyār* followers – often explicitly so – as *mutaṭawwiʿa*. It was due to the conflicts which characterized the next stage of Yaʿqūb's career that a concerted effort was subsequently made on the part of the Sāmānid rulers and the ʿAbbāsid power behind the throne, the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq, to blacken Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's name and reputation – not because his political nature and aims had changed, but because political expediency now required that he be discredited. Since Yaʿqūb is history's most famous and best-documented *ʿayyār*, and the reputation of the institution of *ʿayyārī* has, to a large degree, been judged by Nöldeke and his successors in light of their interpretation of Yaʿqūb's career and actions, the ʿAbbāsid-Sāmānid attempt to portray Yaʿqūb as a lawless, greedy bandit has seriously distorted the modern scholarly definition of the phenomenon of *ʿayyārī* in general. As we shall see in the next two chapters, when the sources relating to Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's later, more famous career are subjected to scrutiny, this interpretation of the Ṣaffārid founder – and therefore of the pre-Saljūq *ʿayyārān* – collapses.

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151 See D. Tor, "A Numismatic History of the First Ṣaffārid Dynasty," *Numismatic Chronicle* series 7, vol. 162 (2002), pp. 293-314.

152 This is a characteristic of the Jihad-oriented at this time: "… they saw the expenditure of money on permanent structures [as] a deviation from the permanent *jihād* that they felt was the salvation of society … one literary by-product of this was the numerous traditions urging the believer to spend his money and his possessions in the pursuit of *jihād* …" D. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and *Jihād*," p. 82. *Vide supra*, Chapter 2, where al-Awzāʿī rejoices over his inheritance, because now that money can be dedicated to the Jihad.

153 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 208. Ibn al-Athīr first places the conquest of Herāt in 248/862f (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 120), probably following Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 255), then later (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 185) corrects himself.

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4. The ʿAyyār Versus the Government: The Ṣaffārids and the Ṭāhirids

> Why should we, in the compass of a pale,
> Keep law and form and due proportion,
> Showing as in a model our firm estate,
> When our sea-wallèd garden, the whole land,
> Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers choked up,
> Her fruit trees all unpruned, her hedges ruined,
> Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs
> Swarming with caterpillars?
>
> – *King Richard II*

We saw in the last chapter that the sources – even those overtly hostile to the Ṣaffārids – explicitly state that Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's early career as a Sīstānī *ʿayyār* was that of a volunteer Sunni holy warrior (*mutaṭawwiʿ*). It is now time to examine the more famous events of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's career, and to see if and how they fit in with this earlier holy warrior career; for, as we have seen, the common view of *ʿayyārān* was formed from a contextual definition, derived first and foremost from Yaʿqūb's biography, since he is by far the best-documented historical *ʿayyār*.

There were two flaws in this methodology, however; first, the source-base from which that definition was originally extrapolated was an extremely limited one: the very few works available to and utilized by Theodor Nöldeke in his brief sketch of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's career. Second, Nöldeke, in arriving at his view that Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth was a self-serving military adventurer, seems to have adopted uncritically Ibn Khallikān's particular interpretation of the events we shall examine in the next two chapters: Yaʿqūb's later military campaigns in the Islamic world outside of Sīstān, and, especially, the mere fact that he campaigned against the Ṭāhirids and the Caliph al-Muʿtamid.

In espousing this interpretation, Nöldeke ignored both the testimony that was available to him regarding the *mutaṭawwiʿ* nature of Yaʿqūb's activities, and the larger historical context. This larger historical context includes not only the political question of ʿAbbāsid-Ṣaffārid and Sāmānid-Ṣaffārid relations, but also the larger background of the collapse of the caliphate, with the ensuing political and religious chaos that event caused, and the rise of the independent Sunni volunteer religious warriors in reaction. In fairness, we should remember that not only was Nöldeke living before source-critical methodology became *de rigeur*, but that his sketch was undoubtedly never meant to bear the weight, as it has done, of defining all subsequent research on the subject.

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The primary source testimony that Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's *ʿayyār* career was essentially that of a volunteer holy warrior (*mutaṭawwiʿ*) allows one to interpret Yaʿqūb's later activities in a wholly new light. In these next two chapters we shall examine the evidence in order to demonstrate that the accounts in the sources support the holy warrior interpretation of Yaʿqūb's character and later career as well or better than they buttress the more commonly accepted negative one.

We shall scrutinize most intensely those two episodes which have been taken as the most serious evidence of *ʿayyār* lawlessness: namely, Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's overthrow of the Ṭāhirids, and, in the next chapter, his campaign against the Caliph al-Muʿtamid in ʿIrāq. In the process, we shall discover that the Ṭāhirid government had all but collapsed when Yaʿqūb finally intervened in Khurāsān; that Yaʿqūb waited many years before actually sweeping away the Ṭāhirids entirely; and that when he finally did assume control of the Ṭāhirid domains, it was at the invitation of the populace, including many Ṭāhirid relatives and leading supporters. We shall examine in detail who Yaʿqūb's supporters in the Ṭāhirid dominions were, in order to show that they were prominent clerics of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* camp, directly connected to the *mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition we traced in the second chapter of the present work.

This last discovery is extremely important, because it strengthens the Yaʿqūb-as-holy-warrior interpretation and correspondingly weakens the Yaʿqūb-as-reprobate one; strict Ḥanbalite clerics, particularly leading ones, tended not to support the latter kind of person, whereas they certainly did champion the former with great enthusiasm. The committed support which the sources record such men as having extended to the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyārs* during the reign of both Yaʿqub b. al-Layth and, subsequently, his brother ʿAmr, therefore weighs heavily in favor of the religious warrior interpretation of both Yaʿqūb and of *ʿayyārī* during the mid – and late-ninth century.

The Incursions into Ṭāhirid Lands

In order to understand why Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth expanded beyond the borders of Sīstān into Khurāsān, we must first understand the situation of the Ṭāhirid rulers of that province. The Ṭāhirid family were the hereditary governors of Khurāsān on behalf of the ʿAbbāsid caliphs between the years 821 and 873. All of the literary sources emphasize that, by Yaʿqūb's period, the Ṭāhirids had become dismally ineffectual in dealing with the various heterodox threats which had arisen in their dominions – most notably the Zaydī Shīʿites in the Caspian provinces and the Khārijites in the Herāt-Badghīs area.[1] Indeed, one scholar has even

[1] See e. g. Mīrkhwānd, *Tārīkh rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, pp. 8-9; for a detailed description of the woes of Ṭāhirid government, see infra. The Khārijite tendencies of the Herāt area are mentioned in Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-Arḍ*, vol. 2, p. 439.

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pointed out that the Ṭāhirids themselves can be suspected of having taken a rather philo-ᶜAlīd stance; not only were they none too zealous in putting down ᶜAlīd revolts, but it has even been suggested in explanation that they themselves may have harbored heterodox beliefs.[2]

The sources also inform us that as a result of this situation, many prominent figures in the Ṭāhirid state became thoroughly disenchanted with the dynasty, and were apparently casting about for someone to come save the sinking ship of state. Many respectable elements in Khurāsān, therefore, supported Yaᶜqūb's takeover of the Ṭāhirid state when that did eventually occur. Moreover, Yaᶜqūb showed a great deal of forbearance toward Ṭāhirid incompetence; for several years, he only went into specific trouble spots to clean up affairs, limiting his activities to local operations and usually leaving again. He did not ever make an attempt to take over the Ṭāhirid state as a whole, according to the sources, until after he had received appeals from leading figures – particularly religious figures – to do so.

In short, the sources support the interpretation that Yaᶜqūb was engaged in an attempt to restore the old unitary, orthodox Islamic order – and that, in the end (and it took him quite a long time to reach this point), he gave greater weight to this goal than to the formal legal recognition of the incompetent governors of a decayed dynasty who were, if not actively inimical to that welfare, at least not helping to further it. We must also remember that this was a period in which the very idea of political authority had been severely compromised and was arguably at its nadir; even caliphs were being deposed with alarming facility and frequency.[3] Viewed in the historical context of the prevailing political instability and turmoil of the mid-ninth century, it is perhaps more surprising that Yaᶜqub took several years to reach the conclusion that the Ṭāhirids were unresurrectable, than that he actually deposed them. We shall be returning to this question of proper Sunni behaviour toward authority later.[4]

That the Ṭāhirid dynasty was strikingly unsuccessful in managing affairs -and, in particular, in containing the heretical threats of Khārijites and Shīᶜite ᶜAlīds – there can be no doubt.[5] It is worth citing again the passage from Yaᶜqūbī's *Ta'rīkh* on Ṭāhirid decline, because it is our sole surviving contemporary source:

> When Ṭāhir died and Muḥammad his son was appointed governor – and on the day he was appointed he was young – a group of the Khawārij and others in Khurāsān revolted. The *shurāt* in Khurāsān grew strong until they were on the point of taking over Sijistān,

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2 Sourdel, "La politique religieuse," pp. 11-12.

3 Vide e. g. Kennedy, *Armies of the Caliphs*, pp. 137-141, for the murders perpetrated on a series of caliphs between 861 and 870.

4 *Vide infra*, Chapter 5.

5 On ᶜAlīd rule in the Caspian area see Madelung, "The Minor Dynasties of Northern Iran," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume IV: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 206-212, and *idem*. "Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī on the ᶜAlīds of Ṭabarīstān and Gīlān," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 26 (1967), pp. 17-57.

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> but Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, who is known as al-Ṣaffār, arose from among the people of courage and intrepidity (*ahl al-ba's wa'l-najda*), asking Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir to permit him to go out [to fight] the *shurāt* and gather the *mutaṭawwiʿa*. [Muḥammad] gave him permission to do this, so he went to Sijistān, and expelled those Khārijites who were in it, then marched to Kirmān; he did thus until he had cleansed the province of them. His prestige [thereupon] grew stronger, so [the Caliph] al-Mustaʿīn wrote to Muḥammad to make [Yaʿqūb] governor over Kirmān, and he established himself in it and he did good in the country.[6]

Thus, we see, first, that Yaʿqūb was aware for a very long time of Ṭāhirid incompetence before he finally felt compelled to act. Second, the source confirms that his campaigns were first and foremost a logical outgrowth of his unceasing war against the Khārijites. Moreover, we learn from Yaʿqūbī that Ṣaffārid actions were not, prior to his contretemps with the ʿAbbāsids, viewed at all negatively by his contemporaries, but, on the contrary, as good government; Yaʿqūb's early positions were, according to this account, held not by usurpation but by the express permission of, first, the Ṭāhirid governor of Khurāsān and then the Caliph. No doubt, this is a prettification of what actually occurred, in the same way that the usurpations of all rulers from this period onwards – Sāmānids, Ghaznavids, and Saljūqs – were glossed over or prettified by chroniclers; but this is precisely the point. Yaʿqūb's contemporaries **saw nothing wrong with his behaviour**, at least until he was so foolish as to pick a quarrel with the ʿAbbāsid al-Muʿtamid and not carry that quarrel out to its logical conclusion.

Later chroniclers, too, mention Ṭāhirid weakness; Ibn al-Athīr repeatedly highlights the Ṭāhirids' ineffectuality in controlling Khurāsān, particularly when it came to providing protection against what were in Sunni eyes religious deviants:

> In the meanwhile Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir became weak. Many of the districts which had paid their *kharāj* to him rebelled against him, [until] nothing remained in his hands but a small part of Khurāsān. [Furthermore], most of that was in a state of sedition, going to war together with those who had taken over its [i. e. Khurāsān's] areas, and the Khārijites who were causing havoc in its districts; and [Muḥammad] did not have the capacity to control them. This was the reason for Yaʿqūb al-Ṣaffār's gaining mastery over Khurāsān …[7]

The Khārijite problem in particular, of course, would have drawn Yaʿqūb. Even scholars who follow the traditional school in their interpretation of Yaʿqūb's career have noted the relationship between the early incursions and Yaʿqūb's pursuit of Khārijites; Bosworth has remarked of Yaʿqūb's first expansion into Khurāsān:

> At the outset, this involved in large measure punitive and retaliatory raids by Yaʿqūb against the Khārijite bands which had been afflicting the Sīstān countryside and which

6 Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh al-Yaʿqūbī*, vol. 2, p. 495.
7 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 248.

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> had even attacked Zarang itself, working from the old-established Khārijite centres in Badghīs and Quhistān …[8]

In fact, even a pro-Zaydī source, which one would expect to have opposed Yaʿqūb because of his campaigns against al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, mentions the weakness of both the Ṭāhirids and the caliphate when discussing Yaʿqūb's conquest of Ṭabaristān:

> In this time that the caliphs and Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh were occupied with [the Zanj rebellion], many fitnas arose in Khurāsān, and *runūd* and *ʿayyārān* operated openly; on every side someone rebelled, and the most fortunate of all was Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār …[9]

This source, interesting for its mention of *ʿayyārān*, must be related to warily for several reasons, first and foremost its inaccuracies: for instance, according to all the earlier sources Yaʿqūb held power by caliphal and Ṭāhirid patents at least until his suppression of the Ṭāhirid dynasty; and the Zanj rebellion began only in 255/869, long after Yaʿqūb's power had already become well-established. Its seeming contempt for *ʿayyārān*, as well, dates of course from the thirteenth century, and therefore sheds little light on our time; for Ibn Isfandiyār, indeed, the fact that Yaʿqūb was an *ʿayyār* may, in his time, merely have been further confirmation that the Ṣaffārid was simply a scoundrel. There is yet another possibility, however: that Ibn Isfandiyār's attitude is not the result of a shift in the meaning of the word *ʿayyār*, but rather an embodiment of the Shīʿī view of this Sunni phenomenon; the *ʿayyārs* were not kind to the Shīʿīs during the pre-Mongol centuries.[10] The report is important, however, because it shows that even a source hostile to the Ṣaffārids has preserved the historical memory, confirmed by other, earlier sources, that Ṭāhirid and caliphal control were at a nadir in Khurāsān at this time.[11]

It cannot be emphasized enough that Caliphal control was at this point at a nadir not only in Khurāsān, but everywhere: the caliphs were virtual prisoners of the overmighty Turkish soldiery, and the nine years between 861 and 870 witnessed the murders of four caliphs in succession. There was, in other words, not only no effectual government in Khurāsān, but not even any overlord to whom to turn in order to intervene. The problem of the Khārijites in particular, which

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8 Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids*, pp. 108-109.

9 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabarīstān*, p. 245. *Runūd* – another under-researched term – is conventionally held to have been a pejorative designation: "thief" or "vagabond." Note again, as we saw with the word "*ʿayyar*" in Chapter 1, however, the element of errancy or wandering implied in the latter definition.

10 Even the most cursory reading of the great chronicles covering this period will show that the *ʿayyārs* were actively involved in the sectarian civil wars between the *Sunna* and the *Shīʿa* at this time, on the Sunnī side. For a discussion of the phenomenon in late Buyid times, see *infra*, Chapter 8.

11 In fact, the only source which does not make a derogatory comment in reference to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's abilities is the *Taʾrīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, which does, however, mention several of the rebellions raging in his territories (p. 170).

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certainly did not respect provincial borders, therefore became Yaʿqūb's by default.

Yaʿqūb was apparently reluctant to intervene in the neighboring province; for, although he must surely have noticed the turmoil next door from the time of his accession to the governorship of Sīstān, it was not until 253/867, as an extension of his anti-Khārijite campaigns in nearby areas, that Yaʿqūb made any incursions into Khurāsān proper. In 253/867, however, Yaʿqūb invaded Herāt, where "he gave security and safety to the people of Herāt, so that they set their hearts upon him," then defeated the Ṭāhirid general sent to fight him.[12] Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir then sent messengers with a letter and gifts to Yaʿqūb, together with the patent for Sīstān, Kābul, Kirmān and Fārs and a robe of honour; "and Yaʿqūb was patient [*ārām girift*] and returned [to Sīstān]."[13]

The mention of Yaʿqūb's patience here naturally raises the question: patient with what? Our hypothesis is that Yaʿqūb was giving yet another chance to the Ṭāhirids. Apparently, they had asked him to leave Herāt – and the historical fact is that he promptly complied with the Ṭāhirids' request, despite his having just defeated their army; no obstacle stood in the way of his assuming direct control of the area at this point – yet he did not. Nor did he appoint a governor of his own, either; the local history of Herāt squarely places Yaʿqūb's assumption of full control of the city in 256/870.[14]

This is hardly the behaviour of an unscrupulous expansionist; there is no evidence that Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir had the military capacity to enforce his request in 867.[15] On the contrary, we are specifically told (by an anti-Ṣaffārid source, no less) that Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir was too weak to confront Yaʿqūb, and that he therefore sent him to Kirmān in the hope of then being able to betray and depose Yaʿqūb in his home base of Sīstān while the latter was away fighting Khārijites in Kirmān:

> After two years [Yaʿqūb] gained mastery over the rulership of Herāt. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir Dhū al-Yamīnayn was the governor of Khurāsān. In himself he had no power to resist [Yaʿqūb]. He wanted [therefore] to overcome him by ruse, which [intention] he arrived at due to the waxing of Yaʿqūb's fortune [*dawla*].[16] Muḥammad sent Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir to Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth with a friendly message, and gave him the government of Kirmān so that in the absence of Yaʿqūb, perhaps he could liberate Sīstān. Yaʿqūb was glad of this ... [and] he went and freed Kirmān. Muḥammad

12 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 208.

13 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 209.

14 Muʿīn al-Dīn Muḥammad Zamchī al-Isfizārī, *Rawḍāt al-jannāt fī-awṣāf madīnat Harāt*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim Imām, Tehran, 1338/1959, vol. 1, p. 383.

15 *Pace Rawḍat al-ṣafā'* (vol. 4, p. 11), which claims not only that Yaʿqūb apparently invaded Khurāsān at some earlier point (no date is given, but this alleged incident clearly occurred before 253/867, because that latter date is given afterwards as the time when he conquered Herāt and then Kirmān), but also that Yaʿqūb retreated because he had "no choice."

16 *Dawla* is another tricky work to translate; it could mean "turn [of the wheel of Fortune]," or simply "dynasty." For a discussion of the term see M. Sharon, *Black Banners*, pp. 19-27.

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> Ṭāhir, in the absence of Yaʿqūb, sent an amīr named Qāsim with a great army to liberate Sīstān.[17]

This unique account goes on to say that Yaʿqūb defeated the Ṭāhirid army. While it is not at all certain that the factual occurrences happened precisely as stated (this is the only source to claim that the Ṭāhirids attempted to overthrow Yaʿqūb militarily in Sīstān while he was away doing their bidding in Kirmān, and it is a late one),[18] what is important here is the writer's understanding that Yaʿqūb was stronger than the Ṭāhirid ruler, and that the latter did not like this fact, and was therefore scheming against Yaʿqūb.[19]

According to an even more intriguing tradition, Yaʿqūb restored – or at least freed, in obedience to Caliphal orders, the Ṭāhirids of this area whom he had taken prisoner in the fray:

> The Amīr of Khurāsān at this time [253/867] was Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn al-Khuzāʿī, and his representative over [Herāt and Būshanj] was Muḥammad b. Aws al-Anbārī. [The latter] went out to fight [Yaʿqūb] with a mobilization [*taʿbi'a*], [with] great courage, and fine attire. His battle went well until Yaʿqūb employed stratagems upon him, and interposed between him and the entrance to the city, which was Būshanj. [Then] Muḥammad b. Aws withdrew, defeated. It is said: No one battled [Yaʿqūb] with a better fight than Muḥammad b. Aws. Yaʿqūb entered Būshanj and Herāt, and these two cities passed into his hands. He [also] vanquished a group of the Ṭāhiriyya, who were related to Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn al-Khuzāʿī, and he carried them [away] to Sijistān, whereupon the Caliph al-Muʿtazz Billāh sent to him [someone] known as Ibn Balʿam, a Shīʿite man, with a message and a letter, so he freed them.[20]

One can only imagine what Yaʿqūb, if he was indeed, as the sources declare, a Sunni holy warrior, must have felt upon receiving a Shīʿite as the emissary of the Sunni caliph. In any case, it is instructive that Yaʿqūb left Herāt in obedience to Ṭāhirid – or caliphal – wishes. Yaʿqūb is said to have sent, before departing, a letter to the Sīstānī religious figure ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān,[21] ordering him to recite the prayers and *khuṭba* for Yaʿqūb, which he did for three Fridays in Yaʿqūb's absence.[22] This episode provides the first instance – it will be far from the last – of

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17 Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 371.

18 Other writers, such as Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 346), say that the Ṭāhirids sent an army to battle Yaʿqūb in the Herāt area at the time of his conquest of it.

19 In this context, the following words are apposite: "Even when the account gives every indication of being fanciful, there is beneath the story line the kernel of an historical truth which awaits extrapolation. As a rule medieval historians seldom invented traditions out of whole cloth; they preferred instead to weave strands of historical fact into a larger fabric of their own making. In such fashion they seemed to authenticate their creations by drawing upon still vivid historical memories." J. Lassner, "Propaganda in Early Islām: The ʿAbbāsids in the Post-Revolutionary Age," *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980), pp. 82-83. There are, of course, certain verifiable elements in this account which are confirmed by other sources – for instance, that "Muḥammad Ṭāhirī fell into drink and rule passed from him."

20 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 346.

21 On this important figure, see *infra*.

22 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 209.

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Yaʿqūb's close personal cooperation with the most reputable orthodox religious figures.

Yaʿqūb's first action upon returning to Sīstān was to kill some of the remaining Khārijites and seize their property; we are told that the first poems composed in his honor were related to this incident. Four poems are cited in this connection in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*; these poems are very unusual for panegyrics in that they emphasize, not military prowess, but rather the religious nature of Yaʿqūb's rule. "Religion" does not in this case mean God as legitimizer of the dynasty, which is in fact a common theme in panegyrics,[23] but rather religion in a much deeper sense. The very first poem given (the only Arabic one) runs as follows:

> God has honoured the people of [both] town and country/ With the rulership of Yaʿqūb, possessor of excellence[24]and provisions/ His honor and his generosity have made people safe/ A shield from God upon the cities and the country.[25]

Yaʿqūb is being described as a God-sent protector, not just an outstanding ruler – a "shield of God."

The last two encomiastic poems given at this point in the same source are even more emphatic about Yaʿqūb's religious merits. One of those two was composed by a reformed Khārijite:

> Anyone who is not suspect in his heart says "yes" as a result of your *daʿawāt*[26]/ Life was cut away from ʿAmmār because the bold one opposed [you] until of necessity [or: consequently]/ he saw affliction, in his own body and soul; he walked about in the world, his body in anguish./ God made Mecca sacred to the Arabs/ He has made your covenant[27] sacred in the non-Arab lands [*ʿajam*];/ all who entered into it remained living; those who did not see this as holy, on the contrary, were annihilated.[28]

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23 Although the second paean's most salient lines do use God in such a fashion, stating that "From all eternity writing has stood upon the tablet [upon which God writes his decrees]: give rulership to Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth the great ruler," *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 210. Lazard translates this last word, *humām*, as "hero." (G. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persanes IXe-Xe siècles: fragments rassemblés, edités, et traduits*, Tehran, 1964, vol. 1, p. 54).

24 *Dhī'l-ifḍāl*. The latter word can also signify "doing good."

25 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān, loc. cit*. The text of this poem, as noted by Bahār, is corrupt. The author wishes to thank Wolfhart Heinrichs for helping to decipher the meaning of the problematic lines.

26 This word is of course, as noted *supra*, religiously loaded.

27 *ʿahd*. This could equally well mean "promise" or simply "time; period of time." The sense of a covenant or promise, however, is probably more fitting as a partner to the word *daʿwa*; an oath or a covenant with Yaʿqūb would be held sacred.

28 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 211-212. Lazard has translated the last line as "Those who enter into it [i. e. the covenant] have won eternity – and those who ignore it have fallen back into nothingness (sont retombés au néant)." (Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, vol. 1, p. 57). These poems quite probably constitute the earliest Persian poetry; the significance of this for Persian was quite inexplicably overlooked by Frye, "The New Persian Renaissance in Western Iran," *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi, Leiden, 1965, pp. 225 – 231, and *idem*. "The Sāmānids," *Cambridge History of Iran* IV,

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Here, of course, Yaʿqūb's mission is explicitly described as *sacred*. This choice is significant if only because it shows that the people writing poems for Yaʿqūb believed, presumably, that they would please him far more by talking about the sacred than about, say, the glorious; it conveys something of the atmosphere surrounding him.

This emphasis upon the sacred is even more apparent in the last poem of the series, which was obviously a piece of flattery. Again, though, how it chooses to flatter is significant, because in order to be successful flattery must be applied in an area that is of interest to its object: this poem describes Yaʿqūb himself, not as glorious, or magnificent, or generous, or puissant, but as a redoubtable warrior in the Prophet's cause. Thus, the poem reveals what a court sycophant thought Yaʿqūb valued, and what he perceived Yaʿqūb's aims to have been at that time – and his perceptions corroborate the holy warrior interpretation of Yaʿqūb. In Gold's translation, this poem runs as follows:

> Eve gave birth to no one, and Adam sired no one, with a lion's heart and a majestic nature such as yours. / You are the miracle of the Prophet of Mecca in deed, in thought, and in word. / And the Great Day will come, when ʿAmmār will boast: "I am the one who was [honored by being] killed by Yaʿqūb.[29]

Thus lauded, Yaʿqūb set out on his mission to Kirmān and Fārs. Although final Ṣaffārid conquest of the latter province – and coinage from there[30] – date only from 264/877f, the incorporation of Fārs was a long-drawn-out process which contradicts the common image of Yaʿqūb as a land-hungry, cynical self-aggrandizer. The conquest of Fārs in a sense developed from the continuing low-grade warfare in Kirmān. Both *ghāzī* ideology and concern for Kirmān's negative influence upon the stability of neighbouring Sīstān can plausibly be seen to have motivated clashes in Kirmān long before the Caliph or the Ṭāhirids appointed Yaʿqūb to take control of either of the two provinces.

We know from the geographers that there was a Khārijite problem in Kirmān.[31] Equally, we know that the people of certain areas of Kirmān were "cutting off the roads" in Kirmān and the Sīstānī desert.[32] Indeed, Bosworth says (without, however, drawing the present author's conclusions): "It was with the aims of reducing banditry and attacks on travelers by the mountain folk of Jabal Bāriz, in eastern Kirmān, … that Yaʿqūb … led punitive raids thither … The Jabal Bāriz was only imperfectly Islamized and Zoroastrianism lingered on there."[33] Another scholar

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pp. 144-148. In the latter work, Frye's blind spot toward the Ṣaffārids extends to the administrative and institutional spheres as well.

29 Milton Gold, *The Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 168.

30 See D. G. Tor, "Numismatic History."

31 E. g. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*, vol. 2, p. 325.

32 Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, pp. 163-164.

33 Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids*, p. 143. According to Mary Boyce, Zoroastrianism remained the dominant faith in Iran until well into the ninth century, after which time "the only places where Zoroastrians succeeded in maintaining themselves in any numbers were in and

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has characterized the Kirmāni campaign even more clearly as religiously motivated: "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith waged a war of extermination against the Khārijites of Kirmān …"[34] This latter characterization is more in line with at least one of our earliest sources, which speaks in the most plainly religious terms: it says that Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr conducted *ghazwas* there.[35]

Fārs was equally troubled for many years before Ṣaffārid involvement began there; already under the year 231/845f we are told of ineffectual caliphal attempts to subdue malefactors in the province: "In [this year] Waṣīf the Turk[36] arrived from the areas of Iṣfahān, al-Jibāl, and Fārs; he had gone in pursuit of the Kurds [*al-Akrād*] because they had been causing mischief in these areas."[37] In fact, it seems as though no one was really in firm control of the two provinces until Yaʿqūb was sent there. Just who precisely sent him is a matter of some dispute, which we shall deal with presently.

The situation in Fārs during the 860s was undeniably turbulent:

> The army of Fārs in this year [249/863] rose up against their governor al-Ḥusayn b. Khālid, rioted against him, and fell upon the money which he had brought, taking their pay from it. Their leader was ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Quraysh al-Bukhārī. Fārs [at this time] was attached to Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir; when the news [of the rebellion] reached him he appointed as governor ʿAbdallāh b. Isḥāq, who started out for [Fārs] with equipment and numbers [of soldiers], and when he neared it the army gave him their obedience. [ʿAbdallāh b. Isḥāq's] aim was Ibn Quraysh, for he abhorred him; [but] then he was satisfied with him, and appointed him to fight a group of the Khārijites in the area of Fursh and Rudhān, on the border between Fārs and Kirmān. So Ibn Quraysh went to the area of Iṣṭakhr, [where he] wrote to the army and informed them that he was rebelling against ʿAbdallāh b. Isḥāq, and they supported him in this because of the bad behaviour of ʿAbdallāh toward them, for he withheld their pay from them. [Then] ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn returned and attacked him, drove him out of his house, and seized his money and his possessions. Then they made ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn Amīr over them, [so] ʿAbdallāh retreated to Baghdād, betaking himself to Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Naṣr b. Ḥamza al-Khuzāʿī. When the troops of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn drew near, he did not make peace, but continued to avoid him in the rural districts of Fārs … [Meanwhile] the rule of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār [in Sīstān] grew strong, and he went to Fārs [in 254/868];

around Yazd and Kirmān." (M. Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977, p. 1). Iṣṭakhrī, too, notes that the area around Jabal Bāriz remained completely Zoroastrian until well into ʿAbbāsid times, and that its inhabitants were "evildoers" (*Masālik al-mamālik*, p. 164).

34 William Thomson, "Khārijitism and the Khārijites," p. 379.

35 Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. De Goeje, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, vol. 3, Leiden, 1906, p. 471.

36 One of the major Turkish strongmen controlling the caliphate during this period.

37 Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, vol. 7, p. 23. Defining these "Kurds" is a problem. Minorsky, "The Guran," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11:1 (1943), p. 75, long since pointed out that "The vague and indiscriminate use of the term Kurd goes back to early times … Arab and Persian authors of the tenth century A. D. mean by Kurds any Iranian nomads of Western Persia, such as the tent-dwellers of Fārs."

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> ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Quraysh had gained mastery over [the province], but he [Yaʿqūb] defeated his army, imprisoned him, and gained mastery over Fārs.[38]

The above narrative, although it does not enlighten the reader as to how or why Yaʿqūb went to Fārs and Kirmān, does inform us of the confusion rife in the area at the time, and that the person whom he set out to fight and defeat was not the province's appointed governor, but a usurper who had already overthrown the Ṭāhirid representative. Note, also, that whereas the turmoil in Fārs began in 249/863, it was not until 254/868 that Yaʿqūb finally intervened; in this case, at least, he cannot be accused of pouncing on the first timely pretext for intervention.

In fact, other sources inform us that Yaʿqūb went on his Kirmān-Fārs expedition only at the explicit behest of the Caliph. According to Ṭabarī, in the year 255/869, when Yaʿqūb was busy fighting in the Herāt area, he was sent the patent to Kirmān and Fārs by the Caliph.[39] Unbeknownst to him, the Caliph had also sent the very same patent to the governor of Fārs,[40] either because he was deliberately trying to set the two men against one another (as Ṭabarī claims), or simply because he was hoping that if he threw enough people at the problems in Kirmān and Fārs, sooner or later someone would successfully manage to control those places.

As soon as Yaʿqūb finished his Herāt operations, therefore, he turned first toward Kirmān, where he clashed with and defeated the general of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, after which he proceeded toward Fārs. His march into Fārs, therefore, was not an act of anti-ʿAbbāsid aggression; he held a caliphal patent for it. Other writers confirm this as well:

> In [this year – 255/869] Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār took possession of Kirmān, the reason for this being that ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn was ruling over Fārs, and he wrote to al-Muʿtazz asking for Kirmān, describing the failure of the Ṭāhirids, and how Yaʿqūb had taken possession of Sijistān. [Now] ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn was slow in remitting the *kharāj* of Fārs, so al-Muʿtazz wrote to him [giving him] the governorship of Kirmān, and wrote [simultaneously] to Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth giving him the governorship also, [thus] seeking to incite each of them against the other in order to remove the trouble of the loser from him, [thereby] remaining with only the other. Each one of the two professed obedience which did not really exist, and al-Muʿtazz knew this of them.[41]

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38 Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 497-498; continuation on p. 504. A very brief mention of this can be found in Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 144.

39 The entire episode can be found in Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, pp. 382-386; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 191-194; according to *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (p. 106) it was Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, rather than the caliph, who invested Yaʿqūb in 255/869 with the province of Fārs.

40 Ṭabarī refers to ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn as the "governor on behalf of the Ṭāhirids," but as we have just seen from the only source contemporaneous with the events, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn had actually rebelled against and expelled the Ṭāhirid representative.

41 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 191; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 382.

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Although the source is obviously skeptical regarding Yaʿqūb's loyalty toward al-Muʿtazz,[42] it positively asserts that Yaʿqūb was – albeit in bad faith – assigned the task of governing at least Kirmān. Ibn al-Athīr goes on to detail how ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn's general barricaded himself in the capital city, refusing to emerge and fight the redoubtable Yaʿqūb. The latter thereupon used his cunning[43] to lure ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn's general into battle, in which Yaʿqūb won a resounding victory.[44]

There is an anecdote told in this context which serves to illuminate the somewhat grim and fanatical devotion of Yaʿqūb to his cause. According to this story, while Yaʿqūb was shackling the opposing commander with the fetters that had been intended for the Ṣaffārid leader, he noticed a wound upon the man's arm.

> [Yaʿqūb] said to him: 'What is this, O Ṭawq?'[45] [Ṭawq] replied: 'May God prosper the Amīr! I found it to be hot so I opened a vein. ' [Yaʿqūb] called to someone who was with him and ordered him to remove his boot from his foot. He did so; and when he had pulled it off of [Yaʿqūb's] foot crumbs of dry bread scattered from the boot. [Yaʿqūb] said: 'O Ṭawq! This boot of mine has not left my foot for two months, [with] the bread inside it from which I ate; and I did not weigh down a bed [*viz.* Yaʿqūb had not slept in a bed for two months], while you sat in drink and entertainment! With such preparation you wished to fight me and wage war against me!' … Then he entered Kirmān and gained possession of it, and it became one of his provinces together with Sijistān.[46]

Once again, the image being depicted accords well with the *mutaṭawwiʿ* interpretation of Yaʿqūb.

After conquering Kirmān Yaʿqūb then proceded to take Fārs; as we saw, according to at least two of the most reliable sources, at explicit Caliphal or Ṭāhirid command. But even if Yaʿqūb had not held the patent for Fārs, it would have been consistent with freelance *mutaṭawwiʿ* behaviour if he had at this point battled the governor of Fārs anyway. The governor of Fārs had not only, so far as Yaʿqūb was concerned, clearly attacked him and attempted to wrest Kirmān from him against caliphal wishes; he had, far more importantly, outraged pious Muslims by his violent and unjust practices.[47] Ibn Khallikān has Yaʿqūb say of this governor:

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42 As well it might be, considering that even that caliph's closest associates evinced scant loyalty toward him. Al-Muʿtazz, at just about precisely the same time that Yaʿqūb was conquering Fārs, was, according to Ṭabarī, first deposed by his own officers after his mother had refused to supply him with the funds to buy his own life and safety, then deprived of food and water for three days, and finally closed up alive into a vault; it is unclear whether he was killed by thirst or by suffocation. Anyone who had actually been loyal to al-Muʿtazz would certainly have constituted a startling exception, considering that even the caliph's own mother was not so.

43 A most *ʿayyār*-ish quality; see Chapter 1, *supra*, for this trait's inclusion in the medieval dictionary definitions.

44 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 192.

45 Yaʿqūb's question would seem to imply that commanders were not to be hurt in the fray.

46 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 383-384.

47 A point already noted by Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids*, p. 145.

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> What do you think about a Muslim who brings infidel Kurds[48] into the country of the Muslims, for the purpose of killing them [i. e. the Muslims], carrying off their women and taking their possessions? Do you not know that Aḥmad b. al-Layth al-Kurdī killed seven hundred men in Kirmān … that the Kurds deflowered two hundred virgins of the leading families and carried away with them to their country more than two thousand women? Have you ever seen a Muslim who would sanction this?[49]

It should also be noted that even some of the accounts which cast aspersions on Yaʿqūb's takeover of these areas note and commend his holy warrior persona. For instance, when, according to one account, Yaʿqūb was addressed by the chief of the spy network and the leading notables in the province [*ṣāḥib al-barīd wa-wujūh al-balad*] (probably at the behest of the ruler, assuming this story to be historically accurate), and asked **not** to take over the province, those same people commended Yaʿqūb for his fighting in the cause of religion:

> The chief of intelligence and the leading notables of the province wrote to Yaʿqūb, informing him that he must not – despite the [qualities] which God had bestowed upon him of volunteer fighting for religion [*taṭawwuʿ*] and religiosity [*diyāna*], and killing of Khārijites, expelling them from the lands of Khurāsān and Sijistān – hasten to spill blood, because ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn would not give up the province except by a letter [of appointment] from the Caliph.[50]

Here we see revealed once again the image Yaʿqūb apparently had in the eyes of his contemporaries and those whom he ruled: the *mutaṭawwiʿī* man of religion who battled heretics. This depiction of his reputation as such is particularly interesting in the context of a tradition such as this, which is clearly meant to be a negative one (i. e. Yaʿqūb acts without caliphal orders and against the express wishes of leading notables). It thus seems as though Yaʿqūb's reputation for religiosity and *taṭawwuʿ* must have been a rather strong one, to the point where even those who were not his partisans – and, if this tradition is a fabricated one, even to the point where his most zealous and creative detractors – still had to acknowledge those qualities in him.

While Yaʿqūb was approaching the province, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn, the aforementioned governor of Fārs, immediately barricaded himself in a narrow defile near Shīrāz, protected on one side by a mountain and on the other by a river "nonfordable by walking or wading," while he awaited Yaʿqūb's approach.[51] Yaʿqūb managed to overcome that particular obstacle, however, in a resourceful fash-

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48 On the "Kurds," see *supra*. Note that according to Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 193-194, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn's forces consisted largely of these "Kurds."

49 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 349.

50 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 349.

51 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 192-193. This passage is a bit clearer in Ibn al-Athīr than the version appearing in Ṭabarī; Ibn al-Athīr employs the word *maḍīq* (which Lane translates as "a narrow, or strait place" instead of Ṭabarī's *kurr*, which Saliba takes to mean "reservoir."

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ion,[52] successfully bringing his army to the other side of the water, where Yaʿqūb won the battle and pushed on to Shīrāz that same night. His actions following the conquest of Shīrāz were notable for several reasons. First, he and his soldiers are said to have looted only the houses of ʿAlī and his companions, and not to have touched anything else (other than to collect the *kharāj*, the religiously sanctioned taxation). Second, they then turned around and returned to Sīstān. Such activity hardly qualifies for the epithet bestowed upon it by Nöldeke – a "robber's raid."[53]

Ibn al-Athīr goes on to add information, not found in other sources, which sheds additional light on Yaʿqūb's character. According to him, there was a terrible slaughter of ʿAlī's fleeing troops; "but when Yaʿqūb saw the killing with which they had met, he ordered [his soldiers] to forbear from them, and if not for that they would have been killed down to the last man …"[54] Thus we see Yaʿqūb attempting to enforce religious precepts regarding proper behavior in warfare, either from conviction or political expediency.[55]

Moreover, his activities after entering Shīrāz, as described in the same source, also conform with the previous depiction of Yaʿqūb as a good Islamic ruler, who limits his torments to evil-doers and observes proper relations with the caliphs:

> … Al-Ṣaffār entered Shīrāz, and went around the town, proclaiming the peace, [so that] the people felt secure.[56] He tortured ʿAlī with all kinds of tortures, taking from him 10,000,000 dirhams – it is [also] said 4,000,000 dirhams – weapons and horses, and unlimited additional [booty]. [He] then wrote to the caliph [tendering] his obedience, and sent to him a splendid present, including ten falcon's eggs, a piebald Chinese falcon, a hundred musks and other rare things apart from these, and returned to Sijistān

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52 By having his army swim the river naked, following the course of a dog Yaʿqūb had thrown into the water in order to observe its passage across. Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 385-386. Confirmed in its general outline by al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-masālik al-mamālik*, p. 144.

53 Th. Nöldeke, "Yakub the Coppersmith and his Dynasty," p. 181. Contrast Yaʿqūb's restrained behavior, and the historiographical characterization of this behavior, with, for instance, the indiscriminate and wholesale destruction wreaked by the troops of the Saljūq Sulṭān Ṭoghril Beg whenever they cconquered a Muslim city; nevertheless Ṭoghril Beg, in contrast to Yaʿqūb, received a reputation for Sunni piety. Yet Ibn al-Athir states in his eulogy of Ṭoghril Beg that "His army used to rob people of their possessions; they freely engaged in this [lit. : "their hands were free in this"] day and night." (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 10, p. 28).

54 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 194.

55 According to one later source, as a result of this killing "the pious [*al-ṣulaḥāʾ*] wrote to him condemning him for his hastening in shedding blood."(Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 514) Even if this is a statement intended to condemn Yaʿqūb by attributing the slaughter of the troops to Yaʿqūb's orders or wishes, the very fact that such people dared to communicate with him and even express their disappointment, is a strong statement in favour of his piety. Dhahabī himself notes that Yaʿqūb, despite what this letter implies, scrupulously guarded the safety and property of the people of Shīrāz, and took only the property of the governor before departing. He adds, moreover, that the Caliph al-Muʿtamid was perfectly satisfied with him after receiving generous gifts.

56 *Aṭmaʾanna'l-nās*; the word is Qurʾānic (e. g. 22:11; 4:103).

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> with ʿAlī and Ṭawq upon the victory; and when he had left the province of Fārs the Caliph sent his governors there.[57]

Again, this is not the behaviour of a ruffian – quite the opposite, in fact. Yaʿqūb is depicted as having been concerned with protecting the innocent to an extent unusual among medieval rulers; obviously, such behaviour accords far better with the holy-warrior paradigm than with the ruffian one. It is also significant that Yaʿqūb did not at this point declare himself the ruler of Fārs, despite the caliphal patent he held and his military victory there, both of which would have provided a convenient pretext for doing so. Yet what actually happened was that Yaʿqūb went into Fārs, put the province in order, did not have himself named governor there, and then marched home again immediately, leaving the Caliph to appoint whom he would as governor. This behaviour once again directly contravenes Nöldeke's characterization of Yaqūb's career and motivation.

Even negatively slanted sources acknowledge Yaʿqūb's willing withdrawal from Fārs; Mīrkhwānd, for instance, after stating that Yaʿqūb successfully invaded Fārs, recounts that Yaʿqūb sent magnificent presents to Baghdād, together with a message to the Caliph declaring his own obedience, and then simply returned to Sīstān. There is no hint that Yaʿqūb required a caliphal request to make him do so.[58] In fact, he was far more interested in continuing his holy war in the East; he soon after marched into Zābulistān to fight the rebellious son of the Zunbīl, whom he pursued until heavy snowfall in the Kābul area cut short his campaign. As a result of this campaign

> Yaʿqūb … sent a messenger to Muʿtamid with gifts and fifty gold and silver idols which he had taken from Kābul … for [al-Muʿtamid] to send to Mecca so that for the honor of Mecca, according to the custom of the people, they would throw them down to spite the infidels.[59]

Al-Muʿtamid in turn was said to have been pleased, and sent Yaʿqūb patents for Balkh, Tukhāristān, Fārs, Kirmān, Sijistān, and the Indus valley.[60]

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57 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 194-195. Ṭabarī also has the sending of gifts, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 381-382, as does *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 214. The eleventh-century work *Kitāb al-dhakhāʾir waʾl-tuḥaf* (attributed to al-Qāḍī Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr, ed. M. Hamīd Allāh, Kuwait, 1959), p. 39, describes the gift slightly differently: "Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār gave al-Muʿtamid ʿalāʾllāh a gift containing ten gyrfalcons, one of them piebald, the like of which no one had ever seen; a hundred workhorses; twenty boxes carried on ten mules containing specialties [or curiosities] and exotic objects from China; a silver mosque with bolts in which fifteen people could pray; a hundred *mann* of musk; a hundred *mann* of Indian aloeswood; and four million dirham [coins]," in the translation of Ghāda al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddūmī (*The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996, p. 85).

58 *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, vol. 4, p. 12.

59 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 216.

60 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 216. Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 382; see also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 191) mentions only Kirmān, from which Bosworth (*The Ṣaffārids*, p. 148) deduces that the Caliph must have stipulated that Yaʿqūb withdraw from the province of Fārs; there is, however, no evidence for this assertion. We are told merely that "when [Yaʿqūb] left the land of Fārs the Caliph sent his administrative representatives [*ʿummāl*] to it [Fārs]," not

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But Yaʿqūb was soon forced to realize that he had left a dangerous power vacuum in Fārs; the caliph did not have the necessary force and authority to shore up his officials' rule. Indeed, already in the following year, 256/870, an at least erstwhile Khārijite, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, allied himself with the leader of the notorious Kurds, killed the caliphal governor of Fārs and usurped the province.[61]

A little background on Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, who had a long history of disruptive behaviour, is necessary in order to understand just what kind of problem his usurpation of Fārs posed for the Ṣaffārids. In the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* we are informed that already in the year 222/837 Ibn Wāṣil had been causing trouble in Sīstān. Around the year 221/835-836, there was a Khārijite revolt in Bust, eventually defeated. Muḥammad b. Wāṣil apparently rallied those defeated Khārijite forces to lead his own revolt the following year, and managed to defeat in battle and take prisoner the son of the governor (who was also commanding the army that had been sent against Ibn Wāṣil).[62] Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, after negotiations, eventually released the governor's son, and then disappears from our sources until resurfacing in Kirmān, to where, we are previously told, the Khārijite fugitives had fled at this time. Thus, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil had probably had connections with Khārijites in Kirmān and Fārs at least since 222/837.

Yaʿqūb accordingly marched toward Fārs in 257/870f., but Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, together with his Kurdish ally, hastened to Yaʿqūb's camp in order to pay homage and probably to give assurances of his good behaviour. According to one source, Yaʿqūb confirmed him as governor.[63] Yaʿqūb was able to do this because the caliph had sent him at this time, once again, the investiture patents for Balkh, Tukharistān,[64] Fārs, Kirmān, Sīstān and Sind.[65] Perhaps al-Muʿtamid, also, had realized that he was too weak to control those provinces himself. According

whose initiative it was for Yaʿqub to leave the province (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 195).

61 Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 474; Bosworth, *The Ṣaffārids*, p. 147, describes Ibn Wāṣil as "renouncing caliphal authority," on the basis of Ṭabarī's statement that "in this year [257/871] Muḥammad b. Wāṣil disobeyed the caliph in Fārs, and conquered it [i. e. the province]." Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 257.

62 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 188.

63 We have already seen previously that Yaʿqūb was clement toward repentant renegades. In this he was, again, following Muslim religious practice; see J. L. Kraemer, "Apostates, Rebels and Brigands," *Israel Oriental Studies* 10 (1980), pp. 34-73.

64 The district immediately south of the Oxus river, in the nothernmost part of today's Afghanistan. Balkh was this area's most important city. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, tr. S. Soucek, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Princeton, 1984, ch. 1, *passim*.

65 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 216. "Sind" refers to the area of the lower Indus, to the east of Balūchistān, located in today's Pakistan. (See H. T. Lambrick, *Sind: A General Introduction*, Hyderabad, 1975, which contains not only fairly comprehensive geographical information and a condensed history of the province, but also several detailed maps of Sind during various periods). This is in direct contrast to the account in *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, according to which the caliph sent Yaʿqūb a message angrily demanding to know why he keeps invading Fārs (vol. 4, p. 12).

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to our other sources, however, Yaʿqūb had apparently directed Muḥammad b. Wāṣil to submit to the **Caliph**; thus we read that by 258/872, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil, the erstwhile Khārijite, made his peace with the Caliph and handed over the province to a caliphal governor.[66]

Yaʿqūb thereupon returned promptly to his *ghāzī* campaigns: first toward Kābul, where he captured the Zunbīl (son of the former Zunbīl);[67] and then toward Khurāsān, where he set off to fight anti-Khārijite and anti-Shīʿite campaigns. Yaʿqūb marched first to Balkh, in the possession of which he had just been confirmed by the Caliph, and from there to Herāt, in which area a Khārijite had declared himself counter-caliph:

> ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the Khārijī made an insurrection from Mount Karūkh, giving himself the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* and the *laqab al-Mutawakkil ʿalā'llāh*; gathering to himself 10,000 men from among the Khawārij, [he] occupied the mountains of Herāt and Isfizār,[68] took [many] areas in Khurāsān, and continually launched assaults. The army commanders and the notables of Khurāsān were powerless before him.[69]

According to Ṭabarī, Yaʿqūb killed this man and sent his head to the caliph with a note stating: "This is the head of God's enemy ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the Khārijite in Herāt, who for thirty [*sic*] years falsely pretended to the caliphate; Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth killed him."[70]

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66 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 490; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 257.

67 *Tārikh-i Sīstān*, p. 216; *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p, 12. See also Forstner, "Yaʿqūb b. Lait und der Zunbīl," *passim*.

68 A district "three days' march from [Herāt] … which belonged to the province of Harāt." Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, p. 64.

69 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 217; note that Milton Gold's translation is inexact here. (*The Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 172-173)

70 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 507. A story in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, however (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 217-218), uniquely maintains that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān voluntarily repented, renouncing his former behaviour and coming as a supplicant to Yaʿqūb, whereupon Yaʿqūb, acting in a manner consistent with his previous recorded behavior toward penitent erstwhile religious deviants, honoured the man and appointed him a sub-governor in an outlying area. According to this version, the Khārijites killed ʿAbd al-Raḥmān one year later, and their new leader, Ibrāhīm, followed precisely the same policy that his predecessor had: namely, hastening to appear before Yaʿqūb and tender his obedience. Yaʿqūb thereupon told Ibrāhīm and his people not to be afraid, for the bulk of his own army was in origin Khārijites (who had submitted and turned to better paths). In Islamic border warrior culture one typically finds the erstwhile enemy being co-opted into Islamic forces, from the very earliest times; for a discussion of the phenomenon in early Ottoman times see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, 1995, especially pp. 19-27; and the section in Chapter 2, "Gaza and Gazis in the Frontier Narratives of Medieval Anatolia."
This was, empirically, an extremely effective policy; as Bosworth notes, ("The Armies of the Ṣaffārids," p. 544) after Yaʿqūb, "the role of the Khawārij in eastern Iran was now finished … mention of the Khawārij henceforth drops out completely from the narrative of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, whereas for the previous period it is extensively concerned with their activities; this cannot be fortuitous."

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In the meantime, Yaʿqūb's – and others' – "patience" with the moribund Ṭāhirid dynasty was fast waning. At the news of Yaʿqūb's approach, a man who had apparently arrogated to himself authority in Herāt,[71] named ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad, had fled from Herāt and gone to besiege Nīshāpūr. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir first tried to negotiate with the man, then in his weakness appointed ʿAbdallāh ruler over Ṭabasayn[72] and Quhistān, in western Khurāsān.[73] At the same time, the ʿAlīd al-Ḥasan b. Zayd conquered and overran the district of Qūmis.[74] In other words, except for a very small section of northeastern Khurāsān around Nīshāpūr, the entire Ṭāhirid province had not only slipped out of the governor's hands, but been virtually dismembered by various rebels and heretics.

It was at this point, in 259/872f., after these latest glaring proofs of just how precarious the Ṭāhirid realms had become, that Yaʿqūb received appeals from prominent religious figures and erstwhile Ṭāhirid officials and supporters to come and put an end to the effete Ṭāhirid dynasty and save Khurāsān from chaos. Indeed, we are told that many from among the hereditary governor's closest associates and household supported Yaʿqūb: "Some of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's *khāṣṣa* and some of his family, when they saw his rule declining, inclined towards Yaʿqūb, corresponded with him, and invited him [to come and take over]."[75] So deep an impression did this make that even accounts written much later, ones riddled with factual errors and apocryphal stories, still related that Yaʿqūb had taken Nīshāpūr without a fight.[76]

Even an overtly hostile account such as the *Tārīkh-i guzīda* does not attempt to deny that Yaʿqūb took over Khurāsān with the support of the region's notables; it simply tries to reinterpret that fact in order to preserve its own negative message:

It is probable that the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* has here confused somewhat the careers of Ibrāhīm and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān; the latter was killed by Yaʿqūb and his head sent to Baghdād, while the former prudently submitted to the Ṣaffārid and probably renounced his former ways.

71 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 217.

72 Or Ṭabas (actually the twin cities of Ṭabas), located in Quhistān, between Nīshāpūr and Iṣfahān. Yāqūt says it is known as "the gate of Khurāsān" because it was the first city of Khurāsān to be conquered by the Arabs, in the time of the Caliph ʿUthmān. (Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 4, p. 20).

73 Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 503) implies that the man had been affiliated with Yaʿqūb but had openly turned against him: "In [this year] ʿAbdallāh al-Sijzī parted from Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth in disobedience to him and besieged Nīshāpūr. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir sent messengers and *fuqahāʾ* to him, who went back and forth between the two sides. Then [Muḥammad] appointed him governor of al-Ṭabasayn and Quhistān."

74 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 266.

75 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 263; see also Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, vol. 4, p. 9. Some of these Ṣaffārid supporters from Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's entourage state: "Know that carelessness has overtaken Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, and his dynasty has come to its end."

76 E. g. Minhāj al-Dīn ʿUthmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, Kābul, 1342, vol. 1, p. 199: "After that he brought an army to Nīshāpūr and took [it] without a fight in … the year 259/872f."

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> Yaʿqūb in kindness and friendship sent messengers to the *amīrs* of Khurāsān, and by means of their fear and hope he effected their submission to himself. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir fell into drink, his rule was shattered, and he went to Baghdād.[77]

While this account retains the fact of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's drunkeness, it seems to imply that he only began to engage in such behaviour in order to drown his sorrows after Yaʿqūb had wooed all his supporters away from him. The *amīrs'* support itself – as well as Yaʿqūb's having used kindness rather than threats to gain that support – is also preserved, but the words "by means of their fear and hope" seem to imply that mere personal greed and pusillanimity motivated the defection of erstwhile Ṭāhirid supporters.

Yet at least some of Yaʿqūb's supporters were not only Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's close political associates, but also religiously impeccable Sunnis. Before continuing with our narrative of Yaʿqūb's first forays onto the larger Islamic political scene, therefore, it is worth pausing to examine, insofar as possible, Yaʿqūb's and his brother ʿAmr's known connections with Sunni religious scholars, for this will tell us much about *ʿayyār* religious affiliations.

The ʿUlamāʾ of the Ṣaffārid ʿAyyārs

One of the best proofs that, as *ʿayyārs*, the Ṣaffārids were an offshoot of the proto-Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition lies in the prosopography of the religious scholars who supported them. Some of the strongest Ṣaffārid supporters in Khurāsān were Sunni Traditionist scholars, the direct heirs of the militant *ghāzī* tradition passed down from ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak to the circle of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's associates and Yaʿqūb's Sīstānī compatriot Abū Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī. One such Ṣaffārid supporter was the *amīr* Abū Haytham Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Dhuhlī, for instance, a *muḥaddith* of Bukhārā who had served repeatedly as the Ṭāhirid representative in Marv and Herāt, then subsequently became the administrative officer over all Khurāsān [*wālī Khurāsān*].[78] This man is said to have become alarmed by Ṭāhirid incompetence and, as a result, to have turned towards Yaʿqūb. In fact, Khālid, when subsequently passing through Baghdād on his way to the Ḥajj, was imprisoned by the Caliph on account of the former's strong support for the Ṣaffārids.[79]

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77 Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i guzīda*, pp. 361-362.

78 al-Samʿānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 18. Ibn al-Athīr calls him "*Amīr Khurāsān*," (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 412), as does al-Dhahabī (*Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 83), who describes him as "*Amīr Khurāsān* in Transoxiana."

79 Al-Samʿānī, *loc. cit.* . p. 19; Ibn al-Athīr, *loc. cit.* Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 83, also notes that "In the latter days of his rule he came out against *Āl Ṭāhir* and inclined towards Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth b. al-Ṣaffār," whom Dhahabī describes as having "revolted in Sijistān."

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Khālid receives very honourable write-ups in the biographical literature; thus, for instance, al-Baghdādī writes of him:

> Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid b. Ḥammād … Abū'l Haytham al-Dhuhlī al-Amīr, governor [*wālī imārāt*] of Marv and Herāt, and other towns in Khurāsān besides, subsequently governor of Bukhārā ... When he settled in Bukhārā, the guardians of *ḥadīth* came to his presence … Khālid used to go with the aforementioned [traditionists] to the gates of the *muḥaddithīn* in order to hear [traditions] from them; he would go on foot, in a loose outer garment and sandals, abasing himself by this. His hand was outspread in charity to *ahl al-ʿilm* . … [Khālid's quarrel with Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī is related, ending with Khālid's expulsion of the latter from the city] Some of *ahl al-ʿilm* said: "What he did to Muḥammad b. Ismaʿīl al-Bukhārī was the reason for the end of his rule."[80]

There are several traditions which seem to indicate Khālid's genuine love of and devotion to pious Traditionist learning, for instance: "… I heard Abū'l-Haytham Khālid b. Aḥmad al-Amīr say: I have spent over a million dirhams in the pursuit of *ʿilm* …,"[81] and that Abū'l Haytham "brought to [Bukhārā] the *muḥaddithīn* and honoured them."[82]

Khālid b. Aḥmad's devotion to Traditionism was such that after retiring from public life he travelled to Baghdād to relate *ḥadīth* in that city to a long list of students. It was this sojourn, according to one source, that led to his arrest;[83] the caliph had not forgotten Khālid's deep support of Yaʿqūb; therefore "the authorities seized Khālid and threw him in jail in Baghdād; and he was never freed until he died."[84] Toward the close of this entry we find information about Khālid's Ṣaffārid proclivities:

> Khālid b. Aḥmad was vehemently opposed to the Ṭāhirids toward the end of their rule, and inclined toward Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, who had arisen in Sijistān [*al-qā'im bi-Sijistān*]; so much so that when Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir was carried to Sijistān, Khālid was in Herāt

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80 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, pp. 314-315. Khālid's disagreement with al-Bukhārī was at the behest of the proto-Ḥanbalite circle; according to Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol 12, p. 463, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's close associate Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (another Ṣaffārid supporter – *vide infra*) wrote to Khālid b. Yaḥyā to warn him against al-Bukhārī: "This man has already shown deviation from the *Sunna*." The reason for the campaign against al-Bukhārī was his espousal of "*lafẓiyya*" doctrines, which Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had already declared so heretical that those who espoused these beliefs should be considered infidels (see Christopher Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," *Arabica* 44: 2 [1997], pp. 237, 241). For more on the expulsion of al-Bukhārī from Nīshāpūr, see *infra*. For a general discussion of the outlook of Ibn Ḥanbal and his associates at this time see Muḥammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics Under the Early ʿAbbāsids. Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts*, vol. 16, Leiden, 1997, pp. 62-69.

81 Al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 316; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 84.

82 Al-Dhahabī, *ibid*, p. 83.

83 Although we saw above that different sources attributed Khālid's presence in Baghdād to the Ḥajj. Note, however, that all the sources attribute Khālid's presence in Baghdād to pious pursuits.

84 Al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 316. Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 83, notes that he was imprisoned, but neglects to mention that this was a caliphal action taken in retaliation for Abū'l-Haytham's support of the Ṣaffārids.

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> and told [Muḥammad] to his face about all he had done wrong. Then Khālid passed through Baghdād on the Ḥajj in the year 269/882f. and was jailed in Baghdād. He died in the prison in Baghdād in the year 269 …[85]

We find an entry almost identical in wording in al-Samᶜānī's biographical dictionary; though al-Samᶜānī stresses even more his positive evaluation of the man: "There are many famous stories about him, all praiseworthy, except for his having a grudge against *imām ahl al-ḥadīth* Muḥammad b. Ismāᶜīl al-Bukhārī; this was an error, and the reason for the end of his rule."[86] Al-Samᶜānī hastens to reassure us, however, that Khālid "took upon himself after this the maintenance of [several prominent traditionists]." Moreover Samᶜānī repeats the story we have just seen above regarding Khālid's passion for *muḥaddithīn*, adding a few extra details as well:

> The *amīr* Abū'l-Haytham used to go frequently with [several prominent religious scholars] to the gates of the *muḥaddithīn* in [only an] outer wrap and shoes and behaved well towards them, modestly and humbly, to the point where it is said that he wrote traditions from 600 individuals of the *muḥaddithīn* of Bukhārā.[87]

Samᶜānī details as well Khālid's passionate support of the Ṣaffārids, and his vehement upbraiding of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir for his failure in executing his duties, ending with Khālid's imprisonment at the hands of the caliph and death while incarcerated.

The support of the Dhuhlīs of Khurāsān for the Ṣaffārids continued firm and unwavering in both Yaᶜqūb's and ᶜAmr's time, led in the latter period by the even more illustrious father-son duo of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (known as "Ḥaykān"). Abū ᶜAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Naysābūrī al-Dhuhlī was, in fact, a crucial link in the chain of *mutaṭawwiᶜī* tradition stretching from ᶜAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, through Saᶜīd b. Manṣūr, from whom he heard traditions[88] (and who is also described as having transmitted traditions from him),[89] to the Ḥanbalite circle; Saᶜīd b. Manṣūr, it will be recalled, was one of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's teachers as well.[90] Saᶜīd b. Manṣūr is also particularly prominent in traditions of *ghazw*,[91] and transmitted from many of the first-generation *mutaṭawwiᶜa*;[92] all of this, of course, further reinforces Ṣaffārid *ghāzī* credentials and places major Ṣaffārid supporters firmly in the most militant wing of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the pro-*mutaṭawwiᶜ* camp.

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85 Al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, vol. 8, p. 316.

86 Al-Samᶜānī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 18. Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 83, speaks about his praiseworthy legacy as well.

87 Al-Samᶜanī, *Kitāb al-ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 18.

88 See al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 3, p. 201.

89 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, vol. 3, p. 415; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aᶜlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 275.

90 Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 21, p. 303.

91 See e. g. Abū Dāʾūd, *Kitāb al-Sunan*, vol. 3, "*Kitāb al-jihād*," (pp. 200-355) *passim*.

92 See the long list in Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 10, pp. 586-587.

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Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, as we shall see, had excellent personal relations with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself,[93] and related traditions on the latter's authority,[94] including regarding who was or was not a reliable transmitter of traditions.[95] There is some confusion regarding Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī in the sources; he is listed under two slightly different names in the biographical literature, and, since it seems most unlikely that there would been at this time two traditionists called Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī in eastern Khurāsān, obviously from the same family if not one and the same person, both connected to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, students of the same *muḥaddithīn*, and both father to an important son named Yaḥyā, one must conclude that the two aforementioned men are one and the same person.[96] To further complicate matters, there is also some confusion between Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā and his son Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad in some of the sources, a point we shall address presently.

At any rate, both of the men at this time named in the sources as Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī and operating in Khurāsān can be connected directly to the militant proto-Sunni tradition we have been tracing. The man given as Abū Yaḥyā Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Dhuhlī, was, like our Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, a pupil of the very important *muḥaddith*, Saʿīd b. Manṣūr b. Shuʿba Abū ʿUthmān al-Khurāsānī. Furthermore, the man who was the father of Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad (known as "Ḥaykān", whom we shall be discussing shortly), Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Naysābūri al-Dhuhlī, is asserted to have transmitted directly from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,[97] from other direct pupils of his;[98] and from the famous ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī.[99]

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93 They may very well have been friends from their student days, when they both heard traditions from at least three of the students of Ibn al-Mubārak, with whom they had in turn studied: Saʿīd b. al-Manṣūr – with whom Muḥammad's son Yaḥyā studied as well (al-Mizzī, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 201), ʿAffān b. Muslim, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī. Ibn ʿAsākir (*Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 5, p. 326) relates, under the biography of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the following of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā: "I heard Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Naysābūrī – when [the news of] the death of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal reached him – saying: It behooves all the householders in Baghdād to observe mourning for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in their houses."

94 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, pp. 446, 448.

95 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 448.

96 In fact, there may have been yet a third Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī, unless our same prior "*wālī Khurāsān*" is being referred to in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*'s reports that in 213/828 Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Dhuhlī was appointed viceroy in Sīstān, where he encountered trouble with the Khārijites (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 179).

97 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 446.

98 Thus in the biography of Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ, we are told that he studied in Baghdād with Ibn Ḥanbal, "then returned to Egypt and dwelt there, and spread his knowledge among its people. [The following] transmitted from him: Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, al-Bukhārī, Yaʿqūb al-Fasawī, and others." Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 83.

99 For the information on ʿAbd al-Razzāq, see Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, p. 493; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, pp. 276-277.

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Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā appears to have travelled quite widely in his search for traditions; he is said to heard traditions in ʿIrāq, the Ḥijāz, Syria, Egypt, and the Jazīra.[100] He has a very high reputation in the Ḥanbalite literature; according to one tradition:

> There remain to us today in the world three [great scholars of *ḥadīth*]: Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī in Khurāsān; Abū Masʿūd in Iṣfahān; and al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Ḥulwānī in Mecca. The one among them who knows the most *ḥadīth*: Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā …[101]

Further confirmation of his prestige in Ḥanbalite circles can be found in the following tradition:

> Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbdallāh b. Khālid b. Fāris b. Dhuʿayb, Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Nīsābūrī al-Dhuhlī … one of the *imāms* of the ʿIrāqīs,[102] [among] the keepers of those of firm belief, and [one of] the trustworthy ones of the believers, who compiled the traditions of al-Zuhrī by himself ... Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal used to praise him and broadcast his excellence, and a number of the greatest transmitted from him, such as … Saʿīd b. Manṣūr … and Abū Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī[103]

Muḥammad's Sīstānī connections also included the prominent Sīstānī *ʿālim* Abū Ḥātim, who is supposed to have written down traditions from him.[104]

An anecdote is told of the honour and regard in which Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal held him; according to this story, a group of Ibn Ḥanbal's associates were present at the latter's residence when Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā entered, upon which Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal rose. Everyone present wondered to see their Imām paying such respect to someone; then Ibn Ḥanbal turned to his sons and companions and said: "Go to Abū ʿAbdallāh [*viz.*, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā] and write down [*ḥadīths*] from him."[105]

Ibn Ḥanbal is also reported to have said that he never met a Khurāsānī who knew more of al-Zuhrī's *ḥadīths*.[106] In fact, the son of Saʿīd b. Manṣūr is supposed to have related that when Saʿīd b. Manṣūr asked one scholar why he was

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100 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, vol. 3, p. 415.

101 Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 91. The same statement is made with a different attribution in Muḥammad b. Shākir al-Kutubī, *ʿUyūn al-tawārīkh*, Beirut 1416/1996, p. 330.

102 Alternatively, he is called "*Shaykh al-Islām … wa-imām ahl al-ḥadīth bi-Khurāsān*." (Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 273)

103 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, vol. 3, pp. 415-416.

104 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 275.

105 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, p. 416; Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 280. The regard was mutual; Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā is reported by his son to have said: "I hold Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal my imām in matters between me and my Lord, may he be glorified and exalted." (p. 282)

106 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, p. 417; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 281. An even stronger statement is the following: "I used to hear our religious leaders [*mashāʾikhanā*] saying: The tradition that Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā does not know is not worth knowing [lit. : is insignificant]." *Ibid.* p. 280.

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not collecting al-Zuhrī's traditions, the scholar replied, "Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā spared us this [i. e., by already doing the work himself]."[107]

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā is also called "the Imām of the people of his time."[108] In the same vein, another tradition states:

> Zanjawayh b. Muḥammad: I heard Abū ʿAmr al-Mustamlī say: I reached Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. He said "Whence do you come?" I replied: "From Nīshāpūr." He said, "Does Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā have a *majlis*?" I answered: "Yes." He said: "If only he were with us [here], we would deem him the Imām of *ḥadīth* [*jaʿalnāhu al-imāma fi'l-ḥadīth* …]"[109]

Moreover, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā seems to have acted as theological watchdog for the Ḥanbalites. It was he who warned Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal against associating with the theologian Dāʾūd al-Ẓāhirī, due to the latter's espousal of *lafẓiyya* beliefs.[110] Subsequently, he was personally responsible for the expulsion of al-Bukhārī from Nīshāpūr on the same grounds.[111] Under the biographical entry on the Imām Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, we find the following anecdote regarding Muslim's inclusion with al-Bukhārī as the target of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's anti-*lafẓī* crusade:

> Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj used to expound the teaching about *al-lafẓ* and did not keep silent about it. When al-Bukhārī settled in Nīshāpūr Muslim visited him frequently, so that when there occurred what occurred between al-Bukhārī and Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā regarding the question of *lafẓ*, he summoned him, and prevented the people from frequenting him until he left and travelled from Nīshāpūr. … Most of the people broke off with [al-Bukhārī] apart from Muslim. This reached Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā one day, and he said: "Verily, it is not permitted to someone who expounds *al-lafẓ* to be present in our *majlis*."[112]

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107 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 280.

108 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, p. 418. The son of Abū Ḥātim, one of the greatest of the Sīstāni *ʿulamāʾ*, reports: "My father wrote [traditions] from Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā in Rayy, and he [that is, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā] was a truthful authority [*thiqa ṣadūq*], a leader among the leaders of the Muslims [*imām min aʾimmat al-muslimīn*], whom my father trusted, and I heard [my father] say: He is the leader of the people of his day [*huwa imāmu ahli zamānihi*]." Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 281. In the same place, the son of Abū Dāʾūd al-Sijistānī calls him "*amīr al-muʾminīn fi'l-ḥadīth*."

109 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 280. A similar tradition states: "The Imām of imāms Ibn Khuzayma said: Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, the imām of his age, may God cause him to dwell in His garden with those who love him, related to us." (*ibid*. p. 284).

110 On this whole issue, see Melchert, "The Adversaries of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal," pp. 244-245; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 93 also speaks about Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's having warned against these doctrines of Dāʾūd's. al-Dhahabī also indicates Muḥammad's superiority to Dāʾūd al-Ẓāhirī, stating (p. 92) that "*Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā aṣdaqu minhu*." For an inadvertently humorous attempt to reconcile the Ḥanbalite and *lafẓī* positions on the whole issue of Allāh's speech see Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's *Fatḥ al-bārī bi-sharḥ saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* on the subject.

111 Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 5, p. 187; Melchert, "Adversaries," pp. 245-246. For this quarrel, and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's alliance with Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā on this matter, see al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, pp. 284-285.

112 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 188.

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This kind of uncompromising attitude toward the religiously erring accords well with what we know of other *ʿulamāʾ* in the *mutaṭawwiʿa* tradition, particularly ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, who is said, for instance, to have refused to speak for thirty days with one of his close associates simply because that man had eaten with an "innovator"[*ṣāḥib bidʿa*].[113]

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's general reputation as a traditionist was also of the highest order. One major biographical work informs us of an anecdote related by the great traditionist al-Nasāʾī:

> Abū ʿAmr Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khaffāf said: "I saw Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā in my sleep, and I asked him: 'How has God acted toward you [or: what has God done with you]?' He answered: 'He has forgiven me. ' I said: 'And what was done with your *ḥadīths*?' He answered: 'They were written in water of gold and were raised to the highest place in heaven. '[114]

No birthdate is given for him, but he is said to have died somewhere between 252/866 and 258/872.[115] Interestingly enough for our purposes, there are some indications that Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's teachings possessed a rather militant *ghāzī/mutaṭawwiʿ* tendency of their own: both of his known sons – who both studied with him – and at least one of his pupils are described as *ghāzīs* in the biographical literature, while yet another died a martyr's death.[116]

Muḥammad's son Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbdallāh b. Khālid b. Fāris al-Dhuhlī, Abū Zakariyyā al-Naysābūri, was an *ʿālim* equally as prominent as his father.[117] He is described as "the *shaykh* of Nīshāpūr after his father, its mufti, and the head of the *muṭṭawwiʿa*. [He was] of the *qurrāʾ*;"[118] or, in a different account: "*Amīr al-muṭṭawwiʿa al-mujāhidīn*."[119]

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113 Al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 178, #11799.

114 Ṣafadī, *loc. cit.;* Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 278.

115 al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, p. 420; Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 258) lists his death under 258/c. 872; Ṣafadī, *ibid*., concurs with Ibn al-Athīr, as does al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 284.

116 For Abū'l Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Naysābūri al-Ghāzī see al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 4, p. 244, #7476; for al-Dhuhlī's pupil Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Rafāʾ al-Ghāzī al-Naysābūri, see *ibid*., vol. 4, p. 245, #7477; his pupil Abū'l-ʿAbbās Ḥāmid b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Sikishī al-Naysābūri al-Shahīd can be found in *ibid*., vol. 3, p. 292, #5269.

117 He is sometimes incorrectly called "Ḥaykān," a term which seems more properly to belong to his relation, Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Dhuhlī, also active in supporting the Ṣaffārids. *Pace* Bosworth, who follows Ibn al-Athīr's mistake (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 300) in identifying Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Dhuhlī (the grandson of the *amīr Bukhārā* discussed above) with Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī; Gardīzī (*Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 9) makes very clear that these were two different, but related, people: "And Ḥaykān Qārī [*viz*. Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid] and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. [the editor mistakenly has "*wa*" instead of "b." here] Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī – they [were] *muṭṭawwiʿa* and *fuqahāʾ* of Nīshāpūr – inclined towards ʿAmr …"

118 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 198.

119 Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Asʿad al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-jinān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān fī maʿrifat mā yuʿtaburu min ḥawādith al-zamān*, Hyderabad, 1337/1918, vol. 2, p. 181.

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Yaḥyā transmitted *ḥadīth* directly from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his father's associate Saʿīd b. Manṣūr, and was considered to be a *sadūq* transmitter.[120] In fact, he is said to have surpassed his father in religious knowledge and understanding, as illustrated by the following anecdote:

> Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Muzakkī said: Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad and others told me that Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā and his son Yaḥyā [once] disagreed about an issue, so that one of them said to the other: "place a judge between us in this." So they agreed upon Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Khuzayma, and he judged in favour of Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad over his father.[121]

More importantly, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad apparently kept alive the pious and militant *mutaṭawwiʿī* tradition in person:

> Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad used to go out himself with the *ghuzāt*, together with a group from among [both] *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* and *aṣḥāb al-raʾy*, and they placed him upon a mount and armed him with a sword – al-Muzakkī said: I heard that it was a wooden sword – and they fought the ruler of Nīshāpūr, called Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥujistānī [*sic*], a Khārijite who had taken over the city. [al-Khujistānī] was a tyrannical oppressor, and the people, or most of them, agreed with Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad regarding him. But defeat came upon the people, and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad fled to a village from among the villages of Nīshāpūr, called Busht, but Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh followed him and came upon him. It is said: most of those leaders who were with Yaḥyā turned against him when Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh arrested him, and he said to him: "Have I not been good to you?" … Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad was over all the people of the city [i. e. their leader], but Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad said: "I disapproved of this, but they united against me [i. e. and forced me to lead them in the revolt]" … but they [in turn] said: "It is not as he said." So Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh took him and killed him. It is said that he built upon him [i. e. immured him – *banā ʿalayhi*], and it is [also] said that he commanded that his private parts be pulled until he died, and this was in the year two hundred and sixty-something.[122]

> Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Hāniʾ said: Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. al-Shahīd; Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī killed him wrongfully in Jumādā II of the year 267/880f.[123]

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120 al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl*, vol. 8, pp. 85-86; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 286; *idem.*, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 198. For an *isnād* showing the direct line of transmission, see Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, vol. 1, p. 535.

121 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, vol. 8, p. 86.

122 Yet another, equally gruesome account of his murder can be found in Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 287, and *idem.*, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 199, which is obviously intended to demonstrate al-Khujistānī's violence and personal responsibility for the crime; according to this version, al-Khujistānī tries virtually every method of execution possible without success – beating, choking, *etcetera* – until he finally does away with Yaḥyā by stabbing him in the abdomen.

123 Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 287: "Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī killed him wrongfully in Jumādā II of the year 267, because of his [Ḥaykān's] having risen against him, and he [Ḥaykān] fought him [al-Khujistānī] because of his aggression and his tyranny."

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> Al-Ḥākim Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥāfiẓ said: I heard Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Akhram say: I never saw the likes of Ḥaykān, may God have no mercy on his killer.[124]

According to a different source, this same al-Ḥākim al-Ḥāfiẓ also stated the following regarding Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad:

> He is the Imām of Nīshāpūr in fatwas and leadership [*al-fatāwā wa'l-riʾāsa*], the son of [Nīshāpūr]'s *imām*, and the unopposed leader of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* in Khurāsān [*Amīr al-muṭṭawwiʿa bi-Khurāsān bi-lā mudāfaʿa*], that is: the *ghāzīs* [*al-ghuzāt*].[125]

The fact that this prominent *mutaṭawwiʿ* family was so deeply and steadily involved in supporting the Ṣaffārids in Nīshāpūr, from the time of Yaʿqūb's ousting of the Ṭāhirids to the dark days when al-Khujistānī had wrested all of Khurāsān from ʿAmr and it must have seemed as though the Ṣaffārids were finished, certainly provides evidence of impeccably orthodox – and deeply religious – support for the Ṣaffārids. It also raises the highly intriguing – and germane – question of whether and to what degree nascent Sunni Islam was, at this point, quietist in the same way as later Sunnism. This is a question to which we shall be returning shortly.[126]

The Ṣaffārids also had the support of less prominent, although equally orthodox, *ʿulamāʾ* as well. We have already mentioned above Yaʿqūb's connections with ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān;[127] he was, it will be recalled, one of the religious figures sent as a mediator by Ibrāhīm al-Qūṣī, the governor, to the *ʿayyārān* headed by Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr in 239/854.[128] ʿUthmān was also the man whom Ṣāliḥ consulted when things were going poorly for him,[129] and the one whom Yaʿqūb entrusted with making the *khuṭba* in Sīstān while he himself was absent on campaign in the Herāt area.[130]

The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* is proud of him as one of the province's outstanding great men, listed alongside such illustrious *ʿulamāʾ* as Abū Dāʾūd, Abū Ḥātim, *et alii*; "These [men] in knowledge and greatness occupied such a place that no one in the world could deny their merit."[131] He is also eulogized as "a great man in reli-

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124 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, p. 86; al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, vol. 14, p. 218; the last part of this tradition appears also in al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 199; the tradition appears in its entirety in Dhahabī's *Siyar*, vol. 12, pp. 293-294. Al-Baghdādī adds "*al-qurrāʾ*" to the list of those who chose Yaḥyā to lead them against al-Khujistānī.

125 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. 12, p. 285; *idem.*, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 198 has almost identical wording.

126 *Vide infra*, chapter 5.

127 Calling one's children after the Rāshidūn caliphs seems to have been something of a trend at this time among the Traditionists of Sijistān; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 140-141, notes the death of one of Abū Dāʾūd's teachers, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Sijistānī.

128 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 195.

129 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 196-197.

130 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 209.

131 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 19-21.

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gious knowledge and *fiqh*."[132] His father was most probably that same ʿAffān – listed without any patronymic – among the students of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, which, if true, would make the son's ties to the *mutaṭawwiʿ* tradition even stronger and clearer.[133]

ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān was an eminent figure well before the rise of the *ʿayyārs* in Sīstān; during the early part of the reign of the caliph al-Muʿtaṣim [c. 833], ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān was, along with a group of the other prominent Sunni *ʿulamāʾ*, entrusted with a mission to exhort a former Khārijite freelancer (who had repented and now spent his time zealously eradicating his former friends) to lay down his arms.[134] During the famine of 221 (835-836), the governor of Sīstān, on the instructions of ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir, entrusted 300,000 dirhams in state money to ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and Ḥusayn b. ʿAmr, "the religious leaders [*fuqahāʾ*] of the two sects [i. e. *ahl al-sunna* and *ahl al-raʾy*]" for distribution to the needy.[135] Obviously, his reputation was very high in Sīstān, and we are told this explicitly; Dhahabī, for instance, says: "He commanded honour in his province because of his merit and his asceticism [*zuhd*]."[136]

ʿUthmān's local eminence and reputation, alas, did not extend to his legacy as a *ḥadīth* transmitter; his standing as a *muḥaddith* was forever destroyed by the Shāfiʿī *muḥaddith* Ibn Khuzayma, whose statement "I bear witness that he used to forge ḥadīths about the Prophet" relegated ʿUthmān to the collections of weak traditions.[137] In this, too, he accords well with the type of a "*ṣāḥib sunna*" as noted first by Juynboll,[138] then, more particularly in the specific *ghāzī*-supporting context, by Michael Bonner. Bonner – who pithily encapsulated Juynboll's findings in the statement: "The *aṣḥāb sunna* tended to receive poor to middling

132 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 215.

133 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 8, p. 380.

134 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 184-185. ʿUthmān was also quite possibly the son of a Sīstānī *ʿālim* killed fighting the Khārijites in 188/804, ʿAffān b. Muḥammad, eulogized as "of the great ones, and of the *ʿulamāʾ* and *fuqahāʾ* of his time." (*Ibid*. p. 159).

135 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 186.

136 Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, v. 19, p. 206. In fact, he was prominent enough to have been used in a very typical Shīʿite attempt to depict prominent Sunnis witnessing to the truth of Shīʿite views. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Tehran, 1377/1957-, vol. 39, pp. 320-321.

137 Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *al-Kashf al-ḥathīth ʿamman rumiya bi-waḍʿi al-ḥadīth*, Baghdād, 1984, p. 286; Abū'l Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Kitāb al-ḍuʿafāʾ wa'l-matrūkīn*, ed. Abū'l Fidāʾ ʿAbdullāh al-Qāḍī, Beirut, 1407/1986, vol. 2, p. 171; Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī fi'l-ḍuʿafāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItir, Aleppo, 1971, vol. 2, p. 427; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, ed. A. A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, Beirut, 1416/1995, vol. 4, p. 172. Ibn Ḥajar adds: al-Jawzaqānī [i. e. al-Juzjānī] said: [he was] *matrūk al-ḥadīth*; he used to steal traditions. And al-Barqānī said: "I asked al-Shamakhī about him and he said: "He was as God wanted him in his religion [*huwa ka-mā shāʾllāh fi dīnihi*]."

138 G. H. A. Juynboll, "Some New Ideas on the Development of Sunna as a Technical Term in Early Islām," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), pp. 97-118.

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grades as traditionists, they were characterized as ascetics,[139] and the *ḥadīth* which they related was often hortatory … without much legal content" – observed this type in connection with the famous second-century scholar-ascetics of the frontier, the formulators of the *mutaṭawwiʿī* tradition we have been tracing here.[140]

The name of another of the Ṣaffārid rulers' most religiously impressive associates is disclosed in an anecdote regarding Yaʿqūb's reverence for ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān; under the biographical entry for Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī, said to be the greatest of the Traditionists in Fārs, in the *Mukhtaṣar Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, we are told the following:

> Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAbdān said: When Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, the lord of Khurāsān, came to Fārs, he was told that here was a man who spoke of [*yatakallimu fī*] ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān – may God be pleased with him – and Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī, who was accompanying Yaʿqūb, wanted to meet him. So [Yaʿqūb] ordered his dispatch from Fasā to Shirāz. But when he arrived the wazīr knew what was in the heart of the ruler, and said: "O commander, this man who has arrived, does not speak of Abū Muḥammad ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, our Shaykh" – known as al-Sijzī – "but rather speaks of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, the companion of the Prophet." When he heard this he said: "What have I to do with the companions of the Prophet? I thought that he was speaking about ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān al-Sijzī." So he didn't appear before him.[141]

This tradition is important for several reasons, other than demonstrating Yaʿqūb's regard for his personal *ʿulamāʾ* and his shocking indifference (from an Islamic standpoint) toward the actual *Ṣaḥāba*; for it teaches us both that Yaʿqūb would seek out and consult Traditionists, and that he travelled accompanied by such illustrious *ʿulamāʾ* as Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fasawī. This latter – whose full name, Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān b. Jawān Al-Fārisī, Abū Yusuf b. Abī Muʿāwiya al-Fasawī al-Ḥāfiẓ, is assertively Sunni[142] – is said to have been

> … among the greatest leaders [*kāna min al-aʾimma al-kibār*] of those who gathered [*ḥadīth*], and travelled from the east to the west, and collected the most with godliness, devotion, and firmness in the Sunna [*al-ṣalāba fīʾl-sunna*]. He travelled to ʿIrāq, the Ḥijāz, Syria, North Africa and Egypt, and wrote down [traditions] … He died on the 23 of Rajab in the year 277/890.[143]

Al-Fasawī's biographical entry in the great dictionary of al-Mizzī is quite lengthy. He is there described as "the author of famous *ḥadīth* compendia;" the list of those whom he transmitted from covers one and a half folio-sized pages of minute writing and includes Saʿīd b. Manṣūr – once again returning us to the

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139 Which we have just seen that ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān was.

140 M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 111.

141 Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, vol. 28, pp. 44-46.

142 Indeed, he is actually described by Ibn al-Athīr as very partisan: "*wa-kāna yatashayyaʿu*"(Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 440).

143 Al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 4, p. 362. Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, Hyderabad, 1403/1983, vol. 9, echoes this appraisal, but lists his death date as 280 or 281 (c. 893).

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mutaṭawwiʿī tradition. His pupils included the illustrious compilers al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī, who became part of the Sunni canon.[144] Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān is also described as "the leader of the Traditionists [*imām ahl al-ḥadīth*] in Fārs." He also had professional connections with Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī, whom we have discussed above; one of al-Fasawī's students relates that "Abū Yusuf Yaʿqūb b. Sufyān al-Fārisī taught us *ḥadīth* in Nīshāpūr in the *majlis* of Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā in the year 241/855f."[145]

Another of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's associates about whom we have information is a man by the outstandingly anti-Shīʿite name of Abū ʿAmr Shimr b. Hamdawayh al-Harawī.[146] This man is said to have been a religious scholar – "a praiseworthy religious scholar" [*ʿāliman faḍīlan*], in Yāqūt's words – learned in both ḥadīth and linguistic studies, who had journeyed to ʿIrāq to learn from Ibn al-Aʿrabī, al-Aṣmaʿī, al-Farrā', and Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī, among others, and had then returned to Khurāsān.[147] We have here, again, a religious scholar who reportedly travelled on campaign with the *ʿayyār* ruler (according to one source, Yaʿqūb even appointed Shimr to office[148]): "It is said: [Shimr] joined the Amīr Abū ʿAmr Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, and went with him to the area of Fārs, and brought with him [his] *Kitāb al-jīm*, but the water overflowed from Nahrawān on the encampments of Yaʿqūb and it [the book] drowned together with the other chattels which drowned."[149] A later version expatiates on the merit of this lost work:

> He authored a great book, based upon the letters of the alphabet and beginning with the letter *jīm*; no one who came before had ever surpassed its like, and no one who came after him ever equalled it. When he finished the book he withheld it, and not one of his companions [was allowed to] transcribe it; but there was no blessing to him in what he did [i. e., his jealous behaviour regarding the book]…[150]

144 Al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, vol. 8, pp. 168-170.

145 *Ibid*. p. 170.

146 Shimr was according to tradition the name of the killer of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the third Imām, known among Shīʿites as the "Lord of Martyrs." Shimr was, to say the least, not the most popular figure in philo-ʿAlīd circles; see e. g. Abū'l – Faraj al-Iṣbahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn*,, ed. Aḥmad Saqr, Cairo, 1368/1949, pp. 116-118; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 16, p. 180.

147 Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb ilā maʿrifat al-adīb*, vol. 4, pp. 262-263; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-wuʿā fī ṭabaqāt al-lughawiyyīn wa'l-nuḥā*, Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1384/1965, vol. 2, pp. 4-5; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 16, p. 281; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Yusuf al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt ʿalā anbāh al-nuḥāt*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1371/1952, vol. 2, p. 77; Abū'l-Barakāt Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Anbārī, *Nuzhat al-alibbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-udabā'*, Baghdād, 1970, p. 151.

148 Al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt*, p. 77: "*fa-qalladahu baʿḍ aʿmālihi*."

149 Yāqūṭ, *loc. cit.* and Ṣafadī, *loc. cit.* . According to al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-ruwāt*, p. 78, it was at the time of Yaʿqūb's encounter with al-Muwaffaq.

150 Al-Anbārī, *loc. cit.*

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Significantly, that same version tries to deny Shimr's support for Yaʿqūb, claiming that this same author, who guarded his manuscript so jealously, inexplicably subsequently let "one of his relatives" take possession of his unique magnum opus. It was, therefore, the nameless relative who joined Yaʿqūb, was appointed one of Yaʿqūb's officials, travelled with Yaʿqūb's army – and lugged his own kinsman's manuscript with him on all his travels, eventually losing it at Nahrawān.[151] Here, again, we see a transparent attempt to try to deny or downplay the Sunni religious support for the Ṣaffārids.

Interestingly, Shimr's works are said to have included not only linguistic books but also a Qur'anic *tafsīr*, an unparalleled collection of unusual ḥadīth,[152] and a "*Kitāb al-ṣilaḥ*" – the latter book constituting, perhaps, although not necessarily, a possible indication that Shimr was interested in Jihād.[153] Shimr is specifically singled out for his Sunni leadership, being called in one source "one of the leaders of [the community of] tradition and consensus."*[min aʾimmat al-sunna waʾl-jamāʿa*][154]

Such were the religious figures who were associated with Yaʿqūb: staunchly Sunni, mainstream figures of impeccable repute, and often directly connected to the *mutaṭawwiʿī* tradition to which we are maintaining that Yaʿqūb belonged. Moreover, these people were no lukewarm, reluctant supporters; on the contrary, we see them actively involved in Yaʿqūb's rule: they travel with him on his military campaigns, they actively work to replace Ṭāhirid rule with his, and they take over the recitation of the prayers in his home base when he is absent fighting. All of this indicates that the support of the hardline Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* was offered willingly rather than grudgingly. Their devotion to the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* cause is a strong indication that they could not possibly have viewed that cause in the same light in which current historical consensus regards those same *ʿayyārs*.

Support for the Ṣaffārids within Ṭāhirid Circles

ʿUlamāʾ were not Yaʿqūb's only friends, however; all of our major sources state both that Yaʿqūb was invited to take over Khurāsān by other prominent erstwhile Ṭāhirid supporters, and that both he and they felt that the province had to be rescued from what were in Sunni eyes religiously depraved elements. This emerges both in Yaʿqūb's actions upon arresting Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir and also in his communications afterwards with the Caliph, who was obviously worried about Yaʿqūb's becoming overmighty:

151 *Ibid.*
152 Al-Qifṭī, *loc. cit.*
153 Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, *loc. cit.*; Suyūṭī, *loc. cit.*
154 al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 19, p. 166.

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> [Yaʿqūb] interrogated [Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir], then began to censure him and to reprove him for neglecting his duty ... Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir and his household [*ahl baytihi*] were jailed. News of this reached the central authorities [*al-sulṭān*], so they despatched Ḥātim b. Zayrak b. Salm to [Yaʿqūb]. On the 20th of Dhū'l-Qaʿda, the central authorities received Yaʿqūb's letters. [When the messengers bringing these arrived], Jaʿfar b. al-Muʿtamid and Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil – so it is related – held an audience … [at which] the army commanders were present. Permission was granted Yaʿqūb's messengers [to speak]. His messengers recalled the condition of the populace of Khurāsān, which had come to Yaʿqūb's attention; how Khārijites and rebels had already overmastered it; and how Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir had become impotent. They [also] recalled the correspondence of the people of Khurāsān with Yaʿqūb, imploring him to come help them, and that he had gone to them. [They mentioned that] when Yaʿqūb was more than ten Fārsakhs from Naysābūr, its people went to him and handed it over to him, so he entered the city.[155]

These themes of Yaʿqūb's reproval of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's laxness in his duty, the appeals made to him by members of the provincial elite, and, in striking contrast, the Caliph's political considerations, appear in many of the major sources:

> [Yaʿqūb] did not act nicely toward [Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir], but rather censured him for his remissness in his work, seized Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir and his household [*ahl baytihi*] … and sent to the Caliph reminding [him] of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's neglect of his duty, and that the people of Khurāsān had asked him to come to them. He [also] mentioned the ʿAlīd seizure of Ṭabaristān, and continued in this vein, but he was condemned [anyway] for this, and ordered to restrict himself to what had been entrusted to him, and that he not behave toward him as rebels do.[156]

The above passages are particularly interesting because they suggest that Yaʿqūb was more concerned with the beneficent regulation of the Muslim polity than was the Caliph. Indeed, the Caliph appears far more bothered by the idea of anyone else becoming powerful (i. e. Yaʿqūb) than he was by the fact that Khurāsān had already been disintegrating for several years, and, worse yet, taken over by Zaydīs and Khārijites. Apparently, so important and evident was this aspect of Yaʿqūb's move – that is, his concern to restore what a good *ghāzī* who associated with proto-Ḥanbalite *ʿulamāʾ* would consider the proper social and religious order – that all of the variant versions emphasize this theme as well:

> Then Yaʿqūb arrived in Nīshāpūr … and sent his brother ʿAmr b. al-Layth to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir. [ʿAmr] brought him into [Yaʿqūb's] presence, who arrested him and had him shackled, berating him for his neglect of his province [*aʿmālihi*] and his failure in his guarding [the welfare of the Muslims]. [Yaʿqūb] then seized [Muḥammad's] entire household [*ahl baytihi*], who numbered over 160 men, and bore them off to Sijistān. He gained mastery over Khurāsān, and appointed his representatives to the various districts.[157]

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155 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 507.
156 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 262.
157 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, pp. 262-263.

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This same source iterates yet a third time Yaʿqūb's motivation in doing away with the derelict Ṭāhirids:

> It is said that the reason for Yaʿqūb's taking possession of Nīshāpūr was what we mentioned in the year 257/870f.; namely, the weakness of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, *Amīr Khurāsān*. When Yaʿqūb became certain [*taḥaqqaqa*] about this, and that he was no [longer] capable of defending [Khurāsān or the Muslims], [Yaʿqūb] went to Nīshāpūr. He wrote to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, informing him that he had resolved upon betaking himself to Ṭabaristān in order to execute what the Caliph had commanded regarding al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, who had gained mastery over it, and [promising] that he would not disturb anything in his [Muḥammad's] district, nor any of his relations [*ashābihi*].
>
> Some of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's *khāṣṣa* and some of his family [*ahl*], however, when they saw his rule slipping away [*idbār amrihi*], inclined towards Yaʿqūb. They entered into correspondence with him, inviting him to come, and playing down to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir Yaʿqūb's matter with regard to Nīshāpūr, telling [Muḥammad] that he should not be afraid of him, thereby restraining him from being on his guard against him [Yaʿqūb]. Muḥammad relied upon what they said.[158]

Even Gardīzī, who is ever loyal to the Sāmānid memory and therefore hostile to the Ṣaffārids, has preserved the record of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's misrule:

> Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir was negligent and improvident; he indulged in wine-drinking and was occupied [solely] with merry-making and festivities, to the point where because of his negligence Ṭabaristān was disturbed, and Ḥasan b. Zayd the ʿAlawī revolted in the year 251/865 ... [and by the year 256/870] Ṭabaristān and Gurjān were in a state of confusion.[159]

He even includes the information that Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's friends and relatives had abandoned him, although he gives this fact a hostile twist when he first mentions it:

> The sons of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's uncle envied Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, so they befriended Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and emboldened him to the point where he made an attempt upon Khurāsān, took Muḥammad [prisoner], and himself sat [in the ruler's seat] in Khurāsān.[160]

Of course, after Gardīzī's previous description of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's rule, it does seem as though there were plenty of reasons other than envy for tiring of the latter's reign. Later on, when describing the actual takeover, Gardīzī reveals for the first time that Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's **generals**, not just his envious cousins, also supported Yaʿqūb: "When Yaʿqūb came to Firhād, three days' journey from Nīshāpūr, the generals [*sarhangān*] and Muḥammad's cousins all came before Yaʿqūb and offered their services except Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad."[161]

The most laudatory source even relates an apocryphal-sounding anecdote depicting Yaʿqūb as God's instrument in putting an end to degenerate Ṭāhirid rule.

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158 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, p. 263.
159 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 5.
160 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 5.
161 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 7.

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Supposedly, Yaʿqūb was out strolling one day when he saw graffitoed on the wall a poem comparing the Ṭāhirids to the Barmakids and stating "a great cry shall be heard among the Ṭāhirids/ the anger of The Merciful One shall fall upon them." Yaʿqūb thereupon exclaimed that this must be a miracle from God, directing him to free the Muslims of the Ṭāhirids "and their tyranny" [*jawr*]."[162] Again, this story is important not because it is literally true (which it most likely is not), but rather for preserving a religious perception of Yaʿqūb as the righteous instrument of God's wrath against inept rulers who do not fulfill their obligations toward the Muslim community.[163]

This same account details another legendary episode that has given rise to much misinterpretation. According to this anecdote, certain people in Nīshāpūr (we are not told precisely who) were murmuring that Yaʿqūb lacked a caliphal patent, and that this showed his Khārijite tendencies. Yaʿqūb therefore ordered all the notables and religious scholars to be called into his presence, whereupon he ordered the chamberlain to "bring that diploma of appointment of the Commander of the Faithful so that I may read it to them." The chamberlain, so the story goes, brought Yaʿqūb a sword, which he waved around, frightening all those assembled. Yaʿqūb thereupon reassured them that he did not intend to kill anyone, but rather to show them that he did indeed possess the caliphal *ʿahd*.

> Then Yaʿqūb spoke: "Has the Caliph not been seated in Baghdād by this sword?" They responded: "Yes." He said: "This sword has placed me, too, in this position [which I have attained]; my diploma of investiture and that of the Commander of the Faithful are identical! … I have arisen for justice upon the people of God, may He be blessed and exalted, and to seize the people of deviation from the way of iniquity [*fisq*] and of wickedness. If I were not thus, then God, may he be exalted, would not have given me these victories until now ..."[164]

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162 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 220.

163 Note the statement in Anon., *The Sea of Precious Virtues (Bahr al-Favā'id): A Medieval Islamic Mirror for Princes*, tr. J. Meisami, Salt Lake City, 1991, pp. 215-216: "Know that unjust, tyrannical kings have robbed Islām of two things: They have condoned peace and hypocrisy, and accept unlawful wealth in return for not waging holy war. That peace is invalid, and the wealth that they take unlawful ... Whoever does such or condones it is no Muslim."

164 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 222-223; significantly abbreviated version in Mīrkhwānd, *Ta'rīkh Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 9. An echo of this famous story is contained in Gardīzī's account as well: "Yaʿqūb came to Nīshāpūr … and Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir sent Ibrāhīm b. Ṣāliḥ al-Marvazī with a letter to Yaʿqūb's presence [*be-nazdīk-i Yaʿqūb*] to say: 'If you have come by command of the Commander of the Faithful show your diploma and patent of investiture so that I can give charge of the province to you; but if not, go back. ' When the messenger arrived in Yaʿqūb's presence and passed on the message, Yaʿqūb took out his sword from under his prayer mat and said: 'This is my *ʿahd* and standard.' So Yaʿqūb came to Nīshāpūr. He stopped in Shādyākh and took Muḥammad; [he] had [Muḥammad] brought before him, where he reproached him and took all his treasures." (Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 7) Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford, 1964, p. 125, defines a *fāsiq* as a "sinner," the opposite of an *ʿādil*." The author thanks David Cook for this reference.

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The key to understanding this position – assuming that there is any historical basis to the anecdote[165] – lies in the latter half of Yaʿqūb's statement. Rather than claiming that "might makes right," Yaʿqūb was actually taking an extreme *ghāzī* position: Islam – not to mention the caliphate – is established by the sword, and the ruler approved and sanctioned by God is he who fights in God's name to establish God's proper order upon earth. In other words, the sword itself is no justification, but rather the fact that the sword is wielded on behalf of an absolute concept of justice; in Yaʿqūb's own phrasing, "for justice upon the people of God … and to seize the people of deviation from the way of iniquity and of wickedness."

Modern researchers, relying upon the accepted quietist norm in later Sunnism (i. e. that any ruler, no matter how awful, is better than armed conflict, and therefore must be submitted to), have tended to view askance any early Islamic militancy directed at political authorities in the name of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*, suspecting it of unorthodoxy at best and Khārijism at worst. Yet it is not at all clear that this later Sunni norm was present in the ninth century; nor that, if it was present, it was widely accepted among the more radical proto-Sunnis, especially the more militant associates of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, among whom, as we shall soon see, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself may possibly be included. The ninth-century is littered with rulers, from caliphs on down, who usurped their position by force of arms, yet are still regarded as good Sunnis. This is an issue which we shall leave aside for the present; it is dealt with at length in the following chapter, in connection with the discussion of Yaʿqūb's relations with the ʿAbbāsids.

But to return to Yaʿqūb, whom we left brandishing his sword before the Nīshāpūri notables: If Yaʿqūb was indeed what we are positing – a dedicated, even somewhat fanatical, self-appointed Jihadist – he could very well at this point have become frustrated with the current occupant of the ʿAbbāsid throne. After all, if Yaʿqūb had no qualms about replacing incompetent governors for the good of Islam as he understood it, then why not consider replacing incompetent or venal ʿAbbāsids with more worthy ʿAbbāsids, especially when this particular ʿAbbāsid was hampering the good fight?[166] Yaʿqūb apparently did try to bring

[165] One must also take into account, though, the possibility that this whole story is simply a topos; there are suspiciously similar stories told of other Islamic rulers whom our sources wish to discredit; *vide e. g.* the anecdote concerning the Fātimid Caliph al-Muʿizz, of which Bernard Lewis remarks that "Its purpose is to depict al-Muʿizz as an adventurer – an unscrupulous upstart who had gained power by force … But this is precisely what al-Muʿizz was not, and nothing is less likely than that he would, in this brazen way, have declared himself an imposter." (B. Lewis, "An Interpretation of Fātimid History," *Colloque International sur l'histoire du Caire*, Cairo, 1999, pp. 287-295.) The present author has chosen to relate seriously to the story about Yaʿqūb, because what it relates is actually quite congruent with what we know of Yaʿqūb's personality, style, and outlook.

[166] For a thorough discussion of the religious and historical issues involved in this, *vide infra*, Chapter Five.

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home to the caliph the dire straits in which he had found Khurāsān, even in a manner he thought would personally interest the caliph, if only for power considerations; according to one source, it was at this point that Yaʿqūb sent the head of the Khārijite counter-caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān to Baghdād.[167]

There are differing accounts regarding the caliph's reaction to Yaʿqūb's suppression of the Ṭāhirids. According to Ṭabarī, the caliph, unmoved by Yaʿqūb's recital of the woes of Khurāsān, ordered Yaʿqūb to abandon the province and return to his previous duties, on pain of being considered a rebel. Yaʿqūb's emissaries were given robes of honor and sent back with this stern message.[168] This exchange highlights to some degree the relations between the caliph and Yaʿqūb. To have sent back such a message, in such a harsh tone, the caliph must have been fairly certain that Yaʿqūb would obey him, or at least not openly break with him, particularly given the caliph's own precarious position at this juncture; after all, the Zanj rebels and Musāwir the Khārijite were pressing the caliph uncomfortably close to Baghdād. The account also incidentally confirms the fact that, up until this point, Yaʿqūb had **not** been considered a rebel; otherwise, the caliph's threat makes no sense.

Interestingly, one hostile source even depicts the caliph as having acquiesced in Yaʿqūb's takeover of Khurāsān. This source, too, also confirms that the Ṭāhirids were by now highly unsuccessful as rulers:

> A group gathered around [Yaʿqūb]; and, in time, because the ruler [i. e. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir] was not victorious, he deceived him and expelled the governor of Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh from Sijistān. He [Yaʿqūb] was appointed to the rulership and from there he came to Khurāsān and took the kingship of Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir. His rule came to such a point that the Caliph made a pact with him and Khurāsān passed to him.[169]

Yet another source settles for a position somewhere in the middle; the Caliph was not pleased about the suppression of the Ṭāhirids but was happy with Yaʿqūb's battle against the Khārijites in Khurāsān:

> [Yaʿqūb] ordered that the head of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm [*sic*], whom the Khārijites had killed, be taken and brought [to Yaʿqūb]. [Then Yaʿqūb] sent emissaries and a letter to al-Muʿtamid, who was Commander of the Faithful, and to al-Muwaffaq his brother and heir apparent … In the letters he recalled the arrest of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, and he sent the head of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm [*sic*]. Now, the Commander of the Faithful was not pleased with the imprisonment of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir and was opposed to it, but he deigned to accept the head of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm [*sic*] and his killing. He gave a command that they carry the head of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm [*sic*] around Baghdād, proclaiming: "This is the head of him who pretended to the Caliphate; Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth killed him and sent his head." Then he answered nicely the letters [i. e. Yaʿqūb's letters to the caliph and his brother]

167 On this episode, *vide supra*.
168 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 507.
169 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 245.

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> because he had no choice, for Yaʿqūb had become powerful, [so that the caliph] saw the rightness of gaining his favour.[170]

It is therefore unclear whether or not the caliph actually did remonstrate with Yaʿqūb to leave Khurāsān in the end. It seems, however, likely that he did, since Yaʿqūb was most likely obeying a caliphal injunction (if such there was) by his subsequent withdrawal from Nīshāpūr and Khurāsān, although he did not restore the degenerate Ṭāhirid dynasty. Once again Yaʿqūb's actual behaviour, when closely examined, belies the current historical consensus: this is not the course of action that a land-hungry rebel or adventurer would have chosen at this juncture. According to two of our sources, he actually went back to Sīstān.[171] Numismatic evidence would suggest that from there he went yet again on a *ghāzī* campaign to the East.[172] According to other sources, he simply proceeded at this juncture – without *jihādī* detours to the East – to execute the original mission he had been given: to rid western Khurāsān of ʿAlid encroachment from Ṭabaristān.[173]

The Campaign against the Zaydīs

The Zaydī Imāms found fertile ground for their *daʿwa* in the Caspian region, at least in part due to the misrule of Ṭāhirid representatives in the area.[174] In the year 250/864, the ʿAlids had taken the city of Rayy for the first time.[175] In 252/866, the Ṭāhirids had abandoned Rayy to the ʿAlids and paid them 2,000,000 dirhams in tribute.[176] The ʿAlids again took the city in 256/870, defeated the Ṭāhirid army which Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir had at last bestirred himself to send, and took over and plundered the surrounding province.[177] The following year – 257/871 – al-Ḥasan b. Zayd sent a representative to al-Rayy, "and he gained mastery over it. He acted very badly toward its inhabitants, tore out the gates of the city, which were of iron, and sent them to al-Ḥasan b. Zayd; things remained like this for over three years."[178] That is, al-Rayy remained under Zaydī control until Yaʿqūb came to change that situation.

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170 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 225.
171 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 266; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 502.
172 See D. Tor, "A Numismatic History."
173 Even Qazvīnī allows that Yaʿqūb was appointed by the caliph to combat the Zaydīs; see *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 331.
174 See M. S. Khan, "The Early History of Zaydī Shīʿism in Daylamān and Gīlān," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 125 (1975), p. 303; and M. Rekaya, "La Place des provinces sud-Caspiennes dans l'histoire de l'Iran de la conquête arabe à l'avènement des Zaydites (16-250 H/637-864 J. C.): particularisme regional ou rôle 'national'?" *Revisti Degli Studi Orientali* 48 (1973-1974), p. 148.
175 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 134.
176 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 372; according to Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 177), 1,000,000.
177 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 248.
178 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 249.

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Yaʿqūb's clash with al-Ḥasan b. Zayd was also connected to the shadowy figure of ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Sijzī.[179] It is unclear who this man was and what (if anything) he stood for. He is first encountered, as previously mentioned regarding his activity in the year 258/872, when he had apparently taken control of the Herāt district (an area rife with *shurāt*).[180] Upon Yaʿqūb's approach to the city, however, ʿAbdallāh fled to Nīshāpūr. We are, incidentally, informed in this connection how the people of Herāt felt towards the Ṣaffārid ruler, and this description does not support the *ʿayyār*-as-robber thesis: "Yaʿqūb entered Herāt, held court there, and was solicitous toward the people, both in words and action. The people of Herāt had already been followers of Yaʿqūb, and were deeply attached to him."[181]

After fleeing before Yaʿqūb, ʿAbdallāh had besieged Nīshāpūr and apparently been admitted to the city by Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir. What the former's position was at this court we can only guess; given the latter's weakness, however, and what our sources tell us about Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's inability to resist ʿAbdallāh,[182] it is probably not too far off the mark to assume that this man wielded a certain amount of influence there. This supposition is confirmed, moreover, by the explicit reports that ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad gave counsel to the Ṭāhirid.[183] When ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad realized, however, that the Ṭāhirid ruler was not going to fight against the Ṣaffārid forces (or anyone else, for that matter), he hied himself to Dāmaghān, and thence to Gurgān, where he joined with the ʿAlid Ḥasan b. Zayd and began gathering an army in order to fight Yaʿqūb.[184]

Again, we do not know what this ʿAbdallāh was aiming for, nor what his religious convictions were. He was, however, obviously willing to cooperate with non-Sunnis in order to achieve his goals. Moreover, he seems to have been fiercely opposed to Yaʿqūb. ʿAbdallāh's alliance with al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, over and above the caliphal mission to get rid of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, apparently provided part of the immediate reason for Yaʿqūb's march into the Caspian provinces – not necessarily because of any obsession on the latter's part with ʿAbdallāh, but simply to break up a dangerous alliance.

One of Yaʿqūb's tactics as reported by several chroniclers was to try to use the *divide et impera* strategy in order to break up the Zaydī – ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad alliance:

> I was also told that Yaʿqūb sent to al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, requesting that he hand over ʿAbdallāh al-Sijzī to him, in order for him to withdraw, for he had come to Ṭabaristān only for his [ʿAbdallāh's] sake, not to fight [al-Ḥasan]. But al-Ḥasan b. Zayd refused to

179 *Vide supra.*
180 *Vide e. g.* al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, pp. 266-267.
181 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 217.
182 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 266.
183 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 219.
184 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 223.

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> hand [ʿAbdallāh] over to him. Yaʿqūb then called upon him to fight. The two armies clashed, but there was no clear outcome, until al-Ḥasan was vanquished, and passed toward … the land of Daylam. Yaʿqūb … advanced from there toward Āmul, collecting from its inhabitants the year's taxes.[185]

This report has led several modern scholars to downplay the religious nature of Yaʿqūb's campaigns, since they have understood the hostility between Yaʿqūb and ʿAbdallāh b. Muḥammad to be a personal emnity rather than a battle on Yaʿqūb's part to suppress a dangerous rebel who was making common cause with the Zaydī Imām.[186] Moreover, they have taken at face value Yaʿqūb's initial statement to al-Ḥasan b. Zayd that he had no intention of fighting him when, as we have seen, he had already been commanded by the caliph to deal with al-Ḥasan.[187] Thus, it is perfectly in accordance with the religious interpretation which we are here positing that Yaʿqūb arrived in Ṭabaristān in 260/873f. and set off into the heterodox Caspian Provinces in an attempt, ultimately unsuccessful, to capture the Zaydī Shīʿīte leader and extirpate heresy from the area.[188] At least one source states that the Daylamites themselves favoured Yaʿqūb: "In [the year 261/874f.] the Daylamites inclined toward Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, and abandoned al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, so al-Ḥasan burned down their houses and went to Kirmān."[189]

After finishing his campaign in the Caspian area Yaʿqūb returned to Nīshāpūr to finish establishing order in Khurāsān. Apparently, his efforts to "command good and forbid evil" at least in some measure restored tranquillity to Khurāsān: various malefactors, when they realized that Yaʿqūb had come to stay, hastened to submit themselves to his rule. At this time, certain armed groups [*suʿlūk*][190] of Khurāsān, who seem to have been organized in some fashion, took counsel together and said:

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185 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 509; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 268

186 In this, it should be noted, the partisans of such a view are following the precedent of *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ* (vol. 4, pp. 12-13), which omits any mention of caliphal behest and plays up the ʿAbdallāh-Yaʿqūb enmity.

187 *Vide supra*. Indeed, if the caliphal behest – or even Yaʿqūb's religious reputation – was known to the Zaydī Imām, it may very well have been the reason for his refusal to hand over ʿAbdallāh.

188 If Yaʿqūb failed to capture al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, it was certainly not for lack of trying. For the whole course of the campaign, including the insurmountable topographical and meteorological barriers to Yaʿqūb's goal of taking al-Ḥasan, see Ibn Isfandiyār, *loc. cit*., pp. 242-243; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 268-269.

189 Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 5. Dhahabī's account of Yaʿqūb's anti-Zaydī campaign in *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* is treated below.

190 The word *suʿlūk* is, like the word *ʿayyār*, quite murky in meaning. To attempt to elucidate it here, however, is far beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to say that they were also some form of organized armed band, and probably in this context one which had been engaging in violent activities of one kind or another.

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> "This man is going to be master of the age [*ṣāḥib qirān*];[191] he has great power [or: fortune – *dawlatī buzurg dārad*], he is a man of valour [*mardī mard*],[192] and no one can triumph over him. The right thing for us to do [therefore] would be to go and place ourselves under his protection, so that during the period of his rule we can continue to live."[193]

The men thereupon submitted to Yaʿqūb and, typically, were treated kindly by him. One of these *suʿlūk* was a man named Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī, whom we shall meet again in Chapter Six.

Whether or not the specific story is accurate, it seems to preserve the historical memory of certain characteristics of Yaʿqūb's rule in Khurāsān: a) that the various disorderly elements in Khurāsān realized they could no longer carry on with their disruptive activities, obviously because Yaʿqūb was concerned with public order (otherwise the robbers need not have feared to continue their activities); and b) that Yaʿqūb was perceived not only as invincible, but also as using his might in the service of the quintessential domestic Islamic duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*.

Having satisfactorily begun to organize Khurāsān, Yaʿqūb was now forced to turn his attention to pressing matters in Fārs. It will be recalled that Yaʿqūb had left Fārs after his campaign there in 257/871, leaving the appointment of a governor to the Caliph.[194] Yaʿqūb was drawn into Fārs again in 261/874f., however, when Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil defied Caliphal orders to replace him, defeating and killing not only the governor but also a caliphal general, named Mufliḥ, who had subsequently been sent to forcibly remove the rebel.[195] The general Ibn Wāṣil killed, moreover, was one who had an illustrious family history of fighting religious deviants: not only had the dead man's father fought against the ʿAlīds, but Mufliḥ himself had been the crack caliphal general sent to battle religious rebels, including both the Zanj and a dangerous Khārijite rebel who had taken over Mosul.[196]

Ibn Wāṣil was now clearly in open rebellion against caliphal authority, and had even marched on al-Ahwāz, vowing to fight Samarra's strong man, Mūsā b. Bughā.[197] This same strong man, moreover, felt too weak to battle Muḥammad b. Wāṣil: "When Mūsā [b. Bughā] saw the severity of affairs in this district, and the plethora of those gaining mastery over it, and that he was too weak to over-

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191 Defined by Steingass as "Lord of the happy conjunction [of the stars]"; "a fortunate and invincible hero."

192 Gaillard gives two definitions for *mardī*: 1) the quality of manliness or valour and 2) generosity or noblesse oblige; M. Gaillard, *Le Livre de Samak-e ʿayyār: Structure et idéologie du roman persan médiéval*, Paris, 1987, pp. 17-26. The author thanks Marina Gaillard for having supplied a copy of her work.

193 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 224-225.

194 *Vide supra*.

195 Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, pp. 142-143.

196 On Mufliḥ see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 226-7; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 382; on Mufliḥ's father ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's war against the Zanj see *ibid*, p. 504.

197 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 512-513.

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come them, he asked to be released, and this was granted to him."[198] Even worse, in the aftermath of a Zanj defeat of caliphal forces, the governor of al-Ahwāz retreated to ʿAskar Mukram and the Zanj rebels promptly took over the city.[199]

In other words, the political situation was now critical: the Zanj were in possession of southern ʿIrāq and parts of Khūzistān, the rebel and erstwhile Khārijite Muḥammad b. Wāṣil had control of Fārs, and the caliph's strongman Mūsā b. Bughā had already admitted his inability to do anything to rectify matters. According to Iṣṭakhrī, at this juncture one of the leading magnates of Fārs appealed to Yaʿqūb to save Fārs from the arbitrary rule of Muḥammad b. Wāṣil.[200] In 261/875, therefore, Yaʿqūb entered Fārs and defeated Muḥammad b. Wāṣil.[201] He continued as far as al-Ahwāz, some sixty miles west of the Fārs-Khūzistān border, which he took, and then halted.[202]

It is important to note that Yaʿqūb did **not** continue into ʿIrāq; once again, the empirical evidence supports the *ʿayyār*-as-*mutatawwiʿ* interpretation rather than the *ʿayyār*-as-unscrupulous-adventurer thesis; if Yaʿqūb's aims and ambitions had been merely to aggrandize his own power, he could have continued straight into ʿIrāq at this point and easily overwhelmed the caliphal forces, which had proven themselves incapable of defeating even Ibn Wāṣil. The fact that he did not do so at this time would seem to indicate that his subsequent move upon ʿIrāq was the product of unfolding historical events rather than unbridled ambition.

One need not look far in order to discover what historical events might have motivated Yaʿqūb's decision to challenge the caliph: around this time, "al-Muʿtamid ordered the gathering of the Ḥajj from Khurāsān, and al-Rayy, and Ṭabaristān, and Jurjān; informed them that he had not made Yaʿqūb governor of Khurāsān; and that his entry into Khurāsān and his imprisonment of Muḥammad

198 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 275.

199 *Ibid*., p. 276; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 513.

200 al-Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, pp. 142-143. The fact that this magnate is described as having had his own ulterior motive for inviting Yaʿqūb in – he was afraid for his own life under Ibn Wāṣil – does not in any way affect Yaʿqūb's motivation. According to the much later and more negative *Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, the "real" reason Yaʿqūb marched into Fārs after hearing of Ibn Wāṣil's victory was that he 'became desirous of" ruling Fārs (vol. 4, p. 13). One can only wonder why Yaʿqūb was never seized by such a desire any of the previous times he had successfully invaded Fārs.

201 Whereas Ibn al-Athīr attributes Yaʿqūb's intervention solely to his "appetite to rule Fārs, and to take the money and treasure and weapons which Ibn Wāṣil had plundered from [the caliphal army he had defeated]," (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 276) Ṭabarī states that "The reason for this – according to what was told me – was that Ibn Wāṣil had killed … the caliph's administrator [*ʿāmil*] in Fārs, and had taken over [the province]." (*Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 512). Al-Dhahabī (*Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 6) merely states: "Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth went to Fārs. He clashed with Ibn Wāṣil, and Yaʿqūb routed him and smashed his army, taking from a castle [Ibn Wāṣil] had 40,0000,000 dirhams, according to what has reached us." Further on (p. 10) Dhahabī notes again, briefly: "In [this year] Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth subdued Fārs; its governor Ibn Wāṣil fled to al-Ahwāz, and Yaʿqūb grew powerful."

202 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 290.

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b. Ṭāhir had not been by his command."[203] Ṭabarī adds that the pilgrims were ordered to disavow Yaʿqūb.[204]

Interestingly, none of the sources which try to justify al-Muʿtamid's turning against Yaʿqūb can agree upon the caliphal motive. A later report, for instance, claims that the caliph sent out a message to "the amīrs of Khurāsān" that Yaʿqūb had become an extremist Shīʿite who wished to destroy Islam [*mi-khwāhad ke dar dīn-i Islām shikast āward*], and that anyone of piety should therefore rebel against him.[205] A different and unique report claims that the Caliph turned against Yaʿqūb after having received complaints about the latter's behaviour during the Caspian campaign:

> Then Yaʿqūb entered Jurjān, and he acted oppressively and unjustly ... so a group of the Jurjānites sought help in Baghdād against Yaʿqūb, so that al-Muʿtamid resolved upon fighting him. He sent letters to the notables of Khurāsān censuring Yaʿqūb, and [enjoining that] they should take pains for his removal. Then Yaʿqūb wrote to al-Muʿtamid humbling himself and in a fraudulent manner, requesting to be invested with the governorship of the East. al-Muʿtamid granted this, and his brother al-Muwaffaq, because of their preoccupation with fighting the Zanj.[206]

In any case, it is a fact that the caliph, whatever his motivations, real or ostensible, did indeed turn against Yaʿqūb openly. Apparently, Yaʿqūb then reached the end of his patience with al-Muʿtamid, just as he had previously given up on the Ṭāhirids. Thus ensued the most spectacular event in Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's career: his march against the Caliph al-Muʿtamid.

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[203] *Ibid*., p. 288; cf. al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 5: "In [the year 261/874f.] al-Muʿtamid wrote a letter read out to those pilgrims from Khurāsān and Rayy who were in Baghdād, whose content was: 'I did not make Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth governor of Khurāsān,' and commanding that they disavow him."

[204] Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 512. Mirkhwand (*Rawḍat al-ṣafāʾ*, vol. 4, pp. 12-13) also has the caliph summon the pilgrims [reading "*hajjiyyān*" for "*hajjibān*"] and order them to disavow Yaʿqūb, ostensibly for his overthrow of what remained of the Ṭāhirids. Mīrkhwānd, however, squarely places this event before Yaʿqūb's Fārs campaign.

[205] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 331. Needless to say, there is absolutely no historical evidence that Yaʿqūb was a Shīʿite of any sort – on the contrary.

[206] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 514.

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5. The ʿ*Ayyār* and the Caliph

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep …
O but we dreamed to mend
Whatever mischief seemed
To afflict mankind,
But now
That winds of winter blow
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed.

– William Butler Yeats

A few months after the Caliph al-Muʿtamid broke with Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth in the year 262/875, the most controversial deed of history's most famous ʿ*ayyār* – and the one which probably cost him his reputation with posterity – occurred: Yaʿqūb's march on ʿIrāq against the Caliph al-Muʿtamid. This chapter, based on a review of the primary source evidence regarding Yaʿqūb's campaign against al-Muʿtamid, will show that Yaʿqūb intended not to abolish the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, but rather to replace the ineffectual al-Muʿtamid with another ʿAbbāsid contender. In particular, we shall show that there is explicit testimony in several sources that Yaʿqūb entered ʿIrāq with the collusion and encouragement of the power behind the throne, the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq, who apparently wanted to lure Yaʿqūb into a military trap. Finally, we shall examine Yaʿqūb's reaction to this ʿAbbāsid betrayal; what his further actions reveal about his goals, values, and the nature of his career; and what those in turn reveal about ʿ*ayyārs* and ʿ*ayyārī*.

Traditionally, scholars have viewed the campaign against al-Muʿtamid as Yaʿqūb's personal bid for dominion, in keeping with their opportunist image of him,[1] despite their awareness of the persistent hinting in the sources at collusion between him and the Caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq, who was the real power behind the throne. Nöldeke, in fact, dismissed these reports in the primary sources solely because of his pre-conceived image of Yaʿqūb: if the latter were merely out for self-aggrandizement, why would he ever agree to stage a coup to put a powerful caliph on the throne, one whom he would not have been able to dominate?[2] But if one posits that Yaʿqūb really was serious about the ideals he had, at least according to all his declarations, spent his life fighting for, and that he therefore sought a partnership with a caliph who would restore Islam's glory, then the reports cannot be so lightly dismissed.

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1 Thus, for instance, Bosworth writes that "the dominant motive behind Yaʿqūb's action, in addition to … hatred of the ʿAbbāsids, seems to have been a sheer love of military conquest." (Bosworth, "The Armies of the Saffarids," p. 536)

2 Nöldeke, *op. cit.* , pp. 190-191.

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The first issue we must analyze, however, is one briefly touched upon in the last chapter: namely, how someone who was apparently a fanatical Sunni could possibly go about switching caliphs, given that later Sunni dogma, at least, is supposedly quietist.[3] The first point to note is that it has not been established that this later Sunni norm was even extant in the ninth century; nor that, if present, it was universally accepted, particularly among the more radical proto-Sunnis. In other words, although current scholarly consensus maintains that only Khārijites and Khurāsānian Murjiʾites were politically activist at this time, there are many indications that this modern scholarly belief needs to be revised, and there are indeed several scholars who have taken issue with it, particularly insofar as it pertains to proto-Sunnism, let alone later times.

Sourdel goes so far as to assert categorically that in the early ʿAbbāsid period, at least, "Nothing had been resolved … [regarding] to what degree the sovereign must be unconditionally obeyed."[4] Bernard Lewis has noted, first, that

> While the predominant view among jurists in general supported the authoritarian tradition, there was always another strand in Islamic thought and practice, which was radical and activist, at times even revolutionary. This tradition is as old and as deep-rooted as the first, and its working can be seen through the centuries, both in Islamic political thought and in the political actions of Muslims.[5]

Lewis goes on to observe, moreover, that it was only as the political situation deteriorated, and the limitations imposed upon the ruler were trampled, that "the subject's duty of obedience was correspondingly strengthened" by jurists; indeed, our first clear formulation of this quietist principle among hard-line Sunnis dates only from the tenth century, well after the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* period.[6]

It is far from clear, moreover, not only whether or not there were proto-Sunni traditions at this time condemning activism against unjust rulers, but also how widely accepted such traditions were, if they were indeed already extant at this date. On the other hand, one certainly does find the opposite: namely, activist traditions preserved in eminently respectable sources such as al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which states specifically, for instance, that "If the ruler judges with injustice or contrary to the people of knowledge, then he is rejected."[7] In short, not only are we completely ignorant as to how widespread quietist theories were at this time, but we also do not know how commonly such theories – assuming they were

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3 Although see Ahmed Abdelsalam, "The Practice of Violence in the *ḥisba* Theories" *Iranian Studies* 38:4 (2005), pp. 547-554

4 Dominique Sourdel, *l'État imperial des califes abbassides: VIIIe-Xe siècle,* Paris, 1999, p. 46.

5 Bernard Lewis, "The Limits of Obedience," *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago, 1988, p. 92.

6 Lewis, "The Limits of Obedience," p. 99.

7 Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl b. b. Ibrāhīm al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Beirut, 1411/1991, vol. 8, p. 150. Interestingly, this tradition is related by Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād, who, as we have already seen, had strong connections to the militant *mutatawwiʿī* tradition.

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both extant and widely accepted at that time – were translated into practice. As one scholar has noted,

> … Even in the Sunni community there was no one universally accepted doctrine of the caliphate. The assumption that any such general acceptance existed finds little to support it either in the writings of the jurists themselves, or in the psychology of Sunni Islam … But this is not all … As is so often the case in Islam, the inner reality is quite other than would appear from the external formulations of the jurists. Between the real content of Muslim thought and its juristic expression there is a certain dislocation, so it is seldom possible to infer the reality from the outer form …[8]

Gibb's words are especially apposite regarding the Ṣaffārid period; for the quietist dogma, if it indeed existed before the tenth century, was invariably honoured in the breach during this earlier time. In the case of caliphal appointments this seems to have been a non-issue: no political figure of this time seems to have felt the slightest compunction about setting aside by force of arms anyone short of the caliph. We can see this in the unusual proliferation of revolts in the early ninth-century – including anti-caliphal revolts – many of which were emphatically Sunni.[9]

Deposing the Caliph, while a bit more complex than deposing other political figures, was of course frequently done in the third/ninth century, and proto-Sunni religious scholars could always be found to justify the deed. The ʿAbbāsids themselves began the trend in the eighth century with their violent overthrow of the entire Umayyad dynasty, but they found numerous emulators in the generals and courtiers who spent much of the ninth and tenth centuries elevating, deposing, and executing various ʿAbbāsids (with the blessings of various cooperative *ʿulamāʾ*); indeed, it was no doubt partly in response to the ensuing political chaos that this doctrine was even formulated. The decade preceding Yaʿqūb's rise to power had witnessed the murder of no fewer than four caliphs, and nobody accused the various actors concerned – including the Sunni *ʿulamāʾ* who gave their stamp of approval – of being anything but religiously orthodox. Clearly, if any such Sunni ideal existed at this point, it was rather theoretical. In fact, what is perhaps most striking about the proto-Sunni reaction to the deposition of caliphs in this period is that the various *coups d'état* met with virtually no legitimist reaction on the part of the *ʿulamāʾ*, many of whom, as we saw in Chapter Two, were quite outspoken when it came to the duty of reproving those in power for religious misconduct.

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8 H. A. R. Gibb, "The Sunni Theory of the Caliphate," reprinted in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Princeton, 1982, pp. 148-149.

9 For several Sunnī revolts in this period, including the ʿAbbāsid one against al-Ma'mūn and his religious policies, see D. G. Tor, "An Historiographical Re-examination of the Appointment and Death of ʿAlī al-Riḍā," *passim*. No one at that time accused the ʿAbbāsid family of having been bad Muslims for rising against their caliph.

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The research of one modern scholar, Khaled Abou El Fadl, seems to suggest, moreover, that the commonly-held assumption that the prohibitions against *fitna* apply to religiously-motivated rebellion is mistaken. Abou El Fadl, a legal scholar, examined this issue at some length from a juristic standpoint. He noted that there is an inherent ambivalence, even in later Islamic law as it was finally codified, around the whole question of the legitimacy of rebellion or political activism:

> … There is a tension in the fitna discourse between the fear of civil strife and the historical precedent of political activism. Precedents for both political passivity and activism existed in Islamic history. The tension, however, was created because of the theological need to uphold the credibility of the Companions who adopted diametrically opposed positions on the use of force against fellow Muslims.[10]

Abou El Fadl notes further that

> The Qurʾān does command Muslims to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, which could imply a duty to resist injustice. Furthermore, some of the most notable figures in Islamic history rebelled against those in power. The Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids came to power through rebellions as well.[11]

Finally, he points out that the ultimate position of the jurists, in light of the contradictory Prophetic traditions on this subject, was that "the traditions condemning rebellion apply only to those who rebel without a plausible cause or interpretation."[12] Under the laws dealing with rebellion, *aḥkām al-bughā*, a Muslim who honestly believed that his duty of enjoining the good required him to rebel, would be religiously obligated to do so. Furthermore, "Muslim jurists insisted that the articulated rules of *aḥkām al-bughā* are binding **whether a ruler is [actually] just or unjust**."[13] A rebel need only be convinced – correctly or erroneously – that his cause is just in order for him to be considered **religiously obligated to rebel**.[14]

Abou El Fadl, of course, as a believer in the authenticity of the Prophetic corpus, was assuming that all the traditions he examined were equally early, and that both of these positions – the activist and the quietist – must therefore have been coeval, existing in creative tension together since the founding days of Islam. Although the present author finds Gibb's position (i. e. , that the quietist position was a later historical development) more convincing, this point is not germane to our discussion: what is essential is that Abou El Fadl proves that the activist position was not only religiously approved in the earlier centuries, but that it has even survived in Sunni Islam down to the present day.

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10 Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 45.
11 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 61.
12 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, p. 326.
13 *Ibid.* , emphasis added.
14 Noted by Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, pp. 44-47.

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Finally, Lambton is another scholar who has both noted the religious imperative to rebel, and warned against the anachronistic projection of later concepts and norms into early Islamic times in this specific context:

> We must be careful not to underrate the reality of religious convictions, whatever their political, social, or economic dimensions; and we must also beware of anachronistic attempts to force mediaeval thought into the mould of modern concepts of authority. Piety was often linked with armed opposition to authority and was sometimes an expression of alienation, but it was none the less real for all that.[15]

The actual *mutaṭawwiʿī* attitudes we have seen and examined in Chapter Two seem to suggest that, while recognizing the essential function and role of the caliph's political authority, the *mutaṭawwiʿa* attached no particular reverence or religious weight to either the office or the person of the actual office-holder. There is a statement ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak is said to have made regarding Mālik b. Anas that encapsulates this utilitarian and prosaic view of the political authorities, while emphasizing the sacred character of the pious *muḥaddith*. Ibn al-Mubārak notes that, paradoxically, while Mālik did not seek power and prestige, that is precisely what his piety ended up winning for him: "… The way of dignity and the glory [*ʿizz*] of the authority [*sulṭān*] of the pious one/ – he [the pious one] is the venerable one and not the wielder of power [*dhī'l-sulṭān*]."[16] What this statement is baldly asserting is that real power and glory, in the eyes of the militant proto-Sunnis, belonged to the pious scholars, not to the caliphs or their representatives; those were simply necessary but inglorious functionaries.

The actions of eminent proto-Sunnis show that this attitude was carried through into practice; for instance, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself, while not personally joining in the rising against the caliph al-Wāthiq, considered the leader of the abortive uprising against that caliph to be a *shahīd*.[17] Likewise, the strongly Ḥanbalite religious associates of Yaʿqūb appear to have been completely unfazed by Yaʿqūb's militant Islamic activism. We saw in the last chapter the irrefutable fact that both Yaʿqūb and his fraternal successor, ʿAmr, enjoyed the strong and unwavering support in Khurāsān of impeccably Sunni figures (i. e. people associated with and respected by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, listed in Ḥanbalite biographical literature, and generally reported to have been irreproachably orthodox and Traditionist in outlook); this is inexplicable unless certain circles, at least, among the

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15 A. K. S. Lambton, "Concepts of Authority in Persia: Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 26 (1988), p. 95.

16 Abū ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Rabbihi al-Andalusī, *Kitāb al-ʿiqd al-farīd*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, no date, vol. 2, p. 194. Note that Ibn al-Mubārak deliberately plays upon the word *sulṭān*, which, as Hugh Kennedy has noted, was used frequently at this time to denote the Caliph.

17 Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, p. 105.

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third /ninth century *ahl al-ḥadīth* regarded the government and Caliph as subject to "*al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf*" and, if need be, removal.[18]

In fact, this activist, radical interpretation of the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* is a hallmark of the whole *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement, and in particular of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak and the militant – and militantly orthodox – school we have traced above; nobody ever appointed Ibn al-Mubārak to go on any raids or to lead the Jihad; yet he did so, because according to his own lights it was right to do so.[19] In the words of one of Ibn al-Mubārak's more famous traditions: "Behold! God sent me with a sword, just before the Hour [of Judgment], and placed my daily sustenance beneath the shadow of my spear, and humiliation and contempt on those who oppose me …"[20] Although later scholars – and later Sunni Muslims – might regard independence and military disobedience to caliphal rule as dangerously akin to Khārijism, the behaviour of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* in the eighth and ninth centuries suggests that in fact their view of the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* was actually very close to the Khārijite position, certainly in practice.

Even assuming that a quietist ideology existed at this time which was somewhat akin to the English Renaissance ideal of the "divine right" of rulers, Yaʿqūb would most certainly have been confronted with the same conundrum faced in so many other times and places by people holding such ideals: what was the proper course of action for a pious person to pursue when one's lawful and legitimate ruler consistently failed to uphold and enforce God's rule and laws? This dilemma would have been all the more profound for a Muslim, of course, than it was for a Christian faced with a similar situation, because the former believed that "religion was actually meant to put things right for people in this world no less than the next."[21] The Sunni law books are full of discussions of the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding evil; the means of doing this was, as we saw in Chapter Two, through the complementary duties of *ḥisba* within the

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18 Note also that, regarding the problem of disobedience toward his lawful commander, Yaʿqūb – apart from the ʿAbbāsid example itself – had very good authority for disobeying a legitimate commander if the exigencies of religion so dictated; see Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1950-1956), vol. 2, pp. 47-48, no. 622. In this tradition, the Prophet himself has appointed a particular commander over a group of the Anṣār, and commanded them to obey him. When the commander orders the troop to cast themselves into a fire, however, they balk and inquire of the Prophet, who says to them: "If you had entered it you would never have left it forever, for obedience is only in [what is] good [*al-maʿrūf*]." The question of actively putting aside a legitimately appointed ruler is a different matter, however. Yet the historical record of the ninth century, with its multiple caliphal depositions, would suggest that compunctions about setting aside caliphs by force of arms were rather scarce, too.

19 See *supra*, chapter 2.

20 ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Jihād*, pp. 89-90, cited and translated in D. Cook, "Muslim Apocalyptic and Jihad," p. 75. For a slightly different translation, see Kister, "Land, Property and Jihad," p. 281.

21 Crone, *God's Rule*, p. 11.

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borders of Islam and *jihād* outside of them. Yet it was precisely these two duties that the caliphs were no longer fulfilling.

To a ninth-century Muslim, the world must have seemed a shambles: the Islamic oecumene, which had started out full of bright promise, carrying God's word and order in strength and conquest, had fallen into disorder and confusion. Evil was rampant, heresy was rife, enemies were gnawing at the borders – and the caliph was doing nothing to rectify the world. The anguish voiced by Europeans at the collapse of their orderly world in the early twentieth century surely addresses equally well the anguish felt by the inhabitants of the ninth-century central and eastern Islamic lands:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

It is too facile to dismiss the reality of this dilemma for a Sunni of that time by citing later jurisprudential theories. Since the time of Antigone, thoughtful citizens have been vexed by the problem of what a person who wishes to be righteous should do when a moral imperative clashes with a legal or political one. Yaʿqūb seems to have solved this problem much in the fashion prescribed by John Donne: "… States and matter of government … are somtimes surprizd with such *accidents*, as that the *Magistrat* asks not what may be done by *law*, but does that, which must *necessarily* be don in that case."[22] If Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself, who was certainly no Khārijite, could declare a rebel against an ʿAbbāsid caliph to have been an Islamic martyr, how much more compelling, for a *mutaṭawwiʿ* of that same time, must the religious imperative have seemed to attempt to exchange a venal, ineffectual, and remiss ʿAbbāsid caliph for one he believed would be, if not able to enjoin the good himself, at least supportive of those Muslims who were anxious and eager to do so, thereby restoring God's rule.

For what has been overlooked or downplayed by prior scholarship is the ample historical evidence that Yaʿqūb invaded ʿIrāq in order to replace one ʿAbbāsid ruler with another, more competent and (hopefully) more godly and cooperative one, not in order to seize the caliphate for himself. Yaʿqūb had actually been sheltering an ʿAbbāsid in his camp – ʿAbdallāh b. al-Wāthiq – who died in 261/875, half a year before the invasion of ʿIrāq.[23] One tenth-century source tells us, in fact, that "ʿAbdullāh b. al-Wāthiq went to Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth to ask him for aid against al-Muʿtamid, and this is what encouraged him to be-

22 John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, IX, "Meditation."
23 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 512.

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take himself toward Baghdād."[24] It seems that Yaʿqūb had intended to install this protégé on the throne, was stymied by the latter's death, and had then opened contacts with al-Muwaffaq afterwards as the most fitting surviving candidate.

There are many pieces of evidence which strengthen this supposition. First of all, we know that Yaʿqūb was unhappy with al-Muʿtamid's weak rule on religious grounds; Masʿūdī, a very early source, states that Yaʿqūb composed verses on his journey, "condemning al-Muʿtamid and the *mawālī* who were with him for their neglect of religion and remissness in the matter of the Zanj," and declaiming:

> I now have possession of Khurāsān and the regions of Fārs, and I have high hopes of conquering ʿIrāq.
> For the interests of religion have been damaged and neglected and have become disordered, and they have become like effaced and disappearing traces (sc. Like those of e. g. a desert encampment)
> I have gone forth, with God's aid, with fortune and victorious, whilst the upholder of the banners of right guidance (or: "true religion," sc. The caliph) is not guarding [what he is supposed to].[25]

Given all the wars that Yaʿqūb had had to fight because the Caliph could not do so successfully himself (the Khārijites, the Zaydīs, and so forth), Yaʿqūb's disenchantment is not surprising. Moreover, this evidence corroborates the *mutaṭawwiʿī* motive which we have been positing underlay all of Yaʿqūb's campaigns: the restoration of Islam under a fit ruler. Furthermore, we know that al-Muwaffaq was actually the person who controlled whatever power the caliph was able to wield at this time; in the words of Ibn Khallikān, "Al-Muwaffaq was master over all matters, and al-Muʿtamid possessed nothing apart from the name of caliph."[26]

Evidence of Yaʿqūb's having entered ʿIrāq with al-Muwaffaq's encouragement is, in fact, found in many of the literary sources. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* is not only convinced that this was so; it purports to quote the actual letter that al-Muwaffaq sent inviting Yaʿqūb to come:

> Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq heard the news [of Yaʿqūb's successes], that matters stood this way, that the people of the world were attached to him because he was just, and that wherever he turned, no one opposed him. So al-Muwaffaq addressed a letter to Yaʿqūb, [asking] would he please come in order that they could see him, "and we shall entrust the world to you, in order that you may be the world keeper [or protector] – for the whole world has become obedient to you. As for us, that which you command, I shall obey completely. Know that I am satisfied with the *khuṭba* – for we belong to the *Ahl bayt* of Muṣṭafā [=the Prophet Muhammad] and you constantly strengthen his religion. There are to you[r credit] many *ghazāt* in the Abode of the Infidels; you enter India, Ceylon, and the remote region of the ocean;[27] and entered

24 al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-bad' wa'l-Ta'rīkh*, vol. 6, p. 125.
25 Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 229; tr. Bosworth, *Saffarids*, p. 157.
26 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 354.
27 This is very possibly a reference to Yaʿqūb's earlier *ghāzī* activities, of which we know virtually nothing. We do know, however, that there was active *ghāzī* activity in the Indian

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China,[28] Turkestān and Byzantium (*Rūm*). Upon the Infidels of the world, in every place, the effect of your sword is clear. Your claim over all of Islam has become compelling. We have commanded that in the Two Holy Places they should continually make the *khuṭba* in your name, for these deeds [i. e. Yaʿqūb's holy wars] are the best in the world. There has not been to [the credit of] anyone in Islam, after Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, such good works and justice as there has been during your period. Now we and all the [true] Muslims are your supporters, so that all the world, in your hands, will return to one religion – and that religion is Islam."[29]

While the letter itself may well be spurious, passages such as this are significant because they reflect, in however apocryphal a fashion, contemporary understanding of the actual course of real events, as well as contemporary perceptions of the Ṣaffārids.[30]

Likewise, Gardīzī, too, whose work is not pro-Ṣaffārid, shows the same insistence that there was collusion between Yaʿqūb and Muwaffaq:

[Yaʿqūb] wanted to go to Baghdād, to remove al-Muʿtamid from the Caliphate and to instate al-Muwaffaq; and al-Muwaffaq apprised al-Muʿtamid of the situation. Yaʿqūb would write letters addressed secretly to al-Muwaffaq, and al-Muwaffaq would show those letter to al-Muʿtamid, until Yaʿqūb came to Dayr al-ʿAqūl, near Baghdād, upon the Euphrates water course, and [his] army encamped there. Muwaffaq ordered that the waters of the Tigris be opened upon him, Yaʿqūb's army was for the most part destroyed, and he was defeated and retreated. From this disgrace he contracted dysentery and when he arrived in Jundishāpūr … he died; he had never [before] been defeated by any adversary …[31]

Ocean at what would have been the time of Yaʿqūb's early career. We read in Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's *Taʾrīkh*, for instance, of a *ghāzī* expedition whose ship went down in the Persian Gulf in the year 230/844f. There were also very active trade relations between the Muslim Persian Gulf ports and the far east at this time (Sulaymān al-Tājir and Abū Zayd Ḥasan b. Yazīd al-Ṣirāfī, *Akhbār al-Sīn waʾl-Hind*, Cairo, 1999, p. 63; see also G. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, Princeton, 1951, pp. 61-79). "Hind" here may simply refer to the pagan areas in eastern Afghanistān/western Pakistān conquered by Yaʿqūb; this is certainly the usage in Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Jaʿfarī, *Tārīkh-i Yazd*, ed. Īraj Afshār, Tehran, 1965, p. 60.

28 The phrase used, *chīn u māchīn*, is also used in Persian literature to indicate any really remote and exotic locale; for instance, in *Samak-i ʿayyār*, *passim*. It is, of course, also possible that Yaʿqūb actually went on raids at other points in the far east aside from Ceylon, and that these places were indiscriminately labelled "China." Or, "China" may refer to areas in Central Asia slightly to the northeast of the Zunbīl's territory in eastern Afghanistān, to which Yaʿqūb may have penetrated. See Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 68, where he discusses the sea route from Sīrāf to Canton.

29 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 231.

30 One finds this accurate historical reflection of popular perception (however apocryphal or garbled the narrative or document) not only in other Islamic contexts – for example, Ṭabarī's purported correspondence between al-Manṣūr and Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, which is important not for the letters' verbatim content, but because they reflect the actual ʿAbbāsid and Shiʿite ideological positions of the time – but also in other medieval historical works, e. g. Notker's "biography" of Charlemagne.

31 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, pp. 8-9. Even certain much later reports of these events are presented in a fashion which is in accordance with the interpretation we are proposing; e. g. Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 8.

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These reports of an al-Muwaffaq-Ṣaffārid conspiracy are given added weight by several accounts which, by bearing witness to Yaʿqūb's complete lack of even the most basic military preparations, appear to be alluding to such an agreement. In these accounts Yaʿqūb is asked how he, a general so skilled that he was until then literally undefeated, could have embarked on such an ambitious project in such an unprepared, lackadaisical fashion:

> "I never saw you plan a war in this way; how could you beat these people after placing in your front the baggage, the treasure, and the prisoners, and seeking a country you knew very little, going into its marshes and canals without a guide … You took forty days to march from al-Sūs to Wāsiṭ, with deficient provisions for the army. Then, when they received provisions and money and their affairs were put in good order, you advanced from Wāsiṭ to Dayr al-ʿAqūl in two days, and then hesitated at the auspicious moments, and advanced too rapidly instead of proceeding cautiously." Al-Ṣaffār replied: "I did not know that I should have to fight; I had no doubt of success, and I believed that the envoys would return to me, bring the matter to fruition, and I would obtain what I had aimed for."[32]

This testimony is particularly valuable because it comes from Ibn Khallikān, a hostile, anti-Ṣaffārid source. Yet, despite his animus toward the Ṣaffārids, Ibn Khallikān appears to have transmitted uncorrupted all the traditions that undercut his own interjections and opinings.[33]

The same holds true for al-Dhahabī, who relates a very similar tradition about the complete lack of military preparedness in Yaʿqūb's army within the context of an account that, like Ibn Khallikān's, while openly hostile to Yaʿqūb,[34] yet faithfully copies wholesale many positive earlier traditions:

> Abū'l-Sāj said to Yaʿqūb: I never saw on your part any planning for war; so how could you defeat anyone? For you let your baggage and your prisoners be in front of you, and you made for a country while ignorant of its rivers and its fords. Yet you hastened, while the state of your army was disordered?" He replied: "I did not think that I would be fighting, and I did not doubt of success."[35]

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32 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 356.

33 This is by no means the only instance where Ibn Khallikān has done so. For example, he repeatedly refers to Yaʿqūb as a volunteer in the Holy War – *mutaṭawwiʿ* – (Ibn Khallikān,*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, pp. 345-346) then follows these statements with the bizarre accusations that Yaʿqūb fought the Caliph with crosses on his banners and infidels [*ahl al-shirk*] in his army, and "broke the laws and tenets of Islam." (*loc. cit.* , p. 358) This latter statement simply appears scurrilous in light of Ibn Khallikān's earlier one; and, since Ibn Khallikān's avowed attitude toward Yaʿqūb is negative, the reader is forced to conclude that his former statement (which stands in direct contradiction to Ibn Khallikān's conscious attitude) is true and the latter a mere product of the writer's hostility. One also wonders why he employed such a patently risible accusation, rather than accusing Yaʿqūb of being, say, a closet Shiʿite, Khārijite, or other Islamic deviant.

34 Thus claiming, for instance, that part of Yaʿqūb's army was Christian, and that he aspired to "rule the world." (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 515)

35 *Ibid.*

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Here, again, it does appear somewhat unusual, to state the case mildly, that such a seasoned and successful military commander, while leading a military invasion at the head of an army, should be under the impression that he would not have to fight – unless, of course, al-Muwaffaq had assured him of this.

In any case, al-Muwaffaq was either never serious about using Yaʿqūb to gain the Caliphal throne, having intended merely to lure Yaʿqūb into a trap; or else his plans were detected by the Turkish commanders, who forced him to betray Yaʿqūb.[36] Yaʿqūb was not delivered the province, but rather met with a stinging defeat, as well as the bitter realization that al-Muwaffaq had behaved perfidiously.

There is one final story in our sources which seems to indicate that al-Muwaffaq had, in fact, been planning from the start to lure Yaʿqūb into ʿIrāq and then betray him: the peculiar episode of Ibn Mamshādh. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mamshādh was a former boon companion of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (he is actually known as "al-Mutawakkilī") and a member of the ʿAbbāsid court. He is called the most eloquent man in ʿIrāq; we are told that he wrote a long panegyric extolling al-Mutawakkil, "which is made frequent use of by the scribes of ʿIrāq until the present day."[37]

There are two versions regarding how Ibn Mamshādh ended up with Yaʿqūb. According to the first, "he became annoyed with the company of the children of al-Mutawwakil, so he left them and joined Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth."[38] It is doubtful that this version could be correct; for it would have been unlikely that Ibn Mamshādh suddenly and inexplicably tired of the rulers with whom he had lived happily for so many years, conveniently arriving at Yaʿqūb's court just when the latter was contemplating an invasion of ʿIrāq.

The second version, most interestingly, says that Ibn Mamshādh was sent as an emissary by al-Muʿtamid and al-Muwaffaq to Yaʿqūb:

> He was one of the most eloquent men of his time, so [much so] that no one surpassed him; [therefore] he was sent in the days of al-Muʿtamid **as his emissary, and al-Muwaffaq's**, to Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth. [Yaʿqūb] kept him with him, and advanced him over everyone else in his gate, so that Yaʿqūb's commanders and entourage envied him; so they informed Yaʿqūb that he was in secret correspondence with al-Muwaffaq, and [Yaʿqūb] killed him.[39]

In other words, according to Yāqūt, Ibn Mamshādh was executed for being an ʿAbbāsid spy.

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36 Al-Muwaffaq certainly did want the caliphate to pass to his own progeny, and, in the end, successfully ensured that it did.

37 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 262. "Until now" most probably refers to the time of Ḥamza, the source Yāqūt was basing himself on. Ṣafadī (*Kitāb al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafayāt*, vol. 1, p. 149), cites Yāqūt, mostly word for word, but combines the two different versions the latter gives.

38 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 262.

39 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, vol. 1, p. 263; emphasis added.

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While these most interesting facts were noted by Stern, he was so anxious to attribute Persian national sentiment to Yaʿqūb that he failed to realize the significance of Ibn Mamshādh's known ʿAbbāsid connections and his execution.[40] In fact, the whole interpretation of Yaʿqūb as Persian nationalist rests largely upon one poem of Ibn Mamshādh's, which unabashedly extols the old Persian kings and excoriates the Arabs and ʿAbbāsids. The poem is worth citing in full, since it is so strikingly different in tone and content from the ones we have examined previously, and which we know to have been recited in Yaʿqūb's presence.[41] The poem, in Stern's translation, runs as follows:

> I am the son of the noble descendants of Jam, and the inheritance of the kings of Persia has fallen to my lot.
> I am reviving their glory which has been lost and effaced by the length of time.
> Before the eyes of the world, I am seeking revenge for them – though men have closed their eyes and neglected the rights of those kins, yet I do not do so.
> Men are thinking about their pleasures, but I am busy with directing my aspirations
> To matters of high import, of far-reaching consequence, of lofty nature.
> I hope that the Highest will grant that I may reach my goal through the best of men.
> With me is the banner of Kābī, through which I hope to rule the nations.
> Say then to all sons of Hāshim: ʿAbdicate quickly, before you will have reason to be sorry:
> We have conquered you by force, by the thrusts of our spears and the blows of our sharp swords.
> Our fathers gave you your kingdom, but you showed no gratitude for our benefactions.
> Return to your country in the Ḥijāz, to eat lizards and to graze your sheep;
> For I shall mount on the throne of the kings, by the help of the edge of my sword and the point of my pen![42]

Interestingly, Stern himself is aware of the problematic fact that we do not know if Yaʿqūb ever even *saw* the poem, let alone approved of its Shuʿūbī sentiments:[43]

> The poet puts his verses into the mouth of Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith himself, and this fiction raises the question how far the ideas expressed in the poem are really those of the ruler and how far those of the poet. Put, however, in this form the question rather misses the point. We have here a piece of political propaganda, and as in all cases of

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40 Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," p. 541, dismisses the accusations of Ibn Mamshādh's being an ʿAbbāsid spy as being the invention of these supposedly envious rivals, who may, in fact, simply have been doing their utmost to uncover anything negative about Ibn Mamshādh, and who happened to have stumbled upon the man's secret. Note that the source does not claim that the informants invented the information, nor that they lied. So far as we know, the informants were giving Yaʿqūb solid information.

41 See *supra*, chapter 4.

42 Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," pp. 541-542.

43 "The … *shuubis* [*sic*] proclaimed the superiority of the Persians … to the Arabs, and defended their claim by social and cultural … arguments." H. A. R. Gibb, "The Social Significance of the Shuubiya," *Studies in the Civilization of Islam*, p. 67.

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> propaganda it is more important to ask what effect it was meant and expected to achieve among the public than to try to assess how seriously it was taken by the ruler whose interests it promoted or by the poet who actually wrote it.[44]

What Stern took for granted, of course, was that this poem – written by a man who spent most of his life at the ʿAbbāsid court, came to Yaʿqūb as an emissary of the caliph and was even executed for being an ʿAbbāsid agent – was **Yaʿqūb's** propaganda. In fact, he goes so far as to assert that "the poem is not merely a general piece of propaganda aiming to boost Yaʿqūb's prestige, but a political manifesto with a quite particular objective[:] … Persian national restoration."[45]

Given Ibn Mamshādh's history and probable allegiances, however, together with the tone of this poem, which is so radically different from all other surviving poems from Yaʿqūb's circle (and which, unlike this one, we know to have been approved of – or at least heard! – by Yaʿqūb), it is far more likely that the poem was written as a piece of **ʿAbbāsid** disinformation. The aim of this propaganda would have been either to discredit Yaʿqūb and besmirch his Islamic reputation, or it may simply have been a crude attempt to goad him on to his disastrous invasion of ʿIrāq through grandiose visions and flattery. Of course, there is still another possibility, without attributing such underhanded motivation to the ʿAbbāsid agent Ibn Mamshādh: namely, that he was so accustomed to the ʿAbbāsid court style, and so out of touch with the whole religious atmosphere of Yaʿqūb's circle, that he simply wrote what he thought someone in Yaʿqūb's position would want to hear, based on his own experiences with the genealogically conscious and grandiose ʿAbbāsids.[46]

There is yet further proof in support of the contention that this poem was never written for Yaʿqūb. The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* tells us specifically that Yaʿqūb did not know Arabic; therefore, aside from the very first poem composed for him by Muḥammad b. Wāṣif a decade previously, which Yaʿqūb complained that he did not understand, all subsequent court poetry was written in Persian. In fact, these compositions by Yaʿqūb's poets are said to have constituted the very beginning of Persian poetry.[47] This Arabic poem is therefore very much *not* in the style of Yaʿqūb's circle; and, in fact, Yaʿqūb would not even have understood such a poem if it had been recited to him.

Yāqūt's neat solution to this problem (namely, that Ibn Mamshādh composed the poem and sent it to al-Muʿtamid on Yaʿqūb's behalf) is also problematic. For, as we have seen, even in al-Muʿtamid's propaganda efforts after the failure of

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44 Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," p. 543.

45 Stern, "Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment," p. 545. Bosworth took up and elaborated this idea further in "The Heritage of rulership in early Islamic Iran and the search for dynastic connections with the past," *Iran* 11 (1973), in particular pp. 59-60.

46 It does not seem to this author to be unwarranted to term people who called themselves "the Shadow of God on Earth" grandiose.

47 See *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 209-213.

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Yaʿqūb's ʿIrāqi campaign, he does not accuse the latter of being Zoroastrian, or Arab-hating, or of longing for pre-Islamic Iran, but rather of being a *Christian*.[48] Surely he would have made good use of the anti-Islamic sentiments in this poem if such a thing had ever been addressed to him on Yaʿqūb's behalf or at his behest.

Yaʿqūb's behavior in the aftermath of his defeat in ʿIrāq – particularly his refusal to unite with the anti-ʿAbbāsid Zanj rebels in order to avenge himself on the Caliph – provides further support for our interpretation of Yaʿqūb's character as a ruler.[49] In fact, Yaʿqūb responded to the Zanj overtures to make an alliance against the Caliph with the Qurʾānic verses "Say: 'O Infidels, I worship not that which you worship. '"[50]

Yaʿqūb does seem to have understood that he had been betrayed – in fact, this must have been the reason for his statement on ʿAbbāsid shiftiness that is reported in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*:

> He used often to say that the ʿAbbāsids had based their rule on wrong-doing and trickery: "Haven't [*sic*] you seen what they did to Abū Salama, Abū Muslim, the Barmakī family and Faḍl b. Sahl, despite everything which these men had done on the dynasty's behalf?"[51]

Bosworth's contention that this statement shows mere antipathy or hatred on Yaʿqūb's part does not really seem to fit the accusations Yaʿqūb is levelling against the ʿAbbāsids. These accusations focus, namely, on *betrayal*; on the ʿAbbāsids' using loyal people for their own ends and then turning upon them unjustly, in a sneaky and underhanded fashion.[52] This type of behaviour is, of course, precisely what some of our sources claim that al-Muwaffaq did with Yaʿqūb: first he exploited his *ghāzī* zeal and used him to get rid of all sorts of undesirable characters (from an ʿAbbāsid perspective), then he lured him into a trap and attacked him.

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48 See *supra*, especially the accounts of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Khallikān.

49 As von Grunebaum points out, "One wonders whether Muwaffaq would have succeeded in mastering the Zanj if at the decisive moment the leader of the Sijistānī ʿayyārūn had not refused the alliance proposed to him by the Zanj." (G. von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History 600-1258*, tr. K. Watson, New York, 1970, p. 106)

50 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 291-292. The Qurʾānic quotation is from Sura 109, "The Infidels." The complete Sura reads as follows: "Say: 'O Infidels,/I worship not that which you worship/ And you worship not that which I worship;/ And I worship not that which you worshipped/ And you worship not that which I worship. /You have your religion and I, mine. '"

51 Translated by Bosworth, "The Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids," p. 125.

52 There is a striking corroboration of Yaʿqūb's perception of the ʿAbbāsids in Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā's characterization of them: "Know that the rule of the ʿAbbāsids was one of trickery, political manoevre and deceit, and that there appertained to it more of opportunism and subterfuge than of force and strength, especially in its later period, for those of them who came at the end abandoned force, strength and intrepidity and had recourse to opportunism and trickery." Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *al-Fakhrī*, trans. C. E. J. Whitting (London, 1947), pp. 142-143.

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Yaʿqūb's immediate reaction to his defeat in ʿIrāq was to plan his next holy war – again, behaviour that supports the *mutaṭawwiʿī* interpretation of Yaʿqūb's career: "Yaʿqūb then returned to Jundishāpūr, intending to raid Byzantium – for every year he would undertake Holy War against the Land of the Infidel …"[53] He seems to have simply washed his hands of ʿAbbāsid affairs in disgust; he no longer tried to replace al-Muʿtamid (probably because he had no suitable candidate), nor to lift a hand against the ʿAbbāsids; but neither did he let them push him out of the lands which had formerly been granted him. In fact, his ability to expel caliphal troops from those areas which he had been granted previously further underscores the hypothesis that Yaʿqūb's defeat could not have been so very great, nor the caliphal army particularly strong; Yaʿqūb had no difficulty holding his own against it.[54] Yaʿqūb also commenced minting coins again shortly thereafter, on all of which he steadfastly continued to recognize the ʿAbbāsid caliph.[55]

We are not given much further information about Yaʿqūb's final few years in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*; for

> If all his virtues [*manāqib*] were to be written down, it would consitute many stories, and this book would become lengthy. However we have recalled some of those wars which he fought against the notables of Islam [*buzurgān-i Islām*]. His uprightness and justice are famous, because of what he did for the people of the world during his time.[56]

Apparently, though, Yaʿqūb still retained the admiration of many. We are told, for instance, that in 265/878f. Muḥammad al-Muwallad, one of the top ʿAbbāsid commanders, defected to Yaʿqūb.[57] This is the same man who had led a major expedition to Baṣra in 257/871 against the Zanj rebels,[58] and in 259/873 had been appointed to head the anti-Zanj forces in Wāsiṭ.[59] He must have been deeply trusted by the caliph: in 261/874f. he was the caliphal emissary sent to appoint Mūsā b. Bughā as deputy over all the western parts of the caliphate;[60] and in 262/875f. he had been left, together with the heir-apparent, in charge of Samarraʾ when the caliph had departed the city to fight Yaʿqūb.[61]

Yet in 265/878f. this man joined Yaʿqūb – forfeiting all of his money and lands, which were confiscated by the caliph after he had gone over to Yaʿqūb.

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53 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 232.

54 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 307. Al-Dhahabī notes (*Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 11) that Yaʿqūb's first action after the battle was to go al-Ahwāz, "and he took prisoner the Amīr Ibn Wāṣil, and took over al-Ahwāz."

55 See e. g. R. Vasmer, "Über die Münzen der Saffariden und ihrer Gegner in Fars und Hurasan," #8; G. C. Miles, *Un Tresor de Dirhems du IXe Siècle*, Paris, 1960, e. g. #92-95; D. Tor, "Numismatic History," pp. 298-300.

56 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 233.

57 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 543. Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 16.

58 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 488.

59 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 502.

60 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 514.

61 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 516; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām.* , vol. 20, p. 8.

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Moreover, Ṭabarī specifically employs the word "joined," [*laḥiqa bi*] not "fled to."[62] We are not told of any disgrace of Muḥammad's in the caliph's eyes (it is true that he had lost a battle with the Zanj the previous year, but caliphal commanders frequently lost battles with the Zanj, and we are not told that this had any ill effects upon their standing);[63] there would thus seem to have been no motive for his joining Yaʿqūb – particularly now that Yaʿqūb appeared to be devoting all his attentions once more to *ghāzī* campaigns – apart from personal conviction. We are thus provided once again with circumstantial confirmation that Yaʿqūb must have had some kind of appealing message; such a prominent figure as Muḥammad al-Muwallad would not have been willing to forfeit all his influence and his possessions otherwise.

Yaʿqūb died, according to most sources, in Jundishāpūr in 265/879.[64] Certain sources relate dramatic deathbed scenes – somewhat reminiscent of the spurious legends of Beethoven's deathbed storming against the heavens, in fact – in which the caliph sends a messenger in an attempt at reconciliation, while Yaʿqūb remains defiant.[65] While none of the earliest and most reliable sources – Ṭabarī, Masʿūdī, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir – relates any such scene, Ibn al-Athīr does give the following account:

> al-Muʿtamid had already sent to him a messenger, [together with] a letter trying to win him over and gratify him, and bestowing upon him the districts of Fārs. The messenger reached Yaʿqūb when he lay ill. He gave him an audience, placing before him a sword, a loaf of coarse bread, and onions. The messenger was brought in, and delivered his message. Yaʿqūb replied: Say to the caliph: "I am sick; and if I die, then I have found rest from you and you have found rest from me. But if I recover, there cannot be anything between you and me but this sword, until either I take my revenge or you break me and reduce me to poverty, and I return to this bread and onion. The messenger returned [to the caliph] and Yaʿqūb did not tarry long before he died.[66]

This tradition bears all the marks of being spurious. Yaʿqūb lived for three years after the ʿIrāqi campaign, and never once did he try to march on the caliph –

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62 Al-Dhahabī's much later version is also quite clear on this point: "In [this year] Muḥammad al-Muwallad conspired [*khāmara*] with Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth and became one of his personal retainers [*min khawāṣṣihi*].

63 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 539.

64 Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 206), almost the sole exception, has Yaʿqūb dying in al-Ahwāz. Perhaps he read that Yaʿqūb had died in "Khūzistān," –i. e. the province in which Jundishāpūr is located – and understood by that the city of Khūzistān; that is, al-Ahwāz. Ibn Khallikān also gives this variant tradition (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 360).

65 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 361. Interestingly, in al-Dhahabī's statement regarding the sending of a caliphal emissary, it sounds as though reconciliation was actually effected; Dhahabī writes that "al-Muʿtamid had already sent a messenger for the purpose of conciliating [Yaʿqūb] and uniting with him." (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 515)

66 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 325-326. Quoted by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 361. A variant is also cited by Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 332.

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even though the latter was in a very hard-pressed situation due to the Zanj.[67] Moreover, we know that Yaʿqūb lived on extremely simple fare at all times anyway.[68] Furthermore, it is extremely unlikely that the caliph would have sent a messenger to Yaʿqūb, who was in any case a dying man, granting him so much honour and legitimacy, if he had even a suspicion that Yaʿqūb nursed implacable enmity and harboured military ambitions toward him. In fact, his purported speech seems designed merely to dramatize and exaggerate Yaʿqūb's complicated relations with al-Muwaffaq and al-Muʿtamid.

Another two late (eighth/fourteenth century) reports of a different kind of deathbed scene – one in Persian, one in Arabic – involve one of the greatest early Ṣūfī shaykhs, al-Tustarī, and establish a personal connection between al-Tustarī and the Ṣaffārid ruler. According to the first of these accounts,

> At the time Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth became ill; his illness was strong upon him, such that the doctors were powerless [to heal him]. They said: Everything that we know we have [already] done, however nothing will avail [with] this illness except prayer; [for] no remedy remains that we have not tried. Then someone sent to call Sahl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tustarī. When he came, they said: "Pray for the Amīr." He held his hand, and said: "O God, you have already showed him the ignominy of sin; show him the glory of obedience." Immediately recovery came to [Ibn] Layth, such that not one particle of sickness remained upon him. Afterwards the Amīr commanded that they bring much money together with gifts and place [them] before him.
>
> Al-Tustarī, however, refused to accept a reward, in order to preserve the power of his pious prayer and to demonstrate his reliance on God's dispensations.[69]

This account is somewhat puzzling, since it depicts Yaʿqūb's recovery. There are two possibilities: either it was referring to a different, earlier incident entirely; or, the recovery mentioned was merely a fleeting improvement, which was soon followed by a final relapse. The latter possibility seems more likely, given the second account of al-Tustarī's attempt at faith healing.

The second account, while similar, is not identical. According to this account, Yaʿqūb during his final illness personally ordered al-Tustarī summoned to him as he, Yaʿqūb, lay ill in al-Ahwāz:

> His illness thwarted all the doctors, [so] he sent to Sahl b. ʿAbdallāh al-Tustarī, who was brought to him in litters. When he reached his presence, [Yaʿqūb] asked that he pray. Sahl raised his hands and said: "O God, you showed him the ignominy of sin; now show him the glory of obedience. Solace him in his hour, and impress these words in his heart, so that he may propagate good and spread justice." [This being] said, he [presumably Yaʿqūb] returned to Shīrāz and died there, and it is mentioned in the histories that he died in Jundishāpūr in the year 265/879 and that is correct.[70]

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67 Not to mention the fact that Yaʿqūb kept recognizing the caliph on his coinage.
68 A point we shall be discussing presently.
69 ʿUmar b. al-Ḥasan al-Samarqandī, *Muntakhab-i rawnaq*, pp. 252-253.
70 Junayd Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, pp. 285-286.

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These reports, true or fictional, confirm yet again the picture of the pious *ghāzī* whose *tawakkul* leads him to rely on the power of prayer for healing. In fact, other sources state specifically that when Yaʿqūb lay ill on his deathbed, he refused to take the doctors' medicaments for this reason.[71]

This second account of the Yaʿqūb-Tustarī connection also gives what it purports to be Yaʿqūb's epitaph:

> Peace be upon the people of the crumbling graves/ as if they had never sat in the *majlises*
> And did not drink a sip from the cold of water/ and did not eat from all [things] moist and dry.
> Peace be upon the world and its good delights/ as if Yaʿqūb had never been ruling in it.[72]

However, there are several other reports of Yaʿqūb's supposed epitaph – naturally, they say different things, and at least some, therefore, are necessarily spurious. One of these other reports, given by al-Tawḥīdī, is somewhat similar in the first verse to the one we have just seen, and runs as follows:

> Peace be upon this world and its good delights/ [it is] as if Yaʿqūb had never been in it, endowed with regal power.
> As though he had never led an army of Fate and never desired that which men desire, while being wretched.[73]

Another three sources, however, claim that Yaʿqūb's tombstone was engraved, first, with the enigmatic saying "This is the grave of Yaʿqūb *al-miskīn*." This latter word, meaning poor or humble, can often have religious connotations;[74] in fact, the archetypal *mutaṭawwiʿ* himself, ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak, supposedly enjoined: "Let your seat be with the *masākīn*; and woe unto you if you sit with an innovator!"[75] The fact that at least two of the writers who record that Yaʿqūb's epitaph described him as a "*miskīn*" – namely, Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Khallikān – have preserved such an epithet, despite their own personal poor opinion of Yaʿqūb, lends credence to their reports.

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71 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 325; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 360.

72 Shīrāzī, *Shadd al-izār*, p. 286.

73 ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣā'ir wa'l-dhakhā'ir*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī, Beirut, 1408/1988, vol. 7, p. 141. The author wishes to thank Wolfhart Heinrichs for his assistance with the translation of this, and even more particularly of the next, poem.

74 See e. g. under the biography of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in Ibn ʿAsākir (*Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 5, p. 334): Abū Bakr said: "I awakened and I washed and I prayed two *rakʿas* in thanks to God, may he be exalted, and I put on my garb, and gave alms to the *fuqarā'* and the *masākin* for the sake of the Messenger of God [or simply: of the messenger of God – *al-masākīn li-rasūli'llāh*]; and in this the [most] reliable, the [most] trustworthy [is] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, may the mercy of God be upon him. So then after this I made a pilgrimage, and I visited the grave of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in Baghdad, and I visited and sat, remaining at his grave for the space of a week."

75 Al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. 8, p. 178, #11797.

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Also written on the grave, supposedly, was the following:

> You thought well of the days, when they were good to you/ and you did not fear the evil that destiny would bring [to you];
>
> The nights were at peace with you, so you let yourself be deceived by them/ in the serenity of the nights turmoil comes.[76]

The third supposed epitaph – which, again, bears a resemblance to the first – runs as follows:

> You ruled Khurāsān and the regions [lit: sides – *aknāf*] of Fārs
> And you did not despair of becoming ruler of ʿIrāq.
> Peace [is] upon the world and the fragrance of its fresh breeze
> As though Yaʿqūb had never been seated in it [*idhā lam yakun Yaʿqūbu fī-hā bi-jālisi*].[77]

These last purported epitaphs seem to be the type of moralistic commonplaces that were popular among medieval Islamic poetasters; they do not tell us much about Yaʿqūb, if authentic, apart from his – or his eulogist's – penchant for a sort of melancholy, humble emphasis on the smallness, powerlessness, and evanescence of men.

Far more can be learned of Yaʿqūb's character and the nature of his rule from the direct depiction in our sources. There are, of course, the jaundiced views with which we are familiar. These, it should be noted, come entirely from late sources. Qazvīnī, for instance (who, as we saw above, has some fairly incredible anecdotes) passes on the following evaluation:

> Yaʿqūb ruled for a period of ten years and [in] every place that there was a sign of money, he acted with injustice and violence. The monies of the world were collected for him. He endeavoured to procure ʿIrāq and Māzandarān, and embarked in a war upon *al-Dāʿī ilā'l-Ḥaqq* Ḥasan b. Zayd al-Bāqirī and was victorious. After that he desired Baghdād, so he turned towards a war with the caliph al-Muʿtamid. The caliph sent his brother, al-Muwaffaq, to fight him. They fought at Hulwān[*sic*]. Yaʿqūb, defeated, went to Khūzistān and returned to his former habits. On the fourteenth of Shawwāl in the year 265/ninth of June, 879 he passed away there. Thus the account went.[78]

Another late, implicitly negative evaluation of Yaʿqūb, which we have already examined, comes from the Shiʿite writer Ibn Isfandiyār: "In this time that the caliphs and Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh were occupied with [the Zanj rebellion], many *fitnas* arose in Khurāsān; *runūd* and *ʿayyārān* operated openly, and on every side someone rebelled; and the most fortunate of all [of these] was Yaʿqūb b. al-

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[76] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, *loc. cit*. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 360, and al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 17, also give this complete tradition, including the "*miskīn*" epithet.

[77] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 360. He points out that the hemistich "And you did not despair of ruling over ʿIrāq" was said to have been authored by Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān.

[78] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 362.

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Layth al-Ṣaffār."[79] Obviously, Yaʿqūb is not placed in very flattering company here; nor are the *ʿayyārs* depicted in a complimentary light (although, considering that they were Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿa*, they could not have been very popular among Shiʿites). Not only is this source late and Shiʿite; it is also, as we noted previously, factually wrong on several points. The negative statements of these several sources are outweighed, moreover, by the positive evidence, for several reasons.

First, the image painted in the positive depictions is more detailed and more coherent than the nebulous accusations of greed, rebellion, and heresy. In fact, the actual negative character references appear to consist almost entirely of hopelessly broad – and often contradictory – aspersions which were dutifully hurled at him by historians who adopted the official ʿAbbāsid-Sāmānid line (e. g. Ibn Khallikān's accusations of both Khārijism and Christianity, simultaneously), and which are often admixed with opposing, positive attributes preserved from the sources on which these writers based themselves. Moreover, we have examined in detail the last two accusations – rebellion and heresy – and seen that that of heresy, at least, was completely baseless; the religious company Yaʿqūb kept was irreproachable.

The charge of rebellion we have been able to disprove in every case apart from Yaʿqūb's deposition of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir and attempted deposition of the caliph al-Muʿtamid, in which two cases we have been able to explain the historical circumstances and motives surrounding those two events. In the first instance, the gross incompetence of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, the critical deterioration of the situation in Khurāsān, and the urgent requests for Yaʿqūb's intervention on the part of many former Ṭāhirid supporters (not to mention some Ṭāhirids) demonstrate that Yaʿqūb's actions in this case had some very good justification, or at least respectable motives, underlying them; this was not ruthless self-aggrandizement.

In the case of Yaʿqūb's campaign against al-Muʿtamid, we have seen that he probably undertook it at the behest of the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq, as stated explicitly in several sources. This assertion is bolstered by the fact that, after realizing that he had been tricked and that there was no worthy ʿAbbāsid to take the place of the ineffectual al-Muʿtamid on the throne, he never again marched on ʿIrāq, despite the caliphate's being in its severest state of military vulnerability due to the Zanj rebellion. We know that Yaʿqūb would have had the power to do so, because he was easily able to drive out of Fārs and other areas the caliphal troops that tried to press their advantage after the ambush of Yaʿqūb's army at Dayr al-ʿAqūl.

79 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 245.

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Second, all of our earliest sources attribute either positive or neutral characteristics to Yaʿqūb (even the ones which disapprove of his ʿIrāqi campaign).[80] We saw adduced and elucidated above the abundant mass of material supporting the *ʿayyār*-as-proto-Sunni-holy warrior interpretation, from the positive adjectives in the very spare early accounts of Yaʿqūbī and the geographers, to the sentences which can be gleaned from Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Khallikān. There are, however, two works, one quite early and the other based on very early materials, which actually contain real discussions of Yaʿqūb's character.

There is, foremost, the testimony of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*. Its positive portrayal is given credibility, first, by the fact that it does not sing these same praises with regard to ʿAmr – in other words, this is not simply a formulaic panegyric. Also, while some of the claims it makes regarding Yaʿqūb's sterling qualities may have been standard fare (i. e. his bestowal of generous alms) others, such as his engaging in excessive amounts of supererogatory prayer and his chastity, are far more unusual and difficult to manufacture. One could not have tried to claim chastity, for instance, with someone like Maḥmūd of Ghazna, whose homosexual dalliances were open,[81] or impeccable devotional practices for a pleasure-loving ruler such as, say, the caliph al-Amīn.[82] It mentions first and foremost Yaʿqūb's trust in God [*tawakkul*] and his devout orisonal habits: "In the course of a twenty-four hour period he would pray one hundred and seventy *rakʿas*, both mandatory and customary … every day he would give a thousand dinars in charity."[83]

The writer goes on to extol Yaʿqūb's generosity (a standard theme in eulogies) and then, exceptionally, Yaʿqūb's chastity, including a very detailed story of how Yaʿqūb withstood temptation in the form of a handsome young *ghulām*.[84] Finally, the writer relates concrete anecdotes illustrating Yaʿqūb's involved concern with justice and the responsible, sober administration of public order. Both in this context and when speaking of Yaʿqūb's military activities, the writer emphasizes Yaʿqūb's personal accountability and involvement with the execution of these duties: "Moreover, he himself would for the most part go as a spy or in the vanguard on campaigns."[85]

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80 Of course, not all of our late sources are negative either – see Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khallikān, and Ibn Funduq, who says nothing either positive or negative about the Ṣaffārids (Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, pp. 66-68); most of his entry, in fact, is devoted to the anti-Ṣaffārid rebel Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī, about whom see below, chapter 6.

81 For a discussion of the subject, see C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 103. Niẓāmī ʿArūḍī Samarqandī (*Chahār maqāla*, Tehran, 1375/1955f. , p. 55) refers to this particular passion of Maḥmud's as "famous and well-known." ["*maʿrūf ast ū mashhūr*"]

82 See, for instance, the accounts of al-Amīn's frivolity and self-undulgence, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 4, the entire section on al-Amīn's caliphate.

83 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 263. Obviously, the numbers themselves are unreliable; what is important is Yaʿqūb's reputation.

84 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 264-265.

85 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 268.

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In fact, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* has a great deal to say generally about Yaʿqūb's religiosity, including his religious warfare. At one point, we are told that:

> Never did he draw a sword against any of the Believers who had not [first] targeted him. Before beginning to fight he would remonstrate, and would call upon God Almighty as witness. He would not wage war in the Land of the Infidel until he had first offered them Islam; and when anyone converted to Islam, he would not take his property and his children. If after that [i. e. the battle] someone became a Muslim, Yaqʿūb would give him a robe of honour, and return his property and his children to him. Furthermore, [Yaʿqūb] would not take the *kharāj* from any one in his dominions who had fewer than five hundred dirhams; rather, he would give [that person] alms.[86]

At least part of this picture we have seen confirmed in the accounts we have already seen, a number of which depict Yaʿqūb's scrupulous observance of the religious rules requiring that he first summon infidels and heretics to Islam and repentance before fighting them, and his embrace of such people when they did in fact declare their penitence.[87]

Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab* is another early source containing information on Yaʿqūb's character and lifestyle. In particular, it has a special section on Yaʿqūb's unusually good relations with his armies – uniquely so, according to Masʿūdī – due to his kindness and generosity towards them:

> Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's policy toward those troops who were with him was one whose like has never been heard of among those kings who came before him … their obedience to his command was perfect, and their perseverance in obedience to him, because he included them in his beneficence, showered his munificence upon them, and [thereby] filled their hearts with respect for him.[88]

Masʿūdī then adduces anecdotal detail to demonstrate just how perfect the obedience of Yaʿqūb's troops was;[89] the unique system of communal living and of supplying all his soldiers' wants which Yaʿqūb instituted in his army; and Yaʿqūb's generosity toward his soldiers. Masʿūdī also indicates Yaʿqūb's extraordinary involvement in the running of his army, and his accessibility; evidence confirmed by the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*'s description of this same sort of behaviour toward even the meanest of his subjects.[90]

Yaʿqūb was not, however, an extroverted, convivial character. When one of his trusted associates was asked about how Yaʿqūb conducted himself in private and in social gatherings with his inner circle, and how he chatted individually, the confidant responded: "He does not apprise anyone of his secrets, nor does he divulge his plans and aims to anyone. Most of his waking hours he spends reflect-

86 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 268.
87 Vide *supra*, the preceding two chapters.
88 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, pp. 229-230.
89 Further on, he relates how astonished the caliphal envoys were by the obedience and loyalty of Yaʿqūb's troops; one of them even exclaims to Yaʿqūb that he had never seen anything like it before (Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 231).
90 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, pp. 230-232; *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 265.

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ing upon what he wishes … [he] does not share his planning with anyone …"[91] Masʿūdī goes on to relate that Yaʿqūb spent much of his spare time educating and training his young mamlūks.[92] He was careful and vigilant; he kept close surveillance over his officers, and only his brothers and one of his *khāṣṣa* had free entrance to his tent.[93]

Masʿūdī also discusses Yaʿqūb's ascetic lifestyle; he would sit on nothing but rough sackcloth, and would lean upon his shield for support; in fact, he would also sleep upon the latter, pulling down a flag to wad up and use as a pillow. There was nothing else in his tent. His clothing was simple, as was his fare.[94] Generally, his austere practices were remarked upon; one emissary from Samarraʾ inquired of him why he had nothing but his weapons and sackcloth in his tent. Yaʿqūb responded:

> The companions of a leader of the people follow his example, both his deeds and his behaviour. If I were to use the furnishings you mentioned we would weigh heavily upon the animals and whoever is in my army would follow my example. We cross every day wide deserts, wastes, dry canyons and lowlands; nothing but lightness is fitting for us.[95]

Finally, al-Masʿūdī states that "Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār and his brother ʿAmr b. al-Layth both had a wondrous policy and behaviour, and tricks and stratagems in battles, which we have already related … in our two [lost] books *Akhbār al-zamān* and *al-Awsaṭ*."[96] Again, this rings true; we know (from both the lexicons and works such as *Samak-i ʿayyār*) that one of the signs of the *ʿayyār* was his wily employment of ruses in order to achieve his ends.

Ibn al-Athīr, apart from his mention of Yaʿqūb's piety and asceticism,[97] states that

> Al-Ḥasan b. Zayd the ʿAlawite used to call Yaʿqūb "the anvil" because of his firmness … Yaʿqūb was intelligent, resolute, and he used to say: "Whomever you have associated with for forty days, and do not [yet] know his character, you will not know it in forty years." Enough has been related of his life that demonstrates his intelligence.[98]

Yaʿqūb, in short, comes across as a pious, unsparing, unrelenting and single-minded fighter, a Cromwellian figure. It has already been noted by others that he was somewhat grim; he was not given to smiling or laughter, and is described as having been stern-faced.[99]

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91 His taciturnity would be fully in accordance with *mutaṭawwiʿ* precepts; note that al-Awzāʿī is reported to have said: "The Believer says little and does much, whereas the Hypocrite says much and does little." (Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, vol. 6, pp. 152-153)

92 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 231.

93 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 232.

94 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 232.

95 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 233.

96 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 233.

97 *Vide supra*.

98 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 326.

99 Bosworth, *Saffarids*, p. 170.

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While Bosworth disagrees with Bāstānī-Pārīzī's point that no historical source ever mentions Yaʿqūb as having had a wife or any relations with women, preferring the lone tradition in the late Ibn Khallikān that Yaʿqūb was married to an unnamed Sīstānī Arab woman,[100] the present writer agrees with Bastani-Parizi, for several reasons. The woman has no name, and the circumstances are vague. It seems peculiar that all of the early sources, and in particular the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, which is so much better informed regarding Yaʿqūb's life, and in particular his personal life, than any other source, should have been unaware of this important fact. In fact, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* does specifically mention his romantic life – to state that he was chaste, and that he "never gazed with a shameless glance upon anyone, neither woman nor young boy."[101]

Finally, his chastity would fit perfectly with his *ghāzī* dedication and its concomitant ascetic practices. As was noted by Bonner, many of the founding fathers of the *mutaṭawwiʿi* tradition practiced an asceticism which included sexual abstinence.[102] The idea here is deeper than that of sexual purity, however; the one who wishes to dedicate himself completely to Jihad and the service of God should not encumber himself with goods and family, which could only detract from the single-minded remembrance of God.[103] In fact, there is a tradition of Ibn al-Mubārak's illustrating the problem with worldly ties. In it, ʿAbdallāh b. Qays relates how he went out on a campaign, and overheard a man addressing his own soul, castigating it for always having reminded him, every time he wanted to become a martyr, of his children, dependents and family, upon which the man lost heart and returned.[104] The message is clear: family, home life, and worldly ties are distractions from the good fight and the attainment of martyrdom *fi sabīl Allāh*.[105]

To conclude our examination of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's career: we have seen that Yaʿqūb, the most prominent *ʿayyār* of his time, was first and foremost a religious

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100 Bosworth, *Saffarids*, pp. 170-171, basing himself upon Ibn Khallikān's statement: "Yaʿqūb had married a woman from among the Arabs of the country of Sijistān, and when Yaʿqūb died his brother ʿAmr had married her, then she died without leaving sons …"

101 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 264.

102 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, p. 127.

103 See M. J. Kister, "Land, Property and Jihad," particularly p. 276. On the importance of the remembrance of God, see ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa'l-raqā'iq*, pp. 340-341.

104 ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-jihād*, p. 116 (tradition #142).

105 Purity of motive is considered key in the Jihad; vide e. g. "Muḥammad b. Fuḍayl related to us from ʿUmāra from Abū Zurʿa from Abū Hurayra. He said: The Messenger of God … said: God has charged the one who goes out in His path, [that] he not go out except [for the sake of] the Jihad in My path, and the belief in Me, and faith in My Messenger. He is a warrantor upon me that I shall bring him into Heaven, or that I shall return him to the dwelling from which he set out, possessing that which he acquired of wages or plunder, which itself is praiseworthy in his hand. Whatever wounds he has been wounded with in the path of God, yet when the Day of Resurrection arrives [he will be] as his form [was] the day he was wounded, his colour the colour of blood, and his smell the smell of musk …" (Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 12, pp. 140-141, no. 7157).

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figure. The terms used to describe him – ascetic, *ghāzī*, *etcetera*; his actions – unceasing campaigns for the orthodox faith; and his practices – chastity, extreme austerity – all form a coherent picture of the ultimate *mutaṭawwiʿī*. It is not a new discovery that medieval Islamic writers had their own political agendas. Yet many scholars who have written about the Ṣaffārids seem to have forgotten this vital point when going about their tasks. This is especially surprising considering the radically opposing portrayals of Yaʿqūb; sometimes, as we have seen, even within the same source. Yet once we take into account the ʿAbbāsid need to discredit Yaʿqūb's motives and actions – a need which was aided and abetted by the Sāmānids in order to establish their own legitimacy and credentials – the Gordian knot simply unravels.

The character portraits of Yaʿqūb preserved in our sources indicate that the nature of Yaʿqūb's aims and motivations were seriously distorted by some subsequent authors.[106] We have suggested that the reason why many excellent modern researchers failed to discern this was their acceptance of Nöldeke's original ill-founded and off-handed definition of the meaning of the word *ʿayyār*. Based upon the historical evidence from this period – rather than upon the much later and unrepresentative source base used in many previous deductions – of what the word *ʿayyār* meant in the ninth century, we have been able to unearth from the sources the material which does not fit the official, negative picture promoted by the ʿAbbāsids and Sāmānids, and to construct a coherent, viable alternative interpretation of the career of the greatest and most famous *ʿayyār* of all. In summation, the strength of the original Ṣaffārid state lay precisely in its single-minded *mutaṭawwiʿī ʿayyār* nature.

Yaʿqūb was in many ways the *ʿayyār par excellence*, the epitome of at least the word's early meaning. He was concerned with restoring Islam to a position of unified strength and fighting wars for the faith; not in building palaces, bureaucracies and other state machinery. This last, rather Cromwellian aspect of Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* ideology has, however, contributed to the systematic misunderstanding of the whole nature and *raison d'être* of Ṣaffārid rule. Modern historians have, for instance, viewed Yaʿqūb's lack of interest in the more luxurious or magnificent aspects of rulership not as a manifestation of single-minded religious devotion and asceticism, but rather as an indication of Yaʿqūb's supposed crudeness and lack of refinement. They have, indeed, therefore condemned Yaʿqūb for not having engaged in activities which would actually have been antithetical to his ideology and deepest principles. Ironically, Yaʿqūb's brother ʿAmr, who is regarded with greater approbation by those same historians for having paid more attention to worldly power consolidation, was, as we shall see, eventually abandoned by his army for precisely that reason: he was perceived as having betrayed *ʿayyār* ideals.

106 Even when, as in the case of Ibn Khallikān, it appears to be the same author writing contradictory things, we are of course in reality dealing with a later author toeing the official ʿAbbāsid-Sāmānid line, but who is copying unexpurgated material from earlier writers.

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6. The Beginning of the *ʿAyyār* – Sufi Connection, and the Decline and Fall of the *ʿAyyār* Realm

> The strongest Castle that is, cannot defend the Inhabitants, if they sleepe, or neglect the defence of that, which defends them; No more can this Oath … secure your Majestie, and us in you, if by our negligence wee should open it, either to the adversaries Batteries, or to his underminings.
>
> – John Donne

We have seen that in the ninth century the meaning of the word *ʿayyār* can best be defined as "Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿ* who fought in brotherhoods or bands." While this meaning persisted throughout the ninth and tenth centuries and beyond, other, additional meanings clearly became associated with the word *ʿayyār* by the late ninth century at the latest. In this chapter, we shall examine the reign of history's second-most famous and -best-documented *ʿayyār*, ʿAmr b. al-Layth, in order to trace both the continuity of the original *mutaṭawwiʿ* meaning of the word and the emergence, clearly seen in ʿAmr's reign, of an *ʿayyār*-Sufi connection. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the downfall of the first Ṣaffārid realm, which reveals much about the ideals of the early Ṣaffārids and their key supporters.

ʿAmr b. al-Layth

ʿAmr b. al-Layth's public career is a bit more difficult to draw conclusions from than is Yaʿqūb's, because ʿAmr was able to enforce his will and purpose to a far lesser degree than did his brother. He appears originally to have been chosen, after some hesitation, by Yaʿqūb's soldiers in order to continue Yaʿqūb's mission as leader, but proved somewhat unequal to the task. Although he is frequently referred to in the sources as having been a wonderful governor and administrator, and also as having been obedient to the caliph, and although he did appear to have gone on *ghāzī* raids in the East whenever possible, his rule was never secure or free from rebellion and dissension. Consequently, more of his energies were spent in trying to keep his brother's once orderly realms from falling apart than in trying to restore proper religion to the Islamic east and to expand its borders.

ʿAmr b. al-Layth had begun his career in the same *ʿayyār* band as his brother Yaʿqūb.[1] He had served as Yaʿqūb's deputy and viceroy on several occasions – as

1 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 194.

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had Yaʿqūb's other surviving brother, ʿAlī[2] – although ʿAmr did not distinguish himself particularly in this capacity.[3] He had always been overshadowed by Yaʿqūb, and on at least one occasion there had been a break in their relations which was said to have grieved Yaʿqūb considerably,[4] although the two siblings were reconciled soon thereafter.[5] ʿAmr then served Yaʿqūb personally during the latter's final illness.[6]

Yaʿqūb's death seems to have left his troops somewhat at a loss. There was no one obvious leader to fill Yaʿqūb's position, so it was therefore natural that they turned to Yaʿqūb's two brothers, both of whom had fought alongside Yaʿqūb from his earliest *ʿayyār* days. It appears that the army originally leaned toward ʿAlī b. al-Layth:

> When Yaʿqūb passed away, his two brothers ʿAmr and ʿAlī were present. The army considered ʿAlī's reign and his command more proper, for the reason that ʿAmr had come to Sīstān in anger and was [but] newly arrived there.[7] Discussions continued among the two brothers and the army for two days. On the third day … [one of Yaʿqūb's close companions] took back the seal from ʿAlī's hand and gave it to ʿAmr. ʿAmr accepted rule [*kār*] and the army assented; and ʿAlī regretted his own hesitation.[8]

ʿAmr's most pressing task upon assuming power was to consolidate his control over the Ṣaffārid dominions. In this he was aided by the Caliph al-Muʿtamid, to whom he immediately professed allegiance. Belying assertions that the Ṣaffārids were seen as anti-ʿAbbāsid, the Caliph straightaway invested ʿAmr with patents for Fars, Kirmān, Sīstān, Khurāsān, Iṣfahān and Sind and the *shurṭa* of Baghdad and Samarra,[9] rather than taking advantage of ʿAmr's weakness during a critical time.[10] In fact, the good will appears to have been reciprocal; we read that in

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2 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 208.

3 E. g. *ibid.* , p. 204, in the year 248/862, when ʿAmr was put in charge of Sīstān while Yaʿqūb was campaigning in Bost and was surprised and captured by Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naṣr; Yaʿqūb was never so unprepared in his career, not even when he was betrayed and attacked by al-Muwaffaq.

4 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 230; there is a lacuna in the text here, so the cause of the rift is unknown.

5 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 232.

6 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 233.

7 I. e. after his afore-mentioned quarrel with Yaʿqūb.

8 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 234. There is a lacuna in the text where the actual process of electing a ruler is described; presumably, ʿAlī's lack of decisiveness was elaborated there. Note that Ṭabarī relates the succession of ʿAmr as though this were a smooth and uncontested transition (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 544).

9 ʿAmr is reported as having delegated in the following year ʿUbaydallāh b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir as his representative in charge of the Baghdadi *shurṭa* (al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 18).

10 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 234; *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 15; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 360; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 326, 332 (where ʿAmr's appointment of a representative is discussed). Gardīzī (*Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 9) merely states that "Muʿtamid and Muwaffaq gave Khurāsān and Sīstān and Fārs to ʿAmr b. al-Layth," without mentioning any oath of allegiance on ʿAmr's part. Al-Dhahabī (*Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 16) states that ʿAmr "entered into obedience" to the caliph, and also that the caliph immediately

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266/879f "ʿAmr sent Muwaffaq much money, and manifested justice and goodness toward the people in Fārs, and he always paid the army also and would give them robes of honour."[11] This rosy picture of ʿAmr's rule is confirmed elsewhere, in a passage which informs us that ʿAmr was "Most excellent of policy, just; and his fortunes became great, yet he obeyed the caliph."[12] Other sources as well emphasize ʿAmr's punctiliously correct behaviour toward the caliph; we are told, for instance, that he was scrupulous in forwarding to the Caliph part of the taxes of Fārs: ʿAmr used to levy in Fārs "fifty thousand thousand dirhams and every year he would give to the caliph [*al-sulṭān*] 15,000 dirhams or dīnārs."[13]

But ʿAmr was faced with grave challenges from other quarters. First, he had troubles with his disgruntled brother and erstwhile rival ʿAlī, although the two were soon reconciled, at least outwardly.[14] Far more formidable was the revolt on the part of virtually all of Yaʿqūb's officials, and of certain other men seeking power and fortune, such as the caliphal Turkish officer Asātakīn,[15] who is said to have appropriated the district of al-Rayy to himself almost immediately after the caliph's confirmation of ʿAmr's authority.[16]

The most serious challenge, though, was the rebellion led by a man named Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī in Khurāsān. This revolt had begun in Yaʿqūb's time and had been going on for several years by the time ʿAmr was compelled to deal with the problem.[17] Al-Khujistānī was no ordinary rebel, either, as we shall see. He was said to have been an associate of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's, who had joined the Ṣaffārids – particularly Yaʿqūb's brother ʿAlī b. al-Layth – after Yaʿqūb took charge of Khurāsān.[18] He receives highly condemnatory press in all the

confirmed him in the possession of those areas (p. 17), adding that the caliph also sent him a collar and a great robe of honour. al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ* (p. 171), states simply that "Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth died in Jundishāpūr, one of the towns of Khurāsān, in the year 265. His brother ʿAmr entered into the obedience of the *sulṭān* and the *sulṭān* entrusted him with the government of the *shurṭa* in Baghdad and the districts of Khurāsān, and those districts of the Ṭāhirids which were attached to it." Ṭabarī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 544) also states merely that ʿAmr proferred his obedience. Ṭabarī also omits the *shurṭa* of Baghdad and the Ḥaramayn from his listing of the areas that ʿAmr was granted rule over (p. 545), but this was clearly an omission on his part, since under the entry for the following year (266) he describes ʿAmr's investiture of ʿUbaydullāh b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir with the Baghdad *shurṭa*, and of Muḥammad b. Abī'l-Sāj as governor of the Ḥaramayn (p. 549). Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 197) follows Ṭabarī.

11 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 234. ; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 371.

12 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 516.

13 Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. De Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 5, Leiden, 1967, p. 204.

14 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 236.

15 Who had been instrumental in the deposition of al-Muhtadī – see Ṭabarī, *sub anno* 256.

16 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 332 (who states that Asātakīn took over the *shurṭa* in Baghdad as well); Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 549.

17 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 296-302.

18 *Ibid.*

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sources; al-Dhahabī calls him "an oppressive, unjust tyrant [*jabbārᵃⁿ ẓālimᵃⁿ ghāshimᵃⁿ*],"[19] and Ibn al-Athīr relates some particularly unflattering stories about al-Khujistāni's envy, cruelty, conniving, treachery, and general nastiness.[20] In fact, Yaʿqūb is said to have perceived al-Khujistāni's true nature fairly quickly, and to have been aware that the latter would seek his own glory as soon as possible.[21]

In 261/874-5, with a force of around two hundred men, al-Khujistānī took over first the town of Busht, near Nīshāpūr,[22] then that of Bisṭām, in Qūmis.[23] In 262/875f[24] al-Khujistānī, after much maneuvering, apparently gained mastery over Nīshāpūr for the first time,[25] immediately thereafter attempting to join forces with several rebels; one of these, Rāfiʿ b. Harthama, responded favourably to these overtures.[26] Rāfiʿ, too, came from the area of Bādhghīs, and was an erstwhile Ṭāhirid supporter who had joined Yaʿqūb after the latter assumed control of Khurāsān. He was said to have been a follower of Abū Thawr, one of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's commanders who inclined towards Yaʿqūb ("One of the group of those favouring Yaʿqūb over Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir"). Rāfiʿ himself is personally described as being "a man of long beard, unpleasant face [*karīh al-wajh*] and little cheerfulness."[27] Yaʿqūb, however, distrusted and disliked him and his ambition, so Rāfiʿ was let go.[28]

Al-Khujistānī seems to have been distracted thereafter in the Herāt region and then Jurjān; precisely how much time he spent campaigning in the latter area is unclear.[29] In 266/880, in a surprise attack on al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, al-Khujistānī was able to gain command of Jurjān and parts of Ṭabaristān. True to form, al-Khujistānī plundered the property of the merchants of Jurjān, and "set fire in the country."[30] Accordingly, ʿAmr went to Nīshāpūr to fight al-Khujistānī in that

19 Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51. It is particularly noted that he killed Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī, whom we discussed at length in chapter 4.

20 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 296; 299-301.

21 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 297.

22 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 1, p. 425; mentioned in al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p. 300, among the rural districts of Nīshāpūr, and even called (p. 317) "the most important" of them, apparently because it contained seven pulpits.

23 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān* vol. 1, pp. 421-422; al-Muqaddasī (*Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p. 356) calls it "heavily populated, with many gardens."

24 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 297, is the only source giving that date.

25 This hegemony did not last very long; a rival took the city back the very next year (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 310).

26 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 297, 328; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 363. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 544, states merely that al-Khujistānī took over Nīshāpūr and installed a Ṭāhirid figurehead over Marv.

27 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 363.

28 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 367-368.

29 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 298, 300; Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 248.

30 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 335; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 552. The description of al-Khujistānī's vandalism is from Ṭabarī.

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same year, but his own brother and erstwhile rival ʿAlī was collaborating with the rebel and ʿAmr was defeated.[31] ʿAmr withdrew to Herat and imprisoned anew his treacherous brother ʿAlī, while al-Khujistānī "entered Nīshāpūr, and killed a group of those who inclined towards ʿAmr."[32]

In the aftermath of ʿAmr's defeat we see the Caliph taking ʿAmr's part, in the year 267/880f. :

> The caliph [*al-sulṭān*] jailed Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir and a number of the members of his household [*ahl baytihi*] after al-Khujistānī's victory over ʿAmr b. al-Layth, for ʿAmr suspected Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir of corresponding with al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir, and al-Ḥusayn and al-Khujistānī summoned to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir on the *minbars* of Khurāsān.[33]

This caliphal behaviour might, on the face of it, seem inexplicable: why was the caliph apparently espousing the cause of a man whom he turned against only some three or four years later? There are two possible reasons: first, the caliph approved of the Ṣaffārids whenever he himself did not feel strong enough to make a bid for real power (one should remember that the ʿAbbāsids were still very much preoccupied with the Zanj at this point); and, second, the nature of al-Khujistānī's revolt, which will be discussed below.

Al-Khujistānī was vehemently opposed in Nīshāpūr itself, however, by the son of the man who had been Yaʿqūb's staunchest supporter in Khurāsān:

> Ḥaykān-[34] he is Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī – and a group of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the *fuqahā'* in Nīshāpūr inclined toward ʿAmr because of the Caliph's appointment of him. So al-Khujistānī deemed he should sow discord among them in order to occupy them with one another. He took from them a group of the *fuqahā'* who adhered to the *madhhab* of the people of ʿIrāq [i. e. the Ḥanafis], and was good to them, and made them close to him, and honoured them, and they showed disagreement with Ḥaykān, and opposed him.[35]

In short, al-Khujistānī began practicing a *divide et impera* strategy, deliberately cultivating the *aṣḥāb al-ra'y* as a counterweight to his opponent Ḥaykān, who was, like his father and the other pro-Ṣaffārid *ʿulamā'*, a member of the *ahl al-ḥadith*. Khujistānī's behaviour suggests that a religious significance was injected into this

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31 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 237. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 335, does not mention ʿAlī's treachery, nor do Ṭabarī (*loc. cit.*) and al-Dhahabī (*Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 19). It is unclear whether Ṭabarī and al-Dhahabī are referring here to al-Khujistānī's first sojourn in Nīshāpūr, or his second, in the following year, about which other sources as well report the killing of ʿAmr's supporters (see *infra*).

32 Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 19; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 552. .

33 al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 557; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol 7, p. 361.

34 The text erroneously has "Kaykān."

35 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 300. This explanation of Ibn al-Athīr's for ʿAmr's support by the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, particularly Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad, is more than a little disingenuous, given the previous history of Ṣaffārid support on the part of the Dhuhlīs and others which we have seen in Chapter Four when discussing Yaʿqūb's takeover of Nīshāpūr.

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conflict, if it did not exist there already.[36] We have good indication in this story, together with the eventual martyrdom of Ḥaykān, that the Ṣaffārid-*ahl al-ḥadīth* connections we delineated in the previous chapter continued under ʿAmr. This impression is further strengthened by the casual mention in an ʿulamology which implies that Traditionists found a very hospitable climate in Sīstān under ʿAmr; we are told that the son of the great traditionist Abū Dāʾūd, who had been living in Baghdad, returned to Sīstān "in the days of ʿAmr b. al-Layth, and *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* gathered to him …"[37]

Al-Khujistānī next followed ʿAmr to Herāt and attempted to besiege the city, but after realizing that he could not take it, he went instead toward Sīstān. Khujistānī's first stop was Farāh, where he "killed many of the common people for no reason."[38] He then continued with his army to Zarang, where he was also unsuccessful in besieging the city.[39]

> When Khujistānī realized that he could not subdue the city, he gave the order to some of his men to lay waste and plunder the environs, and everywhere that they could they destroyed the suburbs. Then the common people took [matters] into their hands and everywhere that one of [Khujistānī's] men was, they killed them all.[40]

At some point during this struggle, al-Khujistānī's deputy in Nīshāpūr was behaving badly [*asāʾa al-sīra*], "and [this] strengthened the *ʿayyārūn* and evildoers [*ahl al-fasād*]," according to Ibn al-Athīr, "so the people gathered around Ḥaykān [who, as will be recalled, was supporting the *ʿayyār* Ṣaffārids], and he revolted against [Khujistānī's] deputy, and ʿAmr b. al-Layth aided them with his army."[41]

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[36] Bosworth has described Khujistānī's actions as follows: "Khujistānī now occupied Nīshāpūr once more, expelling ʿAmr's *ʿāmil* [representative] and slaughtering ʿAmr's partisans there, sc. the members of the orthodox Sunnī religious classes and town notables who had inclined to the Ṣaffārid cause … Ibn al-Athīr … states that ʿAmr's support … came from the *muṭṭawwiʿa* [*ghāzīs*] and *fuqahāʾ* of Nīshāpūr … Khujistānī's purge of pro-Ṣaffārid elements continued for some time, for in Shawwāl 267/May 881 news reached Iraq that Khujistānī had oppressed the people of Nīshāpūr … beating people and confiscating their property. He had also endeavoured to sow dissension within the body of the religious and legal institution in Nīshāpūr … by wooing the Ḥanafis (*ahl al-ʿIrāq*), rivals of the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*." (Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 195). Note that there are other references to Ṣaffārid connections with *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*; see *supra*, Chapter Four, regarding Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's friend Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī.

[37] Ibn Manẓūr, *Mukhtaṣar taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 12, p. 242.

[38] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 237.

[39] On the unsuccessful siege of Herāt and the campaign in Sijistān, see also Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 300.

[40] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 237.

[41] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 301; cf. Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 9. Gardīzī simply states that the *mutaṭawwiʿa* –the term is apparently once again being used synonymously with *ʿayyārūn* – were united with the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in support of ʿAmr: "Ḥaykān [for Jankān] Qārī and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad and Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī [*sic*] and all the *muṭṭawwiʿa* of Nīshāpūr had an inclination toward ʿAmr because he was sent by the Commander of the Faithful and had his patent and standard." There is also the possibility that Ibn al-Athīr or a later scribe interjected "*ahl al-fasād*" as a definitional description for his readers, even

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The Ṣaffārid force succeeded in retaking the city; al-Khujistānī hastened back to Nīshāpūr upon hearing the news that ʿAmr's friends had re-established themselves there.

It was apparently at this juncture that al-Khujistānī's most infamous deed was committed: his barbaric killing of the pro-Ṣaffārid religious scholar and leader of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* in Khurāsān, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhlī, which was analyzed in detail above.[42] Several legends subsequently sprang up about this murder and its consequences, as seen in the following example:

> Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Hānī said: When [al-Khujistānī] killed Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Ḥaykān,[*sic*] Abū ʿAmr Aḥmad b. al-Mubārak al-Mustamlī left off wearing luxuriant clothes; and he used to wear in the winter a pelt without an undershirt [*farwan bi-lā qamīs*], and in the summer coarse woolen cloth. He came one day to Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī, grabbed his bridle and said: "O tyrant [*ẓālim*], you assassinated[43] the *imām* the son of the *imām*, the *ʿālim* son of the *ʿālim*." Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh trembled with fear; his mount broke loose and the foot-soldiers came to hit him, but [al-Khujistānī] said: "Leave him alone, leave him alone."[44]
>
> He related from Abū Ḥātim Nūḥ, saying: "al-Khujistānī told me: 'By God, I was never afraid of anyone with the fright I had for the one with the fur [*ṣāḥib al-farwa*]; and I already regretted at that time the killing of Ḥaykān. '"[45]

According to this same al-Mustamlī who so frightened al-Khujistānī – and who was incidentally one of the main transmitters of traditions about Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā and his son – Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad appeared to him, Abū ʿAmr al-Mustamlī, in a dream: "I asked him: 'What has God done with you?' He an-

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though the term itself was not used in the original source. It is this passage in particular which causes Jürgen Paul to neglect the *ʿayyār* nature of the Ṣaffārid state and, in keeping with the ruling "bandit" paradigm, posit that the *ʿayyārs* all supported Khujistānī: "In the confused period during which the lordship of the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān and especially in Nīshāpūr was approaching its end, the representative of the usurper al-Khujistānī relied upon, among others, the *ʿayyārs*, while the Islamic dignitaries in the city and their military exponent Ḥaykān had pronounced themselves [in favour of] the Ṣaffārid ʿAmr b. al-Layth. Also in this case the *ʿayyārs* seem to be an armed rural element." (Jürgen Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien*, p. 129). The present author finds no indication in this case that the *ʿayyārūn* of Nīshāpūr were a rural element. Bosworth, too, ("Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids," p. 117) understands *ʿayyārūn* and *ahl al-fasād* as being synonymous here.

42 *Vide supra*, Chapter Four.

43 Reading "*ghulta*" for "*qulta/qultu*" as edited. The author is grateful to David Cook for this suggestion. Note that Dhahabī, who also relates this story (*Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 288), writes simply "*qatalta*." The principle of *lectio difficilior*, however, militates in favour of "*ghulta*."

44 Dhahabī, *Siyar, loc. cit.* , adds here "and he [viz. al-Mustamlī] returned and entered the mosque."

45 Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51. On the same page it is stated that "Yaḥyā b. al-Dhuhlī" appeared to someone in a dream and said: "Despite the fact that I did not kill and did not participate in the heat of battle, God distressed Aḥmad b. Abdallah al-Khujistānī through me." Note the militant character of Yaḥya as it is portrayed in this tradition.

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swered: 'He has forgiven me. ' I said: 'But what has he done with al-Khujistānī?' He answered: 'He is in a coffin of fire, and the key is in my hand. '"[46]

After al-Khujistānī came back to Nīshāpūr in 267/880f. he stayed in the city for a whole year;[47] al-Khujistānī's behaviour was, characteristically, nasty.[48] After re-establishing himself in Nīshāpūr, he was said to have behaved badly toward its inhabitants.[49] Among al-Khujistānī's reprehensible dealings, for instance, was one of the exactions he is said to have extorted, in the course of which he stuck a spear into the ground and ordered the people to bury it in a mound of dirhams.[50]

It was at this time, after securely taking over Nīshāpūr, that al-Khujistānī also put aside his pretended loyalty to the overthrown Ṭāhirids and began having the *khuṭba* delivered in his own name.[51] He began striking coins in his own name in Nīshāpūr and, the next year, in the revived mint of Herāt,[52] which had been closed since the time of al-Maʾmūn's reforms in the coinage.[53] This is one of the most fascinating issues in the entire ʿAbbāsid period, first, because of the uniqueness of the coins themselves among the uniform coinages of post-Maʾmūn ninth-century issues.[54] The Nīshāpūr coins are so extraordinary, in fact, that they are the only ones ever described by Ṭabarī:[55]

> In [this year] al-Khujistānī struck for himself *dīnārs* and dirhams ... and upon them [was written]: "Rulership and power are God's; might and strength are in God; There is no God but God; Muḥammad is the Prophet of God." And on one of its sides: al-Muʿtamid ʿAlā Allāh; "*biʾl-yumn waʾl-saʿāda*." And on its other side: al-Wāfī Aḥmad bin ʿAbdallāh.[56]

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46 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 288.

47 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362.

48 We are told, for instance, that he "killed a bunch of people." (Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 9)

49 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362

50 Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51.

51 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362. Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51, makes very clear that *ab initio* al-Khujistānī had espoused the Ṭāhirid cause only from motives of expediency: "He began showing an inclination for Banū Ṭāhir, in order to win over the hearts of the common people [*raʿiyya*] by this."

52 It is unclear in precisely which year he took Herat; al-Isfizārī's *Rawḍat al-jannāt* (p. 383) gives no date, but *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 239, states that 268/881f. was the year in which the rebels took control of the city. This accords well with the numismatic evidence; al-Khujistānī's Herat issue begins in 268/881f. (e. g. ANS 1990. 100. 8; ANS 1998. 93. 2; ANS 1990. 100. 6).

53 On this reform see Tayeb El-Hibri, "Coinage Reform Under the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Maʾmūn," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 36 (1993), pp. 58-83.

54 M. Bates, "The ʿAbbāsid Coinage System, 833-946," paper delivered at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting, Providence, Rhode Island, November 1996, pp. 4-5. The author is grateful to Michael Bates for having made a copy of this paper available.

55 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 363, mentions the coins, but without the detailed description Ṭabarī gives. Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 25, states merely that "He minted coins in his own name, and left out the name al-Muʿtamid on the reverse side."

56 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, p. 600.

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The layout of those coins, as they have survived from Nīshāpūr,[57] has been described elsewhere in detail, as have the unique inscriptions found upon these coins.[58] The Herāt coins are still more intriguing.[59] On one side, they have the same peculiar reverse as the Nīshāpūr series, but in the other, they have a second reverse recognizing a caliph called al-Mutawakkil; this has traditionally been thought to refer to the ʿAbbāsid caliph who was murdered nearly twenty years previously and whose reverse this is definitely modeled upon. In other words, this coin deliberately has two reverses. We know this must have been deliberate because no other type of Khujistānī coin minted in Herāt has ever been found – only these.

The reverse modeled upon al-Mutawwakil's old coins raises numerous questions. It is difficult to believe that al-Khujistānī was here employing an old die, for several reasons. First and foremost, until he started minting, **no coins had been struck in Nīshāpūr or Herāt since the time of al-Ma'mūn**; the Khurāsān mint was located in Marv and Marv alone. So if we are here concerned with an old die that somehow fell into al-Khujistānī's hands and that he for some obscure reason wished to deliberately employ, it must have come from a mint that actually did manufacture those coins. This leaves us, apart from Marv, with either Rayy or Iṣfahān as the closest relevant mints – both of which are much closer to Nīshāpūr than to Herāt, so we are still left with the puzzle of why they would appear on the latter coins rather than the former. This die, moreover, is not identical with that used on any of the known coins of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil which this writer has been able to examine.

Furthermore, we must ask ourselves why al-Khujistānī would have chosen to use that particular die – particularly with the name al-Mutawakkil, as opposed to that of a more recent caliph; this question becomes even more urgent if al-Khujistānī had this die specially designed, as appears to be the case. Even if it was a real die from the time of al-Mutawwakil, surely there must have been many more available dies of al-Muʿtaḍid or some other more recent caliph. There is a possible answer which would satisfactorily explain all of our questions, and which would also explain both why the "al-Mutawwakil" coins are found only in Herāt and not in Nīshāpūr also, and why al-Khujistānī should have instituted such a radical departure from ʿAbbāsid coin types and religious inscriptions (in itself usually a sign of an alternative religious message).

In 259/873 there was, as previously mentioned, a dangerous Khārijite revolt in Bādghīs, where Herāt is located. This revolt was led by a certain ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who called himself caliph (*amīr al-mu'minīn*) with the regnal title al-Mutawwakil. ʿAbd Allāh al-Khujistānī is said to have come from this very area of

57 E. g. ANS 1971. 316. 31 and 0000. 999. 314.
58 *Vide* Tor, "A Numismatic History," p. 302.
59 E. g. ANS 1990. 100. 5; Album 134:333; Album 66:158.

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Bādghīs – in fact, from the town of Khujistān near Herāt, of which town it is written that "its inhabitants are extremist Khārijites in their entirety [*shurāt*^{un} *ghulāt*^{un} *bi-ajmaʿihim*][60] – and to have made his submission to ʿAlī b. al-Layth,[61] whom we know from a different source to have been active in this very same area of Bādghīs;[62] al-Khujistānī was even, according to some accounts, ʿAlī b. al-Layth's personal representative in this very same area.[63] It is here that he began his rebellion, a scant two years after the Khārijite caliph al-Mutawakkil had commanded a fair amount of allegiance in the same region. Surely it is not accidental that solely the Herāt coins bear this name.

Thus, al-Khujistānī may have been either a Khārijite himself, or what is more probable, given what seems like the opportunism of the man, courting the Khārijites, who were traditionally strong in this region. The fact that al-Khujistānī copied the style of the old ʿAbbāsid die could have been either a decision of convenience – the engravers had a previous caliphal example of the same name to go by – or of duplicity; he could avoid outraging Sunni public opinion if it were thought that he was merely accidentally employing an old ʿAbbāsid die. If this was indeed a double game – courting the Khārijites while avoiding too flagrant a challenge to the Sunnis – it would explain the very peculiar legends on al-Khujistānī's coins as well; and al-Khujistānī does seem to have been a man who employed every expediency.

Khārijite coins are usually identifiable by the inscription "*Lā ḥukma illā li'llāh*" – roughly, authority belongs only to God. To have placed this on his coins would have been tantamount to waving a red flag in front of a bull, insofar as the Sunnī *ʿulamā'* were concerned. Yet the inscription "*al-mulk wa'l-qudra li'llāh/al-ḥawl wa'l-quwwa bi'llāh*" ["rulership and power are God's; might and strength are in God"], together with the aforementioned anomalous Qurʾānic verses, is virtually identical in sentiment, while not at all sectarian. We have already seen an indirect confirmation of this theory in the literary sources, when Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, and al-Dhahabī state that Khujistānī's ultimate aim was ʿIrāq;[64] we are not told what he planned to accomplish there, but it was, of course, the seat of the Caliphate – and, interestingly, al-Khujistānī is reported as having begun his abortive ʿIrāqi movement in the very year in which he began minting his peculiar coins. This supposition regarding al-Khujistānī's religious

60 Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, vol. 2, p. 441; Iṣṭakhrī, *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, p. 269, who omits the "*ghulātun*" designation.

61 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 296.

62 See e. g. *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 106.

63 Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 129, citing *Chahār maqāla*. Bogdan Skladanek deals with this question at some length; see Skladanek, "Khujistānī's uprising in Khurāsān (860-869). The anatomy of an unsuccessful rebellion." *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 46 (1989), pp. 66-68.

64 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 599; al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 25; pace Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 197, who claims that Ṭabarī must have meant ʿIrāq ʿAjamī.

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flirtation with Khārijism is further strengthened by the opposition of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* in Nīshāpūr to Khujistānī's rule.[65]

Ibn al-Athīr's relation of the circumstances surrounding al-Khujistānī's murder also support the hypothesis that al-Khujistānī was religiously objectionable:

> [the people of Nīshāpūr] were afraid of him, so that a group of the *ru'asā'* and the merchants hid. The people [*al-nās*] took refuge in prayer, and they asked Abū ʿUthmān and others from among the companions of Abū Ḥafṣ the ascetic [*al-zāhid*] that they beseech God, may He be exalted, to relieve them. They did so; and God consoled them in his mercy, and [al-Khujistānī] was killed that very night …[66]

Here, then, at last, we have an indication regarding who some of those *fuqahā'* must have been whom we saw referred to above in the story of Ḥaykān's organized opposition to al-Khujistānī. Their identity provides one of the earliest historical indications of the *ʿayyār*-Sufi connection.

The Sufi Connection

Abū Ḥafṣ al-Naysābūrī, the man named by the sources as a key Ṣaffārid supporter, is referred to variously as "the exemplary learned Imam [*imām al-qudwa al-rabbānī*], Shaykh Khurāsān ʿAmr (or ʿUmar) b. Salm (or Salma) al-Naysābūri the ascetic"[67] and "one of the religious leaders and masters."[68] Our shaykh is even in one admiring tradition called "the light of Islam in his time."[69] The famous Sufi al-Junayd is reported to have reminisced about Abū Ḥafṣ's pious ascetic practice of not changing his clothing, which was apparently so unbearable for others that they had to beg him to remove the dirty clothing from himself.[70]

What is most interesting from our perspective, however, is that Abū Ḥafṣ is said to have been not only a great Sufi ascetic, but also a practitioner of *futuwwa*:

> … I heard Abū ʿAmr b. ʿAlwān, and I asked him: "Did you ever see Abū Ḥafṣ at Junayd's?" He said: "I was away, but I heard Junayd saying: 'Abū Ḥafṣ stayed with me for a year with eight [others]. I would feed them good food' – and he mentioned some

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65 al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, vol. 14, p. 218. *Pace* Bosworth, who follows Ibn al-Athīr's mistake (*op. cit.* , p. 300) in conflating Khālid b. Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Dhuhlī with Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī; a check of virtually any of the biographical literature shows that these are two separate but related people.

66 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 304. See also Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, Dār al-Fikr edition, vol. 11, pp. 152-153, where Abū ʿUthmān's timely intervention with God saves the Nīshāpūrī population from al-Khujistānī's exactions and threats as well as his general unrighteousness.

67 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 510. See also R. Gramlich's biography (*Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur. Mainz Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission, Band 42, Wiesbaden, 1995, vol. 2, pp. 113-154).

68 Al-Sulamī, *Tabaqātal-ṣúfiyya*, p. 104.

69 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 512.

70 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 511.

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items of clothes – 'and when they wanted to journey forth I clothed them. He [i. e. Abū Ḥafṣ] said to me: 'If you come to Nīshāpūr we shall teach you generosity and chivalry [*al-sakhā' wa'l-futuwwa*]. ' Then he said: 'Your deed had in it reluctance, when the poor ones arrived – be with them without reluctance; when you were hungry, they were hungry, and when you were sated, they were sated. '"

Al-Khuldī said: "When Abū Ḥafṣ said to al-Junayd: 'If you came to Nīshāpūr we would teach you what *futuwwa* is,' it was said to him: 'What [kind of behaviour] did you see from him?' He said: 'He made my friends *mukhannathīn*,[71] he was imposing upon them all sorts [of things]; *futuwwa*, on the contrary, renounces imposition. '"[72]

Although the second half of this tradition appears to be a scurrilous attack upon Junayd's reputation, whether or not this tradition, or the accusation it contains, is spurious is immaterial for us here. The important issue is that Abū Ḥafṣ was seen as someone who represented *futuwwa*, and that there was a definite historical memory of discussions on *futuwwa* between Abū Ḥafṣ and Junayd.[73] In a Persian source, Abū Ḥafṣ discourses upon *javānmardī*.[74] As we shall see in the next chapter, there was a strong connection between *ʿayyārs* and Sufis, centered around chivalry (*futuwwa/javānmardī*).

There are other records of the conversations between Junayd and Abū Ḥafṣ on *futuwwa*, one of which also disparages Junayd in order to glorify Abū Ḥafṣ, but in a less *ad hominem* fashion:

I heard ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥusayn the Ṣūfī saying: "It reached me that the shaykhs of Baghdad gathered *chez* Abū Ḥafṣ, and asked him about *futuwwa*; he replied: 'You speak, for you have the [power of] expression and the eloquence [*al-ʿibāra wa'l-lisān*]. ' Al-Junayd said: '*Futuwwa* is not making a show of piety, and forsaking genealogy[75] [*isqāṭ al-riyā' wa tark al-nisba*]. '[76] Abū Ḥafṣ said: 'What you have said is so beautiful! However, with me *futuwwa* is the pursuit of justice, and desisting from the demand for justice [*adā' al-inṣāf wa-tark muṭālabat al-inṣāf*]. ' Al-Junayd said: 'Arise, O our friends! For Abū Ḥafṣ is greater than Adam and his progeny!'

And I heard ʿAbd al-Raḥmān saying: "It reached me that when Abū Ḥafṣ wished to leave Baghdad, the *shaykhs* and the *fityān* who were in [Baghdad] saw him off, and when they wished to return, one of them said to him: 'Show us the way to *futuwwa* [*dullanā*

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71 On the possible homosexual meaning of this term see Everett Rowson, "The effeminates of early Medina," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111 (1991), pp. 671-693. Since, however, the text was discussing clothing before, it may simply be referring to dress here, or even to powerlessness.

72 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 512. Note that he also appears in Sulamī's chapter on *futuwwa* in *al-Muqaddima fī'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Ḥusayn Amīn, Baghdād, 1984, p. 330.

73 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 98, while he does not relate any such conversations, records the visit. Junayd is also shown pronouncing upon *futuwwa* in other contexts; *vide* Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 195.

74 Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 644.

75 i. e. relying on one's deeds – *ḥasab* – rather than one's descent – *nasab*. The author is indebted to Wolfhart Heinrichs for this suggestion, as well as for proposing the textual emendation in the following footnote.

76 The present writer has here amended the text to read *riyā'* for *ru'ya*.

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> ʿ*alā al-futuwwa*]. What is it?" He replied: '*Futuwwa* is perceived in respect to usage and behaviour, not speech. ' And they were amazed by his words."
> He said: "Abū Ḥafṣ was asked: 'Does the *fatā* have any distinguishing sign?' He replied: 'Yes! Whoever sees the *fityān*, and is not ashamed in front of them by his character and his deeds, is a *fatā*. '"[77]

The connection between our Sufi ascetic and *futuwwa* is explicitly affirmed in another source, according to which some of Abū Ḥafṣ's closest known associates were *fityān* – for instance Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Sijzī, called "of the greatest of the shaykhs of Khurāsān and their *fityān*. He kept company with Abū Ḥafṣ …"[78] This passage's implication that the shaykhs of Khurāsān kept their own force or company of *fityān* is most intriguing.

Another passage implies that the *fityān* wore the *muraqqaʿ*, the distinctive garment of the sufis:

> He said, "I heard Abū ʿAbdallāh, and it was said to him: 'Why do you not wear the *muraqqaʿ*?' He replied: 'It is hypocrisy to wear the clothing of the *fityān*, and not to enter into the bearing of the burdens of *futuwwa* … 'And it was said to him: 'What is *futuwwa*?' He answered: 'Seeing the excuses for [other] people and your own dereliction, their perfection and your own imperfection; and [having] compassion upon all people, [both] the pious one and the profligate. And the perfection of *futuwwa* is not letting people distract you from God, may He be exalted. '"[79]

Yet another one of Abū Ḥafṣ's sufi associates, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Nazwayh, "was of the shaykhs of Nīshāpūr. He saw Abū Ḥafṣ and became friends with Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, and he was of great rank in the *futuwwa*, and still it is the same concerning his sons, whom they mention on account of *javānmardī*."[80] Another of Abū Ḥafṣ's associates and admirers was the famous Sufi Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh al-Balkhī, "of the most celebrated *shaykhs* of Khurāsān in *futuwwa*. He came into Nīshāpūr, on a visit to Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nīshāpūrī."[81]

The most important acquaintance of Abū Ḥafṣ for our purposes, however, is Abū Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣār. He appears in some of our sources as transmitting *ḥadīth* directly from the mainstay of Ṣaffārid support in Nīshāpūr, Ibn Ḥanbal's friend Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī.[82] Ḥamdūn, praised by both al-Tustarī and Junayd, was said to have been not only an associate but a friend

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77 al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 117-118.

78 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 245; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 254.

79 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 255. Note that Abū'l Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī (*Talbīs iblīs*, ed. Ayman Ṣāliḥ, Cairo, 1415/1995, p. 405) speaks of the ʿ*ayyārūn*, as practitioners of *futuwwa*, wearing a distinctive garment based on the sufi one (*vide infra* Chapter Seven).

80 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 410. Note that here the terms *futuwwa* and *javānmardī* are specifically equated; we shall treat this at greater length in the next chapter.

81 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 103. *Vide infra* for more on this figure's ʿ*ayyār* connections.

82 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 171.

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[*rafīq*] of Abū Ḥafṣ;[83] he was also associated with one "Nūḥ, who had a reputation for ʿ*ayyārī* and was known for *futuwwa*[84] [*nām-i ʿayyārī būd be-futuvvat maʿrūf*], and all the ʿ*ayyārān* of Nīshāpūr were under his command."[85] Here, then, we have an explicit ninth-century connection among *Sufis*, *futuwwa* and ʿ*ayyārān*, a point to which we shall be returning in the following chapter. Furthermore, the wording makes it sound as though the ʿ*ayyārān* of Nīshāpūr formed a single group with a command structure or hierarchy (something we saw as well in the case of Yaʿqub b. al-Layth and the ʿ*ayyārān* of Sīstān).

A star pupil of Abū Ḥafṣ – Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī, the man actually involved in leading the spiritual opposition to al-Khujistānī after Ḥaykān's killing – was, as we shall see, also connected to *futuwwa*. "The shaykh, the *imām*, the *muḥaddith*, the model preacher; Shaykh al-Islam, the master Abū ʿUthmān, Saʿīd b. Ismāʿīl b. Saʿīd b. Manṣūr al-Naysābūrī al-Ḥīrī al-Ṣūfī" was born in Rayy in the year 230/844f, and studied in both Rayy and ʿIrāq.[86] He then came to Nīshāpūr specifically to study with Abū Ḥafṣ, and remained in that city. It is said of him that "He was to the Khurāsānis as Junayd to the ʿIrāqis."[87] He is called an ascetic and a miracle-worker,[88] and "the greatest of the Sufis."[89]

He seems to have carried Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad's torch – leading the *muḥaddithīn* against al-Khujistānī – after Yaḥyā's untimely demise:

> When Yaḥyā b. al-Dhuhlī was killed, the people were prevented by Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī from frequenting *majālis al-ḥadīth*; no one dared to carry an inkwell, until al-Sarī b. Khuzayma arrived, and the ascetic Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī arose, gathered the *muḥaddithīn* in his mosque, suspended an inkwell from his hand and preceeded them, until they arrived at the inn [where al-Sarī was staying]. He brought out al-Sarī and seated al-Mustamlī; and we estimated his *majlis* at more than a thousand inkwells. When he had finished, they arose and kissed Abū ʿUthmān's head, and the people [*al-nās*] strewed dirhams upon them and sweetmeats, in the year 273/886f. [*sic*][90]

This passage definitively establishes Abū ʿUthmān in the circles surrounding the leader of the pro-Ṣaffārid *muḥaddithūn* in Nīshāpūr, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-

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83 Al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 103-104. Ḥamdūn was also known for *zuhd*; see Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 128.

84 In fact, at one point Ḥamdūn asks Nūḥ for the definition of *javānmardī*.

85 Al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 228.

86 For a fairly comprehensive biography of al-Ḥīrī, see R. Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums*, vol. 2, pp. 175-241.

87 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 14, p. 63; similarly, "In the world there are three who have no fourth: Abū ʿUthmān al-Ḥīrī in Nisābūr; al-Junayd in Baghdad, and Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Jalā' in Syria," Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 188; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 2, p. 309. On his origins, see also Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 198; the latter work also specifically equates him in stature with Junayd, p. 162.

88 Al-Nīsābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nīshāpūr*, p. 115.

89 Hujvīrī,. *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 166.

90 al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 14, pp. 64-65. The year must be slightly off, unless Rāfiʿ b. Harthama continued al-Khujistānī's policies.

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Dhuhlī Ḥaykān, and particularly connects him to al-Mustamlī, who as we have just seen was one of Ḥaykān's closest associates.

Abū ʿUthmān is also connected to chivalry and chivalric ideals as well. He is asked, for instance, to define what constitutes the *javānmardān* (practitioners of chivalry);[91] both he and Abū Ḥafṣ are quoted defining the concept of *muruwwa.*[92] One of his companions, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar Shibhī, is called "of the *javānmardān* of the shaykhs of the time; he kept company with shaykh Abū ʿUthmān Ḥīrī …" This same al-Shibhī is quoted as an authority on *futuwwa.*[93]

In fact, there appears to have been a larger circle of Abū ʿUthmān's friends who are said to have belonged to the *fityān*. Abū'l-Fawāris Shāh b. Shujāʿ al-Kirmānī, for instance, a very famous sufi, and Abū ʿUthmān's teacher,[94] is described as follows: "Of the friends [*rafīqān*] of Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nīshāpūrī … he became the teacher of Abū ʿUthmān Ḥīrī. He was of the greatest of the *fityān* …"[95] He is quoted as giving the following statement about *futuwwa*: "*Futuwwa* is of the characteristics of the freeborn, and censure of the practices of the base."[96]

Finally, there is Abū ʿUthmān's associate Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Ṣūfī al-Būshanjī, who is said to have been "one of the foremost *fityān* of Khurāsān"[97] and is also described as being "of the peerless ones of the *javānmardān* of Khurāsān. He visited Abū ʿUthmān Ḥīrī … and [was] adept in *futuwwa*."[98] He is also referred to as "the most knowledgable of the *shaykhs* of his time … and the most excellent of them in *futuwwa* and renunciation [*tajrīd*]."[99] It is even said that "the way of *futuwwa* and *ikhlāṣ* was cut off in Nīshāpūr by his death [in 340/951f.].[100] Al-Būshanjī defines *taṣawwuf* as follows: "It is freedom [*ḥurriyya*] and *futuwwa*, the abandonment of constraint in generosity [*tark al-takalluf fi'l-sakhā'*], and [it is] elegance in morals [*al-taẓarruf fi'l-akhlāq*]."[101] All of this, of course, places the *sufi-futuwwa* connection much earlier than the eleventh century, when such a connection is traditionally thought to have begun.[102]

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91 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 199.
92 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 193.
93 E. g. Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 454, where he is defines the concept as follows: "*Futuwwa* is people's being good, and giving generously of the good." [*al-futuwwa ḥusn al-khuluq wa – badhl al-maʿrūf*]
94 Al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp. 167, 174.
95 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 195; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 192. al-Qushayrī writes that he was "*Aḥad al-fityān, kabīr al-sha'n*" (*al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p. 77).
96 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 193.
97 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 458.
98 Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 421.
99 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 458; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 196. al-Būshanjī, too, (Sulamī, *ibid.* p. 460; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *ibid.*) speaks about *muruwwa* as well.
100 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 196.
101 Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 460.
102 See *supra*, Chapter One.

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The nature of the Nīshāpūrī religious leadership supporting ʿAmr and the Ṣaffārids, and opposing Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Khujistānī, is significant for another reason as well. Taken together with the attestations of personal contact between Yaʿqūb and al-Tustarī, it strengthens the proof we saw above, when discussing Abū Ḥafṣ's friend Ḥamdūn and his *ʿayyār* associate, that an *ʿayyār-sufi-futuwwa* connection began or was already established at this time. This hypothesis, which will be examined in depth below, is supported by the fact that several other sufis of this period are described as *ʿayyārs*.[103]

The sources which give us this information seem fairly reliable on this point. First, they date, for the most part, from only about one hundred years after the lifetimes of most of these figures;[104] in several cases the traditions they relate are only one generation removed from the biographical subjects themselves. Still, one hundred years are critical for us in terms of dating the shifts in meaning of terms. How do we know that the Sufi biographers are not anachronistically applying to their subjects terms which were never used in those figures' own lifetimes? The answer lies in the fact that not only is the usage of terms such as *fityān* and *futuwwa* selective, but that one can also trace personal connections and lines of transmission among certain circles. Thus, Sulamī and Anṣārī are not using these terms arbitrarily or indiscriminately; relatively few Sufi figures are called *fityān*, and the ones who are so called all have a direct or indirect connection (i. e. the friend of a friend, or a teacher-student relationship) with one another.

Now that we have explored the pro-Ṣaffarid forces in Nishapur, let us return to the events in Khurāsān. Whether due to the efficacy of Abū ʿUthmān's prayers or not, al-Khujistānī was murdered by two of his own disgruntled men in 268/881.[105] His confederate Rāfiʿ b. Harthama assumed control of Khurāsān in his place, after some minor skirmishes with the representative of ʿAmr's son Muḥammad;[106] Rāfiʿ is said to have impoverished the Khurāsāni villages to the point of ruin with his heavy taxation.[107] In 269/882f. he began issuing coins in Marv, Nīshāpūr and Herāt with the same peculiar slogans (minus the caliph al-Mutawakkil) that Khujistānī had used.[108] To make matters worse, in the mean-

[103] E. g. ʿĀrif-i ʿAyyār (al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 567). See *infra*, Chapter Seven, for a full discussion of this matter; note the early proto-Sufi connection as well (*supra*, Chapter Two) with the early *mutaṭawwiʿ* circles.

[104] With the exception of Dhahabī.

[105] Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 27-28, 51. One of the slaves had had an eye pulled out on al-Khujistānī's orders, according to Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 303-304, 367.

[106] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 239-240. Note that this would mean that, unlike Yaqūb, Amr did not cultivate chastity. According to Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 368, events were much more complicated and involved in Marv and Herāt at this time.

[107] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 397.

[108] Vasmer, "Über die Münzen," #17, 18; Sotheby's London Auction Catalogue February 22, 1990, #210.

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while ʿAmr's governors in Fārs rebelled, and the governors of Egypt tried to displace the Ṣaffārid standards from their place of honour in Mecca.[109]

Throughout 268/881f. and 269/882f. ʿAmr was occupied with campaigning in Fārs against rebellious "Kurds" and the equally rebellious governor of the province;[110] then he received a missive from al-Muwaffaq:

> [al-]Muwaffaq sent new patents and diplomas and standards to ʿAmr over all of Islam and Dār al-Kufr, commanding that "everything should be under his command, and that whatever he conquered of India, the Turkish lands, and Rūm should be his." And a letter arrived from Aḥmad b. Abī Iṣbaʿ[111] saying: "Now that the affairs of Fārs, the two ʿIrāqs, Arabia, Syria, and Yemen are all straightened out, [ʿAmr] must return to Khurāsān and must send the *ghāzīs* to Dār al-Kufr, in order that there may again be conquests."[112]

That is, we once again see the meaning and function of "*ʿayyār*," as in the previous chapters, being defined as some sort of holy warrior; the caliph expects – and ʿAmr accepts such expectations – that ʿAmr should function as a *ghāzī*. ʿAmr accordingly went eastwards, first to Sīstān, then to Khurāsān, to try to put the latter province in order, presumably in preparation for resuming Yaʿqūb's conquests in the East. ʿAmr never did manage to fully quell all of the restive adventurers and warlords, although he must to some extent have been successful; at least one history states that Rāfiʿ b. Harthama had true control over Khurāsān only between 278 and 280/891-893f.[113]

Part of ʿAmr's inability to carry out this program of holy warfare, thus following in his brother's footsteps, was also due, no doubt, to the Caliph's repeated and sudden turnings upon ʿAmr, which forced the latter to fight on all fronts.[114] This intermittent hostility began, according to the literary sources, in the year 271/884f. , in dramatic fashion, after an ʿAbbāsid courtier had slandered ʿAmr before the caliph.[115] The Caliph called in the Khurāsānī pilgrims and announced to them that ʿAmr was deposed from everything he had previously been awarded,

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109 This Ṭūlūnid effort was thwarted: "The people of Mecca aided ʿAmr's representative and they kept ʿAmr's standard to the right of the *minbar,* in accordance with previous custom." *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 239.

110 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 370, 371; Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 15; *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 240. Although this would make no sense, the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* text actually states that "ʿAmr b. al-Layth sent Naṣr b. Aḥmad with an army to Rūm [Byzantium – probably Byzantine Armenia] in order to fight Aḥmad b. al-Layth al-Kurdī." This is most likely an error, particularly since the other Kurd mentioned, against whom a separate army was sent, was located in Rāmhurmuz. Also, as we have seen *supra*, Yaʿqūb had had trouble with religiously suspect and unruly Kurds in Fārs.

111 The caliphal envoy to the Ṣaffārids (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 234).

112 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 240-241.

113 al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, p. 171.

114 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 241-245; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 368. Iṣṭakhrī even implies that the Sāmānid rise in power was due to this (*Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 143).

115 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 242. The numismatic evidence suggests that the first break occurred earlier; see D. Tor, "A Numismatic History of the Ṣaffārid Dynasty."

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and proceeded to curse ʿAmr, ordering him to be cursed likewise from all the pulpits. The Caliph furthermore appointed Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir in ʿAmr's place; Muḥammad declared that Rāfiʿ b. Harthama was serving as his deputy. Then the caliph sent an army to Fārs to fight ʿAmr.[116]

The sole source to supply an explanation for this rift is the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, and one doubts whether the reason given – slander against ʿAmr in the caliphal court – was the only one. For it seems that there may have been a deeper element of strategy and planning in the break with ʿAmr; the preceding year, 270/883f., closed with al-Muwaffaq's victory over the Zanj, a fact which perhaps both strengthened the caliph's desire to regain some of the caliphate's former power and also left him freer to attempt to do so. Among the many panegyrics composed for the occasion we find the following:

> I say the harbinger of good tidings brought word of a battle
> which steadied all that had been shaken in Islam.
> May God bestow the highest reward upon the best of men
> who was so noble to people made homeless and robbed.
> When no one appeared to uphold God's cause
> he alone restored the faith, which had begun crumbling away.
>
> He strengthened the Empire when its glory was on the wane …
> This battle will bring consolation to our weeping eyes;
> it will bring healing to the hearts of the believers.
> The Book of God is read in every mosque;
> the appeals of the Ṭālibis are rejected as contemptible.
> He forsook comfort and friends and pleasures
> to emerge victorious in the cause of Islam.[117]

Other verses in a similar vein, emphasizing the crushing of heretics and apostates, and the restoration of the Faith, abound. The tone, in fact, sounds very similar to that of the poems we saw being composed earlier in honour of Yaʿqūb. In short, it seems that al-Muwaffaq felt that the caliphate was once again sufficiently strong to reclaim the role, or at least the image, of protector of Islam – either because the ʿAbbāsids felt a real desire to assume that role or because they were tearing a leaf out of the Ṣaffārids' book in order to garner support for themselves while concomitantly sapping that of their rivals.

Moreover, the timing of al-Muwaffaq's strike against the Ṣaffārids was right in other ways as well: ʿAmr was distracted by Rāfiʿ b. Harthama's revolt, and ʿAmr now also had to deal with the continued treachery of his own jealous brother, ʿAlī b. al-Layth, who openly joined Rāfiʿ b. Harthama in 275/888f. but may pos-

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116 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* pp. 242-243; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 7; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 414; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 219-220. This, it should be noted, was after the caliph had conveniently sent ʿAmr off to the East again.

117 The translation is Fields's (*The ʿAbbāsid Recovery. The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 37, p. 140). The original can be found in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 663-664; see also the lengthy account and panegyric in Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 399-406.

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sibly have been continuing his previous disloyal dealings undetected for the previous four years, ever since his supposed reconciliation with ʿAmr.[118] Moreover, Rāfiʿ himself was occupied for the next two years in the Caspian region.[119] Even after that time, we find Rāfiʿ perpetually distracted by Zaydi affairs up until 278/891f. , at which point he seized the caliphal emissary who had come to summon him to Baghdad.[120] ʿAmr also had other fractious governors to deal with as well during this time – in 273/886f. , for instance, he had to battle his Dulafid governor.[121]

In 275/888f. , however, al-Muwaffaq restored good relations with ʿAmr, culminating in the following year with the happy visit of ʿAmr's emissaries in Baghdad.[122] According to the sources, the caliph was worried at this time about developments in Syria and Egypt.[123] As a result, the caliph probably realized that his plans to recover ʿAbbāsid power were premature; not only were ʿAmr and the Ṭūlūnids too strong for him, but there was simply too much disorder during these years. We are told, for instance, about renewed Khārijite activity in the caliphal domains – not only did a Khārijite take over the Khurāsān road, killing and raiding in nearby areas, but a powerful rebel, Hārūn al-Shārī, entered Mosul with his allies and actually led the prayers in the Friday mosque there.[124] There was also an ʿAlid revolt in Medina which, we are told, involved much bloodshed;[125] moreover, the area of Samarra was beset by brigands and thieves.[126]

Harmonious relations between the caliph and ʿAmr did not long endure, though; already in that very same year 276/890 the Caliph turned against ʿAmr again, his name was struck out from its previous places of display, and the mentioning of him in the *khuṭba* was eliminated. Only one source provides an explanation for this sudden reversal: according to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* this *volte-face* oc-

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118 This treachery proved to be fatally poor judgement on ʿAlī's part. Rāfiʿ murdered ʿAlī in 277/890f. (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 444) or 278/891f. (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 23), according to several versions of events; alternatively, ʿAlī is said merely to have "died" while in Rayy with Rāfiʿ (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 457).

119 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 364; *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 250 – 252; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 220, 230. After this he was apparently busy raiding Khwārazm, whence he supposedly brought back 10,000 prisoners (Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 252-253).

120 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 253-254.

121 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 12.

122 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 16; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 228, mentions the reconciliation only under the year 276/889f.

123 *Tārikh-i Sīstān*, p. 245; in 273/886f. , for instance, much of the Jazīra went over to Ṭūlūnid allegiance – that is, the part that was not Khārijite; see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 422-423, 427.

124 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 9; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 222. The caliph sent troops to fight him and Hārūn was successfully captured (Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, pp. 287-283; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 359).

125 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 7; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 413.

126 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 13-14.

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curred after the Caliph heard that ʿAlī b. al-Layth had escaped from prison and joined with Rāfiʿ b. Harthama, re-igniting the latter's rebellion.[127]

Thus, the ʿAbbāsid attitude toward the Ṣaffārids seems to have been based not on righteous indignation or disapproval of wicked or irreligious practices, but rather on opportunism; the ʿAbbāsids wanted to rebuild their own power, so they waited until the occasion seemed suitable and then turned upon their powerful ally. In fact, this about-face was so abrupt and unexpected that ʿAmr was not even aware of it for quite some time, even after an army was sent by the Caliph into Fārs; ʿAmr thought that the forces must be acting without higher authority.[128] ʿAmr defeated the Caliphal army and entered Shīrāz in 277/890f. ; there he was informed of the ʿAbbāsid betrayal. It is significant that ʿAmr did not choose to follow up his victory with any further military measures against the Caliph. Rather, in response, he deleted the name of the caliph's brother and strongman al-Muwaffaq from the Friday prayers and from the coins issued in Shīrāz that year and Arrajān the following one, naming instead the caliph al-Muʿtamid's son al-Mufawwaḍ, who was not supposed to be named in the East.[129] After yet a further victory by ʿAmr over the caliphal forces, the caliphal vizier sent friendly letters to ʿAmr (of the "there must have been some misunderstanding" variety).

The grounds on which the ʿAbbāsids appealed to ʿAmr are, once again, highly instructive, for they show what the caliphal circle thought was likely to move ʿAmr:

> All of this is yours, and there is no place in all Islam[dom] which has a dispute with you, but you must guard the rights of the caliphs and the family of Mustafa for the sake of religion [*az bahr-i dīn rā*]; it must follow [therefore] in all this which we have mentioned that you withdraw from al-Ahwāz.[130]

This caliphal appeal to ʿAmr's sense of religious duty succeeded where force had not; ʿAmr obligingly withdrew from al-Ahwāz.

One should note that the ʿAbbāsids could not lose at this game. Even if political considerations and the lust for personal aggrandizement had constituted their only motivations, while the other political figures had been motivated solely or largely by the purest and highest sense of Islamic mission (and, obviously, it is extremely unlikely that either of these hypothetical scenarios was true), the ʿAbbāsids, by virtue of their inherited position, would still have held all the cards. No orthodox public figure could dispense with ʿAbbāsid legitima-

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127 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 247. The renewed break itself is mentioned in other sources, though – e. g. Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 229.

128 In fact, ʿAmr was so convinced of this that he was still sending gifts to al-Muwaffaq (*Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 247).

129 On al-Muwaffaq's omission from the Friday prayers see *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 248. On the coinage see ANS 1917. 216. 60; Bates,"ʿAbbāsid Coinage."

130 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 248.

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tion, no matter how venal or cypher-like the particular representatives of ʿAbbāsid authority might be; the ʿAbbāsids, on the other hand, could betray or attempt to undermine any public figure as much as they liked, and the most that public figure could do in response was to try to replace one ʿAbbāsid with another, usually the objectionable ʿAbbāsid's brother, son, or nephew. Both Yaʿqūb and now ʿAmr (by naming al-Mufawwaḍ, in contravention of al-Muwaffaq's aspirations for his own line) took this route, but it did not solve the problem of their being burdened with treacherous political overlords who hindered their attempts to restore order, yet were incapable of actually ruling themselves.

The fitful caliphal wars[131] finally ended in 279/892, with the accession of al-Muwaffaq's son al-Muʿtaḍid to the throne. After al-Muʿtaḍid became caliph he immediately restored or confirmed good relations with ʿAmr, sending him once again the banners for all the eastern provinces but Transoxiana and enjoining him to fight the renegade Rāfiʿ b. Harthama, who then promptly took an oath of allegiance to the Zaydi Shīʿite *imām*.[132]

> Then [al-Muʿtaḍid] sent Ismāʿīl b. Isḥāq al-Qāḍī as an emissary to ʿAmr, and made peace with him, and he fulfilled all of ʿAmr's wishes. He commanded that [ʿAmr's] name be written in all places and that they make the *khuṭba* in his name in the *ḥaramayn* once again. He sent him a robe of honour and many gifts, and the standards for the provinces of Fārs, Kirmān, Khurāsān, Zābulistān, Sīstān, Kābul and the guards of Baghdad [*shurṭat Baghdad*], and he commanded that he must go fight Rāfiʿ b. Harthama.[133]

Only one source explicitly states the reasons for al-Muʿtaḍid's renunciation of Rāfiʿ and renewed embrace of ʿAmr. We are told that the caliph wrote to ʿAmr "commanding him to fight Rāfiʿ when [news of] Rāfiʿ's preference for Muḥammad b. Zayd reached him, and [Rāfiʿ's] condemnation of the killing of al-Muʿtamid and al-Muʿtaḍid's occupation of the caliphate."[134] This passage is fascinating for the glimpse it gives us of at least some of the public reaction to al-Muwaffaq's usurpation of the Caliphate to his own line, and also indicates that, to a large degree, the viscissitudes in Ṣaffārid-caliphal relations were a function of ʿAbbāsid political ambitions and calculations, rather than of any merits or demerits of the Ṣaffārids. This being demonstrably the case, one can legitimately ask whether, if the Sāmānids, Ghaznavids, or any other dynasty with a good histo-

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131 For accounts of these see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 416, 426, 436.

132 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān* p. 254. According to Ṭabarī the impetus for the rapprochement came from ʿAmr, who sent emissaries to the new caliph (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 30). This is contradicted by what is written in the *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* (p. 254), which states rather that the caliph had sent envoys, ominously, to summon Rāfiʿ to ʿIrāq. Rāfiʿ refused to go and imprisoned the envoys, possibly because he may have known that al-Muʿtaḍid was about to patch up Caliphal-Ṣaffārid relations.

133 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 249. Al-Muʿtaḍid apparently delegated Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abī Dulaf at this point to expel Rāfiʿ from al-Rayy, which was successfully accomplished. (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 31; Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 254)

134 Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 312.

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riographical press had been near neighbor to the ʿAbbāsids at this time, they would have received friendlier treatment from the caliphs; the irridentist ambitions of the caliphal court at this time make this highly unlikely.

Another factor which surely helped persuade the new caliph to foster amicable relations with ʿAmr was the renewed upsurge in heretical activity during this time of disarray and enmity among orthodox, proto-Sunnī forces. In 278/891f. the Qaramatians begin to emerge,[135] and heretical Khārijite activity recommenced on the fringes of Ṣaffārid areas of influence.[136] Marauding bedouin were getting out of control in the Jazīra, to the point where the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the notables of Mosul felt it necessary to unite with Khārijite rebels in order to put down the Banū Shaybān, who were raiding the entire countryside;[137] Rāfiʿ b. al-Layth had already demonstrated his complete disregard for caliphal wishes.[138] The caliph probably understood that he still needed the Ṣaffārids, at least for the time being.

Also, ʿAmr apparently managed, during the periods when he had control of his provinces, to do a good job. We are told by the author Gardīzī, for instance, that ʿAmr, "managed the work of ruling Khurāsān excellently and perfectly, and instituted a manner of rule, such as no one [previously] had [ever before] accomplished."[139] Other sources as well are full of admiration for ʿAmr's abilities as a ruler. Thus we read, for instance, the following:

> When Amr took over he excelled in planning and policy, most exceedingly [*ghāyat al-iḥsān*], until it was said: No one surpassed Amr b. al-Layth in good policy [*ḥusn al-siyāsa*] toward the armies and guidance to the laws of the kingdom [*hidāya ilā qawānīn al-mamlaka*] over a long period of time. And al-Sallāmī mentions in the book *Akhbār Khurāsān* many things about his competence and his ability, and his executing the rules of government, but I must leave [this out] for the sake of brevity. He also described how [ʿAmr] would pay the army every three months, and would preside himself in person over this …[140]

In the same vein, ʿAmr is said, as noted above, to have been "Most excellent of policy, just; and his fortunes became great, yet he obeyed the caliph."[141] Once again, the portrayal in the sources sharply contradicts any theory of the *ʿayyārs* –

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135 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 444-449; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 232-234.

136 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 453, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p 275.

137 E. g. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 453, 464. Masʿūdī, *ibid.* , vol. 5, p. 275, does not mention the *mutaṭawwiʿa* of Mosul, but only the Caliph as having gone to fight the marauders, and Dhahabī (*Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 241) follows this account. The Banū Shaybān continued to disrupt life in the Jazīra well into the 280s/980s (*ibid.* , pp. 495-496) and, indeed, far beyond; see P. Crone and S. Moreh, tr. and ed. , *The Book of Strangers: Medieval Arabic Graffiti on the Theme of Nostalgia*, Princeton, 2000, pp. 67, 118. The author thanks Patricia Crone for her kind gift of a copy of this book.

138 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 457.

139 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 9.

140 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 361

141 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 10, p. 351.

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and the Ṣaffārids – as bandits; bandits are not usually noted for the justness of their rule and their legislative excellence.

With the caliphal mandate in his hand, ʿAmr was now free to return to what we are arguing was the primary purpose of any *ʿayyār*: executing the Islamic imperative to order the world according to God's will, through the complementary duties of *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* (restoring good and just rule within the Dār al-Islām) and *jihād* (fighting the Infidel and heretic, both within and without Islamdom). ʿAmr thus spent the next several years campaigning against the veteran rebel Rāfiʿ. In 279/892f. ʿAmr regained Nīshāpūr and Khurāsān.[142] Rāfiʿ thereupon betook himself to Ṭabaristān, joining forces with the ʿAlid Muḥammad b. Zayd.[143] The climax of the war against Rāfiʿ came in 283/896f, when ʿAmr left Nīshāpūr,[144] and Rāfiʿ seized the opportunity to retake the city. Rāfiʿ then openly assumed the banners of, and allegiance to, the Zaydī Shiʿite leader.[145] ʿAmr quickly returned and besieged the city; Rāfiʿ was again defeated and fled, with ʿAmr, then ʿAmr's men, in pursuit.

Rāfiʿ eventually sought refuge in Khwārazm, where he was killed by the governor's representatives in 283/896.[146] The caliph was so pleased that he had letters announcing Rāfiʿ's killing read from all the pulpits in the Friday mosque services. After Rāfiʿ's head was brought to the caliph by ʿAmr's messenger, al-Muʿtaḍid even had that object displayed on both the eastern and western sides of Baghdad, and bestowed robes of honour upon the messenger who had delivered it.[147] As a reward, the Caliph in 284/897f. sent ʿAmr "robes of honor, the standards of the governorship of Rayy [*wilāyat al-Rayy*], and gifts."[148]

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142 *Idem.* , *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 238.

143 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 457-458. According to Ṭabarī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 34) ʿAmr retook Nīshāpūr in 280/893f. Interestingly, Qazvīnī's *Tārīkh-i guzīda* (p. 372) depicts Rāfiʿ's revolt as though he had allied with the ʿAlids from the beginning; this is probably due to that source's telescoping of events, although the very detailed *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān* depicts Rāfiʿ as having allied himself with Muḥammad b. Zayd immediately pursuant to ʿAmr's reinstatement in caliphal favour (p. 254). This source further claims that both Rāfiʿ and ʿAmr turned to Muḥammad b. Zayd for help, which seems extremely unlikely on ʿAmr's part, particularly given that Rāfiʿ and the Dāʿī were already allied.

144 Possibly to go raiding in the East; see *infra*. This would also be a good reason for Ṭabarī's not mentioning whither he had gone – this information about ʿAmr would have been too positive.

145 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 131-132; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 483; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 44. According to Ibn Isfandiyār, (*Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān* p. 256) Rāfiʿ had already declared ʿAlid allegiance the year before.

146 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 458-459; 483; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 49-50; Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, pp. 372-374; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 364; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 359. Ṭabarī speaks of two different dispatches sent by ʿAmr to the caliph in this year to keep him closely apprised of developments. In the first, ʿAmr informs the caliph of Rāfiʿs defeat and flight, and in the second he recounts how he, ʿAmr, sent men to attack Rāfiʿ in Ṭūs, whence he fled to Khwārazm and was finally killed.

147 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 50. Note that the *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, which as we have seen downplays any good relations between the Ṣaffārids and the ʿAbbāsids, omits all mention of

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As for the Jihad, witness is borne to ʿAmr's *ghāzī* activities in the East in these years by the issuing of coins in Nīshāpūr and Herāt in 282/895f. , and of Andarāba farther east in 283/896f. and 285/898.[149] These Andarāba coins strongly suggest that ʿAmr was campaigning against the infidels in these years, probably in addition to the campaigns supposed by Bosworth to have occurred in the years 278-80/891-893f.[150] There is otherwise no explanation for the sudden, brief revival of these remote mints. This revised timeline is further strengthened by the evidence of Masʿūdī, who describes gifts and idols that ʿAmr sent back to Baghdad in 283/896 and not earlier; in fact, one of the idols was so impressive that it was displayed publicly in Baghdad for several days. Masʿūdī also clearly states that:

> He brought this idol back from the cities which he conquered of the country of India and from its mountains which border upon Bust … which is a frontier district at this time (which is the year 332[/943f.]), from among those which are adjacent to [Bust] of the infidels and the various nations, settled regions and deserts; and among the settled regions are the land of Kābul and the land of Bāmiyān …[151]

Although Masʿūdī is the only written source to state explicitly that ʿAmr was conducting *ghāzī* raids at this time, Ibn al-Athīr's and Ṭabarī's accounts also imply a separate campaign in 285/898, since they too relate that ʿAmr sent major gifts in 286/899 as well.[152] It hardly seems likely that he kept the presents waiting for several years, particularly when the unusual Andarāba coins appear to indicate his presence in the East at precisely those times when fabulous presents and idols began flowing into the Caliphal coffers. Thus it seems that ʿAmr, like Yaʿqūb, made fairly frequent sorties into infidel lands in the East, despite his ongoing troubles with Rāfiʿ.

The war with Rāfiʿ in Khurāsān had fateful consequences in that it embroiled ʿAmr with the Sāmānids of Transoxiana, with whom Rāfiʿ had been allied.[153] Indeed, in 272/885f. the Sāmānid amīr at one point had even sent troops and his – the amīr's – own brother to aid Rāfiʿ, forcing the Ṣaffārid governor to retreat from Khurāsān.[154] Thus, though the Sāmānid-Ṣaffārid tension which culminated in ʿAmr's defeat has traditionally been viewed as a product of ʿAmr's supposed un-

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ʿAmr's sending the head on to the caliph and of the caliph's public rejoicing at the good service ʿAmr had done.

148 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 486; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 63.

149 *Vide* Tor, "A Numismatic History," p. 307.

150 Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 218: "Over the next two years [278-280/891-893f.], the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* records that [ʿAmr] remained in Sīstān, and it must have been within those otherwise unknown years that ʿAmr directed operations in eastern Afghanistan, perhaps through Zābulistān towards Kābul."

151 Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 267.

152 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 493; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 271.

153 al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, p. 114.

154 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 244: "When things were hard for Rāfiʿ he went to Transoxiana and sought the aid of Naṣr b. Aḥmad. Naṣr sent his brother Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad, accompanied by 4,000 cavalrymen, in aid."

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warranted aggression,[155] a close reading of the histories, particularly the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, suggests otherwise. First, there is the obvious fact that Transoxiana was traditionally an administrative dependency of Khurāsān. We know from many sources that this was still true for both the Ṭāhirids and the Sāmānids – that is, both before and after the Ṣaffārids.[156] It would be strangely anomalous were the Ṣaffārids the only ninth-century rulers whose grant over Khurāsān did not include, at least *de jure*, Transoxiana – and, indeed, there are indications in several different sources that there was no such anomalous situation.

We learn from the local history of Bukhārā, for example, that Yaʿqūb's name was read in the *khuṭba* in Bukhārā until the Sāmānids took over there in 262/875f, after Yaʿqūb's break with the Caliph.[157] There is a most interesting admission that the pro-Sāmānid al-Sallāmī makes when he reports that in the year 271/884, when the Caliph deposed ʿAmr and re-appointed Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir over Khurāsān, the latter in turn deputed Rāfiʿ b. Harthama over all his Khurāsāni territories "not including the administrative districts of Transoxiana; al-Muwaffaq bi'llāh established over them Naṣr b. Aḥmad b. Asad al-Sāmānī as deputy to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir."[158] In other words, Yaʿqūb – and ʿAmr after him – were, by any measure, the rightful rulers of Transoxiana until the Caliph broke

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155 Much of this probably had to do with the fact that Ibn al-Athīr's account does not report Rāfiʿ b. Harthama's relations with the Sāmānids. Note the contrast with the Persian anti-Ṣaffārid accounts; the *Tārīkh-i guzīda* actually attributes ʿAmr's entanglement with the Sāmānids not to ʿAmr's aggression or any Rāfiʿ connection, but rather to a supposed caliphal appeal to the Sāmānids to save him from ʿAmr: "ʿAmr's power became great. He became desirous [reading *tamaʿ kard* for *tabaʿ kard*] for Khūzistān and ʿIrāq, and sought the way of strife with the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid. The caliph [therefore] sent Ismāʿīl Samānī to war with [ʿAmr]." (p. 373) No other source states – or even implies – that such was the state of affairs.

156 Al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, p. 178, states of Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad that, when he became governor of Khurāsān after his defeat of ʿAmr, 'there was appointed to him what the Ṭāhirids had had of the provinces appended to Khurāsān [*ma kāna ilā al-Ṭāhiriyya min al-aʿmāl al-muttaṣila bi-Khurāsān*]".

157 Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, p. 108. Another argument in favour of Transoxanian allegiance to Yaʿqūb is the suspiciously emphatic protestation of the Sāmānid source *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, which under its entry for Yaʿqūb (p. 170) claims that "As for Transoxiana, Naṣr b. Aḥmad Asad Sāmānī was governor over her from the beginning [*min al-aṣl*], and this vicegerency was in his hands from before Ṭāhir, and he remained in it for 19 years, until he died in the year 279/892f." If that information were true, it is puzzling why the author should have chosen to include it in a section treating Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth's governorship of Khurāsān.

158 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 364. This statement is confirmed by another source, a late Persian account which does not cite its sources (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, vol. 1, p. 200): "Then the Commander of the Faithful [*sic*] al-Muwaffaq bi'llah deposed ʿAmr from the province of Khurāsān in the beginning of 271/884. And all of the lands and borders of the realms which had been added to him, he gave to Muḥammad Ṭāhir ʿAbdallāh – who was in Baghdad at the caliph's court – and the deputyship and vicegerency in the amirate of Khurāsān he ordered [to be given to] Rāfiʿ Harthama, and Transoxiana he gave to Aḥmad Sāmānī, also in deputyship to Muḥammad Ṭāhir."

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relations in 271/884.[159] It is not surprising, then, that ʿAmr, with caliphal encouragement or at least approval,[160] was anxious to regain that area – which was also a crucial one in *ghāzī* terms, since it was the Islamic *limes* against the infidel Turks. ʿAmr must have viewed the Sāmānids in a similar light to that in which he viewed their erstwhile ally and co-beneficiary from caliphal pique with the Ṣaffārids, Rāfiʿ b. Harthama.

One might posit, of course, that any allegiance Transoxiana had toward Yaʿqūb must have been tenuous. Ṣaffārid claims to Khwārazm, however, were rather more serious; according to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ʿAmr appointed the governors of Khwārazm.[161] This assertion is backed by the fact that when Rāfiʿ fled to Khwārazm, the Khwārazmshāh killed him and sent his head to ʿAmr, as though to an overlord, who in turn sent it on to the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid.[162] Some time after the killing of Rāfiʿ in that province, however, the Sāmānid Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad sent an invading army into Khwārazm, a province that clearly did not belong to the Sāmānids. ʿAmr sent out a counterforce which was defeated, for "Ismāʿīl was a *ghāzī* [*mardī ghāzī būd*], and all of his army, likewise, were such men as day and night said their prayers and read the Qurʾān."[163] In short, Sāmānid behaviour at this time, both in its religiosity and in its disregard for the legalities of possession and rule, seems to repeat the pattern of early Ṣaffārid behaviour – without, however, earning the opprobrium of subsequent historians.

Indeed, the Sāmānids had already been cultivating the same kind of *ghāzī* persona as the Ṣaffārids, although they were not, so far as we know, *ʿayyārs*[164] – though, as we shall see, *ʿayyārs* did serve in their forces. Moreover, the most anti-Ṣaffārid and pro-Sāmānid sources are very careful to stress Sāmānid piety. *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, for instance, when describing Ismāʿīl's war against ʿAmr, inserts a careful description into the midst of this account which seems designed to show both God's favour smiling upon the Sāmānids, as well as Ismāʿīl's appreciation of this favour: "Ismāʿīl offered a prostration of thanks to God, may He be exalted, be-

[159] This may explain why Gardīzī employs the following extremely circumspect but odd phrasing to describe Sāmānid rule in Transoxiana during the Ṣaffārid era: "During the period of ʿAmr b. al-Layth, Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad **held** Transoxiana [*mā warāʾ al-nahr dāsht*]" *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī*, p. 186.

[160] Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, p. 160, while he omits mention of the fact that the Caliph bestowed the province upon ʿAmr, slips when reporting the letter that ʿAmr wrote to Ismāʿīl in light of the latter's stubborn refusal to acknowledge Ṣaffārid overlordship, quoting the letter as stating "Notwithstanding [that] the Commander of the Faithful gave this province [Transoxiana] to us, nevertheless I have made you a partner with myself in rule; you must therefore be a friend to me …" Thus, according to at least one openly pro-Sāmānid source, territorial greed (not to mention blatant disregard for caliphal patents) lay, if anywhere, on the Sāmānid rather than the Ṣaffārid side.

[161] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 132.

[162] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 459; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 364.

[163] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 253-254.

[164] Although Qazvīnī's *Tārikh-i guzīda*, pp. 376-377, does claim that Sāmān, the eponymous founder of the dynasty, was an *ʿayyār*.

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cause his [good] rule and justice, to such a high degree, were in the heart of that army, and [he] hoped for victory."[165]

This is not to suggest that the Sāmānids were insincere in emulating Ṣaffārid *ghāzī* activities. In fact, the proto-Sunni militant spirit was obviously strong in the East at this time, and, as we have seen, won men's loyalties. Thus Naṣr b. Aḥmad, Ismāʿīl's brother, is described as "a professor of religion" (*dayyāna*),[166] and Ismāʿīl himself conducted raids into pagan Turkish areas; in one such adventure, he is even said to have captured the Turkish capital, and taken prisoner the "king" and his wife, along with another ten thousand prisoners, most of whom he killed.[167] Ismāʿīl's commitment was as real as Yaʿqūb's had been; even after he had captured Khurāsān he continued raiding the infidels and acting as the defender of Islam.[168] Thus, perhaps the best analogy to Ṣaffārid-Sāmānid relations at this time would be those between the *ghāzī* beylik of the Ottomans and older, more established beyliks in the early fourteenth century; they were competing with one another for leadership of the same ideological clientele.[169]

The worsening Sāmānid-Ṣaffārid tension came to a head in 285/898 when, according to Ibn al-Athīr, "ʿAmr took over Transoxiana, and Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad was deposed."[170] According to some accounts, ʿAmr had apparently requested the patent to Transoxiana at the time when he sent Rāfiʿ b. Harthama's head on to Baghdad, presumably as a reward for having defeated the rebel[171] – although, as we have already seen and as Bosworth also has pointed out, Transoxania had in any case always been considered subordinate to Khurāsān.[172]

> al-Sallāmī said: When Amr sent the head of Rāfiʿ b. Harthama to al-Muʿtaḍid, he asked to be entrusted with the district of Transoxiana, as had been the custom in the time of ʿAbdallāh b. Ṭāhir,[173] and they promised him this. Then al-Muʿtaḍid sent to him gifts which reached him in Nīshāpūr, but he refused to accept them without the fulfillment of what they had promised him regarding the governorship of the province of Transox-

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165 Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i Guzīda*, p. 373.

166 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 456.

167 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 264-265; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 34; Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 243.

168 In the year 291/904, for example, he sent word to Baghdad about a very large campaign he had successfully undertaken, together with "a great many" of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*, against the Turks, who had been on the march against the Muslims (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 116).

169 For instance, those of Germiyan, Aydın, and Menteşe; *vide* Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 122-138.

170 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 490.

171 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 500-501; Ṭabarī's second version of ʿAmr's appointment, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 76. Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 11: 'When ʿAmr sent the head of Rāfiʿ to Muʿtaḍid in the year [2]84/897 he requested from the Caliph that he send him the patent for Transoxiana, for that had been part of the dominion of Ṭāhir b. ʿAbdallāh."

172 Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 225.

173 Al-Sallāmī is being a bit disingenuous here; as we have seen, Transoxiana had been an appanage of Khurāsān in the time of *both Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr as well*, until the caliph seems to have somewhat arbitrarily decided to end that custom in 271/884.

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> iana, so the messenger wrote to al-Muktafī bi'llāh b. al-Muʿtaḍid, who was in al-Rayy together with a group of his father's closest adherents [*khawāṣṣ*], regarding what Amr had asked of him. So they sent him the patent for it, and the patent was sent together with the gifts which al-Muʿtaḍid had dispatched to him but which he had refrained from accepting, and among them seven suits of robes of honor.[174]

Other versions, however, neither state nor imply that the bestowal of Transoxania upon ʿAmr was at his own instigation.[175] One early source specifically states that this was a subtle caliphal idea, whose purpose was to incite ʿAmr and Ismāʿīl to destroy one another, thereby leaving the field free for the fulfilment of the recidivist ambitions of the weak ʿAbbāsids. Moreover, the fact that this was done after the killing of Rāfiʿ would make it seem like a reward to ʿAmr for his good services:

> Khurāsān was added to [the provinces of] al-Ṣaffār, and when it was in the year 285/898 al-Muʿtaḍid wrote to al-Ṣaffār commanding him that he seek [*yaṭluba*] Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad, and [informing ʿAmr] that [the caliph] had already deputed [ʿAmr] over [Ismāʿīl's] province; and he wrote the like to Ismāʿīl.[176]

ʿAmr accordingly was invested with the province by the caliph and sent an army to fight Ismāʿīl. According to the descriptions of the investiture ceremony performed by the Caliph's envoy,[177] the latter – after showering ʿAmr with numerous and magnificent gifts – placed a number of robes of honour one by one upon the Ṣaffārid ruler: "And each time that he dressed [one upon him] he [sc. ʿAmr] prayed two *rakʿas* and thanked God for it." Supposedly, ʿAmr then prophetically stated that it would be impossible to wrest Transoxiana from the hands of Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad except by "100,000 drawn swords."[178]

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174 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 365. Cf. Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, p. 200: "Amr-i Layth sent the head of Rāfiʿ to the presence of the Caliph, and at this time the throne of the caliphate came to the Commander of the Faithful al-Muʿtaḍid bi'llāh, and Amr-i Layth [asked] from the caliph the governorship of Transoxiana, Khurāsān, Nīmrūz, Fārs, Kirmān and al-Ahwāz; the *niqābat* of the caliphal palace; and the *shurṭa* of Baghdad; and that they write the name of Amr upon the shields which the *sarhangān* in the caliphal palace held, and mention his name in the *khuṭba* and [on] the coinage of Madīna and the Ḥijāz – all [this] he asked from the caliph and was promised, with many robes of honour and innumerable favours."

175 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 67: "On the seventh day remaining of Muḥarram of [the year 285/898], there was read aloud to a group of the Khurāsānī pilgrims in the court of al-Muʿtaḍid [a statement] regarding the investiture of ʿAmr b. al-Layth with the governorship of Transoxiana, and the deposition of Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad from it."

176 Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 312.

177 Both of these descriptions probably derive from the same source, al-Sallāmī. While Ibn Khallikān quotes him by name, Gardīzī never makes clear what his sources are.

178 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 11. Needless to say, it is unclear how much – if any – of this tradition is historically accurate. However, it is significant that Gardīzī, the Sāmānid partisan, portrays ʿAmr as engaging in such religious devotions, even in the midst of court ceremonial. The subsequent prophetic statement does seem a bit contrived; why would ʿAmr attempt something he knew to be impossible, given the fact that he did not have 100,000 men?

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The other version we have of these events is even more detailed and also more obviously pro-Sāmānid (note how ʿAmr appears to be daunted by the task of wresting Transoxiana from the Sāmānids):

> Then [the caliphal envoy] placed the patent of investiture before [ʿAmr], who said "What is this?" He replied: "That which you requested." Amr said: "What shall I do with it? For Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad will not submit to this but with 100,000 swords [compelling him to do so]." He said: "You asked for it, so now prepare to take possession of the governorship in its areas [i. e. those covered by the patent]." So he took the diploma and kissed it and placed it before him, then Amr conveyed to the messenger and those who were with him 700,000 dirhams and dismissed them.[179]

According to one scenario, ʿAmr then sent three generals – Muḥammad b. Bishr, ʿAlī b. Sharvīn, and Aḥmad Darāz – out with an advance guard.[180] Ismāʿīl crossed the Oxus, went around by a circuitous route, and attacked ʿAmr's army. At this critical juncture, one of ʿAmr's three commanders, Aḥmad Darāz, defected to the Sāmānid side. One of the remaining two generals was killed and the third was taken prisoner in the ensuing total rout of ʿAmr's army; Ismāʿīl then returned to Bukhārā.

According to this same report, ʿAmr – unlike his feasting companions – became very grave and sorrowful when hearing of this bloody debacle. Although his companions supposedly urged him to rejoin the revelry in which he had been engaged, ʿAmr did not reprove them (he also did not rejoin them), but merely remained silent.[181] If this story is true it highlights another strong contrast with Yaʿqūb's day – not only is Yaʿqūb never reported as feasting, he is specifically stated to have engaged in the most abstemious practices in food, dress, and lodging.[182]

Another, earlier report, however, claims that ʿAmr's and Ismāʿīl's respective armies met and clashed near Nasā and Abīward, that there was great killing on both sides, and that the outcome was inconclusive.[183] This report has a greater ring of authenticity to it, for several reasons: it is earlier; it is less embroidered and less obviously favourable to the Sāmānids and disparaging of ʿAmr; and it comes from a source that is not discernably biased in favor of one dynasty or the other.

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179 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 365. This anecdote seems designed solely to glorify the Sāmānids by having ʿAmr describe their formidable strength. If, however, the anecdote is historical, it would serve to confirm that the conquest of Transoxiana originated with the Caliph; although it is practically beyond belief that a medieval ruler would voice doubts or misgivings about his own projects and abilities in such a fashion during an official court ceremony.

180 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 12.

181 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akhbār*, p. 12.

182 See *supra*, Chapter 5.

183 Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 312.

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In any case, ʿAmr, seemingly determined to (re-)take Transoxiana, promptly began preparing a large expedition, which his own generals supposedly advised him not to lead in person, from concern for the danger to which he would be exposed (we see here once again ʿAmr's military inferiority to Yaʿqūb).[184] Ismāʿīl, obviously catching wind of ʿAmr's plans, sent the latter a most intriguing missive attempting to dissuade him from attacking:

> You already rule over a wide world [*dunyā ʿarīḍa*]; but in my hands is [only] Transoxiana, and I am in a marcher land [*wa-anā fī thaghr*]; therefore be content with what is in your hands, and leave me established in this marcher land [*hādhā al-thaghr*].[185]

This word, *thaghr*, is a very loaded one, particularly in the tradition of *taṭawwuʿ* that we have been tracing throughout this work. The term, by our period, implied "sacred territory,"[186] particularly for border warriors, on the frontier of Islam's struggle against the *Dār al-ḥarb*.

A variant on this tradition states that Ismāʿīl wrote the following to ʿAmr: "God is between you and me. I am a border man [*rajul thaghrī*] drawn up in battle array against the Turk; my clothing is coarse [*kurduwāʾī*], my men are rabble without pay, and you have already treated me wrongly."[187] Ismāʿīl, in other words, was appealing to ʿAmr on *ghāzī* grounds to leave him in peace. This kind of appeal, we shall soon see, while unsuccessful with ʿAmr, carried great resonance with the Ṣaffārid army. The language and frame of reference of these appeals, whether historically accurate or not, demonstrate yet again that both of these men, at least officially, were imbued with the language and purpose of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*.

The sources tell us something more, though, and in this lies the key both to Yaʿqūb's earlier success and to ʿAmr's failure: ʿAmr seems to have turned away from these original Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār/mutaṭawwiʿi* ideals to a certain extent (or, at least, he is depicted in some of the sources as having done so); there is a statement attributed to him which, if true, would suggest that pride and power had become more important to him than *taṭawwuʿ ad majorem Dei gloriam*:

> When ʿAmr and his companions were reminded of the difficulty of crossing the Oxus at Balkh, he said, "If I wanted to block [the Oxus] with the scattering of money in order to cross it, I could do so."[188]

Even if this statement is apocryphal, it may nevertheless reveals how ʿAmr was perceived by the rank and file when he undertook this anti-Sāmānid campaign: as proud, boastful, and concerned with his own glory rather than with the resto-

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184 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501.

185 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 76; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 516. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 365.

186 The term is Bonner's (*Aristocratic Violence*, p. 96. See his chapters three and four, *passim*).

187 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 12, p. 517.

188 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 76; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501.

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ration of proper order in the world. In fact, when ʿAmr's and Ismāʿīl's forces met near Balkh in the year 287/900, Ismāʿīl persuaded most of ʿAmr's generals to defect by appealing to them on the very grounds which had attracted them to the Ṣaffārids in the first place:

> Ismāʿīl converted [to his cause] the heads of the troops, from among ʿAmr's commanders, and made them afraid of God, saying: "We are *ghāzīs* and do not possess wealth; while this man [ʿAmr] continually seeks this world, we [seek] the Next. What does he want from us?"[189]

Pursuant to this appeal, ʿAmr's commanders abandoned him,[190] his army collapsed,[191] and ʿAmr himself was captured; worse, his unworthy heirs in Sīstān refused to ransom or rescue him.[192] According to one description of this mass desertion:

> The battle occurred before the gates of Balkh … in the year 287/900, and before this Ibn Abī Rabīʿa, Amr b. al-Layth's secretary, fled to Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad, and with him one of the commanders, with a great body of people … Then the flight of his companions to Ismāʿīl grew, so that ʿAmr's heart grew faint and he fled; Ismāʿīl took over the army, and sent an army in search of Amr, and they found him …[193]

What these sources are essentially telling us is that the great loyalty of the *ʿayyārs* and other volunteer warriors toward the Ṣaffārids was predicated upon a shared ideology and sense of holy mission. According to all these sources, ʿAmr lost the allegiance of his fighting men, and this was due largely to the perceived contrast between Ismāʿīl's obvious piety and ʿAmr's growing worldliness.

Several sources give a very positive view of ʿAmr's and Ismāʿīl's relations. In these sources, all blame for ʿAmr's eventual fate is placed upon the caliph,[194] and Ismāʿīl and ʿAmr are shown as having had the closest and kindest relations with each other. The pro-Sāmānid *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* relates the following story:

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189 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 256.

190 Although according to several later account it was not ʿAmr's army but rather the people of Balkh who turned against him: "Nifṭawayh said: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad told us that the reason for ʿAmr's rout from Balkh was its people were weary from his army and their injustice …" al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 516. This version, of course, does not explain the collapse of ʿAmr's army. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, pp. 401-402: "Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad crossed the river of Balkh, seeking ʿAmr b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, and was victorious over him; this was due to the people of Balkh's aiding him, for they were sick of the quartering of [ʿAmr's] companions in their houses …"

191 See e. g. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 313: "Ismāʿīl went towards al-Ṣaffār, [who] was with 100,000 [soldiers] in the city of Balkh, and he besieged him. al-Ṣaffār went out to him and when the two met ʿAmr's cavalry scattered [*tafarraqat khayl al-Ṣaffār*] and he was taken prisoner …"

192 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 258.

193 Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 267.

194 This version is perhaps given added confirmation by the claim of some sources that the caliph praised Ismāʿīl and criticized ʿAmr when he heard the news; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 76-77; quoted by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 366.

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> Ismāʿīl Sāmānī sent a *ḥājib* before ʿAmr-i Layth and consoled him, saying: "God willing, I shall rescue you from the Caliph's wrath." ʿAmr praised Ismāʿīl and said : "I know that there is no hope of rescue from the caliph for me; nevertheless, Amīr Ismāʿīl was that which is the embodiment of gentlemanliness [lit. , "the way of gentlemanliness" – *ṭarīq-i mardī*]." He said [this], gave a bracelet to that *ḥājib*, then said: "Convey my service to Amīr Ismāʿīl, and say to him … 'Send me to the Caliph's presence!'"[195]

The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* portrays Ismāʿīl as having been very regretful upon receiving the caliph's request that Ismāʿīl send ʿAmr to Baghdad; Ismāʿīl purportedly tells ʿAmr "I ought not to have taken you prisoner, but seeing that you have been taken prisoner, I should not send you there." He then informs ʿAmr that he, Ismāʿīl, will send ʿAmr with only a very small escort, so that ʿAmr can tell his friends to come stage a rescue operation while he is in transit.[196]

The third account in this vein, a late Ḥanbalite one, has Ismāʿīl say to ʿAmr "It is difficult for me, O my brother, what has overtaken you," wash ʿAmr's face, bestow robes of honour upon him, and swear that he will neither harm him nor betray him; "but then the letter of al-Muʿtaḍid came, asking that he send ʿAmr b. al-Layth, so he sent him."[197]

These reports are fascinating, for several reasons. First, because although they are very disparate in tone and outlook – the *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* is a very pro-Sāmānid work belonging to the Persian courtly milieu, whereas Ibn al-Jawzī was a Ḥanbalite *ʿālim* writing in Baghdad whose account is fairly Ṣaffārid-neutral; while the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* is a provincial, highly pro-Ṣaffārid work – the underlying message of all three accounts is identical. Both have preserved – or fabricated – a tradition that would seem to imply some kind of perceived *ghāzī* brotherly feelings between the Sāmānid and the Ṣaffārid ruler.

If true, the tales shed some light on how the Sāmānid either felt he had to act towards ʿAmr (due to his own moral compunctions or to popular sentiment regarding ʿAmr); if fabricated, the stories were obviously designed for one of two reasons: either to bolster Ismāʿīl's reputation or to bolster ʿAmr's. If these stories were propaganda for Ismāʿīl, they again imply that it was politically necessary for the Sāmānids to show their sympathy with and feelings of kinship toward the Ṣaffārids. Furthermore, these versions put all the blame for ʿAmr's eventual fate on the Caliph – Ismāʿīl wanted to protect ʿAmr; he simply owed a higher obedience to the Caliph.

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[195] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, p. 374. Ibn Khallikān (quoting from Salamī), *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 367) shares this version, according to which ʿAmr was sent to Baghdad by caliphal request. According to Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 502), however, Ismāʿīl let ʿAmr himself choose by whom he would rather be held, Ismāʿīl or the caliph, and ʿAmr then rather incredibly chose al-Muʿtaḍid: "Then Ismāʿīl gave ʿAmr the choice between remaining with him, or his being sent to al-Muʿtaḍid; and he chose to be with al-Muʿtaḍid."

[196] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 260-261.

[197] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 12, p. 402.

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If, on the other hand, the stories were put out as pro-Ṣaffārid propaganda, then they show something equally interesting. *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* obviously included this information simply because it shows Ismāʿīl the Sāmānid in a merciful, ruthful light. Its appearance in Ibn al-Jawzī's work, however, probably indicates the survival of a pro-Ṣaffārid strain in certain Ḥanbalite sources or circles, as one would expect given what we have seen of the Khurāsānī *ahl al-ḥadīth*'s strong and consistent support for the Ṣaffārids.

However willing or reluctant the Sāmānid role may have been, in the end ʿAmr was sent to the caliph. Al-Muʿtaḍid then supposedly

> brought ʿAmr before himself, aroused in him good hopes, and treated him kindly [or: praised him]. He intended to set ʿAmr free, saying: "This is a great man in Islam [or: this man is great in Islam]; no one has made such conquests in the Abode of Infidelity as he. Sīstān and Khurāsān are both border areas, and are guarded by that [i. e. ʿAmr's *ghāzī* zeal].[198]

But the caliph vacillated before liberating him and then became terminally ill. In this weakened state, the caliph's *mawlā* Badr prevailed upon al-Muʿtaḍid to have ʿAmr killed; "When ʿAmr had been killed, [Muʿtaḍid] was sorry [for ʿAmr's death] and ordered that they kill Badr."[199]

An alternative version in Ṭabarī claims that the caliph actually had nothing at all to do with ʿAmr's killing; rather, one of the ambitious court functionaries wanted to get him out of the way because he was afraid ʿAmr would be freed and would then rise to become the most powerful man at court.[200] There is yet another version, which seems to combine the idea that there was some kind of caliphal order with the themes of general reluctance to have ʿAmr's death brought about, and of the execution having actually been against caliphal will and better judgment:

> Al-Muʿtaḍid, after he had ceased speaking [in his final illness], commanded Ṣāfī al-Khurramī, by signs of his head and hands, to kill ʿAmr b. al-Layth; he placed his hand on his neck and on his eye to signify that the one-eyed one should be killed – ʿAmr was one-eyed. But Ṣāfī did not carry this out, due to his knowledge that the death of al-Muʿtaḍid was near, and his repugnance for the killing of ʿAmr. When al-Muktafī reached Baghdad he asked the wazīr about [ʿAmr]. He replied: He lives; and [al-Muktafī] was glad about that, and he wished to be good towards him because [ʿAmr] used to give many presents to him when [the former] was in Rayy. But the wazīr hated this, so he sent to [ʿAmr] someone who killed him.[201]

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198 *Taʾrikh-i Sīstān*, p. 262. Masʿūdī merely notes briefly: "al-Muʿtaḍid saw him." (*Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 302)

199 *Taʾrikh-i Sīstān*, p. 262.

200 Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 88. Ibn al-Athīr in his first exposition of ʿAmr's death skirts the issue entirely by stating merely that ʿAmr was killed (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 502).

201 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 516, quoting almost exactly from Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 86; also Ibn Khallikān, acknowledging Ṭabarī, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, pp. 368-369.

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Note that al-Muʿtaḍid is here literally on his death bed and no longer possesses the faculty of speech; it is not even clear that he really meant for ʿAmr to be killed, let alone that he was capable of making rational decisions at this point; and the incoming Caliph actually wishes to honor ʿAmr, not to slay him. We are not told why Ṣāfī was so averse to killing ʿAmr, but we are told that this aversion was wholly apart from the practical consideration which is listed; his very reluctance suggests that ʿAmr still possessed some kind of reputation or glamour.

Gardīzī's version of these events – which, one should always recall, was composed at the Sāmānid court – claims on the other hand that the Caliph was so happy at ʿAmr's defeat that he sent a crown [*tāj*] to Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad in the year following ʿAmr's defeat,[202] and that he entertained no such kind feelings as we have seen in our other sources:

> When they brought ʿAmr to Baghdad and he came before al-Muʿtaḍid, al-Muʿtaḍid said: "Praise be to God, for your wickedness was sufficient, and [our] hearts are now free of preoccupation with you." Then he commanded that they keep [ʿAmr] in jail, until he died in jail.[203]

Gardīzī thus omits the salient fact that ʿAmr's death was helped along and that it did not arise from natural causes – although, interestingly, the account of Ibn al-Jawzī implies the same.[204] One notable fact which has never been remarked previously is that there are several statements that the Caliph waited until 290/903 before actually granting ʿAmr's former dominions to the Sāmānids; one doubts therefore that he was as enthusiastic about that dynasty as certain sources would have us believe.[205]

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[202] Also al-Sallāmī as transmitted through Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 367). Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 84, also reports the caliph as having sent a crown, among many other costly gifts, this year. Of course, this may reflect the caliph's eagerness to buy Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad's good will rather than any glee at ʿAmr's defeat – in fact, one could even argue that this anxiety to win over Ismāʿīl would only be more pronounced if it were known that the caliph harboured sympathy toward ʿAmr.

[203] Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, pp. 12-13; also Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i Guzīda*, p. 375 – which latter source, however, has ʿAmr duly executed on caliphal command.

[204] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 13, p. 13: "ʿAmr b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār: of the greatest of amīrs, died in this year, and was buried close to al-Qaṣr al-Ḥasanī …" Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, p. 200, also seems to imply a natural death – as natural as any death in a dungeon can be – in his very sparing account: "The Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid commanded that ʿAmr be put in jail, and also in this place he died in the year [2]89/902, and the rule of the Ṣaffārids came to an end; Allah rightly knows best." Cf. al-Nasafī, *al-Qand fī dhikr-i ʿulamāʾ-i Samarqand*, p. 619: "[ʿAmr] was imprisoned in [Baghdad] until he died there in the year 287/900)." Al-Qaṣr al-Ḥasanī was the palace which had belonged to al-Ḥasan b. Sahl, one of the two power-brokers of the early part of al-Maʾmūn's reign (*vide* D. G. Tor, "An Historiographical Re-examination"), and had been summarily appropriated from al-Ḥasan's daughter by al-Muʿtaḍid (Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 85).

[205] See e. g. al-Muqaddasī, p. 462. The version related in Ibn Khallikān, which he attributes to Ṭabarī, is very careful to have the caliph immediately praise Ismāʿīl and condemn Amr upon receiving the news, then immediately declare: "Everything that was [previously] in the hands of ʿAmr will be entrusted to Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl." This tradition seems de-

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An Evaluation of ʿAmr's Rule

ʿAmr, the second-best documented *ʿayyār* in history, comes across as a much weaker and less talented man than was his brother, whose shoes he was simply incapable of filling; one should keep in mind, however, that he appears downright weak only in contrast to his truly extraordinary sibling.[206] He was still, apparently, a formidable defender of orthodoxy, as can be seen in one of the immediate consequences of his imprisonment – namely, that Muḥammad b. Zayd set out forthwith to invade Khurāsān as soon as he heard the news of ʿAmr's removal from the Khurāsānī scene. The causal relationship is explicitly stated: Muḥammad b. Zayd set out with a large army for Khurāsān when the news reached him of Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad's holding ʿAmr b. al-Layth in captivity; "for he did not believe that Ismāʿīl would succeed in expanding his rule to ʿAmr's territories."[207] (This was, in fact, a correct appraisal, despite the failure of Muḥammad's attempt; parts of ʿAmr's former dominion, such as Sīstān and Fārs, were not assimilated to Ismāʿīl's dominions in any real way.)

While the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* has much to say about Yaʿqūb's personal qualities (his faith in God, his asceticism, and so forth), ʿAmr's eulogy is only two paragraphs long (and one of those paragraphs is exceedingly brief). The language, too, is very suggestive; it states that

> When [Yaʿqūb] died ʿAmr made an effort in order for the most part [*bīshtarī*] to observe his [brother's] custom and behaviour; he built 1000 ribāṭs, and 500 Friday mosques and minarets, apart from bridges and desert signposts. He was able to do many good things, and he had the intention to do more, which he never attained.[208]

ʿAmr, according to this estimation, intended to do great things but never quite managed to accomplish his goals. Moreover, in contrast to Yaʿqūb, who is described as genuinely pious, fervent, and ascetic, a chaste man engaged in constant supererogatory prayer, ʿAmr merely "made an effort" to follow his brother. The most the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* can say about his character is that he possessed the greatest magnanimity and would never harm the weak.[209]

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signed to set at rest any doubts the reader may have entertained that the caliph was delighted by ʿAmr's defeat and eagerly anxious to award all of the areas that had been under ʿAmr's sway to Ismāʿīl as soon as possible.

206 Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i Guzīda*, p. 372, for instance, lauds ʿAmr in the following words: "His rule reached the highest summit; he became ruler over Khurāsān, ʿIrāq [referring either to his responsibilities over the *shurṭa* in Baghdad or, most likely, to his ruling Khūzistān – *ʿIrāq-i ʿajam*], Fārs, Kirmān, Sīstān, Qūhistān, Māzandarān and Ghazna."

207 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 81; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 504; in brief, Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 313.

208 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 268.

209 *Ibid*. The brevity of this eulogy, and the lack of any fulsome praise, gives more weight by contrast to all the encomia this same source bestows upon Yaʿqūb.

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Ibn al-Athīr recites several equivocal anecdotes, which are designed to shed light on ʿAmr's character, but are fairly difficult to interpret. For instance, we are told that ʿAmr became angry with a certain official in Fārs named Abū Ḥusayn and ordered the latter to sell all his possessions and send the proceeds in to the treasury. The cause of ʿAmr's anger is never stated – was it justified? Unjustified? Was the accused man mulcting the peasants and feathering his own nest, or cheating the central coffers? There is no way to know. ʿAmr's official sent to deal with the man is reported to have tortured Abū Ḥusayn and to have released him on the understanding that he would bring in the money within three days or be killed. Abū Ḥusayn, unable to obtain the requisite sum, returned to the official empty-handed. News of the whole drama reached ʿAmr, who is said to have remarked "By God, I don't know which of the two to wonder over more, Abū Saʿīd [the tormenting official], for what he did for the sake of one hundred thousand dirhams, or Abū Ḥusayn, how he returned knowing that he would be killed!" ʿAmr thereupon forgave Abū Ḥusayn and ordered his restoration.[210]

This story is very ambiguous. First, it is most likely topological – the names are simply generic, without any real personal detail supplied. Second, the whole moral of the story is unclear – is ʿAmr furious at Abū Saʿīd for employing such harsh measures against a petty pilferer, or is he merely amused? The moral of the anecdote hinges upon the answer to this question. Of course, this could simply be of a piece with the reports found in anti-Ṣaffārid sources. There, the only accusation our authors seem able to level against the Ṣaffārids is that of cupidity:[211] "By the force of injustice and oppression you acquired people's property."[212]

Like Yaʿqūb, ʿAmr is said to have shunned self-aggrandizement and emphasized his fundamental equality with his men. There is an unusual description of how ʿAmr would preside over the paydays of his troops:

> The custom of ʿAmr was such that when the beginning of the year came around, he commanded that his two drums – one they called "Mubārak" and the other "Maymūn" – both be beaten, so that all of his retinue [*ḥasham*] would receive the news that it was payday. Then Sahl b. Ḥamdān the *ʿāriḍ*[213] would sit and pour out before himself a purse

[210] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 503.

[211] Given the amount of campaigning the Ṣaffārids engaged in, this may very well have been true to some extent. Maḥmūd of Ghazna, another inveterate *ghāzī*, is said to have ruined Khurāsān by the heavy taxation he imposed in order to finance his expeditions (see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, p. 46).

[212] Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i Guzīda*, p. 374.

[213] On the responsibilities and duties of the *ʿāriḍ* see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 122-124; Bosworth's succinct summation of the importance of this position is as follows (p. 122): "The amy's mustering, internal organisarion, commissariat and pay-arrangements were directed from the *Dīwān-i ʿArḍ*, and the office of *ʿĀriḍ* was accounted second only to that of the Vizier." Elsewhere Bosworth writes that "The *Dīwān* [*al-jaysh*] was presided over by the *ʿĀrīḍ al-Caish*, who was concerned with the recruitment of soldiers, their recording in the registers … their state of equipment and military preparedness and the disbursement of

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> of dirhams, and the servant of the *ʿāriḍ* would exhibit a ledger, and the first name that appeared was ʿAmr b. al-Layth. Then ʿAmr would come forth from among [the others], and the *ʿāriḍ* would look at him, and [verify that] his appearance, horse, and weapons were faultless, and he would inspect well all of his tools and would praise and approve. Then he would weigh three thousand dirhams, put them in a purse, and give them to ʿAmr. ʿAmr would take it and put it into his boot, and would say: "Praise be to God who, may He be exalted, holds me worthy of obedience to the Commander of the Faithful and causes me to become worthy of his favours."[214]

ʿAmr resembled Yaʿqūb in other important ways as well – particularly in his possession of that quintessential *ʿayyār* quality: cunning or intelligence [*bushyārī*]; "ʿAmr was cunning, ingenious, and of a luminous mind."[215] In another place in the same work he is called "cunning in the extreme." One of the most positive evaluations of ʿAmr is to be found in Masʿūdī, who ranks ʿAmr together with Yaʿqūb in most areas, including that of cunning: "Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār, and ʿAmr b. al-Layth his brother, had marvelous behaviour and policies, and artifices and ruses in war …"[216]

Another anecdote of Ibn al-Athīr's relates how ʿAmr carried off a Yaʿqūb-like stratagem in order to defeat his enemies by foresightedly toting around sacks in his supply train at all times. When the crucial moment comes, ʿAmr therefore has spare sacks waiting to be filled with dirt and rocks so that he and his troops will be able to cross a canyon and put down a rebellion. This anecdote sounds somewhat more plausible than the first: it is morally neutral; it has no suspiciously incomplete and generic names; and the historical context (rebellions) is one we know to be authentic to the period (as opposed to the timeless quality of the first anecdote). Moreover, this *ʿayyār*-ish quality of overcoming one's enemies by clever ruses is one we know ʿAmr to have practiced together with Yaʿqūb in previous campaigns.

A final anecdote is even more curious. According to this story, ʿAmr upbraided his top official, Muḥammad b. Bishr, "who used to take his place in most of his most important affairs," for "his crimes." These crimes must have been peculative, because Muḥammad reports that he has made only 50,000 dirhams, which he is willing to return to the treasury. ʿAmr orders him to do so,

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their pay." Bosworth, "Military Organisation under the Būyids of Persia and Iraq," *Oriens* 18-19 (1965-1966), p. 162.

214 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, pp. 10-11; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 516; with less detail, in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, pp. 361-362. Ibn Khallikān's account, however, elaborates further upon ʿAmr's punctiliousness with his troops, and in particular his demand that everyone's equipment be in perfect shape, on pain of the offender's having his pay docked, although he notes that the anecdote he relates in this connection appears to be a topos, pointing out that a virtually identical story is related of the Persian ruler Chosroes Anūshirvān as well.

215 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 11. This is, of course, a classic quality of *ʿayyārs*, for instance in *Samak-i ʿayyār*, *passim*.

216 Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 5, p. 233.

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and then forgives him. To the modern mind, ʿAmr's actions appear on the face of it to be a laudable concern with accountability and honest administration. Ibn al-Athīr, however, concludes his character-sketch of ʿAmr with the indignant statement that "this was not the worst of his deeds, and his wickedness regarding the money of one who spent his life in his [sc. ʿAmr's] service."[217] Either Ibn al-Athīr's norms are different from the modern reader's, and he felt it to be among the prerogatives of long-standing high officials to feather their own nests, or else he is telling us point-blank that ʿAmr was unscrupulously greedy. It is impossible, however, to deduce from the story itself which is the correct interpretation.

A variant of this anecdote appears in Gardīzī as well:

> They say one day Muḥammad b. Bishr came before ʿAmr; in the treasury of gifts[218] no money remained, the appointed time for gifts to his retainers was drawing near – and ʿAmr always needed money. So ʿAmr turned toward Muḥammad b. Bishr and reproved him, saying: "You know what you have done. In my place you have done such and such things," and he spoke of each thing; Muḥammad knew what ʿAmr's aim was, so he said: "May God strengthen the Amīr! All the possessions that I have, whether of ears of grain and salves, and whether of gold and silver – more than 50,000 dirhams – all of this property of mine take without cause and spare me from this chiding and threatening." ʿAmr said: "I never saw a man more cunning [*hushyār*] than this." He said to Muḥammad: "Go. Resign this property to the treasury and upon you there is no crime." So Muḥammad b. Bishr consigned that property to the treasury …[219]

Although Gardīzī's story is more fully fleshed out, here, too, the interpretation of the anecdote depends upon whether or not ʿAmr was telling the truth when he confronted Muḥammad b. Bishr. If he was not, then he is merely another avaricious, grasping, and unjust ruler. If ʿAmr was telling the truth, however, then he is an easy-going and indulgent master who overlooks the embezzlement of his officials whenever and for as long as he possibly can. The latter possibility is rendered more plausible by the fact that the very same source informs us that ʿAmr was extremely generous to his entourage and army; "every three months he commanded that a gift be given to them." We are also told that when he took money from his officials, he did so quickly, "and apologized that he was taking money from a man."[220]

Another glimpse of ʿAmr's pious holy warrior reputation can be gleaned from a source which is very critical of ʿAmr. In the midst of an otherwise hostile account we suddenly encounter a tradition incompatible with the author's general

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217 Ibn al-Athīr, *loc. cit.*

218 Gardīzī (*Zayn al-Akhbār*, p 10) informs us that ʿAmr kept three separate treasuries, which stemmed from different sources and served different purposes.

219 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 10.

220 Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, p. 11. Such forbearance would also be in keeping with the definitions of *futuwwa* which we have just seen to have been prevalent among ʿAmr's Nīshāpūrī supporters.

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stance – in this case, a prophetic dream informing us that all ended well with ʿAmr due to his *ghāzī* efforts:

> al-Qushayrī related that ʿAmr b. al-Layth appeared in a dream, and it was said: "What did God do with you?" He answered: "One day I looked down from a mountain upon my army, and their numerousness astounded me; and I desired to be in the presence of the Prophet of God, so I helped and assisted him; so God thanked me, and forgave me."[221]

This, once again, appears to be a reference to ʿAmr's under-appreciated *ghāzī* campaigns, and his utilization of his armies in the service of Islam.

Finally, we have seen that although ʿAmr, like his more dominant brother, started out as an *ʿayyār-mutaṭawwiʿ*, he was eventually abandoned by his supporters because he was perceived as having strayed from those original *ʿayyār* ideals of *ghazw* and ascetic zeal in favour of the kind of "state-building" – mostly just plain building, in fact[222] – and consolidation of power which, ironically, modern scholars view with such great approbation. This disenchantment among Ṣaffārid supporters with their ruler's perceived turning away from their own fundamental ideals did not augur well for the reign of one who had never been an *ʿayyār-mutaṭawwiʿ* at all – ʿAmr's grandson Ṭāhir.

Although Ṭāhir was never, according to any of the sources, an *ʿayyār*, and therefore in himself cannot help us illuminate the term, the process by and reasons for which he lost the support of Yaʿqūb's and ʿAmr's core constituency do indeed help us understand, by contrast, the values and practices of the former rulers, who were of course *ʿayyārs*.

Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad b. ʿAmr b. al-Layth and the Collapse of the ʿAyyār *State*

The fall of the Ṣaffārids – that is, of the first line of them – was as meteoric as their rise. After the capture of ʿAmr in A. D. 900 the Ṣaffārid empire disintegrated rapidly under the misrule of the degenerate Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad.[223] This man, unlike his grandfather and great-uncle, was never an *ʿayyār*. From the his-

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221 Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 517.

222 For ʿAmr's building activities see e. g. al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 241; whereas in Zarang Yaʿqūb built only a minaret and a fortress (al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p. 305), ʿAmr built a fortress, a treasury, and a market, not to mention a governor's palace [*dār al-imāra*] in Nīshāpūr (Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 254). ʿAmr did, however, also build a border fortress [*ribāṭ*] on the frontier between Sīstān and al-Rukhkhaj, an activity more in line with what one would expect of a *mutaṭawwiʿ ʿayyār* (Iṣṭakhrī, *ibid.* p. 252), and a minbar in Nīshāpūr (al-Muqaddasī, *ibid.* p. 316).

223 Ṭāhir actually started out from a fairly strong position – his commanders had no difficulty in ejecting the Caliph's representatives from Fārs the year after ʿAmr was captured (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 83).

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torical records, it seems incontrovertible that he took far more interest in wine and debauchery than in *ghāzī – ʿayyār* campaigns, or any other religious matter.

Real power was held by ambitious generals and functionaries such as Yaʿqūb's former slave Subkarī or Sebük-eri. We are told in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* that "Subkarī had gained mastery over Ṭāhir and the army;" and that "Ṭāhir appointed his brother Yaʿqūb as his viceroy in Sīstān, while he himself, day and night, was occupied with pleasures and diversions. Subkarī seized rule, and all loosing and tying [i. e. the *bannum*] came into his hands."[224] Subkarī promptly set about assassinating all honest and competent rivals.

In brief, Ṭāhir was a self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking playboy, who dissipated his grandfather's patrimony in record time; we are told that he promptly

> gave himself over to diversions and hunting, and all matters rested upon Subkarī … [Ṭāhir] gave no one an audience, and night and day he would give himself up to drink and diversion. He would not give an audience to dignitaries or army commanders; [rather,] he would befriend mules and pigeons. Every day, he would gather them and watch them."[225]

One of the few remaining loyal and competent men in the state, Ṭāhir's cousin Bilāl, came out in revolt against Subkarī, but Ṭāhir evidently did not want help; he ordered Bilāl to return to Sīstān, but had him seized, jailed and then killed in Iṣṭakhr.[226]

During this period of directionless rule, factional disorder is said to have broken out among the people of Sīstān. Interestingly, it seems that two different reasons are given for this tumult in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (our only source for this development): first we are told that it occurred because Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad favoured, like his grandfather and great-uncle, the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, while Ṭāhir's brother, Yaʿqūb b. Muḥammad, favoured the *aṣḥāb al-raʾy*. The source then offers an entirely different explanation alongside this one: namely, that the factionalism went all the way back to the Arab divisions between Tamīm and Bakr.[227]

Most scholars have tried to reconcile the two different statements of the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* by combining them: there was Arab factionalism, which somehow flared up again when ʿAmr's two grandsons espoused different religious positions.[228] In light of the religious connections we have traced above between the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyārs* on the one hand and the proto-Ḥanbalite *ʿulamāʾ* on the other, however, the first explanation is both the most likely one and the most informative one. It is more likely than the Arab factionalism explanation because it

224 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 257-258.
225 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 275; very similar wording can be found in Qazvīnī, *Tārikh-i Guzīda*, p. 375.
226 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 275
227 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 276.
228 E. g. Bosworth, *The Saffarids*, p. 253.

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seems highly implausible that Arab factionalism could have remained simmering for decades on end, without ever erupting into any violent manifestation, yet still have retained its lethal power – and there are no indications in the sources that there was any other such eruption of Arab factionalism since the end of Umayyad times. Also, the religious direction of the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* state seems to have been thoroughly lost by this point (as was perhaps inevitable, given that ʿAmr's grandchildren had never been *ʿayyārs* and had never fought – for the faith or anything else – when they came to power); thus, the hitherto firm of ascendancy of *ahl al-ḥadīth* in Sīstān was, for the first time since Yaʿqūb's assumption of power, open to challenge. It would have been logical for the *aṣḥāb al-raʾy* to have seized this chance to advance their cause when the opportunity suddenly presented itself.

Matters obviously could not continue indefinitely on their downward trajectory. The old type of soldier began deserting a dynasty which no longer held dear any of its original ideals. We are even told specifically about some of these people, their character, and their objections to the behaviour and objectives of ʿAmr's grandsons:

> … Iyās b. ʿAbdallāh, who was a chief of the Arabs [*mehtar-i ʿArab būd*], a valiant man, with judgment and integrity, who had served Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr, and had been a close confidant of theirs, asked permission to leave. He said:" This reign was established by the sword, and you want to keep it by amusing yourself. A reign cannot be maintained by jest; a ruler must have justice and religion, government and discourse, and the scourge and the sword."[229]

This passage is important because it tells us what Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr's supporters saw in them: Justice, religion, the will and ability to punish wrongdoers – and the sword which we have seen so prominently mentioned above, and which stood for the defense and expansion of Islam.[230] Iyās has essentially confirmed here the governmental ideal that we have been positing underlay the original Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* state as conceived under Yaʿqūb, and at least aspired to under ʿAmr: "justice and religion … the scourge and the sword." Iyās's description matches perfectly this work's suggested definition of *ʿayyārī* in the ninth century: militant proto-Sunni *taṭawwuʿ* (including *al-amr biʾl-maʿrūf*) in brotherhoods or bands.

Iyās was, moreover, not the only erstwhile Ṣaffārid commander to defect once this very non-*ʿayyār* ruler came to power. Another disillusioned general, known as Abū Qābūs, deserted Ṭāhir and went to offer his services to the caliph in Baghdad:

> The reason for this was that Ṭāhir was occupied with frivolity and hunting. So al-Layth b. ʿAlī and Subkarī, the *mawlā* of ʿAmr b. al-Layth [*sic*] took over rule in Fārs, and

229 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 279.
230 See the reference to ʿAbdullāh b. al-Mubārak's well-known tradition, *supra*, Chapter 4.

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> there occurred mutual estrangement between them and this commander, so he left them …[231]

In the words of one chronicle:

> All the men of judgment in the army were much afraid of the consequences of such [a state of] affairs, and knew that a kingdom would not remain very long with a pigeon-fancier, nor with one who drinks day and night, and who constantly withdraws money from the treasury without replacing it. So each one would mull upon [the matter] and they would speak to one another [about this].[232]

The outcome of all of this discontent was that al-Layth b. ʿAlī, the cousin of Ṭāhir's father, came to Sīstān and entered into secret correspondence with the army officers. As a result, in 296/909 al-Layth became amīr in Sīstān and began minting coins there.[233] Ṭāhir and Yaʿqūb fled from Sīstān to Fārs, where they intended to fight Subkarī, whom they had been warned was disloyal. Subkarī, however, sent to Ṭāhir's remaining army commanders reminding them of how incompetent and generally detrimental to the public welfare Ṭāhir was; the army officers agreed with Subkarī's assessment, trussed up Ṭāhir and Yaʿqūb, and sent them off to Baghdad post-haste.[234]

In 296/908f. , the year Ṭāhir was deposed, Subkarī began minting coins in his own name in Fārs, throwing off any pretence of Ṣaffarid allegiance.[235] Al-Layth b. ʿAlī thereupon set out for Fārs in the year 297/909f. to subdue the treacherous Subkarī, leaving his brother, Muḥammad, viceroy in Sīstān.[236] Athough al-Layth's campaign was initially successful, resulting in his regaining control of Fārs province,[237] the Caliph subsequently intervened, sending in an army on Subkarī's behalf. After much political maneuvering, in 298/910 al-Layth was

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231 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 546; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 161 (*sub anno* 293/905f.). The commander, much to Ṭāhir's annoyance, took much of the province's revenues with him to the caliph.

232 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 282.

233 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 282-284. J. Walker, *The Coinage of the Second Ṣaffārid Dynasty in Sīstān*, New York, 1936, p. 22, #1; C. M. Fraehn, *Numi Muhammedani qui in Academiae Imperialis scientarum Petropolitanae Museo Asiatico asservantur. Recensio Numorum Muhammedanorum*, St. Petersburg, 1826, vol. I, Ṣaffārid #8.

234 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 285-286. A very laconic mention of this is found in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 141 and in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 371. According to Miskawayhi, *Tajārib al-umam: The Eclipse of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate*, ed. and trans. H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth, Oxford, 1920-1921, vol. 1, p. 16, they were sent into Baghdad in 297/909f. riding in a palanquin placed on a mule.

235 On Subkarī's various numismatic activities *vide* D. Tor, "A Numismatic History," pp. 311-313.

236 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 287. See also Ibn Khallikān, *loc. cit.*, who, however, seems to conflate Muḥammad and al-Muʿaddal.

237 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 288. The coins also bear witness to this Ṣaffarid victory, since al-Layth recommenced minting in his name in the province: e,g, ANS 1966. 126. 3; Album Coin List 35:922; Tübingen EA4 D2; TU 92-25-5; TU 93-22-177; Baldwin Auctions 19: 325; Sotheby's London, May 29, 1987, #878; Spink Auction Catalogue March 17, 1987, lot #390; Album 89:213, and so forth; *vide* Tor, "A Numismatic History."

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taken prisoner in a battle with Subkarī and sent to Baghdad; his brother al-Muʿaddal fled to Nīshāpūr.[238]

In 298/910, therefore, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Layth succeeded to the rule of Sīstān, Bust, Kābul and Ghazna and imprisoned his brother Muʿaddal when the latter came to him from Khurāsān.[239] In this very same year, the caliph al-Muqtadir wrote to the Sāmānid ruler, Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl, giving him the patent for Sīstān.[240] The Sāmānids promptly besieged Zarang. Al-Muʿaddal, newly released by his brother Muḥammad, rebelled against the latter, who in turn abandoned the city for Bust, where he is reported to have tyrannized and oppressed the populace.[241] Zarang soon fell to the Sāmānids, as did Bust.[242]

Thus the only known *ʿayyār* state of the classical Islamic world came to an end. In fact, it had in effect come to an end with ʿAmr's capture. Rather than leaders being established by "the sword" – by their military prowess and dedication to *mutaṭawwiʿi* ideals – the Ṣaffārid polity had lapsed into the customary Islamic dynastic form.[243] Perhaps the course of events might have been different had Yaʿqūb not been so loved by his troops, and had he not possessed two *ʿayyār* brothers who had served as his trusted sub-commanders; then Sīstān might have witnessed the establishment of an *ʿayyār* state on the Mamluk model, with the *ʿayyār* troops choosing a new, competent leader from among their ranks in each generation, dedicated to their founding ideals.[244] The historical reality, however,

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238 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, *op. cit*, pp. 288-290. Most of the information is also in Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 143. Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 347, states that al-Layth was brought into Baghdad on an elephant in the year 299/911f. ; noting, however, that it is also said that this event took place in the previous year. Subkarī did not enjoy his ill-gotten gains for long; in 299/911f. , he tried to bribe the caliph to send him the patents for Fārs, Kirmān and Sīstān. Much to Subkarī's dismay, instead of the patents a caliphal army soon arrived at the gates of Shīrāz. Subkarī was defeated in battle, and then fled, eventually ending up in the dominions of the Sāmānids, who had him bound and sent to Baghdad; *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 295-296; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 144. Miskawayhi, *Tajārib*, vol. 1, p. 19, garbles these events somewhat, aggrandizing the Sāmānid role and minimizing the Caliphal one

239 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 289-290.

240 Over a decade after the defeat of ʿAmr; this information once again casts doubts on the reliability of the reports we previously examined, which claimed that al-Muʿtaḍid had been so overjoyed by the Sāmānid victory over ʿAmr that he had immediately bestowed upon Ismāʿīl all the former Ṣaffārid lands.

241 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 290-291. There is some numismatic indication, however, that the reports of Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 371) and Jūzjānī (*Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, vol. 1, p. 207), according to which al-Muʿaddal assumed the overall rulership in Sīstān at some point, are correct. For the numismatic evidence *vide* Tor, "A Numismatic History," p. 313.

242 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 293-294; Ṭabarī (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 144) merely reports that Muḥammad b. ʿAlī was defeated in battle against the Sāmānids in the area of Bust and al-Rukhkhaj. The fall of Sīstān is reported under the next year, 299/911f. (*Ta'rīkh*, vol. 10, p. 145).

243 There is a certain striking parallel in this to the Protectorate of Oliver and Richard Cromwell.

244 Although of course the Mamluk polity, too, showed a tendency to lapse into the familiar dynastic model.

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was that after ʿAmr's removal from the scene, Sīstān, together with its dependent territories, was no longer ruled by an *ʿayyār*, nor did it any longer espouse *ʿayyār/mutaṭawwiʿ* ideals. The polity built by the Ṣaffārids thereby lost not only its *raison d'etre*, but also its motive force, although there surely must have been some of Yaʿqūb's and ʿAmr's former support base who did not wholly abandon ʿAmr's degenerate progeny.

The *ʿayyārs*, in fact, remained a potent force in Sīstān even after the collapse of the first Ṣaffārid state, and the memory of Yaʿqūb seems to have held their loyalty to his family. When the people of Sīstān were alienated by the policies of the new Sāmānid governor, who raised taxes and quartered his troops inside the city of Zarang, Muḥammad b. Hurmuz (known as Mawlā Ṣandalī), a former client of Ṭāhir's father, led the *ʿayyārs* in revolt in the name of ʿAmr b. Layth's ten-year-old great-grandson.[245] Interestingly, we also get a hint that the *ʿayyārs* were at this time already living communally, as was certainly the case by the Buyid period;[246] when the governor searches for Mawlā Ṣandalī, he does not find him, since the latter has gone "among the *ʿayyārs*."[247]

After defeating the Sāmānid governor Mawlā Ṣandalī put aside his Ṣaffārid figurehead,[248] whereupon a large group of his *ʿayyārs* defected, went east and rallied their forces, then came back and defeated Ibn Hurmuz, installing the Ṣaffārid once again, with the support of the notables as well.[249] Mawlā Ṣandalī managed to attract enough support among some of the *ʿayyārs* to lead a final abortive uprising, but it was quickly put down by the pro-Ṣaffārid forces, as was another overweening "protector" of the new Ṣaffārid amīr.[250]

It was too late, however, for the Ṣaffārid state to be saved – at least in its former *ghāzī* constitution. In the year 300/913 the Sāmānid army came and once again took control. Although the Ṣaffārids were able within several years after the Sāmānid conquest to reestablish their power in Sīstān, beginning the so-called Second Ṣaffārid Dynasty,[251] their authority was thenceforward purely local and purely dynastic; never again did they recapture the pure faith and zeal that had led them on far-flung crusades against pagans and heretics.

In summation, the strength of the original Ṣaffārid state lay precisely in its single-minded *mutaṭawwiʿ* nature. Yaʿqūb was concerned with restoring Islam to

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245 For the entire episode, see Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār*, pp. 16-17; *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 297. For this coinage, see ANS 1971. 155. 1. Jūzjānī states merely that "the people of Sīstān rebelled." (*Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, vol. 1, p. 207)

246 See *e. g.* the case of the famous *ʿayyār* of Baghdad, al-Burjumī (Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 233-234), or the retreats of the fictional *Samak-i ʿayyār*.

247 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 297.

248 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 299. See also C. Edmund Bosworth and Gert Rispling, "An *ʿayyār* Coin From Sīstān," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd Series, vol. 3, part 2, 1993, pp. 215-218.

249 *Tarīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 299.

250 *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 300.

251 *Vide* Walker, *Coinage*, p. 14.

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a position of unified strength and fighting wars for the faith; not in building palaces, bureaucracies and other state machinery. This rather Cromwellian aspect of Ṣaffārid *ʿayyār* ideology has been, however, systematically misunderstood by modern historians, who have consequently misinterpreted the whole nature and *raison d'etre* of Ṣaffārid rule, as well as the nature and meaning of *ʿayyārī*. Modern historians have, indeed, therefore condemned Yaʿqūb for not having engaged in activities which would have been antithetical to that *ʿayyār raison d'etre*.

ʿAmr, who is regarded with greater approval by those same historians for having paid greater attention to worldly power consolidation, was abandoned by his army for precisely that reason – he was perceived as having betrayed *ʿayyār* ideals. The torch of *taṭawwuʿ*, devout warfare in service of the Faith, together with the *ʿayyār* standard-bearers of that torch, passed over to the Sāmānids. We shall see evidence in Chapter Eight that *ʿayyārs* played an important role in the military forces of that dynasty as well.

In short, we have already seen *ʿayyārs* throughout the Ṣaffārid period functioning as volunteer holy warriors for the faith; and throughout the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries we see them continuing to function in this capacity. While the Sunni holy warrior element remains present throughout the pre-Saljuq period, we saw in this chapter, as indicated by the new religious demographic supporting ʿAmr in Khurāsān, that, already in the ninth century, there were two other meanings that began to be associated with the term: namely, a spiritual Sufi significance, and a chivalric one, involving a code of courtly behaviour and values. These new meanings, possibly by the tenth century and certainly by the eleventh, came to predominate, eclipsing the original Sunni holy warrior significance. It is these Sufi and chivalric aspects that the remaining chapters of this work address.

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7. The ʿ*Ayyārs*, Sufism, and Chivalry

> Ei mihi! Dic mihi per miserationes tuas, domine deus meus, quid sis mihi. Dic animae meae: Ecce aures cordis mei ante te, domine; aperi eas et dic animae meae: saluas tua ego sum.
>
> – St. Augustine

> A true knight … matchless, firm of word,
> Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
> Not soon provoked nor being provoked soon calm'd:
> His heart and hand both open and both free;
> For what he has he gives, what thinks, he shows;
> Yet gives he not till judgment guide his bounty,
> Nor dignifies an impure thought with breath.
>
> – *Troilus and Cressida*

The connection between the ʿ*ayyārān* and Sufism dates back to the ninth century; we have just seen that some of the strongest Ṣaffārid supporters in Khurāsān, particularly during ʿAmr's period, were Sufis of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* persuasion, many of whom were said to have been *fityān* or concerned with *futuwwa*, and at least one of whom also had some kind of ties with ʿ*ayyārān*,[1] to the extent that he was interested in learning from an ʿ*ayyār* the definition of *javānmardī* (chivalry).[2] Thus we see, from a very early period, a close intertwining of Sufis, ʿ*ayyārs*, and chivalry.

Although Cahen found such an association puzzling,[3] it should not surprise us when we consider the milieu out of which both the Sufi and the volunteer warrior movements grew. All of the important *mutaṭawwiʿ* figures we examined in Chapter Two, the progenitors of the movement of which the ʿ*ayyārān* were an offshoot, appear in the Sufi literature and associate closely with many of the outstanding figures, such as Junayd and Sufyān al-Thawrī, considered by that literature to have been leading early Sufis. As we noted in that context, these progenitors even wrote books on asceticism. The connection, therefore, between ʿ*ayyārs*

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1 E. g. Abū Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣār, who studied with Ibn Ḥanbal's friend Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī and was on cordial terms with Nūḥ, the leader of the ʿ*ayyārān* of Nīshāpūr; *vide supra*, Chapter Six.

2 We shall return to this story presently. On the linguistic and significatory equivalence of *futuwwa* (Arabic) and *javānmardī* (Persian), see H. Corbin, "Introduction analytique," *Traites des compagnons chevaliers (Resā'il-e Javānmardān)*, Tehran, 1991, pp. 5-6.

3 Although note that Cahen was unaware of Sufi-ʿayyār connections earlier than the eleventh century; *vide supra*, Chapter One.

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and Sufis seems to have existed almost since the earliest times for which we have a record of *ʿayyārs*. As we saw in Chapter Two, the early ascetics and Sufis also appear to have been particularly active in volunteer border warfare, and closely associated with the founding figures of the *mutaṭawwiʿa* movement; hence the dual use of the term "*ribāṭ*," in Persian and Arabic, to denote both a Sufi monastery and a fortress of Sunni border warriors.[4] In short, there is a connection between Sufis and *ʿayyārs* virtually from the inception of both movements.

Let us examine in chronological order some more of the evidence for *ʿayyār*-Sufi ties. The earliest mention of an *ʿayyār* in a Persian work is by Rudakī,[5] in a highly enigmatic poetic reference upon whose meaning, literally, no one is able to agree,[6] but which clearly includes the phrase "*fozhe pīr*." *Pīr*, of course, could mean simply "old man." It is very frequently, however, a religious title of the Sufi kind. The fact that this *pīr* is dirty – most likely because he is an ascetic – adds weight to this interpretation. In other words, the language strongly suggests that this *ʿayyār* has something to do with religion – more specifically, the Sufi variety of it.

A less ambiguous reference can be found in Sufi literature. Obviously, there is in some cases a certain methodological problem in using these works, because they frequently date from a later period (the tenth and eleventh centuries) than the people being discussed, but this cannot be helped; they are the earliest Sufi works we have. One of these works – the eleventh-century *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, the first mystical treatise in Persian, baldly states that one of the foremost fathers of Sufism was an *ʿayyār*:

> Among [the prominent Sufis was] the vessel of truth and excellence, and the repository of nobility in holiness, Abū'l-Fayyāḍ Dhū al-Nūn b. Ibrāhīm al-Maṣrī, son of a Nubian named Thawbān. He was of the best of this people [*akhyār-i qawm*] and was of the great ones [*buzurgān*] and *ʿayyārān* of this order [*ṭarīqa*]. He sought the path of affliction and walked the path of blame [*malāma*].[7]

This "path of *malāma*" refers to the *malāmatiyya*, Sufis who wished to preserve their religious merit hidden and unacknowledged, and even to be commonly de-

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4 *Vide* J. Chabbi, s. v. "Ribāṭ," *EI2* , who is, however, puzzled by the connection in the absence of previous examination of the border warrior movement. Thus, she writes in this context as though the Sufi and holy warrior Sunni strains were unrelated: "In the sources of the 4th/10th century, the representation of *djihād* seems to be promulgated in two major directions. On the one hand, there is Sufism, which tends to lay claim to an irreproachable past … But it seems that certain minorities within Sunnism professed parallel ideas, advocating exterior activism and inner moralisation."

5 Abū ʿAbdallāh Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad Rudakī, *Divān-i Rudakī*, Tehran, 1374, p. 27.

6 When the present author discussed this passage at the Fourth International Conference on Iranian Studies of the Societas Iranologica Europaea, in Paris, September 1999, a fierce argument erupted among the literary experts and philologists, which ended inconclusively only when terminated by the panel's chair.

7 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp. 124-125.

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spised as an exercise in humility and self-mortification.[8] One of the most extensively documented examples of this kind of person given by our source is the *mutaṭawwiʿī* Ibrāhīm b. Adham, who, when asked if he had ever reached his desire, answered that he had indeed enjoyed this bliss twice: once when traveling incognito on a ship and he was constantly mocked, scorned and reviled, including being urinated upon; the other when he was refused admittance to shelter on a rainy, wintry night and, having been turned away from all the mosques, ended up in the smoky corner of a bathhouse.[9] Again, we are led back to the early militant proto-Sunnis.

Later we get a full explanation of *malāmatiyya* under the section dealing with the Qaṣṣāriyya, the followers of Abū Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmāra al-Qaṣṣār, the Ṣaffārid supporter whom we examined in the previous chapter. al-Qaṣṣār is termed "among the great *ʿulamā'* and lords of this way [*ṭarīqa*] and his path was the manifestation and spreading of *malāma*."[10] Al-Qaṣṣār himself encapsulates his philosophy as "God's knowledge of you, May He be exalted, is better than that of people could be," which Hujvīrī interprets to mean the following: "It must be that in privacy with God, may He be exalted, [your] deeds are better than that which you do in company with men, for the greatest concealing/veiling of truth is the preoccupation of your heart with people."[11] Al-Qaṣṣār then relates the following story:

> One day while I was walking towards the river bank in Ḥīra in Nīshāpūr, I saw Nūḥ, known for *ʿayyārī* and renowned in *futuwwa* – all the *ʿayyārs* of Nīshāpūr were under his command – upon the path. I said: "O Nūḥ, what is *javānmardī?*" He replied: "Do you want [to know about] my *javānmardī* or yours?" I said: "Tell me both." He said: "My *javānmardī* is such that I take off this garment, cover myself in the *muraqqaʿa*, and perform such deeds that I may be a Sufi and from the modesty of people in this garment I abstain from sin. Your *javānmardī* is that you put off the *muraqqaʿa* so that neither you against the people, nor the people against you, cause any *fitna* [discord]; therefore, my

8 J. Chabbi defines the movement as follows: "Le Malamtisme est un mouvement essentiellement urbain ... issus du milieu des petits métiers du Bazar de Nisābūr. Musulmans convaincus et même piétistes, contrairement à leurs rivaux karramites, l'ascèse est pour les *Malāmatis* une affaire personnelle ... Leur principe de base pourrait se définir comme la recherche de la non-difference, autrement dit du conformisme apparent, au plan social et politique. Leur force etait de ne rien laisser paraître à l'extérieur de ce qui'ils sont en réalité. Selon Sulamī, des Mystiques qui, aussi bien que les Soufies atteignent les sommets de la Proximité (*qurb*), de l'Union … et sont gratifiés de charismes." Chabbi, "Remarques sur le développement historique des mouvements ascétiques et mystiques au Khurāsān IIe/IXe siècle-IVe/Xe siècle," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977), pp. 55-56. For a similar Pietistic phenomenon in late-twelfth and early-thirteenth century Rhineland Judaism, see T. Alexander-Frizer, *The Pious Sinner; Ethics and Aesthetics in the Medieval Hasidic Narrative. Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism* 5, Tübingen, 1991, particularly Chapter 4.

9 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, pp. 76-77.

10 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 228; al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 103, calls him "*imām-i ahl-i malāma*."

11 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 228.

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> *javānmardī* is the preserving of the *Sharīʿa* openly [*bar izhār*], whereas yours is the preserving of truth in secret."[12]

This story depicts *ʿayyārī* as a religious discipline akin to Sufism; moreover, it shows a Sufi consulting an *ʿayyār* on the meaning of a term that was important to – though differently practised by – both groups. Second, it confirms that *ʿayyārs* at least occasionally wore the special dress of Sufis (the patched garment, or *muraqqaʿa*).[13]

At least one other important early Sufi work, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, contains two anecdotes illustrating the purity and piety of this same Nūḥ the *ʿayyār*:

> I heard Manṣūr the Maghribī say: Somebody wanted to test Nūḥ al-Naysābūrī the *ʿayyār*. So he sold him a slave-girl in the clothing of a slave boy, claiming that he was a boy; and she was surpassingly fair of face. Nūḥ bought her on the understanding that she was a boy, and she remained with him for many months. Then it was said to the slave-girl: "Does he know that you are a slave-girl?" She answered: "No, for he has not touched me, so he believes that I am a boy."
>
> And it is said: One of the *shuṭṭār* demanded that [Nūḥ] hand over to the ruler [*al-sulṭān*] a *ghulām* who served him, but he refused, so he beat him 1000 whiplashes, but [Nūḥ] would not hand [the boy] over. Then it happened that [Nūḥ] had a nocturnal emission that very night, and it was very cold. When he got up in the morning he performed his ablutions in the freezing water, and it was said to him: "You are risking your life." He replied: "May I be ashamed before God, that I should bear 1000 lashes for the sake of a creature, but that I should not suffer enduring the cold of the ablution for His sake!"[14]

Nūḥ the *ʿayyār* is thus depicted not only as being pure himself, but as enduring great torment and risking his own life in order to save an innocent fellow creature (the young *ghulām* – for it is pretty clear why "*al-sulṭān*" wanted him) from being defiled. The image of the bloody, half-dead Nūḥ dragging himself out to perform his ablutions is a very powerful one. Whether this image is historically accurate or not is immaterial for our purposes; for it in any case shows the religious ideal that Sufis attached to the term *ʿayyār*.

The *ʿayyārs* of Nīshāpūr appear in connection with another famous early Sufi, Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh – again, a *malāmatī*.[15] The Sufi-*ʿayyār* connection surfaces constantly in connection with this figure. al-Qushayrī calls Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh

> Among the greatest shaykhs of Khurāsān … He came to Naysābūr, and visited [*zāra*] Abū Ḥafṣ. . and he was great in *futuwwa*.
>
> Abū Ḥafṣ said: I never saw anyone greater in zeal [*himma*], nor [is there anyone] more truthful now than Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh.[16]

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12 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 228.

13 Ibn al-Jawzī, writing several centuries later, confirms this; *vide infra*, Chapter Eight, the passage cited from *Talbīs iblīs*.

14 al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p. 304.

15 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 149.

16 al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p. 58.

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Elsewhere, Ibn Khiḍrawayh is referred to as "the commander [*sarhang*] of the *javānmardān* and the sun of Khurāsān."[17] His connection to *ʿayyārs* appears in al-Qushayrī's chapter on *futuwwa*:

> I heard the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, may God have mercy on him, saying: "Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh said to his wife Umm ʿAlī: 'I want to hold a convocation, to which I will invite a cunning *ʿayyār* [*ʿayyār*^{an} *shāṭir*^{an}],' who was the leader of the *fityān* [*raʾīs al-fityān*] in their city. His wife said: 'You are not rightly guided, to invite the *fityān*.' He replied: 'It is necessary. ' She said: 'If you do thus, kill sheep and cattle and donkeys, and lay them from the gate of the man's house to the gate of your house. ' He said: 'Regarding the sheep and the cattle, I know [why you have said this]. But why the donkeys?' She replied: 'Invite a *fatā* to your house, and at least there should be [some] good for the dogs of the quarter. '"[18]

Umm ʿAlī is obviously not enamored of *fityān*, who seem here to be explicitly equated with *ʿayyārs*. Her statement implies that nothing good will come of consorting with *fityān* unless one leaves some donkey meat for the dogs of the neighborhood to enjoy – then at least the dogs will have derived some benefit. Umm ʿAlī's attitude, however, should not blind us to the fact that Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh nevertheless obviously did consort with *ʿayyārs* and *fityān*; and, as we have seen from the preceding stories, Nūḥ, at least, was highly regarded religiously by other Sufis as well. Moreover, a different version of this precise story is repeated in the *Kashf al-maḥjūb* – only there the guest is not an *ʿayyār*, and Aḥmad's wife states that the donkeys should be killed "Because when a noble comes as guest to the house of a noble all the inhabitants of the quarter should know about it."[19]

Ibn Khiḍrawayh's connection is by no means a lone example: *ʿayyārs* frequently crop up in this kind of biographical literature regarding the whole period of the ninth-eleventh centuries. For instance, the following anecdote is inserted into the biography of a mid-tenth century Sufi from Shīrāz: "Shaykh al-Islam said: "Once an *ʿayyār* said to a Sufi: 'The difference between us and you is this: That we do everything that we say [we will do],[20] whereas all that you meditate, and that comes to pass in your heart, you do. '"[21]

Another such case of an *ʿayyār* cropping up in a Sufi biography occurs in the *vita* of one Transoxanian *ʿālim*, Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Nūḥ b.

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17 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 149. Note that the military term *sarhang* is frequently used for *ʿayyār* leaders as well; *vide supra*, Chapter Three.

18 al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, pp. 302-303. As Hartmann notes ("*Futuwwa* und *Malāma*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 72 (1918), p. 195), "The fact that the Fityān had a leader [*Vorstand*], presupposes at any rate a certain organization."

19 al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, p. 150.

20 Cf. Farāmurz b. Khudādād, *Samak-i ʿayyār*, ed. P. Khānlarī, Tehran, 1347/1968, vol. 1, p. 46: "a man of valour [*mardī*] is one who speaks the truth and says [only] those things which he is capable of realizing."

21 al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 423.

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Ṣāliḥ b. Sayyār al-Kamdādī (Kamdād is one of the villages of Bukhārā), which states:

> He transmitted from Abū Nuʿaym al-Astarābādī and the most venerable ones. He was *qāḍī* in Nasaf twice: the first time in the year 340/951f. , and the other in the year 399/1008f. [*sic*] after the destruction of Nasaf and the burning of its houses and castles and markets. [He arrived] one day with al-Ḥasan al-Banafghānī the *ʿayyār*. He died in Bukhārā in the year 391/1000f. [*sic*][22]

Once again, then, we find a pious sufi closely consorting with an *ʿayyār*.

Perhaps the most interesting such example is that found in the biography of one Sufi Ḥanbalite *imām* of the Sāmānid period, Abū'l-Muẓaffar al-Tirmidhī, because it unites all three of the strands, Sufi, Traditionist and *ʿayyār*. Al-Tirmidhī, "Ḥanbalite *imām*" and "shaykh of his time," was said to have been "good in deeds [*muʿāmalāt*], asceticism [*zuhd*], chastity [*waraʿ*], and piety [*taqwā*]."[23] We are told that al-Tirmidhī's son, who spent his time in a *ribāṭ* on the eastern border,

> ... was a miracle worker [*khudāvand-i karāmat*] and an associate of Khiḍr. He was also one whose prayers are answered, and the teacher of Shaykh al-Islām. He had friends, all of whom were lords and masters of miracles [*sādat u khudāvand-i kirāmat*], such as Pīr-ī Pārsī, ʿAbd al-Malik Askāf, Bū al-Qāsim Hināna, Ḥasan Ṭabarī and ʿĀrif the *ʿayyār* and his *pīr* Shaykh al-Islām Bū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Anṣārī, may God have mercy on them ...[24]

Here we have a Ḥanbalite Sufi, one of whose Sufi friends, a "lord of miracles," is said to have been an *ʿayyār* – not merely an *ʿayyār* associate of Sufis. And he is not the only Sufi *ʿayyār*.

One of the major fifteenth-century Sufi manuals, when describing the training of a *murīd* (a Sufi novice),[25] holds up the *ʿayyārān* several times as models for emulation, depicting them by implication as a branch of Sufism equivalent to the *malāmatiyya*:[26]

> If one is asked how many are the desirable actions [*mustaḥabbāt*] of a *murīd*, state five: The first, that he should perform perfect ritual ablution from every prohibited thing of the *sharīʿa* and prohibited thing of the *ṭarīqa*, still more from whatever is not justice and truth.
>
> Second: He should be an *ʿayyār* in nature and a *malāmatī* in mode of conduct, and not be afraid of the speech or hearing of [other] people.

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22 Nasafi, *al-Qand fi dhikr ulamā' Samarqand*, p. 87. It is unclear to the present author how the man could have become *qāḍī* after he had been dead already for nearly a decade, but this conundrum obviously did not perturb Nasafi in the slightest.

23 al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 522-523.

24 al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, pp. 525-526. On p. 527 ʿArif-i ʿAyyār appears in Abū'l-Muẓaffar's assemblies.

25 On the Sufi aspirant and his relationship to his master see Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford, 1973, p. 3.

26 On the identification of *futuwwa* and *malāmatiyya* see Hartmann, "*Futuwwa* und *Malāma*," in particular p. 197.

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> Third: He must be of *qalandar*-like life;[27] that is, good reputation and infamy, encomium and censure, rejection and acceptance of [other] creatures, in his regard must be the same.
> Fourth: He should be strong-hearted and disregard dangers.
> Fifth: He must be indigent, and at no time not give to any needy person …

The passage concludes by stating that if one is asked when the *murīd* becomes the "perfect *ʿayyār*", one should reply: "When he does not turn his glance toward the world and the people of the world."[28] Interestingly, holy warfare is still a part of the vision being presented: "… the bow should be taken to hand with the aim of expeditions against the infidel and the repelling of the wickedness of tyrants from the Believers. Third, as *ghāzīs* always to be reciting the *takbīr* …[29] Clearly, *ʿayyār* is being used as a religious term, indicating a model toward which the Sufi *fatā* should aspire and strive.

We see the same, exalted meaning given to the term in earlier Sufi manuals as well. Al-Anṣārī, when discussing divine unity, *tawḥīd*, informs us that "the *ʿayyār* of *tawḥīd* [*ʿayyār-i tawḥīd*] has come beyond intellect; [for] the source of *tawḥīd* is guarded from thought."[30] While the philosophical thought being discussed may be somewhat nebulous, the labelling of a certain ideal Sufi behaviour with the term *ʿayyār* is quite clear.

These, of course, are depictions of ideal Sufi *ʿayyārs*, not real ones. There were other real Sufi *ʿayyārs*, though, apart from ʿĀrif-i ʿAyyār. One of the most famous and influential tenth-century Sufis of Nīshāpūr was a man called Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār (aka Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Nuʿaym b. Ishkān or Ishkāb) who was also – unsurprisingly, given the strong *ʿayyār*-Traditionist connection we have already seen – a *muḥaddith* and the associate of well-respected Sufi and Traditionist religious figures;[31] he was, in fact, one of the outstanding *muḥaddīthīn* of his day:

> He heard from the *shaykhs* of Khurāsān; he was famous in *ḥadīth*; [and] he was the companion of a group of the *shaykhs* of Khurāsān. He heard Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Shabawī in Marv and related it in Nīshāpūr … and he heard from Abū Ṭāhir b. Khuzayma, al-Makhladī, Abū Bakr b. Hāniʾ, Abū'l-Faḍl al-Fāmī and al-Jawzaqī …

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27 Defined by T. Yazici, *EI2* , *s. v.* "*Ḳalandar*," as follows: "[A] name given to the members of a class of dervishes which existed formerly, especially in the 7th/13th century, in the Islamic world … they resembled, with some minor differences, the "hippies" of today, distinguishing themselves from other Muslims by adopting *Malāmatiyya* [q. v.] doctrines and by their unconventional dress, behaviour and way of life."

28 Ḥusayn Vāʿiz Kāshifī Sabzavārī, *Futuvvat nāmah-i sulṭānī*, ed. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Maḥjūb, Tehran, 1350/1971, p. 80.

29 Kāshifī, *Futuvvat nāmah-i sulṭānī*, p. 361.

30 al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 173.

31 Ibn Mākūlā, *al-Ikmāl*, vol. 6, p. 287; al-Nasafī, *al-Qand fī dhikr ʿulamā' Samarqand*, p. 563.

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> He was born in the year 345/956f. and died in Ghazna in the year 457/1065. Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Fārisī transmitted from him.[32]

In keeping with our picture of both the early *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ʿayyārs* in the mold of Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth, Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār was an ascetic (*zāhid*). He was also said to have been "a brilliant, charming shaykh …"[33] Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār is also said to have followed the path of *malāmatiyya*; his biography in one of the great Persian Sufi works describes him as

> The revered Shaykh and the foremost among the great ones, Saʿīd b. Abī Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār. He was a master of the traditions of the Prophet [*ḥafiz-i ḥadīth-i paygḥambar*], led a good life, and saw many shaykhs. He was strong in Sufism and intelligent, but he went concealed/hidden; his virtue [*maʿnā*] he did not show to anyone.[34]

The case of Saʿīd, though, unlike the case of ʿĀrif-i ʿAyyār, may possibly confirm that *ʿayyārī*, though in many ways closely related to Sufism as a kindred spiritual discipline, was indeed a separate and distinct path; Saʿīd himself, according to one thirteenth-century tradition, had apparently left *ʿayyārī* for Sufism: "Ghayth al-Armanāzī said: I asked a group: Why was he called '*al-ʿayyār*'? They said: Because in his beginning [*ibtidā'ihi*] he followed the ways of the *ʿayyārs*."[35] What militates against any interpretation of mutual exclusivity, however, is the fact that there are other *ʿayyār malāmatī* Sufis other than Saʿīd, who are **not** said to have abandoned their *ʿayyārī* in order to have pursued the Sufi path.

In addition to all the example adduced above, the very same source that tells us of Saʿīd also describes another *malāmatī* practitioner as

> *Shaykh-i ʿayyār* and miner of secrets [*maʿdan-i asrār*] Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥakīm, known as Murīd, may God have mercy on him. He was among the intoxicated from the proximity of the Presence of Truth, and in his art [*fann*] he had no second [*thānī na-dāsht*]. His state was hidden from people, but he had clear proofs [*barābīn-i zāhir*] and shining signs [*āyāt-i zāhir*]; and in friendship [with God] his state was better than that which [is apparent] to sight.[36]

Also, given both the lateness and the uniqueness of the statement depicting Saʿīd as having left *ʿayyārī* for the kindred but distinct spiritual discipline of *malāmatī* Sufism, it is difficult to draw any conclusions from it – the author may have added it because in his own time *ʿayyārī* and Sufism were quite distinct, in a way in which they had not been a few centuries earlier.

For, whereas in the ninth and tenth centuries the religious meanings, both *mutaṭawwiʿ* and Sufi-related, of *ʿayyārī* almost wholly predominated, by the end

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32 al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ghafir b. Ismāʿīl al-Fārisī, *Ta'rīkh Nīsābūr*, p. 741; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 18, p. 86.

33 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 18, p. 86.

34 Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 217.

35 Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 18, p. 87.

36 Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 217.

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of the eleventh-century and throughout the twelfth century the meaning of the term *ʿayyār*, as we shall see in the next chapter, had become predominantly chivalric.[37] Note, though, that in the eleventh-century itself the religious meanings – including the Sufi meaning – had not yet been eclipsed; we still read, among the Sufis who lived in Qūhistān, Azerbayjan, Ṭabaristān and adjacent areas, of one Pādishāh-i Tāʾib,[38] "An *ʿayyār* in the way of truth." [*Mardī ʿayyār būd dar rāh-i haqq*][39]

In fact, a model for Dhahabī's interpretation of Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār's name appears in the story, found in the late twelfth-century "Book of Penitents," of an *ʿayyār* who is said to have turned entirely from the world at some point in order to become a Sufi:

> It is related that a man, who was known as "Dinār the *ʿayyār*," had a mother who used to admonish him, but he would not take her advice. Then one day he passed by a graveyard [in which were buried] many important people. He took from it a rotting bone and it crumbled in his hand; then he reflected, and said to himself: "Woe unto you! It is as though I see you tomorrow; your bone has already become like these mortal remains, and the flesh is dust; yet I today have the audacity to commit sins." Then he regretted, and resolved upon repentance. He raised his head to the sky and said: "My God! I cast before you the keys of my destiny: receive me and have mercy upon me!"
>
> Then he went to his mother changed in aspect, heart-broken, and said:" O mother! What is done to the fugitive slave whose master catches him?" She replied: "His food and clothing are coarsened, and his hand and foot are shackled."
>
> Then he said: "I want a *jubba* of wool, and bread loaves of barley, and that you treat me as a runaway [slave] would be treated; perhaps my Master will see my humility and have mercy on me." So she did what he had asked.
>
> And when the night would descend, he would begin to weep and wail, saying to himself: "Woe unto you, O Dinār! Will you be able to manage the Fire? How could you have exposed yourself to the wrath of the Almighty?" And so forth until the morning.
>
> Then his mother said to him one night: "Treat yourself gently." But he replied: "Bid me [rather] toil a little so that perhaps I shall rest a long time …"
>
> She said: "Rest a little." He replied: "I seek rest; can you vouchsafe me deliverance?" She replied: "And who can vouchsafe it to me?" He replied: "Then pray for me, and what I have embarked upon, as though you, O my mother, were tomorrow going to be among those creatures who are conveyed to paradise, and I conveyed to the Fire."
>
> She passed by him one night while he was reciting, "By your Lord, We shall question them all, regarding what they used to do."[40] And he reflected upon it, and wept, and began to sway like a serpent, until he fell down swooning. His mother came to him and cried out to him, but he did not answer her. She said: "Delight of my eye, where shall we meet [lit. : where is the meeting place]?" He replied in a weak voice: "If you don't

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37 Chivalrous is defined by the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary as "Pertaining to or characteristic of the ideal knight; gallant, honourable, courteous, disinterested." For comparable definitions culled from Islamic writings *vide infra*.

38 The name means, literally, "King of the contrite."

39 Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 215.

40 Qurʾān 15: 92-93; trans. Fakhry.

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find me in the court of resurrection [ʿ*araṣat al-qiyāma*], then ask an angel about me."[41] Then he moaned a [last] moan and died.[42]

Almost as interesting as the story itself is what can be gleaned from the context in which it is set. This source, as in the parallel medieval Christian repentance literature, was concerned largely with people of social standing. The story appears in a section, placed immediately after the section dealing with kings and Sufis, which surveys respectable people; many of the stories in this section are related by Sufis. We are also told specifically what many of the people were repenting of – e. g. a youth repenting of frittering away his time in sport and amusement; another youth rueing his general preoccupation with this world; the contrition of a castellan for possessing wealth; the repentance of a government official for committing fornication; the repentance of a youth for effeminacy and displaying effeminate behaviour; the penitence of a woman circumambulating the Kaʿba; the repentance of a man over unnamed things he had done ; the repentance of an entertainer of the people of Madīna for his profession and his renunciation of entertainment by means of his mother; Dināar the *ʿayyār's* repentance of unspecified sins; the "repentance of a man of love of his songstress slave-girl who diverted him from God;" the repentance of a neighbor of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and so forth.[43]

All of the people in this list are middle to upper class; with the exception of the fornicator and the homosexual, none of these people was a great sinner, and most of them were repenting simply for their own normal worldliness and failure to make God their all-absorbing thought – a standard and crucial element in Sufi life.[44] If the word *ʿayyār* had truly meant "bandit," "thief," or "outlaw," one would, first, have expected Dināar to have repented of those crimes specifically, not merely for his waywardness and lack of suitable devotion to God in his life; and, second, one would also be rather surprised by the inclusion of a hoodlum

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41 Mālik; lit. , an owner/possessor [of power] – according to the textual note, "*mālik khāzin al-nār*." Obviously, some kind of supernatural being other than God is meant here.

42 Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh b. Aḥmad b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-tawwābīn*, Beirut, 1410/1990, pp. 266-267 (# 105).

43 Ibn Qudāma, *Kitāb al-tawwābīn*, pp. 257-272.

44 Vide e. g. al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, p. 156: "For repentance is the first way station of the way stations of those following the spiritual life [*al-sālikīn*]." We have already seen this element in Chapter Two, in the *vita* of the great ascetic Ibrāhīm b. Adham, who was not guilty of any crime either, other than worldliness. Compare this with, for instance, the words with which St. Ephraem of Edessa laments his own human failings in a final address to his readers: "Again at evening I say, 'I shall keep vigil all night, and I shall entreat the Lord with tears, to have mercy on my sins': but when night has come, I am full of sleep... my Lord makes haste to come; and behold my heart trembles and I weep the days of my negligence and know not what excuse to bring. Have mercy on me, Thou that alone art without sin, and save me, Who alone art pitiful and kind … and lead me out of the prison-house of my sins … Remember me that am without defence, and save me, a sinner …" St. Ephraem of Edessa, "The Life of St. Mary the Harlot," in Helen Waddell, *The Desert Fathers: Translations from the Latin*, New York, 1998, pp. 208-209.

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or criminal amongst the government functionaries and ordinary, economically comfortable people on this list.[45] Obviously, the status and respectability of a person's associates, and the social class to which his friends belong, matter greatly in trying to determine how a given person and his profession were viewed in his own historical context; both here and in the next chapter, we shall see that *ʿayyārūn* are repeatedly depicted as consorting with the most respectable and even exclusive circles.

One important piece of evidence regarding the religious associations and the respectability of *ʿayyārs* during the tenth century is supplied by Tanūkhī's *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*. Tanūkhī's testimony is important for several reasons: First, he is an eyewitness to the events he is describing. Second, he was a *qāḍī*, and therefore a member of the religious class; and, like many other clerics,[46] he personally was not a fan of the *ʿayyārs*. Thus, for instance, when Tanūkhī is editorializing in the beginning of his work, he classes "the people of loss/damage [*ahl al-khasāra*] and the *ʿayyārūn*" together.[47] Yet, despite this consciously negative view, he nevertheless provides us with information that allows us to see clearly that *ʿayyārūn* had a connection with the Sufis of Baghdad and with the Sunni religious establishment generally.

Tanūkhī informs us that he was personally present in the *majlis* of Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī, in the days when one of the incessant Sunni-Shiʿite *fitnas* of the Buwayhid era broke out: "the commonalty of Baghdad was stirred up ... civil disorder grew mighty, so [al-Muhallabī] seized a group of the *ʿayyārīn* and bearers of knives [*ḥamalat al-sakākīn*], put them in covered boats, conveyed them to Birūdh [near al-Ahwāz], and jailed them there." Tanūkhī goes on to say that the story became the talk of the town, and in particular, one segment of it:

> Talk of the[se] occurrences increased in the mosques, and [among] the heads of the Sufis, so that [al-Muhallabī] feared a renewal of the *fitna*. So he arrested a group of [the Sufi leaders] and jailed them, fetched Abū al-Sāʾib, the chief *qāḍī* [*qāḍī al-quḍāt*] … and a group of the *qāḍīs*, and the witnesses, and the *fuqahāʾ* – I was among them – in order to reprove them; and the members of the police, that we might believe in their harmfulness [*viz.* , of the Sufi leaders], when the proofs were shown against them.

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45 One might reasonably ask how *ʿayyārī* could be construed as in any way ignoring God, given everything we have just shown about its deep religious component. One must remember, first, that we are speaking in relative terms, and that the lengths to which Dinār goes – starving himself to death and doing nothing but groan, weep, and pray all day – are certainly more God-oriented than his previous behaviour, however commendable that might have been. Second, one must keep in mind that this source is late twelfth-century – from the time of *Samak-i ʿayyār*, in fact – and that the chivalric meaning, which we shall be discussing below, particularly in the next chapter, had largely superseded the religious aspect of *ʿayyārī* by this point. The transformation that the *ʿayyār* movement underwent in the twelfth century, and even more so after the Mongol conquest, is unfortunately outside the scope of this work.

46 *Vide infra*, Chapter Eight, which expounds this antipathy in greater detail.

47 al-Qāḍī Abū ʿAlī al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara wa-akhbār al-mudhākara*, Beirut, 1995, vol. 1, p. 4.

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> It was agreed that he should begin with a man from among the leaders of the Sufis, known as Abū Isḥāq b. Thābit, living in Bāb al-Shām, one of the *rabbāniyyīn*, among his companions …"[48]

Al-Muhallabī, in his attempt to discredit this Sufi leader, proceeds to humiliate the man, dissecting some of his Sufi theology and terminology in order to claim that Abū Isḥāq is really an infidel, and unfit to be preaching to the people because he teaches them follies and errors, and denounces the authorities. Al-Muhallabī accordingly forbade the Sufi from preaching to the people or surrounding himself with a circle of students.[49] This treatment had, presumably, the (from al-Muhallabī's point of view) salutary effect of intimidating the other religious figures into silence on the subject of the exiled *ʿayyārs*. Once again we see the elements of Sufis, *ʿayyārs*, and warfare for Sunnism (in this case, in the form of internecine warfare against the Shiʿites) combined.

And, in fact, if the equation we saw above between *ʿayyārūn* and *fityān* holds good in other contexts as well,[50] then there is another outstanding example in the biographical literature of this potent mix of Sufism, *ʿayyārī*, and holy warfare. al-Samʿānī, in his biographical dictionary, defines the *nisba* "al-Ribāṭī" as follows:

> This *nisba* belongs to the *ribāṭ*, and this is the name of a place in which there are cavalry [*al-khayl*] and which is known for the holy warriors [*ʿurifa bi'l-ghuzāt*]. For when they have settled down in the *thaghr*, and stationed themselves in front of the enemy, repelling their … assault upon the Muslims, then this place is called a *ribāṭ*. God, may He be exalted, said: "From the lining up of horsemen [*ribāṭ al-khayl*] you will frighten them."[Qur'ān 8:60, Sūrat al-Anfāl]

One of his very first entries under this *nisba* is one Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Ribātī al-Marwazī,

> ... among the great shaykhs of the Sufis: he journeyed with Abū Turāb al-Nakhshabī, and came to Baghdad, and Junayd b. Muḥammad used to praise him and exaggerate in depicting him [*yubāligha fī waṣfihī*] … He was versed in knowledge of open things [*ʿulūm al-ẓāhir*] and knowledge of [hidden] truths [*ʿulūm al-ḥaqā'iq*]; and he was among the close friends of Abū Turāb … in his journeys. Al-Junayd used to say: ʿAbdallāh al-Ribāṭī is head of the *fityān* of Khurāsān [*ra'īs fityān Khurāsān*].[51]

This, of course, sounds reminiscent of Aḥmad b. Khiḍrawayh's Nīshāpūrī *ʿayyār* whom he had wanted to invite for dinner, who is also referred to as *ra'īs al-fityān*.

Thus far we have repeatedly mentioned chivalry (*futuwwa/javānmardī*), which was the bonding element of *ʿayyār*-Sufi relations, without ever probing the mean-

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48 Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, vol. 3, p. 144.

49 Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, vol. 3, p. 145.

50 There is no way of ascertaining whether the identification is absolute or not. This author's working supposition, derived from acquaintance with the sources, is that, while all *ʿayyārūn* are by definition *fityān*, not all *fityān* are necessarily *ʿayyārūn*; even though the terms are frequently fungible, one can never assume that they are so absent an explicit statement to that effect in the source in question.

51 Al-Samʿānī, *al-Ansāb*, vol. 3, pp. 43-44.

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ing of this term for *ʿayyārs* and Sufis respectively. At this point, our focus inevitably must shift from the *ʿayyār*-Sufi ties toward an examination of *futuwwa* – chivalry – itself. Clearly, this was a shared value of the *ʿayyārs* and the Sufis; let us now attempt to elucidate precisely what *futuwwa* entailed.

Futuwwa/Javānmardī *(Chivalry)*

First and foremost, *futuwwa* was a code of conduct. The definitions are almost as multifarious as the sources in which they are given, but seem invariably to contain some element of fairness or generosity. In the words of one scholar,

> It would be difficult to give a definition of *futuwwa* capable of covering the significance of this term in every milieu and in every period in which it has been used ... but here we are concerned only with its technical sense as a complex of moral virtues, comprising courage, generosity, liberality, hospitality, unselfishness, and spirit of sacrifice ...[52]

In fact, the first author to devote a treatise to *futuwwa* declares that the definition of *futuwwa* varies with context: "There is a *futuwwa* fit for your behaviour toward God ... yet others toward the pure ones of the past, your sheikh, your brotherhood ..."[53] It is significant, however, that Sulamī's next several pages after this

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52 G. Salinger, "Was the *Futuwwa* an Oriental Form of Chivalry?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 94 (1950), p. 481. The present author disagrees with the rest of Salinger's article; due to his expressed desire to be sociologically *au courant* (p. 481), Salinger ends up quite weak in historical methodology, suffering especially from a lack of historical context. The present author rejects particularly his view of holy warriors as "dubious elements who sought in the Holy War to satisfy their desire for looting." (p. 483) Jürgen Paul's explanation – of the precise incident used by Salinger to state his case, no less – is far more convincing. In this incident, a large group of Khurāsānī Sunni volunteer holy warriors demanded of the Buyid governor of Rayy that he hand over the tax revenue, the *kharāj*, to them, "since it was meant exactly for the purpose they were serving, fighting the infidels and defending the *Dar al-Islam*." (Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 16; cf. *The Sea of Precious Virtues*, p. 216: " ... The *Bayt al-Māl* rightfully belongs to the *ʿulamā'*, the judges, the Koran readers, the poor, the orphans, and the *ghazis*. But [the unjust, tyrannical kings] have taken it all, and have established a treasury for astronomers, physicians, musicians, buffoons, cheats, wine-sellers, and gamblers. '*Woe to them; and again woe to them.* ' Whoever does such or condones it is no Muslim.") Upon the ruler's refusal to hand over the money in support of the *ghazw*, the volunteer warriors subsequently clashed with the Shiʿite Daylamite troops. As Paul observes: "There are clearly two political principles in conflict here; The state (in this case, the Buyid governor) insists on its right to decide on matters of peace and war, and above all, of taxation, whereas the volunteers brandish the banner of their religious legitimation." (Paul, *loc. cit.*) One strongly suspects that Salinger had not read the major chronicles in depth, and was consequently unaware of how frequently Sunni holy warrior bands ended up fighting Shiʿites within the *Dār al-Islām* instead while on their way to the Christian infidels on the frontier. Mottahedeh, too, never doubts the sincerity of the volunteers, and seems to view this episode in much the same light as does Paul – that is, one of conflicting agendas and priorities. (Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 34)

53 al-Sulamī, *al-Futuwwa*, ed. I. al-Thāmirī and M. al-Qadḥāt, ʿAmmān, 1422/2002, pp. 5-6; tr. Tosun Bayrak al-Halveti, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry: Lessons to a Son of the Moment*, New York, 1983, p. 36.

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deal with loyalty and forbearance toward one's friends, and with generosity.[54] Another important ideal is truthfulness,[55] and helping the down and out.[56] As we shall see, these are all important *ʿayyār* virtues.

One Nīshāpūrī Sufi, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Maslama al-Ḥaddād, who died in the 260s/870s, defines *futuwwa* as "the performance of justice [*adā' al-inṣāf*], [together with] the renunciation of the demand for justice."[57] A version of this tradition (also attributed to Abū Ḥafṣ) exists in Persian as well: "*Javānmardī* consists of giving justice [*inṣāf dādan*] but not soliciting justice [for oneself]."[58] That is, a practitioner of *futuwwa* will mete out fairness to others but will not demand it for himself. Another anecdote relates how, when Abū Ḥafṣ was about to leave Baghdad, he was attended by "whomever was in [the city] of the shaykhs and the *fityān*," and they asked him to define *futuwwa* for them. He replies; "*Futuwwa* enjoins action and behaviour toward others, not speech." In the same context Abū Ḥafṣ is asked whether one can identify a *fatā* by any particular sign. He replies: "Yes! Whoever sees the *fityān* and is not ashamed before them by his character and his deeds, is a *fatā*."[59] This particular definition would seem to imply nobility of action and conduct. Abu Ḥafṣ is also quoted in another tradition stating that *futuwwa* means that one "weigh his deeds and affairs at all times by the Qurʾān and the Sunna."[60] Clearly, a religious dimension enters into this last definition.

This same last source gives a whole page of definitions of *futuwwa*. Thus, at one point it quotes definitions, such as Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Tirmidhī's, which explain *futuwwa* as the equal treatment of all persons, regardless of social status: "*Futuwwa* is that the resident and the foreigner are equivalent in your eyes." In a similar vein, *futuwwa* is defined as practicing indiscriminate hospitality toward all, by not distinguishing "between a holy man [*walī*] or an infidel [*kāfir*] eating at one's [house]." We are also treated to the Ḥanbalite understanding of *futuwwa* as the execution of one's duty despite personal pleasure or preferences: "I heard ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal say: My father was asked: 'What is *futuwwa*?' He replied: 'The leaving of what you love for what you fear. '" The famous Sufi Junayd defines *futuwwa* as "The cessation of wrong and the bestowing of generosity," while the almost equally famous al-Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh defines the term as "Adherence to the

54 al – Sulamī, *ibid.* , pp. 6-17.

55 *Ibid.* p. 13; cf. *Samak-i ʿayyār*, vol. 1, p. 65: "Know and be aware that in the world nothing is worth [so much as] the truth, and one must speak the truth anywhere [that one] may be, before [both] high and low, the wise and the foolish, and especially before the king, particularly because we may speak nothing but the truth, for our good name is bound up in *javānmardī* and we ourselves are *javānmardān*."

56 Sulamī, i*bid.* , p. 17.

57 al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 60; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 105.

58 Mustawfi Qazvīnī, *Taʾrīkh-i guzīda*, p. 644.

59 al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 105.

60 al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 60.

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Sunna" and al-Qushayrī himself reports the meaning of the word as "the keeping of promises and the upholding of loyalty [*al-wafā' wa'l-ḥifāẓ*] …"[61]

A different, equally seminal Sufi source states that "It is [a characteristic] of *futuwwa* that the *fatā* should observe five things: faithfulness [*al-amāna*]; guarding [*al-ṣiyāna*]; truthfulness [*al-ṣidq*]; brotherhood; and good deeds [*al-ṣāliḥa*]"[62] This same source quotes the following injunction from Junayd: "Do not concern yourself with ensuring your livelihood; perform your work with which you were charged, for this is the course of action of the noble and the *fityān*."[63] Here, the meaning seems to be once again that one should be concerned with performing one's obligations regardless of personal considerations or predilections.

Another key aspect of *futuwwa*, for the Sufis as for the *ʿayyārs*, was loyalty and patience toward one's brethren in the movement;[64] in fact, Taeschner long ago labeled this quality – friendship – the most salient ideal of *futuwwa*.[65] In this vein, one Baghdadi Sufi, Ruwaym b. Aḥmad b. Yazīd, defined *futuwwa* thus: "That you should forgive your brethren their errors, and not treat them [i. e. the faults] with that for which you need to be forgiven [*viz.* , one must not treat his brother's faults as he treats his own; rather, one should be more lenient toward others' failings than toward his own]"[66]

Perhaps the best definition of Sufi *futuwwa*, however, is that promulgated by one modern scholar who has, insightfully, placed *futuwwa* in its context as a form of spiritual Jihad:

> … La *fotovvat* ou *javānmardī* est une sorte de chevalerie spirituelle, de *jehad* majeur: un combat, non plus armes à la main, mais un combat intérieur pour se conformer à un modèle de vie, pour se perfectionner et travailler à l'épanouissement des forces spirituelles intérieures, pour devenir un "chevalier de l'âme", un "chevalier de la foi", libre de toutes les passions et concupiscences, et de toutes les infirmités et ténèbres de l'âme.[67]

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61 al-Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 302. This is another element of *futuwwa/javānmardī* that is very prominent in *Samak-i ʿayyār*; *vide* e. g. vol. 1, p. 112.

62 al-Sulamī, *al-Muqaddima fī'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Ḥusayn Amīn, Baghdad, 1984, p. 39.

63 *Ibid.* , p. 26.

64 Cf. *Samak-i ʿayyār*, *passim*; Samak, the ideal *ʿayyār* , devotes his entire career to helping his friends. At one point he expounds this philosophy: "We are called *ʿayyārān* by profession, and the profession of *ʿayyār* cannot be [anything] but [that of] *javānmard*, and *javānmardān* by definition perform many deeds, and bear afflictions and sacrifice their lives for others ... O king, we have accepted [Khorshīd Shāh] among us into *javānmardī* and have aided him in his affair, and with one soul with him we have striven only to realize his goal ... (*Samak-i ʿayyār*, vol. 1, p. 65)

65 To be precise, he calls "Freundschaft das hervorstechendste Ideal" of *futuwwa*; F. Taeschner, "Die islamischen Futuwwabünde. Das Problem ihrer Entstehung und die Grundlinien ihrer Geschichte," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 12 (1934), p. 6.

66 al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 149.

67 Ehsan Naraghi, *Ensiegnements et changements sociaux en Iran du VIIe au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1992, p. 12.

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The very idea of spiritual Jihad itself, which is much later than that of Jihad in its early, purely military sense,[68] was developed by those who, like Ibn al-Mubārak, strove to live as pure Muslims while fighting the good fight against Infidels; hence, as noted previously, the double use of the same word, *ribāṭ*, for both a fortress of border warriors and a Sufi monastery. Obviously, if *futuwwa* was thought of as part of Jihad it is easy to see how the *ʿayyārs*, as holy warriors in the Jihad, would have been interested in developing their spiritual perfection in this aspect as well. Thus, when discussing "les compagnons chevaliers," Naraghi notes that theirs was

> une chevalerie spirituelle populaire inséparable (comme l'idéal chevaleresque en général) d'une certaine ferveur religieuse ... L'éthique transmise par l'idéal des compagnons-chevaliers est celle qui conduit l'être à purifier son âme et son cœr, par tout un échelonnement de qualifications morales.[69]

What did *futuwwa* mean for the *ʿayyārs*, though? Although, as we have seen, the *ʿayyārs* were close to the Sufis, the two epithets are not coterminous. In what way, therefore – apart from being more concerned with this world – did their conception of *futuwwa* differ from that of the Sufis? Regarding the pre-Sāmānid *ʿayyārs*, the question is virtually impossible to answer, since no surviving sources from the period that deal with *ʿayyārs* also mention *futuwwa*. This fact accords well with our hypothesis that the meaning of the word *ʿayyār* evolved: if, prior to the ninth century, the word *ʿayyār* meant, quite simply, "Sunni holy warrior who fought in *mutaṭawwiʿ* brotherhoods," it is not surprising that we fail to encounter the word *futuwwa* in an *ʿayyār* context, since no chivalric meaning had yet accrued to the term.

Beginning in the tenth century, however, pieces of evidence begin to appear which suggest that the word *ʿayyār* was indeed acquiring a new, chivalric dimension.[70] Both Ṭabarī and Balʿamī's so-called translation of Ṭabarī mention the word *ʿayyār* in conjunction with *fatā* during the Fourth Fitna, albeit in different places and with different connotations. Ṭabarī does so in a poem which contains the phrase "*al-fatā al-ʿayyār*,"[71] while Balʿamī has his *ʿayyār* declare while defeating a Khurāsāni soldier: 'Take that! For I am *ibn al-fatā*."[72] This is one of our first indications that, by Ṭabarī's time if not earlier, the association in at least one courtier's mind between *ʿayyārī* and *futuwwa* existed.

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68 For the dating see D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, pp. 32-48.

69 Naraghi, *Ensiegnements*, pp. 68-69.

70 What Taeschner referred to as "the knightly ideal" (F. Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften*, p. 18).

71 Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 8, p. 458.

72 Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Balʿamī, *Ta'rīkh-nāmah-i Ṭabarī*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshan, Tehran, 1366, vol. 4, p. 1223.

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Even more intriguing, however, is Balʿamī's use of the word *ʿayyār* anachronistically as a descriptive term for one of the early Muslims. What is particularly exciting about this story is how he has changed Ṭabarī's depiction of the man's character. Ṭabarī's story runs as follows:

> ʿUmayr b. Wahb al-Jumaḥī[73] was sitting with Ṣafwān b. Umayya after the misfortune of the people of Badr from Quraysh [i. e. the Qurashis who fought against the Muslims at the battle of Badr] … ʿUmayr b. Wahb was one of the arrogant young men of Quraysh [*shayṭān min shayāṭīn Quraysh*];[74] he was of those who harmed the Prophet … and his companions … His son Wahb b. ʿUmayr was among the prisoners of Badr …[75]

The story goes on to relate how ʿUmayr and Ṣafwān planned to kill the Prophet. Upon confronting the Prophet in Medina, however, ʿUmayr is convinced of the Prophet's divine inspiration and supernatural knowledge, converts to Islam, and praises Allāh for having brought him to the only correct religion.[76]

Let us now look at what Balʿamī does with this story:

> In the midst of Quraysh there was a man whose name was ʿUmayr b. Wahb al-Jumaḥī, a courageous and brave man although poor [*darvīsh*];[77] he was an *ʿayyār* and performed many deeds of intrepidity and manliness. [*va kārhāy-i tahavvur u mardānegī bisyār kardī*][78]

Moreover, "*rāhhāye bādiye dānestī*" – "he knew the desert roads." The definition of an *ʿayyār* is explicitly synonymous here with a brave, manly person. The element of "one who knows many roads" also implies errantry, which would fit in nicely with the Arabic etymological root of the word. In Balʿamī's time and milieu, accordingly, it seems that when one wanted to describe an admirable and intrepid man, it was natural to call him an *ʿayyār*.

There was yet another essential component of *ʿayyār* chivalry which we can glean from the sources: their considerate treatment of women. Ironically, the same clerical authors of the chronicles who inveigh against the *ʿayyārs* also provide us with invaluable information regarding this chivalric treatment of the fair sex. Ibn al-Jawzī, one of the writers most responsible, through the denigrating epithets he applied to the *ʿayyārs* in his chronicles, for the modern *ʿayyār*-as-bandit paradigm, writes:

> Of this kind are his [Iblīs's] wiles [practised] upon the *ʿayyārīn*: in [their] taking people's [*al-nās*] money, even though they call themselves *fityān* and say: "a *fatā* does not commit fornication and does not lie, and preserves the sacredness of women, and does not

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73 On the historical Abū Umayya ʿUmayr b. Wahb b. Khalaf b. Wahb b. Khudhāfa b. Jumaḥ, see al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi'l-wafayāt*, vol. 23, pp. 89-90. Note that ʿUmayr is described as one of the notables of Quraysh ("*la-hu qadr wa-sharaf*"), not some outlaw or low-status person.

74 Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 1552. This seems to be the best translation, other than the English "young devil" or "hell-raising young men," for "*shayṭān*" in this context.

75 *Ṭabarī*, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 2, p. 472.

76 *Ibid.* pp. 472-478.

77 There is a possible Sufi undertone meant here.

78 Balʿamī, *Ta'rīkh-nāmah-i Ṭabarī*, vol. 3, p. 147.

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> violate their modesty." But in spite of this, they do not restrain themselves from seizing people's property, forgetting the bad blood they cause by taking property. They call their order (*ṭarīqa*) *futuwwa*. Sometimes one of them swears by the truth of the *futuwwa* [*bi-ḥaqq al-futuwwa*], and abstains from food and drink. They dress trousers (*sarāwīl*) upon the initiate into their rite [*madhhab*], as the Sufis clothe the initiate in a patched garment (*muraqqaʿa*) … Frequently one of them boasts of his endurance to affliction.[79]

Obviously, Ibn al-Jawzī is well aware of the chivalric and even the Sufi aspect of the phenomenon; note his use of Sufi terminology and imagery – *ṭarīqa*, *madhhab*, the special clothing and the parallel drawn with the Sufis at the end.

This interesting information about the *ʿayyār* attitude toward women is also borne out by accounts in the chronicles themselves. Ibn al-Jawzī describes at various points the chivalrous behaviour of individual *ʿayyār* leaders toward women. One such *ʿayyār*, nicknamed Aswad al-Zabad and active in the 360s/970s, bought a slave-girl for a thousand dīnārs. When Aswad wished to have his way with her, however, the girl demurred; upon his asking what she did not like about him, she replied that she simply disliked him. He then inquired "What do you want?" She responded: "That you sell me." Aswad said that he would do better than that, however, took her to the *qāḍī*, manumitted her, and bestowed one thousand dīnārs upon her; "and all the people [*al-nās*] were amazed by his generosity, the more so since he did not punish her for her dislike towards him."[80] Another Baghdādi *ʿayyār*, al-Burjumī, active in the 420s/1030s, was reported never to harm a woman nor to take anything from her;[81] in the words of one of Ibn al-Jawzī's fellow chroniclers, "[al-Burjumī] ruined the people [*al-nās*] in Baghdad, and there were many tales about him; yet together with this he had *futuwwa*, and *muruwwa*; he would not stand in the way of a woman, nor of one who had submitted to him."[82]

For the fullest exposition of the *ʿayyārūn* as practitioners of *futuwwa*/*javānmardī*, however, one must turn to the eleventh-century *Qābūs nāmah*. The excerpt is from the chapter entitled "On the Institution of *Javānmardī*":[83]

> Know, O my son, regarding the profession of *javānmardī*, first what *javānmardī* is and of what it is composed … Know, O my son, that the philosophers have formed an image – in words and not physically – of virtue and wisdom. To that image they have attributed body, soul, senses and ideas, in human fashion and declared: the body of that shape is "*javānmardī*" … That class whose alloted portion is body are the cavalry-soldiers [*sipāhī-*

79 Abū'l Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *Tallbīs Ibīs*, Cairo, 1415/1995, p. 405.

80 *Idem.* , *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 235.

81 *Ibid.* , vol. 15, p. 233. Sabari also notes (*Mouvements populaires*, p. 83): "On racontait ... de lui qu'il ne molestait jamais une femme et ne lui prenait jamais rien."

82 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 439.

83 Levy translates this word as "nobility" but the present writer thinks "chivalry" would be more appropriate. The translation used throughout this passage is a combination of this writer's own and Levy's, which was highly impressionistic in key places

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yān] and the knights-errant [*ʿayyārān*] and the merchants, who are given the name "*javānmardī*" by people …[84]

After a discussion of the next class – *faqīrs* – our author returns to the theme of *javānmardī* and connects it specifically with *ʿayyārān*:[85]

(243)[181] ... "*javānmardī*" consists of three things: One, that everything you promise you fulfill; two, that you do not diverge from [or oppose] the truth; three, that you see a deed through in patience … Know then that the noblest of *ʿayyārs* [*javānmardtarīn-i ʿayyārān*] is he who is endowed with several virtues: One of them is that it behooves him to be brave [*delīr*] and manly. Then he must exercise patience in every action, be pure in his sexual life and in his thinking. He must never desire other men's loss for his own benefit; on the contrary he must regard as proper the incurrence of loss for himself in order to benefit his friends. Let him never oppress the weak or let his hand be stretched out extortionately against prisoners; he must grant aid to those who are deprived of means and he must repel harm from any who suffer wrong.

As he speaks the truth, let him listen to it, granting justice of his own body [*az tan-i khūd*]. To that table at which he has eaten bread he must not do evil. It behooves him never to requite good with evil, always to hold hypocrisy a disgrace and not to regard hardship as a misfortune ... . [182]

I have heard that one day … a group of *ʿayyārān* were seated together in the mountains when a man approached and after greeting them said, "I am an envoy to you from the (244) *ʿayyārān* of the city. They send you greetings and request that you will hear three questions which I will put to you. If you can answer, they will consent to own themselves your inferiors, but, if you cannot, they demand that you acknowledge their superiority."

"Speak," said they.

Whereupon he asked, "What is 'nobility' and what distinguishes 'ignoble' conduct from 'nobility'? Lastly, suppose an *ʿayyār* to be seated at the roadside as a man comes by. Suppose, further, that a little while later another man comes by, with a sword in his hand for the purpose of slaying the first man, and demands of the *ʿayyār* whether he has seen a man of such-and-such a description passing. What reply should he give? If he says that such a man did pass that way, that constitutes a direction. If he says the man did not pass that way, it is a lie. Both of these two [i. e. people who would answer in one of these ways] are indubitably not *ʿayyārān*."

When they had listened to these queries, the mountain *ʿayyārs* looked at each other. Now there was amongst them a man … he rose and said: "I shall give the answer … The fundamental principle of 'nobility' is to perform everything you promise; the distinction between 'nobility' and 'ignoble' conduct lies in endurance; and the response to be made by that *ʿayyār* is that he must immediately take a step onwards, seat himself again and then say, 'While I have been sitting here nobody has passed. ' Thus he will have spoken the truth."

When you have comprehended these words the nature of (245) *javānmardī* will be plain to you. After we have mentioned the *javānmardī* which is in *ʿayyārān*, in the cavalrymen

84 Kaykāvūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs b. Wushmgīr b. Ziyār, *Kitāb-i naṣīḥat nāmah, maʿrūf bah Qābūs nāmah*, ed. Amīn ʿAbdulmajīd Badavī, Tehran, 1963, pp. 179-181; *A Mirror for Princes: the Qābūs Nāma*, tr. Reuben Levy, London, 1951, p. 242.

85 In the following section the Persian page numbers will be inserted in brackets while the pages of Levy's translation will appear in parentheses.

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> [*sipāhīyān*] also the appearance of this practice is a condition most perfectly fulfilled; soldiery is the most perfect form of *ʿayyārī*. In the soldier, generosity, hospitality, open-handedness, gratitude, chastity and the condition of being abundantly armed should be present in a higher degree than in the rest of mankind, but while a cavilling tongue, regard for self, obedience and submission to command are [183] merits in a soldier, they are faults in an *ʿayyār* ...
> (258)[190] On behalf of your friends keep three things open: the door of your house, a place at your table and the fastenings of your purse, to the full extent of your powers.
> Never utter a lie; ignoble men betray themselves by their lying and the whole essence of ignoble conduct lies in falsehood. Should a man throw himself upon your chivalry, then, even if he has slain the one dearest to you and though he be your greatest enemy, once he has surrendered to you, admitted his helplessness and entrusted himself to your chivalry rather than that of any other man, though your life is likely to be imperilled by your act, let it go. Have no fear; fight for your life on his behalf and thus achieve 'nobility.'

The royal author excoriates falsehood, covetousness and treachery, and enjoins generosity and kindness. He concludes: "The greatest of men in the world is he who lives in the manner I have described, for he will inherit both this world and the next."

In at least one eleventh century courtly circle, then, *ʿayyārī* was regarded as a noble and praiseworthy form of chivalric conduct very similar to the knight-errantry familiar to scholars of Western European history.[86] This long excerpt clearly presents the main calling of *ʿayyārī* at this time as a code of honourable conduct, of virtue, honour, truthfulness – albeit in a somewhat idiosyncratic, attenuated form – loyalty and generosity; in a word, of chivalry. It is something desirable and to be prized, even by a prince. The religious element still exists (note the connection to *faqīrs* and Sufis as well as the conclusion about inheriting "both this world and the next"), but it is now subordinate to what can only be called the knightly.

In conclusion, then, we see that, from the tenth century at latest, to be an *ʿayyār* meant to be a chivalric person. We also see that in many sources – including Sufi religious texts – *ʿayyārī* is portrayed as a noble calling. This positive, chivalric portrayal raises an important question, which lies at the root of the confusion surrounding the essential meaning and definition of *ʿayyārī*: how does one reconcile the *ʿayyār* avowal of chivalric ideals with their oftentimes violent behaviour? This issue has puzzled many previous scholars (most notably Cahen), and has led some of them to conclude either that the *ʿayyārs* were Robin-Hood types of outlaws[87] or that there were two, mutually contradictory and irreconcilable definitions of *ʿayyārs*.

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86 This point is expanded upon at length in Chapter Eight.

87 Here one can see the Marxist influence on Cahen; to anyone not predisposed to see the world in terms of proletarian class war, the evidence surely suggests the noble Götz von Berlichingen model far more than the Robin Hood one.

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There is another possibility, however, one which has not hitherto been proposed: that chivalry of necessity implied violence, and that the *bellatores* of medieval Islamic society, as of medieval European society, frequently used violence in ways that the non-fighting portion of the population – particularly the clerics – vehemently disliked. It is this inseparable entwining of chivalry and violence that forms the subject of our next and final chapter.

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8. The *ʿAyyārs* in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Chivalry (*Futuwwa*) and Violence

> Who does not know that kings and princes derive their origin from men ignorant of God who aspire to lord over their equals by pride, plunder, treachery, murder, and lastly by every kind of crime, at the instigation of the Devil, the prince of this world?
>
> – Gregory VII to Hermann, Bishop of Metz[1]

At the very beginning of this work, we saw that scholars have tended to set up a dichotomy when researching the *ʿayyārs*: **either** they were chivalric knights, **or** they engaged in all sorts of distasteful, violent activities *which necessarily meant* that they were low-class ruffians, robbers and brigands. That is, scholars of the medieval Islamic world have implicitly assumed that shady behaviour denoted a particular social status. Thus, they have been puzzled by the conflicting descriptions and reports of *ʿayyārs*. What is one to make of these errant "youths" [*javānmardān/fityān*] who are described as noble practitioners of chivalric virtues [*javānmardī/futuwwa*],[2] as a group to which rulers such as the Ziyārids were proud to belong, and yet also as engaging in, for instance, the extortion of protection money? What is one to make of noble dynasties such as the Samānids, whose biographies proudly proclaim that the dynasty's eponymous founder was an *ʿayyār*?

The answer to this question becomes clearer when one examines a parallel group of militant errant 'youths' who exhibited many of the same traits as these Islamic *javānmardān*, and yet were by no means low-class ruffians and brigands: namely, the chivalric knights of medieval western Europe. "Youths" [*juvenes*] figure prominently in twelfth-century French sources;

> ... the description applied to warriors and was used to assign them to a clearly determined stage in their careers ... the 'youth' ... was already an adult person ... The stages of 'youth' can ... be defined as the period in a man's life between his being dubbed knight and his becoming a father.[3]

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1 Cited in Philippe Buc, "*Principes gentium dominantur eorum*: Princely Power between Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Twelfth-Century Exegesis," in T. N. Bisson, ed., *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 310.

2 Literally, "Youth[ness]"; see F. Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften im Islam: Texte zur Geschichte der Futuwwa*, Zurich, 1979, p. 13.

3 G. Duby, "Youth in aristocratic society," *The Chivalrous Society*, tr. C. Postan, Berkeley, 1977, pp. 112-113.

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William Marshal of England, for instance, was considered a "youth" until age forty-five.[4] One of the most important aspects of the life of these "youths" was that they were **errants,** engaging in trouble-making as well as high adventure in the course of their wanderings;[5] moreover "This life of vagabondage was originally considered to be a necessary part of a young man's development ... A 'youth's' journey was not usually a solitary one ... the 'youth' found himself caught up in a band of 'friends' who 'loved each other like brothers. '"[6] These bands usually had a leader, who was also a 'youth. ' In these qualities – errantry, banding together in a sworn brotherhood with a leader – we see once again a strong parallel to *ʿayyār* behavior.[7]

Of course, what not only these 'youths', but also their aristocratic parents, did most was engage in predatory violence for their own profit and goals.[8] In fact, Louis the Fat's advisor Abbot Suger (d. 1151) sings the praises of his king for never having brought disorder in the realm "as is the custom of other *juvenes*." Louis, moreover, frequently fought to protect and maintain public order – not from the violence of ordinary bandits and low-class ruffians, but from that of nobles, such as Eudes, Count of Corbeil, enumerated among those who "take pleasure in endless pillage, trouble the poor, destroy churches."[9] It thus sounds as though – at least according to the clerical chroniclers – *ʿayyārs* behaved in much the same fashion as their Christian knightly counterparts.[10]

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4 Note that in the enormous twelfth-century Persian romance *Samak-i ʿayyār* the eponymous hero's foster father and fellow "youth," Shoghāl Pīl Zūr, must be at least that age.

5 See Chapter One on the meaning of the word *ʿayyār* as errant.

6 Duby, "Youth in Aristocratic Society,"pp. 113-114. Cahen describes the Islamic "youths" as having lived at this time "en petites collectivités ... et ... en dehors de toute attache familiale ... s'associant pour mener en commun la vie la plus confortable possible, dans l'ambience de solidarité, de dévouement mutuel, de 'camaraderie' ..." ("Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain," pp. 32-33. Cahen also hazards a guess that there was no religious program to the *fityān/javānmardān*. This author knows of no Shiʿite *fityān*, however; and the discussion below of *ʿayyār* violence demonstrates a clear Sunni partisanship – as do, ironically, nearly all of Cahen's and Sabari's examples.)

7 The communal brotherhood aspect of the *ʿayyārs* appears in sources as diverse as Ibn al-Jawzī's *Talbīs Iblīs* and *Muntaẓam*, on the one hand, and the *Qābūs-nāmah* and *Samak-i ʿayyār* on the other.

8 *Vide* C. Bouchard, "*Strong of Body, Brave and Noble": Chivalry and Society in Medieval France*, Ithaca, 1998, p. 81, "Sometimes they just rode around in gangs, terrorizing the countryside, until reined in by the local bishop or by fathers whose patience had finally snapped."

9 R. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford, 1999, p. 16.

10 Taeschner and von Hammer-Purgstall were convinced of this point, at least with regard to the *futuwwa* generally if not the *ʿayyārs* specifically; *vide* F. Taeschner, "Die islamischen Futuwwabünde. Das Problem ihrer Entstehung und die Grundlinien ihrer Geschichte," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* N. F. 12 (1934), p. 7, and J. von Hammer-Purgstall, "Sur la chevalerie des Arabes antérieure à celle de l'Europe, sur l'influence de la première sur la seconde," *Journal Asiatique* 4th series, 13 (1849), p. 1.

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In medieval Burgundy, "secular elites are among those most frequently blamed" for violence, robbery and pillage, to the point where the viscount of Macon, for instance, is characterized as "the morning-, evening-, and night-wolf of our land."[11] Stories of armed robbery, illegal extortion, and violent behaviour on the part of the medieval knightly class abound. Bernard Grossus, lord of Brancoin, was reputed to have made a spectral appearance before a Cluniac monk, shortly after his death in 1072, in order to beg prayers on his own behalf. According to this nobleman's own ghostly testimony, "'more than anything, the thing that torments me is the construction of that castle nearby,' whence, according to the story, 'robbers often used to burst out and plunder at large, any way they could. '"[12] Obviously, these "robbers" were not some proletarian underclass, but Bernard's own knights.

Despite the lugubrious example of his father's posthumous torment, Bernard's heir (and subsequent descendants, for many generations) continued Bernard's knightly practices; Bernard's son, the new lord of Brancoin, "confessed to seizing merchants and their goods who were passing through his land, a sin that he then compounded by extending his exactions to all travelers, including pilgrims to Cluny."[13] Similarly, Simon de Montfort, the greatest English lord of the thirteenth century, was said by the chroniclers to have extorted money "wherever he could;" and he himself confessed in his last will and testament to having taken illicitly the goods of his own peasants.[14] Leading retinues of armed men, stealing oxen and other valuables from peasants, taking a cut from merchants, levying illegal tolls and exactions upon those over whom one had no legal jurisdiction[15] – all of this sounds terribly familiar to the reader of the Islamic chroniclers' accounts of *ʿayyār* activities.

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11 G. Smith, "*Sine rege, sine principe*: Peter the Venerable on Violence in Twelfth-Century Burgundy," *Speculum* 77 (2002), p. 12.

12 Smith, "*Sine rege*," p. 12.

13 Smith, "*Sine rege*," p. 13.

14 J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 58.

15 For numerous examples of this in the European context, see T. N. Bisson, *Tormented Voices: Power, Crisis and Humanity in Rural Catalonia 1140-1200*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998, *passim*. Bisson also shows how in certain instances the violent behaviour of the knightly class was in effect a contest for lordship, somewhat similar to the kind of conflict we have seen in the Islamic context between the *mutaṭawwiʿa* and the Buyid governor of Rayy regarding the right to the revenues. On p. 82 Bisson treats the case of one particular lord who, for example, seized donkeys and pigs, sheep and goats: "This is hardly the account of a raid. Guilelm has moved in on the Count's lordship in force, demanding maintenance for his knights, and importing his own bailiffs … to carry out his distraints. Making exception for a few violent incidents, what shocks here is the audacity of a lord-baron claiming the fullness of lordship in a comital domain where people believed he had no right …" Similarly, Simon de Montfort had no qualms about extorting 500 marks from a burgess; this was just one among the many "tyrannical practices of oppression and extortion which seemed to inform Montfort's government of Gascony …" (Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, p. 99).

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The salient point is that this activity was, as Cahen himself pointed out so long ago,[16] not limited to the *ʿayyārs* at all but was, rather, common to the entire upper stratum of society. We know that all the ruling class of Christendom was engaging in these practices, from the lowliest knight, through middling castellans and on up to the great dukes and kings – and this parallels what we see in the Islamic world. It was not the *ʿayyārs* alone who were unjustly exacting money from the poor and the middle class; we are told explicitly, more than once, that everybody else of any social or political standing was doing it too, from Turkish officials to the "*sulṭān*."

One might well wonder why, such being the case, scholars have not defined other societal positions (such as "*sulṭān*," for instance) as 'bandits' or proletarian ruffians as they have done with the *ʿayyārs*. The reason for this lack of consistency, of course, is that scholars feel that they understand the role and meaning of, say, a Turkish *ʿamīd*; therefore, regardless of how many of these men they have seen accused of unjust practices in the sources, they do not try to define an *ʿamīd* or a *shiḥna* as a bandit.

In the case of the *ʿayyārs*, on the other hand, since none of the early scholars trying to define the term from scratch was reading the more courtly literature – written almost entirely in Persian – they accepted unquestioningly the scathing remarks of the Arabic chroniclers, simply took at face value the latter's fulminations against the *ʿayyārūn*, and interpreted these according to their own understanding of what kind of people, and what layer of **modern** society, engages in such practices. What they have done is, in essence, equivalent to defining the word 'king' from Gregory VII's definition of the word given in the epigraph to this chapter. While such an approach can tell us a lot about the attitudes of certain segments of medieval society towards kings and secular rulers generally, or about the practices of certain kings, it completely misses the prime function and essence of kingship. In the same way, by their uncritical attitude toward clerical remarks regarding the *ʿayyārūn*, modern scholars have completely misapprehended who and what the *ʿayyārs* were, and the role they played in society.

This is not to say that lower-class crime did not exist; merely that this is not what the *ʿayyārs* were nor what they were engaging in – common crime normally does not interest our sources. Again, this closely parallels what one finds in the medieval European record:

> Of course, ordinary crimes of the sort to be expected – robbery, assault, and the like – and committed by the most ordinary farmers and carpenters, clearly [occurred] … Yet the common concern of our evidence points unmistakably in another direction. What particularly worries all our witnesses is not primarily common or garden crime … but the violence of knights … As Europeans moved into one of the most significant periods

16 Cahen notes the *ʿayyār* imposition of protection money "which, *following the example of certain great men*, they extended over the sūqs for the sake of the spoils that fell to them." (s. v. "Futuwwa", *EI²*, cited in Chapter One; emphasis added)

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> of growth and change in their early history, they increasingly found the proud, heedless violence of the knights, their praise for settling any dispute by force, for acquiring any desired goal by force on any scale attainable, an intolerable fact of social life … chivalry could be praised to the heavens at the same time it could be so feared as a dark and sinister force …[17]

Keeping this contemporaneous historical context in mind, we are better able to understand *ʿayyār* activities that strike the modern Western mind as discordant or alien to chivalric conduct.

There is a description, for instance, in the Persian mystical treatise *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* regarding the beginnings of the career of the illustrious Sufi and important member of the volunteer holy warrior (*mutaṭawwiʿ*) tradition, Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ:[18]

> *shāh* of the people of the [Divine] presence ... Abū ʿAlī Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ, among the *ṣaʿālīk*[19] of the Sufis, and among their great ones … In the beginning he was an *ʿayyār*, and he held the road [*rāh dāshtī*] between Marv and Bāvard. He had at all times an inclination for virtue, and magnanimity and chivalrousness were joined in his nature, such that if there was a woman in a body of travelers he would not attack it, nor would he take the goods of anyone who was of narrow means; he let remain something with each one in proportion to his means, until the time when a [certain] merchant went from Marv. They said to [the merchant]: "Take a guard, because Fuḍayl is on the road." He said: "I have heard that he is a God-fearing man."[20]

The text goes on to inform us that this intelligent man hired a Qurʾān reader instead of a guard to intone the holy text aloud during the journey; Fuḍayl became a penitent upon hearing the words of the Qurʾān, gave up his old life and the world generally, and headed off to become a Sufi ascetic in Mecca.[21] Nicholson translates the key words "*rāh dāshtī*" as "practicing brigandage,"[22] but that would be, rather, "*rāh zadan*". "Holding the road" probably means here just what it says: that Fuḍayl commanded or commandeered control of the road, either at his own or someone else's behest, and took a toll or protection money (whichever one chooses to call it) for keeping the road safe. In both Christendom and the Islamic world at this time, this was a very common practice among knights, and one universally loathed and condemned by everyone else.[23]

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17 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, pp. 28-29.

18 *Vide supra*, Chapter Two.

19 Nicholson translates this as "paupers." Like the word *ʿayyār*, *ṣaʿālīk* is another unclear and poorly understood term. The present author does not presume to define it.

20 Al-Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjub*, p. 120.

21 This is yet another example of the close sufi-*ʿayyār* connection we discussed in the previous chapter.

22 R. A. Nicholson, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 97.

23 For merchant and peasant complaints in the European context about the illegal lordly and knightly imposition of tolls and exactions, *vide* Bisson, *Tormented Voices*, pp. 23, 72, 85, and so forth. Even when toll-taking was practised by someone with an undisputed, rather than a self-arrogated, right to do so (e. g. the king), payment was grudging and evasion common

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The line between legitimate and illegitimate violence was far blurrier in the Muslim world during the period we are examining (800-1055); for, in contrast to the High Medieval European example, the trend during this period was *not* toward greater centralization and development of the state, but rather toward greater fragmentation and centrifugalisation.[24] In the tenth century, "as far as military affairs are concerned, there was no direct rule, not even in the central lands controlled by the Sāmānids." There are instead "strata" of intermediaries – both the *dihqāns* and "religious dignitaries and leaders of religiously legitimated (and at least sometimes religiously motivated) fighters."[25]

This point – the great weakness of the state, and the limited extent to which it was able to provide security – is exceedingly important, because it creates the historical context necessary for comprehending the consequent existence of the societal forces that arose to fill in this gap militarily – Paul's "legitimierte Gewalt." This was an era which regularly saw official governmental troops supplemented by extra-governmental paramilitary organisations, in many cases with the blessing of both the government itself and of the larger society. Recognising the large role played by extra-governmental forces in this period, however, goes against the common instinct of scholars to focus overwhelmingly on the *mamlūk* slave-soldier institution and to view it, in effect, as the only legitimate military force (with the exception of the Buyids' Daylamite troops) from the ninth century onwards. The corollary of this strong focus on the *mamlūks* has been that the native Muslims are viewed as having been passive sheep.[26]

While it is true that the military slaves known as *mamlūks* were undoubtedly central to Islamic society, they were never the only force in the field, least of all in the troubled times between the beginning of ʿAbbāsid *faineance* and the com-

(for examples of evasion of kingly tolls, see M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300-900*, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 275; 678). In the Islamic context, note for example the tradition, cited in Anon., *The sea of precious virtues (Baḥr al-Favā'id): a medieval Islamic mirror for princes*, tr. and ed. Julie Scott Meisami, Salt Lake City, 1991, p. 139: "When you see a toll-taker, draw your sword and kill him;" for more inveighing against toll – and tithe-taking, *vide ibid.,* p. 150.

24 Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 7.

25 Paul, *The State and the Military*, pp. 9-10.

26 See, for instance, M. Cook, "Islam: A Comment," in *Europe and the Rise of Capitalism*, ed. J. Baechler *et alii*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 132-133: "... the systematic tendency [was] for military force in Islamic history to be imported from outside civil society ... With regard to the *mamlūk* phenomenon, we have to do with a pattern that has again been remarkably prominent in Islamic history – it lasted from the ninth into the twentieth century, and in its heyday extended from Spain to central Asia. It is rather as if the core of the Hanoverian troops at the battle of Culloden had been black slaves, freshly imported from West Africa in each generation ... To put the point the other way round: it is remarkably hard to find in Islamic history instances of what might be called citizen armies – armies locally recruited, by a state identified with the area in question, from a settled population that was not tribal. (One of the rare exceptions is perhaps the military basis of the Ṣaffārid state in ninth-century Sīstān.)"

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ing of the Saljuqs. Jürgen Paul has drawn attention to this crucial point in his response to the questions of Boaz Shoshan and others regarding the alleged absence of military and social initiative commonly attributed by researchers to native Muslim populations in the medieval period:[27]

> ... It has not been proved that Muslims, town dwellers and even rural people, were not, at least at times, in some places and to a certain extent, able, and sometimes even entitled, to look after their affairs (including problems of internal and external security). The stress laid on military slavery tends to obfuscate the degree to which free Muslims wielded weapons.[28]

Paul also subsequently demonstrated empirically that the Eastern lands of the Caliphate, at least, witnessed a wide array of native-born, free Muslim leadership groups and initiatives, particularly armed ones,[29] confirming in this both the tenor of Mottahedeh's research and Bulliet's observation that "Popular political quietism and secure, bureaucratized, imperial rule … have no place in the history of this period."[30] This whole question has otherwise been terribly underresearched, no doubt partly because such groups of armed free Muslims appear to have been most prominent in precisely those periods of Islamic history (the Ṣaffārid, Sāmānid, Būyid and Ghaznavid eras) that have been most neglected by modern scholars.[31] The persistent testimony in our sources (some of which we shall be examining below) regarding military forces comprising large groups of armed *mutaṭawwiʿa* and *ʿayyārān*, in the Sāmānid period in particular, tend to confirm Paul's analysis and his evidence, for these groups were clearly not composed of slave warriors.

In short, to properly categorize the *ʿayyārs*, we must first understand and contextualize their violence historically, particularly in those cases where such violence met with the disapproval of the religious clerics, the *ʿulamā'*. For it is important to remember that not every case of *ʿayyār* violence occurred during the course of internecine civil warfare (*fitna*), nor did every such exercise of force

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27 *Vide e. g.* B. Shoshan, "The 'Politics of Notables' in Medieval Islam," *Asian and African Studies* 20 (1986), p. 210: "Why is [it] that despite the uninterrupted existence of urban life in the House of Islam, town dwellers were not entitled nor were they able to claim the right to handle their own finances and taxation, to supervise public works, to decide about matters such as fortifications and food provisions, to control weights and measures in the markets and, above all, to make war and conclude peace."

28 Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 5.

29 *Vide* the section on "legitimate" and "illegitimate" movements in Paul's *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler*, pp. 93-139.

30 R. Bulliet, "The Political-Religious History of Nishapur in the Eleventh Century," D. S. Richards, ed. *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, p. 71. Mottahedeh's entire monograph, *Loyalty and Leadership*, is an analysis of the pervasive societal urge to band together into extra-governmental common associations during this period.

31 It is thus not surprising that Paul, one of the very few researchers to have extensively studied the Sāmānid period, should have been the one to have raised this question.

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meet with clerical disapproval. Even during those years and in the same sources where the *ʿayyārs* are excoriated, we still find clear cases of the *ʿayyārs* acting as volunteer holy warriors, *mutaṭawwiʿa*, particularly in "commanding the good and forbidding wrong" (*al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*), in a manner approved by the authors of those same sources.

One such example of *ʿayyārūn* acting as a military force for the good, at least in the eyes of the chroniclers, can be found in the year 265/878f. In this year the Arab tribes of the area around Dimimmā[32] murdered Jaʿlān the *ʿayyār* because "he used to go out to protect the caravans." Moreover, the government (*al-sulṭān*) was irked enough by the assassination of this *ʿayyār* to send out "a group of the *mawālī*" in search of the beduin perpetrators.[33] Here, then, we see an *ʿayyār* engaged in protecting the roads – one wonders whether he took tolls, legally or illegally, for his services. In any case, it certainly appears as though his activities were officially sanctioned, at least *post facto*.

We can find other cases of *ʿayyārs* acting for the common welfare that were clearly independent of organized authority, however. In the year 352/963 there was a power struggle between Sayf al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān, ruler of the city of Ḥarrān, and his nephew Hibatallāh. The latter came to the people of Ḥarrān, pretended his uncle was dead, and induced them to swear an oath of allegiance to him. Sayf al-Dawla then sent his slave Najā to Ḥarrān seeking Hibatallāh, who fled to Mosul. Najā, as a punishment for the city's innocent support of Hibatallāh, fined Ḥarrān one million dirhams. As a result, the inhabitants

> … brought out their possessions; everything that was worth a *dīnār* [they sold] for a *dirham*, for all the people of the city were selling; there was no one among them to buy because they were being mulcted, so the companions of Najā bought whatever they wanted. The people of the city became poor, and Najā went to Mayyāfāriqīn, leaving Ḥarrān unprotected without a governor; so the *ʿayyārūn* ruled over its people …"[34]

Here, again, the *ʿayyārs* are not in any way being portrayed as exploitative or lawless; on the contrary, they stepped into the leadership vacuum when Ḥarrān was left without a governor, thereby saving the city from anarchy.

In the preceding chapter, we noted the royal author of the *Qābūs Nāmah*'s exhortation to his son to be an *ʿayyār*. This is not the only historical instance of royal *ʿayyārī*; the eponymous founder of the Sāmānid dynasty, Sāmān himself, is proudly proclaimed by a sympathetic chronicler to have begun his illustrious career when, having been moved by a poem exhorting him to greatness, he therefore "became occupied with *ʿayyārī*. After a short time he became ruler over the town of Ashnās."[35] This passage is particularly intriguing because it comes from

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[32] According to Yāqūt (*Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 2, p. 471), "A large town on the Euphrates near to Baghdad ... A large group of *ahl al-ḥadīth* and others traces its ancestry to it."

[33] Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 543; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 327.

[34] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, pp. 547-548; Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, p. 200.

[35] Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, pp. 376-377.

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an anti-Ṣaffārid source, one which is very careful never to refer to the Ṣaffārids as *ʿayyārs*. The fact that it has reserved this term for the Sāmānids, for whom it entertains nothing but approbation, reinforces the sense one has that "*ʿayyār*" must have been a positive, complimentary term at this time. It is also clear from the context of this and other Sāmānid-period references that *ʿayyārī* is primarily connected to knightliness, to the bearing of arms in a military – not a professional bandit – context.

Thus, the same source, when speaking of the Sāmānid ruler Naṣr b. Aḥmad, mentions Naṣr's cousin and rival Abū ʿAlī Ilyās, "who in the beginning engaged in *ʿayyārī*. He became powerful by gaining mastery over Kirmān, and he reigned over it for thirty-seven years."[36] This same Ilyās is also depicted as acting in a highly chivalric manner when fighting with the Būyids, who were trying to wrest control of Kirmān from him. When the puzzled Daylamites inquire why he is treating them so well, Ilyās responds: "During the day, you are my enemies … but at night, in this realm you are my guests; from *muruwwa* I proffer hospitality."[37]

The *ʿayyārūn* are reported, moreover, in several different sources as having continued to play an integral role in the Sāmānid military forces. One curious eleventh-century Arabic work, *al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf*,[38] deals with an incident occurring in Bukhārā under the Sāmānids. In the episode in question, the ruler of China sent envoys to the Sāmānid ruler Naṣr b. Aḥmad. Naṣr sent a commander to meet and escort them, accompanied by *muṭṭawwiʿa*.[39]

The glory of the Sāmānids, their riches, and their multitude of intrepid fighters, are expatiated upon. When the envoys and their escort reach Bukhārā,

> The flags of Bukhārā came out. Bukhārā had one thousand seven hundred banners, and between two hundred and a thousand *ʿayyārs* went out with each flag, *ʿayyārs* alone [*ʿayyārīn khāṣṣat*^{an}], between the standards of the *ghaza*.[40] They [the emissaries] looked at the banners lined up in rows, covering the earth, so that neither cavalryman nor infantryman could be seen for the banners.[41]

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36 Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 380.

37 Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, p. 412.

38 Al-Qāḍī Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd b. al-Zubayr (attributed), *al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf*, ed. M. Ḥamīd Allāh, Kuwait, 1959.

39 Other sources as well confirm that the *mutaṭawwiʿa* were active in Sāmānid campaigns against the infidels; *vide* e. g. Ibn al-Athīr, vol. 7, p. 533, for an account of Ismāʿīl's campaign in 291/903f. against the Turks with the *mutaṭawwiʿa*.

40 The word could be either "*ghazā*" – the raids on infidels, or "*ghuzā*" – the holy warriors themselves. It is also possible to translate the passage "aside from the standards of the holy warriors." In any case, the meaning is the same: the *ʿayyārūn* are in some way connected with the holy warriors in the official Sāmānid forces.

41 *al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf*, p. 145. Note that the English translation of Ghāda al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddūmī (*The Book of Gifts and Rarities*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996) is inaccurate here on the most crucial point.

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The envoys then walk through the city, which is adorned with silk and costly fabrics, and see more magnificent and awe-inspiring sights. They are convinced that "There cannot be a greater king in all Islamdom."[42]

There are several important points to note in conjunction with this passage. Obviously, if a ruler wants to impress people with his magnificence and military prowess he does not trot out his highwaymen and brigands for an organized exhibition. The fact that the *ʿayyārs* took part in this demonstration of the ruler's might – and in a very prominent fashion – suggests, on the contrary, that they had a specific and valued place either at court or in the army. This role, moreover, is explicitly stated to have been connected to holy warfare. Also, the *ʿayyārs* are here said to have comprised both cavalry and infantry – and one must have money to be a cavalryman.

Under this same Naṣr b. Aḥmad (who had great difficulties with various rebellious relatives),[43] the *ʿayyārān* continued to play an important, legitimate military role. For instance, the *ʿayyārān* of Herat apparently constituted an important part of the pro-Naṣr forces resisting the takeover of the city by Naṣr's brother and rival, Abū Zakariyyāʾ Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl; they are singled out for exemplary punishment in order to break the back of the resistance to Abū Zakariyyāʾ's rule:

> ... the amīr Abū Zakariyyāʾ arrived and gave the governorship to Qaratekin [?], and in the city there was great disturbance, so they seized [some] of the *ʿayyārān* and killed all of them [viz. all of the ones they had seized], and they set on fire the gates of the market-places of the town and the fortress, and they destroyed one of the walls in order to render the city tranquil.[44]

The Persian literary sources from this period confirm the historical accounts. We mentioned Rūdakī's poem already in the last chapter, but the *Shāhnāmah* as well contains an *ʿayyār*. We find there a story about an indigent man named Haftvād and the mythical worm that gives him preternatural luck and success. In the course of the story we are introduced to Haftvād's son Shāhūy, described as "ill-made and ill-spoken."[45] Firdawsī goes on, though, to describe the brave fighting of Shāhūy and his army. After Shāh Ardashīr has managed to kill the luck-

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42 *al-Dhakhā'ir wa'l-tuḥaf*, p. 148.

43 *Vide* R. Frye, *Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement*, Costa Mesa, 1996, pp. 51-52.

44 al-Isfizārī, *Rawḍat al-jannāt fī Ta'rīkh madīnat Harāt*, vol. 1, p. 385. The *ʿayyārān* apparently played an important part in the armies of Naṣr's brothers and rivals as well. Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 209) reports that in the year 317/929 there was a jailbreak in Bukhārā, which released the three brothers of the Sāmānid ruler al-Saʿīd Naṣr b. Aḥmad, "with a group of those who were with them of the Daylamites, the ʿAlids, and the *ʿayyārūn*. They gathered together, and there gathered to them those who supported them from the army; their leader was Sharwīn al-Jīlī and others from among the officers." *ʿAyyārs* here are obviously important, key people – on a par with Daylamite military figures, ʿAlids and army officers.

45 Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah*, Moscow, 1968, vol. 7, p. 145.

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bringing worm by stratagem, he vanquishes Haftvād's army and takes Haftvād prisoner along with "Shāhūy his *ʿayyār*, who was his eldest son and his general (*sālār*)."[46] Here, *ʿayyār* must mean some kind of military commander, roughly parallel to *sālār*. It seems unlikely that either Shāhūy's social background or his being uncouth is of significance; the word does not appear in the context of his personal qualities. The fact is that he is not called an *ʿayyār* until he leads armies, and the word appears in close proximity to *sālār* as well.

One can extrapolate a fair amount from these historical examples – for instance, that *ʿayyārs* constituted a legitimate military force, one the ruling dynasty was proud to belong to. When added to the testimony we saw in the previous chapters regarding *ʿayyār* connections to volunteer Sunni religious warfare, to Sufism, and to chivalry (*futuwwa/javānmardī*), the picture becomes much clearer, and stands in sharp contrast to the typical view of *ʿayyārī* currently prevalent among scholars, and to the largely-negative depiction in the Arabic, clerically-authored chronicles from which that view was lifted wholesale.

But if this is what *ʿayyārī* was and stood for, were the Baghdadi *ʿulamā'* who seem to be so critical of the *ʿayyārūn* unaware of all this? That they were, on the contrary, well-aware that there was more to the *ʿayyārūn* than they chose to include in their chronicles becomes apparent in the passages from the chroniclers cited in the previous chapter regarding *ʿayyār courtoisie* toward women. Given the awareness of clerical authors of this aspect of *ʿayyār* behaviour, and of the principles of *futuwwa* motivating the *ʿayyārūn*, one must ask why the portrayals of the *ʿayyārūn* in these authors' historical accounts are so negative, to the point where Ibn al-Jawzī, for instance, never mentions in his chronicle (which, as we have just seen in the previous chapter, he freely does elsewhere) that there was any kind of ideology involved in their way of life. Indeed, one could very well take the issue a step further and ask why the attitude of virtually **all** the Arabic-writing clerics (for instance, al-Tanūkhī) toward the *ʿayyārūn* is so condemnatory, while the Persian books of courtly provenance, such as the *Qābūs Nāmah* and *Samak-i ʿayyār*, are, on the contrary, so laudatory.

Close consideration of the problem shows that Jürgen Paul's explanation of conflicting loyalties, which we addressed briefly in Chapter Two, is key to answering the question:

> If the state, in order to build military might, has to rely upon active participation of non-statal groups, it will most probably have to look for a legitimizing rationale: it has to give reasons for participation in military activities that are liable to convince a satisfactory number of volunteers and to ensure sufficient motivation ... Loyalty, however, is not to the state as such and not even to the ruler, but to the legitimizing purpose and eventually to the persons embodying this purpose (leaders of volunteer troops or specialists for legitimation as [*sic*] e. g. religious leaders ...).[47]

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46 Firdawsī, *Shāhnāmah*, vol. 7, p. 153.
47 Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 6.

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That is, the various paramilitary groups considered by both society and the rulers to be legitimate always had their own agenda and loyalties. So long as their aims coincided with those of the authorities, matters ran smoothly and relations between the two sides were harmonious. Wherever the loyalty and the agenda of these groups conflicted, however, with state interests (as in the many cases where Sunni holy warriors wreaked havoc in major cities by all-out warfare upon the Shiʿites), the ruler and his supporters condemned the groups.[48]

Now we begin to understand one of the sources of *ʿulamāʾ* objection to the *ʿayyārūn*; for perhaps the most important supporters of the idea and theory of central government, at least from the tenth century onwards, were the mainstream religious clerics. The reason for this was not that the clerics necessarily approved of the rulers, but that they abhorred *fitna* and civil disturbances.[49] Thus, it should not surprise us that in every case where groups such as the *ʿayyārūn* were in conflict with officialdom, the clerics employ harsh words in condemning them.[50] The incident cited above of the holy warriors and the havoc they wreaked in Rayy in the year 355/966 is a case in point: if the *mutaṭawwiʿa* had simply obediently proceeded to the frontier and fought infidels, no one would have had any problem with them.

According to the government and the supporters of the ideal of central government (i. e. the *ʿulamāʾ*), the violent power of the holy warriors should have been obedient to the established authorities, even if those authorities preferred to use the *kharāj* to pay their heretical Shiʿite troops, hold large parties, give political payouts, or use this money in whatever other way they preferred, rather than hand it over for use in the Jihad during this time of dire Islamic need, when Tarsus had just fallen to the Christian enemy. Once the holy warriors used that violent power against government officials, in order to fight what they saw as an evil within (i. e. the withholding of the money from the Jihad – by Shiʿite

48 Mottahedeh seems to make a similar point: "If, however, loyalty to one category overwhelmed their other feelings of obligation, then the interest which created that loyalty would feed itself at the expense of the rest of society, which would be oppressed." (Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 175)

49 Gibb attributed this to economic reasons: "Partly, I think, this can be related to the growing prosperity of the cities and the expansion of a mercantile bourgeoisie who feared a revolution above all things, and wanted only to see the control of the central government (or at least of locally organized political institutions) remain undisturbed." (H. A. R. Gibb, "Government and Islam under the Early ʿAbbasids: The Political Collapse of Islam," *L'Élaboration de L'Islam: Colloque de Strasbourg 12-14 Juin 1959*, ed. C. Cahen, Paris, 1961, p. 118). Although Gibb's specific context was the political quiescence of Shiʿites, his remarks are equally applicable to the Sunni *ʿulamāʾ*, who belonged overwhelmingly to the mercantile bourgeoisie to which he refers. Mottahedeh, too, notes the *haute-bourgeosie* background of most of the *ʿulamāʾ*, in *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 135.

50 It is therefore significant that all of our chronicles of events for this period were composed by people who were either religious clerics (e. g. Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Kathīr), government functionaries (e. g. Tanūkhī, Miskawayh), or both.

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Daylamites, no less), once they challenged the authority of the central authorities, the *ʿulamāʾ* became opposed to these people. Yet, as Paul pointed out, any non-slave who wielded power had his own loyalties; these loyalties inevitably conflicted not only with the ideas of at least some government functionaries, but also with the ideas of the clerics.

In other words, the dichotomy that we find between Arabic and Persian sources was not an ethnic or linguistic difference, but rather a divide in mentality. Whereas the Arabic sources are almost entirely clerically- and bureaucratically-authored chronicles, many of the Persian ones are, in contrast, authored by men of the court. The divide is, in effect, to use Islamic terminology, between "men of the pen" on the one hand and "men of the sword" on the other. The social provenance of these sources, the milieux in which they were written, the difference in goals, interests and values between the clerics and bureaucrats on the one hand and the courtiers on the other, accounts for the gulf in outlook across which the Arabic and the Persian sources confront one another on the issue of the *ʿayyārs*.

This striking contrast in outlook is found throughout the medieval world, both Islamic and Christian, between the clerical and the courtly – and this brings us to yet another reason, related to the first yet distinct from it, for this great divergence in outlook between the sources authored by clerics and those authored by courtiers. Ibn al-Jawzī's problem with the *ʿayyārūn* lies in his deep ambivalence – in the ambivalence of all clerics – toward *futuwwa* itself, and its attitude toward violence.

The ʿAyyārūn *and Violence*

As we stated at the beginning of this chapter, chivalry and violence, despite the rosy glow in which Western popular culture has enshrouded the chivalric knight, are inseparable in both the Medieval West and the Islamic world. In the words of one scholar of the Medieval West,

> However glorious and refined its literature, however elevated its ideals, however enduring its link with Western ideas of gentlemanliness … we must not forget that knighthood was nourished on aggressive impulses, that it existed to use its shining armour and sharp-edged weaponry in acts of showy and bloody violence.[51]

Moreover, this violence was not something that was conveniently contained and heroically controlled, a weapon directed only against the outward enemies of the societies in which the chivalric knights lived; on the contrary, it posed a constant and ever-present threat to and burden upon public order, and to the peace and

51 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, p. 5.

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well-being of the civilian populations upon whom the knights frequently preyed. "… In the problem of public order the knights themselves played an ambivalent, problematic role. … The issues are built into some of the very ideals of chivalry, not merely in the lamentable inability of fallible men to attain them."[52]

While it is perhaps impossible to answer the question of the extent to which society's warriors engaged in pillage, extortion, and coercion rather than in chivalrously defending the weak and battling the infidel, this question is also irrelevant, for it is clear enough that the former behaviour was sufficiently pervasive, troubling, and widespread to figure prominently in the non-knightly records of the time, in both Christendom and the Islamic world. In the words of one scholar, "Were knights threatening? Or only some knights? There were enough of them, even if not all knights were terrifying, to ensure that their habits bore heavily on the social outlook ... Violence was familiar and constant ..."[53]

In other words, despite Ibn al-Jawzī's protestations to the contrary, the clerical problem with the *ʿayyārūn* did not stem from an incongruence between the chivalric ideals of the *ʿayyārs* and the effects its actual practice had;

> The fighting, let us remember, was not merely defensive, not simply carried out at the royal behest in defense of recognized national borders, not only on crusade, not really (despite their self-deceptions) in the defense of widows, orphans, and the weak, never (so far as the historian can discover) against giants, ogres, or dragons. They fought each other as enthusiastically as any common foe; perhaps even more often they brought violence to villagers, clerics, townspeople, and merchants.[54]

It is precisely this power of coercion, employed against "clerics, townspeople, and merchants," that the Islamic sources deplore in the *ʿayyārūn*. Merely demonstrating that a plausible parallel exists does not, of course, prove the validity of that parallel; that is, when one examines some of the more random or self-interested violence of the *ʿayyārs*, the fact that medieval European knights and lords engaged in similar behaviour does not in itself prove that *ʿayyārs* were not ruffians or bandits, it merely proves that the flower of European chivalry frequently acted in a ruffianly fashion.

For let there be no mistake about this point: there are certainly examples of brutal *ʿayyār* behaviour that seem to have had no deeper motive than self-interest and unbridled willfulness – from instances (albeit in an exceedingly salacious source) of homosexual pedophilic gang-rape,[55] to cases of *ʿayyār* plunder behind

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52 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 3.

53 Bisson, *Tormented Voices*, pp. 64-65.

54 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 8.

55 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Tīfāshī, *Nuzhat al-albāb fī-mā lā yūjadu fī-kitāb*, ed. Jamāl Jumʿa, London, 1992, p. 288. Presumably the *ʿayyārs* did not think forcing a young male would violate their code of behaviour in the same way that comparable violence toward a woman would have done, assuming that the whole incident was not simply an invention of Tīfāshī's lascivious imagination.

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which the reader can discern no greater principle than profit;[56] and killing – including the killing of *ʿulamāʾ* – for unspecified reasons.[57]

Interestingly, though, this sort of completely self-interested or arrogant violence, in which the reader cannot discern any political or ideological motive, is far rarer among the *ʿayyārs* than among the knights and nobles of high medieval Europe. A careful examination of most of the Arabic chronicles' accounts of Baghdad in the tenth and eleventh centuries – and nowhere is the violence of the *ʿayyārūn* more apparent than in these accounts – reveals two characteristics of *ʿayyār* violence that have been overlooked by scholars, and which serve to confirm that the current scholarly paradigm of the *ʿayyārs* as lower-class criminals is simply incorrect.

First, like much European chivalric violence, *ʿayyār* violence frequently occurred in the context of power struggles within the ruling elite. That is, the *ʿayyārs* are allied with political or military officials or other powers of the ruling elite during their frequent clashes with rivals, and the *ʿayyārs* are apparently involved in such clashes as some kind of allied or auxiliary force. Sometimes the clashes are with the forces of the organized political authorities – examples of the clash between the autochthonous forces and outsider rulers predicted by Jürgen Paul – and appear to be a struggle for dominance; occasionally (as in the case of the *mutaṭawwiʿa*'s clash with the Buyid governor of Rayy) we are given the underlying reasons and causes; most frequently, however, we are not. Since it

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56 E. g. the events of the year 315/927f. (Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 1, p. 179; Ibn al-*Athīr*, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 173), when the *ʿayyārs* are said to have been concerned only with realizing their own opportunities for profit and plunder. Note, however, that in this case there was a Qarmatian invasion of ʿIraq which had almost reached Baghdad; one cannot discount the possibility that the behaviour and disorder the sources so deplore was actually due to typical *ʿayyār* harassment of Shiʿites; this would not be the only instance in which the sources neglect to mention this salient point (*vide infra*). This surmise is strengthened by Miskawayh's casual reference to the fact that, **after** the authorities issued their decree suppressing the *ʿayyārs* and the latter went into hiding, the populace of three Sunni neighbourhoods that were prone to battle with adjacent Shiʿite quarters (Bāb al-Muḥawwal – described by LeStrange, *Baghdad During the ʿAbbasid Caliphate,* p. 337, as "inhabited by Sunnis who were always at feud with their Shiʿah neighbours ..."; Nahr Ṭābiq, *ibid.,* p. 84; and al-Qallāʾīn [on its Sunni composition *vide Yāqūt*, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 5, p. 322]) locked up their possessions, thus implying that these Sunni neighbourhoods felt **less** secure after the suppression of the *ʿayyārs*.

57 Ibn al-Athīr, (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 483), when discussing Tughril Beg's conquest and plunder of Nīshāpūr in 1040, remarks: "The damage of the *ʿayyārūn* had already been great; their power strengthened, and the misfortune they inflicted upon the people of Nishāpūr increased: they plundered property, killed people, committed breaches of the private family quarters [probably in search of hidden treasures], and did everything they wanted to without any impediment preventing them from doing so, and no obstacle to hold them back. But when Toghril Beg entered the city the *ʿayyārūn* feared him and desisted from what they had been doing; the people [*al-nās*] became calm and enjoyed tranquillity." For an example of the *ʿayyār* killing of an *ʿālīm* for which the source states no cause see e. g. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. ʿAlī b. Yusuf al-Fīrūzābādī al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ*, Baghdad,, 1356/1937, p. 98.

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is improbable that members of the elite would not have been able to find any force or allies to back their claims other than proletarian bandits, or that they would have wanted to be associates and familiars of such people in the manner we see depicted in the sources, this type of alliance once again provides a good indication that the current scholarly consensus regarding the *ʿayyārs'* social status stands in need of revision.

Second, unlike European chivalric violence, *ʿayyār* violence seems frequently to have possessed an ideological component that the chroniclers do not remark upon, but which is unmistakable from the context: *ʿayyār* activity, when it was not a partisan battle for one political leader or another, almost invariably occurred in the context of the sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shiʿites that were rife, most prominently in ʿIraq, during this period, and the neighborhoods that suffered from *ʿayyār* exactions and depredations were invariably Shiʿite ones.

Both of these aspects – the sectarian and the *ʿayyār* connections with officialdom or the elite – can be seen in one of the early appearances of *ʿayyār* violence in Baghdad, during the period of the Baghdadi strongman Ibn Rāʾiq, whom the caliph al-Rāḍī had made *amīr al-umarāʾ* in return for his assuming all the expenses of government.[58] In the year 327/938f., we are told, Ibn Rāʾiq appointed one of his officers, Ibn Yazdād, over the *shurṭa*, or police force, in Baghdad.[59] The latter, in turn,

> … appointed a group of the *ʿayyārīn*, gave them many *dīnārs* … received them favourably and promised them whatever they wished. Then he sent to Abū'l-Qāsim al-Kalwadhānī and took from him money that he had gathered for the caliph [*al-sulṭān*]; and the *ʿayyārūn* ruled over the city …[60]

Here the *ʿayyārs* are very clearly an officially appointed group, part of the *shurṭa*. That they abused their power and office, and had to be disciplined by Ibn Yazdād,[61] does not change this fact.[62]

The *ʿayyārs* apparently continued to be strongly associated with Ibn Rāʾiq's cause against his rival, the tax-farmer Abū ʿAbdallāh Aḥmad al-Barīdī.[63] A further incident reveals that there was, moreover, a clear religious component to this struggle as well: around the year 330/941f. the Turkish troops revolted against Ibn Rāʾiq and joined al-Barīdī; when news arrived at Baghdad that al-

58 On Ibn Rāʾiq *vide* Mottahedeh, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Iran," pp. 83-84.

59 "Originally the term probably meant simply 'choice troops,' but it soon developed by usage to mean police or security forces." Kennedy, *Armies of the Caliphs*, p. 13.

60 Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī, *Kitāb al-Awrāq*, Beirut, 1401/1982, p. 219.

61 Ṣūlī informs us (*Kitāb al-awrāq*, p. 220) that "the power of the *ʿayyārūn* grew stronger in Baghdad, and they took the people's garments from the mosques and roads, until Ibn Yazdād rode, took a group of them, and beat them with whips …"

62 Note that almost exactly one hundred years later, after the *ʿayyārs* have already been the cause of terrible sectarian violence and much ruin in Baghdad, we still find the authorities anxious to draft them into the police force (Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 231).

63 *Vide* Mottahedeh, "The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Iran," p. 84.

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Barīdī intended to come to Baghdad – with Qarmatian Shiʿite troops – for a trial of strength, Ibn Rāʾiq, the Caliph, the caliph's son, the vizier and the army set forth,

> Qurʾāns and the *qurrāʾ* before them, and called upon the people to go out to fight the Barīdīs; then they withdrew to his house … Then a group of the *ʿayyārīn* gathered with unsheathed knives in all the eastern quarters of Baghdad; and on Friday, Banū Barīdī were cursed from the *minbar* in the Friday mosques in Baghdad.[64]

During the course of the ongoing struggle between Ibn Rāʾiq and al-Barīdī, the latter at one point had the upper hand and appointed one of his own slaves to head the *shurṭa* of Baghdad; one of the new police-chief's first actions was to arrest the *ʿayyārūn*: "... he summoned the *duʿʿār*, arrested a group of the *ʿayyārs*, and went about the two sides [of Baghdad]; then the city quieted down after great rioting."[65] Furthermore, as part of this same struggle, in the year 330/941f., "Ibn Rāʾiq summoned the *ʿayyārīn*," although the source considers this to have been "a great error of his judgment." Apparently, al-Ṣūlī did not like the tactic Ibn Rāʾiq had them employ; in order to create havoc in Baghdad so that al-Barīdī would have difficulty controlling the city, "the *ʿayyārūn* opened the prisons, and this was of the doing of Ibn Rāʾiq, as preparation for what al-Barīdī was planning, in order to create great disorder among the commonalty."[66]

This same combination of an *ʿayyār* alliance with official forces, infused with a religious element, can be seen shortly after the Buyids' takeover of Baghdad in the year 334/945 and their deposition of the Caliph al-Mustakfī soon thereafter, which led to general turmoil as several leaders sought to dislodge the Buyids and restore the dethroned caliph. One of the anti-Buyid leaders "appealed for aid to the general populace and the *ʿayyārs* of Baghdad to battle Muʿizz al-Dawla and the Daylamites"[67] – and, so we are told, succeeded in enlisting a group of them.

The salient point to note is that the *ʿayyārs* seem to have been very well-connected, not only in Ibn Rāʾiq's time, but well afterwards. Thus, in the year 389/999, when there was a very strong rivalry between two Baghdadi notables, and one managed to get his rival arrested and placed in custody in his own house, it is the *ʿayyārs* who serve as his allies and who kill the man for him.[68] While one could argue that perhaps these *ʿayyārs* were merely hired guns, it is impossible to discount the episode of the year 392/1001f., when one Ibn Musāfir al-ʿAyyār, fleeing from a new army commander who was trying to quell the en-

64 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, pp. 23-24.

65 Ṣūlī, *Kitāb al-Awrāq*, p. 221. It is unclear who the *duʿʿār* were; one is tempted to speculate that they were perhaps the Shiʿite counterpart to the *ʿayyārūn*.

66 Ṣūlī, *Kitāb al-awrāq*, p. 223. Note, moreover, that on the next page (p. 224) the caliph appears to be on Ibn Rāʾiq's side.

67 Misakwayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, p. 91.

68 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl Tajārib al-umam*, vols. 3-4, p. 338. Note that this episode may also be connected to the Sunni-Shiʿi *fitna* of this year (recounted in Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 14).

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demic Sunni-Shiʿi warfare (in which, as we shall see, the *ʿayyārs* played a very large role), "took refuge in the house of the *amīn* Abū ʿAbdallāh, and [the latter] received him and hid him."

The army commander (*ʿamīd al-juyūsh*) from whom this *ʿayyār* was fleeing, in order to avoid a confrontation with the *amīn* who was sheltering the fugitive, waited until the *amīn* was out of the house in order to break into it and kill the *ʿayyār*.[69] The *amīn* then remonstrated with the *ʿamīd al-juyūsh*, who apologized. It is difficult to imagine the Baghdadi elite consorting with mere proletarian bandits and offering them extended hospitality inside their houses, or military commanders having to apologize for killing them.

In another episode from this year, which took place in Mosul, both the *ʿayyārs*' political connections and their involvement with political factions are apparent. A man named Ibn al-Ḥīrī was in charge of finances for and then secretary (*kātib*) to the *amīr* of Mosul, who divided the revenues with the Shiʿite ʿUqaylid strongman, Qirwāsh. Ibn al-Hīrī appears to have harboured Sunni religious bigotry toward his ʿUqaylid counterpart: "Ibn al-Ḥīrī displayed arrogance toward [Qirwāsh's *kātib* Abū'l-Ḥusayn b. Shahrūya] in Islam [*bi'l-Islām*] and because his lord was the *amīr*." Finally, piqued over the rivalry, Ibn al-Ḥīrī decided to eliminate Ibn Shahrūya and the tax collector whom the latter had appointed. Since Ibn al-Ḥīrī conveniently "had with him a group of infantry who bore weapons and followed the path of *ʿiyāra*," Ibn al-Ḥīrī used these men to kill Ibn Shahrūya and his protégé.[70] These *ʿayyārs* evidently had an ongoing association with the *kātib*; from the description they seem possibly to have formed part of Ibn al-Ḥīrī's retinue. Note, also, the religious overtones once again – *ʿayyārs* are consistently found on the side of Sunni hostility directed against Shiʿites.

Not only in Mosul and Baghdad, but also in Damascus we see *ʿayyārs* associated with and in the retinue of powerful notables and political leaders. In the year 368/978f. Ḥumaydān or Ḥamdān b. Khirāsh al-ʿUqaylī was named governor of Damascus after having ousted his predecessor by main force. He had difficulties, however, with one of the notables of the city named Qassām:

> ... it was not long until [disagreement] arose between him and Qassām, so that the *ʿayyārūn* from among the companions of Qassām drove [Ḥumaydān] out. He fled from the city, they plundered his house, and the power of Qassām became strong; and Abū Maḥmūd al-Maghribī became governor after Ḥumaydān.[71]

Here we have a specific statement that the *ʿayyārūn* were companions and associates of a leading local notable. As we see in all of the above examples, whenever we are told with whom the *ʿayyārs* associated, those associates are prominent, powerful people – not proletarian outlaws. This does not necessarily mean that

69 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl Tajārib al-umam*, vols. 3-4, p. 439.
70 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl Tajārib al-umam*, vols. 3-4, pp. 444-445.
71 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*, vol. 15, p. 248.

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the *ʿayyārs* did not also associate with proletarian outlaws – but it is surely significant that the overwhelming preponderance of the evidence in our sources shows the *ʿayyārs* in the context of a very different social milieu entirely. Of course, once the *ʿayyārs* had managed to kindle a really good sectarian *fitna* everybody else usually joined the battle; but in the cases where we have detailed evidence for the course of events, the populace's participation is almost invariably something separate and distinct from the *ʿayyārs'*.

Further confirmation of the explanation of *ʿayyār* violence that we are here positing – namely, that their violence must be contextualized within the endemic violence and extortion practised by the powerful, not by the underclass – can be found in the following revealing anecdote. In the year 417/1026f., in the absence of a Buyid figurehead, "the sway of the Turks in Baghdad grew, and they constantly exacted [money] from people [*aktharū muṣādarat al-nās*]," assessing a special fine upon al-Karkh of 100,000 dinars.

> The matter grew more serious; wickedness increased, and the burning of houses, the alleys, and the markets; the commonalty and the *ʿayyārūn* began to be emboldened, so that they would enter upon a man and demand of him his treasures, **as the ruler [al-ṣulṭān] would do with those whom he mulcted**. So the people [*al-nās*] made gates on the alleys, but nothing helped; there was war between the army and the populace [*al-ʿāmma*], and the army won. They plundered al-Karkh and other places, and took great wealth from it; the good and modest people were destroyed.[72]

We have here an explicit statement that the *ʿayyār* practices so condemned by the sources were, in fact, those practised by the legitimate and undisputed rulers; in other words, what our sources are objecting to is not the behaviour itself, but the arrogation of the prerogative to act in such a fashion; that is, like their slightly later counterparts in Europe, the *ʿayyārs* "usurped lordly powers, imposed uncustomary taxes, and constrained people to the point of capricious violence."[73]

A different source, in its accounts of the events of both this and the previous year, confirms that these *ʿayyār* activities represented some kind of a bid for lordship or challenge to the authority of the Turks, and also shows the *ʿayyārs* as allied to the rest of the local populace (at least the Sunni populace). Ibn al-Jawzī, when narrating the events of the year 416/1025f., states that

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[72] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 353, emphasis added. Christopher Melchert ("The Piety of the Hadith Folk," *International Journal of Middle East Sudies* 34 (2002), p. 434), claims that the chroniclers of this period used the term *ʿāmma* to signify "traditionists": "Chroniclers usually refer to [the ḥadīth folk's] 10th-century successors in Baghdad as the *Ḥanābila* or simply *al-ʿāmma* (the general), periodically rioting against the Shiʿis." Even if the text is here using the term not in Melchert's sense, but rather implying that the *ʿayyārs* were in this case allied with the Sunni commonalty, this does not necessarily indicate that they were themselves "*ʿāmma*;" there are many historical cases from medieval European urban settings (in particular, the municipal revolts) where the military and civilian leadership of a town mobilized the commonalty against their lord.

[73] Bisson, *Tormented Voices*, p. 21.

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> The power of the *ʿayyārūn* grew. They would surround people's [*al-nās*] houses both during the day and at night, with lamps and trains of attendants; then they would enter upon the man and demand from him his provisions/treasures [*dhakhāʾir*] and extract them from him by blows, **as the impounders** [*al-muṣādirūn*] **would do**, and the one who called for help would find no helper. They killed openly and let loose against the Turks [? *inbasaṭū ʿalā al-atrāk*], so that the members of the police force left the city, and many of those connected to them were killed ... and the house of the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā was burned down in al-Karkh ... The Turks had already burmed down Ṭāq al-Ḥarrānī because of the *fitna* that occurred there between them [on the one hand] and the *ʿayyārs* and the commonalty [*al-ʿāmma* on the other].[74]

Not only was this clearly a bid for lordship; these *ʿayyārs* already live and act like lords – note the trains of attendants. Time and again we see the sources commenting on the fact that the *ʿayyārs* were imitating governmental practices and acting in an official manner; nearly thirty year later, in the list of the events of the year 444/1052f., we read that in the midst of a Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna* the "*ʿayyārūn* spread out and held sway, levied taxes on the markets, and took what the governmental officials [*arbāb al-aʿmāl*] used to take."[75]

The account of the complex relations between the *ʿayyārūn* and the Turkish forces continues under the entry for 417/1026f; in this year the Iṣfahlariyya returned to Baghdad, "and corresponded with the *ʿayyārs*, who had multiplied with their [*videlicet*, the Isfahlariyya's] departure from the city."[76] The *ʿayyārs*, however, ignored this goodwill overture, marched to the camp of the cavalry, and proceeded to shout insults at the soldiers. A battle ensued, which lasted an entire day (presumably, the outcome was indeterminate); the next morning the army awoke in a rage, and promptly vented their aggressions and wounded pride by marching to al-Karkh and burning and looting the place.

At this point in the narrative, events become somewhat unclear; we are told that there was great looting in two nearby Sunni neighborhoods, in one of which "the house of Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Mawṣilī, *raʾīs al-ʿayyārīn*, was situated," but the source does not inform us who did this (although it may very well have been the Turkish soldiery). Indeed, Ibn al-Jawzī's account states quite clearly that the *ʿayyārs* played no role at all in the looting of the Sunni neighbourhoods; he writes only of mobs and Turkish soldiery having done so.

No *ʿayyārs* are mentioned at all in this latter part of the account; but what is clear from the earlier part is that they must have been a paramilitary force sufficiently well-organized, trained, and equipped to be a force for the *Iṣfahlariyya* to reckon with – and that the *Iṣfahlariyya* treat them as equals, corresponding with them and (so one can infer from the fact that the *ʿayyārs* are said to have "paid no heed" to this correspondence when they marched out to the *Iṣfahlariyya* camp and began taunting the soldiers) making friendly overtures toward them.

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74 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 175.
75 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 592.
76 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 175.

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Nowhere is this equality – and even mutual relations – between the Turkish governmental forces and the independent, autochthonous *ʿayyār* forces more visible than in the accounts of the career of the Baghdadi *ʿayyār* leader of the 420s/1030s, al-Burjumī. The Turks are said not to have interfered with his activities at all, even when these took place within their own neighbourhoods.[77] On the contrary: in the year 424/1032f., when al-Burjumī raided a storehouse, the *Iṣfahlariyya* came out to give him food and drink.[78] In this same year, after a particularly fierce Sunni-Shiʿi *fitna*, the *ʿayyārs* allied with the army in order to expel the Shiʿi Buyid ruler Jalāl al-Dawla to al-Karkh.[79] Also in this same year, the populace of the Shiʿite and Christian neighborhoods al-Ruṣāfa, Bāb al-Ṭāq and Dār al-Rūm were so terrified of al-Burjumī that they no longer dared mention him by name, referring to him instead as "The Commander Abū ʿAlī."[80] Note once again that all of the *ʿayyār* al-Burjumī's victims are non-Sunnis.

The following year, the official in charge of the upper tollhouse [*al-ʿāmil ʿalā al-maʾṣir al-aʿlā*] came to an agreement with al-Burjumī that the latter would receive a percentage of the tolls taken. The official also put at al-Burjumī's disposal two large boats into the bargain, in return for his promising to preserve order in the area.[81] Furthermore, in that same year one finds the *ʿayyārs* completely assuming the local police functions of protecting the city, levying taxes in the markets "which the members of the armed forces would exact, and receiv[ing] that which was due to the commander of the police ... they were addressed as 'commanders'."[82] Again, the description is one of the arrogation of lordship and of law-enforcement functions, not of criminal license.

Even when the *ʿayyārs* are engaged in activities that the chroniclers deplore, we find them in close relations with the Turkish military elite; when wreaking havoc at one point by night in Shiʿite neighborhoods, they are reported to have sheltered during the day in the houses of the Turkish soldiery.[83] Ibn al-Jawzī comments acerbically at one point that "The *ʿayyārs* ruled the city;"[84] and there is every sign that this is precisely what they intended to do. That is, we have here an example of local people, part of a municipal or regional paramilitary force, trying to assume mastery of their own municipal affairs; they come in for attack in the sources when those attempts cause disorder, particularly when *ʿayyār* Sunni mili-

77 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 200.
78 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 233.
79 Ibn al-Athīr, vol. 9, p. 431. After much debate they gave up their insurrection for lack of a suitable alternative candidate and permitted Jalāl al-Dawla to return.
80 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 233.
81 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 239. On the tolls in the Buyid period *vide* Mafizullah Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad (334/946-447/1055)*, Calcutta, 1964, pp. 153-154.
82 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 240.
83 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 245.
84 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 246.

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tancy causes or enflames inter-communal warfare between Sunnis and Shiʿites. We shall be returning to this important aspect of *ʿayyār* activities presently.

Moreover, it was not just the Turkish military elite that associated with the *ʿayyārs*. Perhaps the most informative story in terms of revealing with whom the *ʿayyārs* associated is found in al-Tanūkhī's account of a confrontation between the *wazīr* Abū Muḥammad al-Muhallabī and the Hashimite notables in the wake of a great Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna* that occurred around the year 350/961f. In this account, we find that the *ʿayyārs* were allied with the Sunni Hashimites in a dispute that arose between them and the ʿAlīds.[85]

> ... The *ʿayyārūn* were risen up in Baghdad, and caused a great *fitna*, at whose root was the Banū Hāshim, and they closed the mosque in the City [of al-Manṣūr] and the prayers were not held in it that Friday.
>
> The reason for this was a riot that had occurred between an ʿAbbāsid man and an ʿAlīd man, over wine, in Khandaq Ṭāhir. The ʿAlīd was killed, and his family rose up to avenge him; *fitna* broke out and the *ʿāmma* entered into it. The matter grew worse, until the Daylamites were sent to encamp in the [various] quarters, and the matter was dreadful.
>
> The *fitna* did not die down, so Abū Muḥammad [al-Muhallabī] seized many of the Banū ʿAbbās, the respectable notables [*al-wujūh al-mastūrīn*], the *ʿayyārīn* among them and the *duʿār*, until he had seized among the group of them a number of Hashimite *qāḍis* and witnesses and pious people [*ṣulaḥā'*], and among those whom he seized was Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[86]

The wazīr Abū Muḥammad then spoke with these men personally,

> … He demanded of them that they name to him the *ʿayyārs* among them, and the *aḥdāth*, and the bearers of knives [*ḥamalat al-sakākīn*], in order that he might seize them, and separate them from the rest, and that he might appoint as his surety the pious ones for the wicked ones, and [that the former] take them [i. e. the latter, the "wicked ones"] into their hands, in order to put out the conflagration of the *fitna*.
>
> The *qāḍī* Abū'l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ the Hashimite was present, and he began to speak apposite words in repudiation of this, and friendship of al-Muhallabī, and he was courteous to him.
>
> Then Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz objected, and spoke words to him of roughness, vanity, and rudeness.[87]

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[85] Although the commonalty eventually joined the fray, as inevitably occurred whenever sectarian strife broke out, they were not the instigators, and were clearly a separate group from the *ʿayyārs*. The *ʿayyār*-Sunni notable alliance can be seen in particular in the events of the arrest, and in the refusal of the Hashimite *qāḍī* to name the *ʿayyārs* among the group.

[86] Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, vol. 1, p. 86. Note that Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 126) ascribes this *fitna* to the year 349/960f., not 350/961f., and does not mention the *ʿayyārs* at all; merely that there was "a *fitna* between the Sunna and the Shiʿa ... a group of the Banū Hāshim were arrested, and were bound and confined as prisoners in the house of the *wazīr*, because they were the cause of the *fitna* ... "

[87] Tanūkhī, *loc. cit.*, pp. 86-87, for the following quotation as well.

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The *wazīr* then soundly berated the *qāḍī*, warning him:

> "Do you not know that the master of the throne today is the *amīr* Muʿizz al-Dawla the Daylamite? He views the shedding of your blood as good work for the sake of God, and your buzzing has with him the weight of a dog. Hey, slaves, drag him out by the legs!"

Al-Muhallabī had Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz dragged out and shipped to exile in ʿUmān, but the caliph al-Muṭīʿ intervened and obtained forgiveness for him. al-Muhallabī, however, continued to round people up:

> He gathered a group of the Hashimite *aḥdāth*, together with others from among the ʿ*āmma*, and the people of wickedness and partisanship [ʿ*aṣabiyya*], placed them in boats, closed them over them, fastened [the covers] with nails, sent them to [two towns near al-Ahwāz], and jailed them in cramped jails there; many of them died in jail[88] … but the *fitna* continued until the present.[89]

This account is enormously valuable, because it reveals to us much about the social milieu of the ʿ*ayyārs*: first, they were associated with the ʿAbbāsid, Sunni camp against the Shiʿites. Second, they were on such terms with the Hashimite "*qāḍis*, witnesses, and pious men" that the latter refused to hand over the ʿ*ayyārs* to the Buyid vizier. Third, this particular group of ʿ*ayyārs*, at least, must have been indistinguishable in both manners and appearance from the Sunni notables arrested – otherwise, the *wazīr* would not have needed to have them pointed out to him; the class and cultural difference would have been evident in the same way that it would be today if one took into custody a group of people consisting of modern gang members or mafiosi on the one hand and a group of respectable upper-middle class citizens on the others – the hairstyles, dress, vocabulary, and social manners would differ strikingly between the two groups. It therefore seems highly unlikely, once again, that this particular group of ʿ*ayyārs* was lower-class.

The last element revealed in this tale, one which we can no longer ignore, is that the overwhelming preponderance of ʿ*ayyār* violence occurred in sectarian battles against the Shiʿites. For, although there was plenty of disorder during the Buyid era, it is striking that we do not read of ʿ*ayyār* violence taking place randomly – let alone in a Sunni neighborhood – during the course of non-sectarian upheavals.

These civil wars appear to have been particularly endemic during the Buyid period, most likely due to the fact that the Buyids were themselves Shiʿites[90] and permitted the Shiʿites to openly express their religion, most particularly on the

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88 The remainder were freed after al-Muhallabī's death several years later.

89 Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, vol. 1, p. 88.

90 See Kabir's chapter "The religious background to the rise and fall of the Buwayhids," in *The Buwayhid Dynasty*; H. Busse, "Iran Under the Buyids," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume IV: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed R. N. Frye, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 250, 253; and Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 38.

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ʿĀshūrāʾ, the anniversary of the death of Imam Ḥusayn.[91] The traditional Sunni religious supremacy and monopoly on public religious expression was thereby challenged; it is therefore not surprising that sectarian tensions – and Sunni resentment – should be higher during the period of Buyid rule. During these years, Baghdad seems to have resembled a tinderbox, with sectarian conflagrations constantly being set off by the slightest arousal of partisan fervour.

Sometimes, as in the year 361/971f., the outpouring of religious fervour was magnified by the Jihad and Sunni volunteer-warrior enthusiasm. At this time, in the wake of Byzantine raids and successes, a group of Muslims from the border areas came to Baghdad, "summoned the Muslims to war in the Friday Mosques and the markets, speaking about how the road was open before the Byzantines, and that there was no obstacle to prevent them from reaching their houses, which were adjacent to ʿIrāq."[92] Joined by many Baghdadis, the group proceeded to the caliph al-Muṭīʿ li'llāh's residence, where they attempted to break in, reviled the caliph, "accusing him of ineptitude in that which God rendered obligatory upon the Imams; they went [even] beyond this, to [the point where] what [they said or did] is [too] ignominious to relate." The notables of Baghdad, for their part, condemned the Buyid ruler for having neglected the Jihad, and he consequently announced that he would go on a raid (which he never did), and sent to his *ḥājib* Sebuktegin, "rousing him to go on a *ghazw* with him, and commanding him to convoke to war whomever longed for the Jihad. Sebuktegin accepted this with a hypocritical acceptance, then rode to Baghdad with the army, and convoked the Muslims to war."

The enthusiastic response among the populace [*al-ʿāmma*] to this summons astonished Sebuktegin who, however, instead of preparing these people for the Jihad, decided to keep them as his own reserve force; unsurprisingly, *fitnas* and *ʿaṣabiyya* soon became rife among them, "and the ruler [*al-sulṭān*] lacked the strength to pacify them and to extinguish their flame of war, which he had raised, until this became the reason for the ruin of Baghdad …" Baghdad is described as being

> ... destroyed by the multiplying of *fitnas*, the commonalty's [*al-ʿāmma*] becoming presumptuous, and the occurrence of wars in it … The multiplying of chiefs appearing among them, until there was in every quarter a number of chiefs of the *ʿayyārūn*, defending their quarter and appropriating monies [*yajbūnahum al-amwāl*] and fighting those who were nearby to them. In consequence, they [presumably, the opposing neighbourhoods] hated one another, would raid one another by day and night, and burn one another's houses; each group would raid its brothers and neighbors."[93]

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91 The frequency of Sunni-Shiʿi clashes under the Buyids has already been remarked by H. Laoust, "Les agitations religieuses à Baghdad aux IVe et Ve siècles de l'hegire," *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, D. S. Richards, ed London, 1973, p. 169.

92 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, vol. 2, p. 303.

93 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-Umam*, vol. 2, p. 303.

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Although Miskawayh does not say so explicitly, it seems fairly clear from the continuation of his story that, once again, Sunni/Shiʿi fitnas are being spoken about.[94] What one can only infer from Miskawayh's account is explicitly confirmed by Ibn al-Athīr's version of the same events, in which he states explicitly that al-Karkh was attacked because it was the Shiʿite stronghold, and names the Sunna and Shiʿa (along with the *fityān* and the *ʿayyārūn*) as among the warring groups:

> In this year [361/971f.] there was a great *fitna* in Baghdad. They manifested immoderate *ʿaṣabiyya*, people [*al-nās*] took sides, and the *ʿayyārūn* appeared and manifested wickedness, and took people's money.
> The reason for this was what we have mentioned, the calling out of the *ʿāmma* to go to the raids; they gathered together and became numerous, and there arose ... the *fityān*, the *sunna*, the *shiʿa*, and the *ʿayyārūn*; property was plundered, people were killed and houses burned down; and among everything that was burned [was] the quarter of al-Karkh, which was the place of the merchants and the Shiʿa ...
> Then Bakhtiyār sent to al-Muṭīʿ li'llāh demanding from him money in order to spend it on the raids. Al-Muṭīʿ replied:" Lo, the raid, the outlay upon it, and other matters of the Muslims apart from [the raid], would be incumbent upon me were worldly matters [*al-duṇyā*] in my hand, and were the monies levied for me; but since my condition is such [as it is], none of this is incumbent upon me, but rather incumbent upon him in whose hand the country is, for I have nothing but the *khuṭba*; and if you wish that I should resign [even from that], I shall do so.[95]

The *ʿayyār* appearance the following year, though not so explicit, is suggestive, since it takes place in the context of Shiʿi riots; "the *ʿaṣabiyya* of the *Sunna* was strong," and they burned down al-Karkh.[96] In this context, with the *wazīr* "oppressing the subjects, public affairs thrown into disorder in his hands, the surrounding districts ruined," and a rift having occurred between the Turkish soldiers and Buyid ruler, the *ʿayyārs* appeared and "did whatever they wished to do."[97]

This supposition of sectarian tensions is confirmed by the events of the subsequent year, when there was once again a renewal of the Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna*. According to Miskawayhi, the Sunni *ʿāmma* developed at this time closer relations with the *ḥājib* Sebuktegin, and were therefore able to begin to oppress and make war upon the Shiʿites. The Shiʿites, being outnumbered, fortified themselves in al-Karkh:

> The wars continued uninterruptedly until blood was shed, illicit actions were considered licit, and al-Karkh was burned a second time. … The merchants were impoverished; the

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94 Since the *fitnas* reignite when it becomes clear that the person whom Sebuktegin has appointed to head the *shurṭa* is aligned with the partisan Sunnis (*ibid.*, p. 306).

95 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 619. After threats and intimidation, Bakhtiyār managed to extract 400,000 dirhams from the caliph, who needed to sell his own clothing in order to raise the sum; "when Bakhtiyār took possession of the money he diverted it to his own affairs, and stopped the talk of the holy war raid." (*Ibid.* p. 620)

96 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 619, p. 628.

97 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 8, p. 619, p. 629.

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> *ʿayyārūn* deprived them of their wealth, their goods, their wives, and their houses, and they required that they have "protection" of them; and whichever party was under [the *ʿayyārs*'] protection attacked the other party … The *ʿaṣabiyya* between the two sides became a matter of both religion and the world, after it had been one of religion particularly; and this was because the Shiʿa rose to the war-cry of Bakhtiyār and the Daylamites, while the people of the Sunna rose to the war cry of Sebuktegin and the Turks.[98]

Note that according to this account, however, even though the *ʿayyārs* apparently began their activities by persecuting the Shiʿites, they appear to have been bought off at some point, and to have sold their protection to the highest bidder. It is impossible to verify this account, though, since Miskawayh is the only author who mentions *ʿayyārs* in the Sunni-Shiʿi *fitna* of this particular year.[99] Equally difficult of interpretation is Miskawayh's earlier, all too terse statement that when the Ḥamdānid ruler of Mosul, Abū Taghlib, advanced to Baghdad this year, "he found it embroiled in *fitnas* by the *ʿayyārūn*, so he subdued them and killed a group of them …"[100]

But in many, many cases the connection between *ʿayyār* activities and anti-Shiʿite activities is quite clear. In the year 380/990f., for instance, the moment the Buyid ruler Bahāʾ al-Dawla left Baghdad for Khūzistān, the *ʿayyārs* took advantage of his absence to rekindle the *fitna*:

> The *ʿayyārūn* arose in the two sides of Baghdad; *fitnas* broke out between the Sunna and the Shiʿa, and there was much killing between them; obedience ceased, some shops were burned, goods were plundered, and dwellings were destroyed. This lasted several months until Bahāʾ al-Dawla returned to Baghdad.[101]

Of course, when Bahāʾ al-Dawla returned to Baghdad the *ʿayyārs* did not go unpunished for having stirred up the sectarian troubles; once the *fitna* had subsided, "*ʿayyārūn* were pursued unremittingly, caught, and killed, so that the people [*al-nās*] enjoyed tranquility, and reverential fear [of the government] was established." Even under these circumstances, however, when the government was trying to suppress *ʿayyār* activity, it did not treat the *ʿayyār* leader as a bandit – and, indeed, the behaviour in which he was said to have engaged does not appear very bandit-like:

> Among the *ʿayyārs* captured was a man known as Ibn Jawāmard [i. e. "Ibn Javānmard"], one of their leaders. He had shown pity in the days of Ṣamṣām al-Dawla, and guarded the markets; so when Bahāʾ al-Dawla was asked about his matter, he granted him amnesty – and whoever has [himself] shown mercy, has mercy done to him …[102]

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98 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, p. 338.

99 Also, as we have seen in the discussion on chivalric ideals, part of the *futuwwa* code of conduct enjoined honouring one's word and extending protection to those who threw themselves upon one's mercy.

100 Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 2, p. 337. The most exhaustive account of this dynasty remains Fayṣal Sāmir's *al-Dawla al-Ḥamdāniyya fī Mawṣil wa-Ḥalab*, Baghdad, 1970-1973.

101 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, pp. 75-76.

102 Al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, p. 199.

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Apart from noting the extremely chivalric name of the *ʿayyār* leader, we need note only that, while one frequently finds legitimate military forces raiding the markets whose safety they are supposed to be ensuring, it is unusual, to say the least, to find supposed bandits actually guarding the markets, rather than pillaging them.

The outbreak of Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna* in the year 384/994f. is causally linked to *ʿayyār* activities as those related to sectarian tension between the main Shiʿite and Sunni neighborhoods: "In [this year] the power of the *ʿayyārūn* in Baghdad grew stronger, so that *fitna* broke out between the people of al-Karkh and the people of Bāb al-Baṣra, and many of the shops were burned down; then they made peace."[103]

Several years later, in the year 391/1000f., when a man reputed to be a Fatimid *dāʿī* (missionary) returned to Baghdad from Egypt, the *ʿayyārs* killed him – and then pillaged his house. This was not random and indiscriminate robbery; it was the deliberate targeting of a Shiʿite proselytizer:

> People [*al-nās*] related that [Abū'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir al-Kātib] came with the agreement of the lord of Egypt [i. e. the Fatimid caliph], in order to begin to undermine on his behalf the ʿAbbāsid dynasty. So when it was the afore-mentioned night, the *ʿayyārs* attacked him in his house … and struck him with swords in order to kill him. His slave girl stood before him in order to protect him, but they struck her hand a blow which severed it, struck him a number of blows by which he died, then took all that they found of his money and movable goods and withdrew.[104]

In that same year, although there is unfortunately a lacuna in the text, it is unmistakably clear that there was a Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna*, in which the two opposing groups were the ʿAlīds and the *ʿayyārs*.[105] If Rūdhrāwarī's account had been more abbreviated, it would have looked like those of the major chroniclers, which simply inform one that the "*ʿayyārs* pillaged," apparently without any reason or objective other than robbery. As we see here, though, whenever historical context and motivation are supplied, they invariably reveal a sectarian, anti-Shiʿite context.

In other words, sometimes the chroniclers, in their dislike of the *ʿayyārs* and the disorder they caused, omit the most salient information about their activities – that is, its sectarian religious aspect. A comparison of Ibn al-Athīr's and Miskawayh's accounts of the events of the year 392/1001f. will serve to illustrate this. Ibn al-Athīr writes merely that the situation in Baghdad

> ... became disordered, and the power of the *ʿayyārūn* returned and gained the upper hand; the evil-doing intensified, people were killed, property was plundered, and houses were burnt down. [News of] this reached Bahāʾ al-Dawla, so he sent Abū ʿAlī b. Abī

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103 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 106.

104 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, p. 398.

105 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, p. 408. Ibn al-Jawzī does not list a *fitna* for this year (*al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 26-27).

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> Jaʿfar, known as "Ustādh Hurmuz," to ʿIraq in order to guard it, and gave him the title Head of the Armies [*ʿamīd al-juyūsh*] … Abū ʿAlī reached Baghdad, established order [*aqāma al-siyāsa*], and restrained the evil-doers, so that the *fitna* abated and people were safe [*amina al-nās*]."[106]

His account makes it sound as though this were just a case of random or self-interested violence; but we never hear of large-scale *ʿayyār* violence (that is, killing people, burning down many houses, and so forth, as opposed to mere extortions or limited violence directed against an individual) when this is not in the context of a Sunni-Shiʿite fitna. And, in fact, in al-Rūdhrāwarī's fuller account, we discover that this particular incident is no exception:

> In the month of Ramaḍān the *fitna* intensified in Baghdad ... the power of the ʿAlīds [on the one hand] and the *ʿayyārs* [on the other] increased; they killed people, continued performing thefts, and took monies, so that the people of high rank [*ashrāf al-nās*] were in a difficult situation because of them.[107]

Our judgment that Rūdhrāwarī rather than Ibn al-Athīr has been giving the correct account is confirmed by Ibn al-Athīr himself in his entry for the following year (393/1002f.), when he discusses the quelling of this *fitna*, and confirms that the context of the *ʿayyār* violence in the prior year had indeed been a Sunni-Shiʿite *fitna*, which he had neglected to mention in his earlier entry:

> ... the *fitna* in Baghdad grew strong, and the *ʿayyārūn* and the evil-doers spread, so that Bahāʾ al-Dawla sent the head of the army [*ʿamīd al-jaysh*], Abū ʿAlī b. Ustādh Hurmuz, to ʿIraq in order to arrange its affairs. He arrived in Baghdad … curbed the evil-doers, **prevented the Sunna and the Shiʿa from manifesting their *madhhabs***, and banished, after this, Ibn al-Muʿallim, *faqīh* of the Imāmiyya, so that the country was in order.[108]

Ibn al-Athīr again commits the same sin of omission when he reports on *ʿayyār* activities in the year 409/1018f. :

> In this year the power of the Daylam weakened in Baghdad, and the *ʿāmma* was emboldened against them, so that they [i. e. the Daylamites] withdrew to Wāsiṭ. [Wāsiṭ's] *ʿāmma* and its Turks went out against them, and battled them; but the Daylamites repelled them from themselves, killing many of the *ʿāmma* and Turks of Wāsiṭ. The power of the *ʿayyārūn* grew strong in Baghdad; they acted wickedly and plundered money.[109]

A reader whose only source of information was Ibn al-Athīr's chronickle would never know that there was a religious component to this strife. From Ibn al-Jawzī's account of the same year, however, we discover the background to these events; that "the *fitna* between the Shiʿa and the Sunna grew grave," that there was fighting between the Sunni neighborhood of Nahr al-Qallāʾīn on the one hand and the Shiʿite neighborhood of al-Karkh on the other, and that when the

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106 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 171.
107 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl Tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, pp. 436-437.
108 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 178. Emphasis added.
109 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 304.

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commander of the *shurṭa*, Abū Muqātil, attempted to enter one or both of the neighborhoods,[110] both the inhabitants and "the *ʿayyārūn* who were in it" prevented him from doing so, and ended up setting a conflagration.[111]

As in our previous instance of Ibn al-Athīr's neglecting to mention the social context of the *ʿayyārs'* violence, he himself confirms the sectarian nature of the disorders in his entry under the following year (409/1018f.); when the new governor of ʿIraq, Ibn Sahlān,[112] heard of "the worsening of the *fitnas* in Baghdad ... he went there ... The *ʿayyārs* fled from him, he banished a group of the ʿAbbāsids and others, banished Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Nuʿmān the *faqīh* of the Shiʿites,[113] and sent the Daylamites to encamp on the borders of al-Karkh and Bāb al-Baṣra."[114] This was unmistakably a Sunni-Shiʿite war, and it was apparently not limited to street gangs, either, given the prominence of the people banished ("a group of ʿAbbāsids" and the leading jurisprudent of the Shiʿites).

On many other occasions, though, despite our clerical chroniclers' distaste for the *ʿayyārs*, they do give us enough information for us to be able to discern, through the condemnatory verbiage, the pattern of anti-Shiʿite violence. Ibn al-Athīr's account of the year 416/1025f., for instance, though it starts out with a pontification against *ʿayyār*-induced disorder, by enumerating the burning of al-Karkh among the *ʿayyārs'* crimes, makes clear that the other activities, as well, were probably also carried out against Shiʿites: "In this year the power of the *ʿayyārūn* gained the upper hand in Baghdad, and their wickedness grew stronger; they killed people, plundered money, did whatever they pleased, and burned down al-Karkh, so that prices in it increased …"[115]

Thus, in the *fitnas* of 420/1029 and 421/1030, although Ibn al-Athīr, for instance, notes merely that "There was a *fitna* in Baghdad in which the power of the *ʿayyārūn* and the thieves [*al-luṣūṣ*] became strong, and they would take

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110 The editor assumes it is al-Karkh which they tried to enter, which would also explain why the source speaks of "*al-ʿayyārūn alladhīna fī-hā*" rather than "*ʿayyārūhā*"; there were no Shiʿite *ʿayyārs*.

111 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 125.

112 As Kabir notes, at this time "not only Baghdad but Wāsiṭ became the scene of incessant conflicts between the Shiʿah and the Sunnah with consequent heavy loss of life and property." The Buyid ruler therefore appointed the brutal Ibn Sahlān, "'a man of tyranny and violence. '" (Kabir, *The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad*, p. 95)

113 This is the famous Shiʿite religious scholar and leader Abū ʿAbdallāh b. al-Nuʿmān al-Baghdādī al-Karkhī, known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd. Ibn Kathīr (Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 12, p. 17) describes his importance as follows: "[He was] Shaykh of the Rāfiḍis and defender of their interests. He had influence with the rulers of all sides, because of the propensity of the people of this time to partisanship, and a great number of the *ʿulamā'* of all the sects would attend his *majlis*. Among his students were al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and al-Murtaḍā." On his religious and theological importance to the Imāmī Shiʿites, see M. J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid*, Beirut, 1978.

114 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 307.

115 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 349.

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money openly,"[116] there is strong evidence, both from Ibn al-Athīr and from other sources, that this, too, was a Sunni-Shiʿite sectarian *fitna*. First, in the course of this *fitna* the Shiʿite Friday prayer was stopped in the Barāthā mosque, which had a long history of clashes with the Sunni authorities because of its Shiʿite tendencies.[117] In fact, at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century the mosque had been razed by the Caliph:

> At the place known as Barāthā there was a mosque frequented by the Shiʿites ... When it was called to the attention of al-Muqtadir that the Rāfiḍites assembled at that mosque in order to slander the Companions [of the Prophet] ... and rebel against the state, he ordered the mosque surrounded on a Friday during the time of prayer ... Everyone found there was seized, punished, and sentenced to a lengthy prison term. The mosque was razed to the ground and all traces of it were erased as the area became part of the adjoining burial ground ...[118]

The mosque was rebuilt in 328/c. 940 with the intention of assuring its orthodoxy; however, in our *fitna*, in the year 420/1029, the Caliph replaced the regular speaker of the mosque, because of his " Shiʿite *ghuluw*" [extremist Shiʿite beliefs], with one of his own. The sources diverge regarding what followed. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, this caliphally-appointed speaker closed his sermon by saying "[May] Allah forgive the Muslims and those who pretend that ʿAlī is His Friend [*mawlāhu*];"[119] all the sources are agreed that the congregation pelted the preacher with bricks and that thirty men attacked and plundered the preacher's house.[120] Additional confirmation of the sectarian nature of this *fitna* – and of

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116 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 393.

117 Shiʿite tradition held that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had prayed on that site in the year 37/657, on his way to the battle of Nahrawān (Le Strange, *Baghdad During the ʿAbbasid Caliphate*, p. 154). For Shiʿite *faḍā'il* of Barāthā see Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, Tehran, 1377/1957-, vol. 52, p. 218; and ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Ṭāwūs, *al-Malāḥim wa'l-fitan*, Beirut, 1988, pp. 117-118.

118 Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 97. See also Le Strange, *loc. cit.*

119 In relation to the Imams, "*wilāya* ... means that God has bestowed upon the family of the Prophet special honour and qualities, thereby making them the ideal rulers, and that through their presence on earth His grace is disseminated." S. Husain M. Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam*, London, 1979, p. 180.

120 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, pp. 393-394; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 198; according to Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 12, p. 30, they broke his nose and dislocated his shoulder. Prayers were restored in this mosque only after a delegation of notables from al-Karkh, headed by the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, had apologized to the Caliph and begged personally for the resumption of divine worship. The Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and his brother, the Sharīf al-Raḍī, were at this time the most prominent Shiʿi leaders; "As Naqībs of the ʿAlīds and as illustrious members of the Prophet's family these Sharīfs occupied a prominent rank in the ʿAbbāsid court. They threw in their lot with both the Caliphate ... and the Amirate of the Buyids and thus exercised a moderating influence in the state, which made it possible for the Sunni Caliphate and Shiʿi Amirate to work in collaboration, for which they in their turn won the goodwill of both. During the most serious days of Sunni-Shiʿi riots in Baghdad that characterised the entire Buyid period they co-operated with the administration in maintaining peace and amity. In the disputes between the Caliph and the

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ʿ*ayyār* involvement in such strife – is evident from the further course of it, during which time the Sunni quarter of al-Qallāʾīn and the Shiʿite quarter of al-Daqqāqīn began battling one another, with the ʿ*ayyārs* joining the fray.[121]

Sectarian tension during these years was also surely heightened by the religious fervour aroused by the situation at the frontiers; in 421/1030 there was a Byzantine raid, and in 422/1031 Byzantium conquered al-Ruhā, "killed the Muslims, and destroyed the mosque."[122] As a result, a Sufi shaykh named al-Khazlajī received the caliphal banner and permission to gather volunteers for the holy war. The Shaykh then proceeded to pass through the Shiʿite neighborhood of Ṭāq al-Ḥarrānī with his retinue of would-be Sunni holy warriors, "and they cried loudly in remembrance of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar … saying: 'This is the day of Muʿāwiya. ' But the people of al-Karkh contradicted them, and pelted them, so *fitna* broke out."[123]

The next day pandemonium broke loose; Sunnis from both sides of Baghdad, together with many of the Turkish soldiers, went to al-Karkh and burned and demolished the markets.

> The fighting within the districts of the city occurred on both sides [of the river]. The people of al-Karkh and Nahr Ṭābiq fought one another, and al-Qallāʾīn and Bāb al-Baṣra; on the East side the people of Sūq al-Thulāthāʾ and Sūq Yaḥyā, and Bāb al-Ṭāq and al-Asākifa … The bridge was cut off in order to separate between the two sides, the ʿ*ayyārūn* entered the city, and there was much doing of evil deeds in [the city], and of theft, night and day. … then the expulsion of the ʿ*ayyārūn* was proclaimed in al-Karkh, and they left ...[124]

Once again, ʿ*ayyār* violence was clearly part of a larger Sunni-Shiʿite war, and this violence was explicitly directed against Shiʿites (hence the only neighborhood from which the ʿ*ayyārs* have to be expelled is Shiʿite al-Karkh).

Amīr they often worked as arbitrators." (M. Kabir, "A Distinguished ʿAlīd Family of Baghdad During the Buyid Period," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, vol. 9, no. 1 [1964], p. 51).

121 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 208-209. Ibn al-Jawzī deplores the ʿ*ayyārs*' "wicked deeds" in the course of this *fitna*, but that may very well have been – particularly in light of the passage we have seen from *Talbīs Iblīs* – because he expected better behaviour from them.

122 On the earlier raid, *vide* Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 404; on the conquest of al-Ruhā by the Byzantine Infidel, p. 413.

123 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 418; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 213-214; an abbreviated version can be found in Ibn Kathīr, *al-bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, vol. 12, p. 35. Presumably, the meaning of "*yawm*" here would be the archaic one of the Prophet's time – that is, "battle," with the implication that the Sunnis were doing battle in the name of, or in defence of the reputation of, Muʿāwiya. According to Ibn al-Jawzī's version the Sunni volunteers shouted "this is the day of the *maghāzī*," but Ibn al-Athīr's version seems to be more in line with the other Sunni partisan cries and the reaction of the inhabitants of Ṭāq al-Ḥarrānī.

124 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, pp. 419-420.

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The next *ʿayyār* manifestation we shall examine occurred in the course of a *fitna* in the year 425/1033f. Ibn al-Athīr's account once again omits crucial pieces of information:

> In [this year] al-Basāsīrī[125] was appointed to the protection of the western side of Baghdad, because the matter of the *ʿayyārūn* had become more severe; their evil-doing [*fasāduhum*] had become great, and the government's representatives lacked the strength to do anything to them; so they installed al-Basāsīrī for the sake of his protection and his power.[126]

Yet in Ibn al-Jawzī's account we discover that at the heart of this "evil-doing" of the *ʿayyārs* was once again sectarian: first, al-Burjumī's raiding of Shiʿite Bāb al-Ṭāq; and, more seriously, the spreading of the *fitnas* between Shiʿite al-Karkh on the one hand and staunchly Sunni Bāb al-Baṣra and al-Qallāʾīn on the other, so that other Shiʿite and Sunni neighborhoods were pitted against one another (Shiʿite Bāb al-Ṭāq against Sunni Sūq Yaḥyā – the neighborhood, incidentally, where al-Burjumī's sister lived; and Sunni Nahr Ṭābiq versus Shiʿite Bāb al-Arḥāʾ and Christian Bāb al-Dayr, a *fitna* in which the Turkish soldiery soon joined).[127]

Then, in the beginning of Ramaḍān, the two Ibn al-Iṣbahānī brothers, "commanders of the *ʿayyārs* of the *ahl al-Sunna*," made a pilgrimage to the grave of Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr,[128] as a counterstatement to the pilgrimage "that the *ʿayyārs* of al-Karkh would make" to the tomb of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī.[129] Predictably, this set off a fierce *fitna*, in the course of which the al-Iṣbahānī brothers managed to cut off al-Karkh's water supply.[130]

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125 Who later declared for the Fatimid caliph (*vide* Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 16, pp. 32-34).

126 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 437.

127 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, pp. 239-240. Bāb al-Dayr is the quarter also known as Dayr al-Rūm. According to Le Strange (*Baghdad During the ʿAbbasid Caliphate*, p. 207), "The Dar-ar-Rumiyin, more generally called the Dar-Ar-Rum (the House of the Greeks), was the Christian quarter of Medieval Baghdad ... situated in the neighbourhood of the Shammasiyah Quarter and at no great distance from the tombs of the Caliphs in Rusafa." Sabari (*Mouvements populaires*, p. 12) mistakenly lists this neighbourhood as Shiʿite, probably because of this *fitna*.

128 One often sees Sunnis cultivate reverence for a personality known to have opposed prominent Shiʿite figures, as a reaction to the veneration accorded the latter by the Shiʿa. This phenomenon has been analysed by C. Pellat, "Le culte de Muʿawiya au IIIe siècle de l'Hégire," *Études sur l'histoire socio-culturelle de l'Islam (VIIe-XVe s.*), London, 1976, pp. 53-66. Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr was especially appropriate for Sunni purposes in this case, not only because of his role in crushing Mukhtār's rebellion, but also because the anniversary of his death fell just eight days after the *ʿĀshūrāʾ*, the primary Shiʿite religious observance.

129 The text says "*al-mashhad bi'l-ḥā'ir*." On the identity of this with the tomb of Ḥusayn, "Lord of Martys," *vide* Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 2, p. 208.

130 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 241. This tactic became popular among the Sunnis generally; the very next year the inhabitants of Sunni Sūq Yaḥyā prevented the bearing of water to the people of Shiʿite Bāb al-Ṭāq and al-Ruṣāfa, without any interference on the part of the Turkish soldiery or the government [*al-sulṭān*]. (*Ibid.* p. 246)

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Ibn al-Jawzī's statement regarding "the *ʿayyārs* of al-Karkh," together with Ibn Kathīr's account of the same events,[131] and a passage in Rūdhrāwarī,[132] are the only indications we have in all the literary corpus that there were Shiʿite *ʿayyārs*. There are several possible explanations for the anomalous statements: first, that they are descriptively accurate, and that the Shiʿites actually formed a parallel counter-group to the Sunni *ʿayyārs* – although one assumes that if that were the case one would have heard a lot more about them in the sources if they had been a genuine *ʿayyār* organization, and that one would have seen the same kinds of depredations taking place in Sunni neighborhoods that we see the *ʿayyārs* inflicting upon Shiʿite ones. Second, the term is perhaps being applied incorrectly, for lack of a better designation, to some kind of Shiʿite counter-group formed to defend al-Karkh from the Sunni *ʿayyār* groups;[133] or that the sources simply got carried away in their reporting and desire to be "even-handed,"[134] at the cost of historical accuracy. If there were indeed Shiʿite *ʿayyārs*, they must have been extremely marginal and not very numerous, since there is **no** case in the sources where a Sunni neighborhood is attacked, robbed, or otherwise preyed upon in the way that the Shiʿite neighborhoods were, in every known case of *ʿayyār* violence where the geographical location is named.

There are many, many additional examples of *ʿayyārs* participating in Sunni-Shiʿite *fitnas* and wreaking havoc in Shiʿite neighborhoods; in fact, these include nearly all the recorded *ʿayyār* appearances in Baghdad during the Buyid period.[135] We have already seen sufficient evidence, however, to understand that

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131 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*, vol. 12, p. 40: "There was a *fitna* between the *Sunna* and the *Rawāfiḍ*, so that [it reached even] between the *ʿayyārs* of the two parties ..." Of course, from Ibn al-Jawzī's far more detailed account, it would appear that this particular *fitna* actually began with the *ʿayyārs*.

132 al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, p. 439. In this passage a new army commander comes to put order into ʿIraq in the year 392/1001f., "And he sought the *ʿayyārs* from among the ʿAlīds and the ʿAbbasids, and when they were found he ordered that they join the ʿAlīd and the ʿAbbasid together and drown the two of them during the day at an assembly of the people [*al-nās*]." While, of course, "ʿAlīd" could simply mean "of ʿAlīd descent," it seems far more likely in this context that the epithet is being used to designate either a group of Shiʿite *ʿayyārs* – or, alternatively, that al-Rūdhrāwarī is using the word *ʿayyār* for lack of a comparable epithet for a Shiʿite group or organization intended to counter the Sunni *ʿayyārūn*. Note also that this same punishment – drowning – was also meted out to corrupt Turkish officials; the *ʿayyārs* were in illustrious company here.

133 We speculated earlier that perhaps *duʿʿār* might have been the term used for Shiʿite counter-groups.

134 Particularly since they were Sunni, and therefore may not have been happy to let the Sunnis be depicted as the only party inflicting grievous harm – although in this last conjecture the present writer may well be drawing unjustified inferences from some inverse modern-day journalistic practices.

135 E. g. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 9, p. 76 (mentioned also in Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 163); vol. 9, pp. 575-577; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 15, p. 336; and so forth.

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the *ʿayyārūn* had close if not always conflict-free ties to official bodies,[136] particularly official military bodies, and that their activities in Baghdad – or, rather, those activities which interested the clerical chroniclers – concentrated largely on anti-Shiʿite belligerence. This *ʿayyār* absorption in Sunni partisanship suggests that even after the term *ʿayyār* had acquired a chivalric component, the *ʿayyārūn* – at least in Baghdad – were still preoccupied, at least to some degree, with *mutaṭawwiʿ* concerns.[137]

Also clear from our sources, from the very language they employ, is that the clerical-bureaucratic authors' camp did not like much of *ʿayyār* behaviour.[138] This salient point is clearest whenever we compare sparser accounts with more detailed ones, as we did above; invariably, when a chronicler is summarizing *ʿayyār* activities he confines himself to brief, condemnatory statements such as Mīrkhwānd's regarding *ʿayyār* activities during the great sectarian *fitnas* of the 420s/1030s ("the *ʿayyārs* and people of wickedness and mischief gained mastery over Baghdad. They set their hand to plunder, spoil and mulcting; the money of the rich they extracted, and every one who had a little power seized the occasion of opportunity …" and "they plundered and wreaked havoc"[139]), whereas the fuller accounts give us enough contextual information to make it unmistakably clear that the *ʿayyārs* were actually preying upon Shiʿites.

Yet it becomes difficult for the reader to accept uncritically the chroniclers' fulminations, and by extension to sustain the traditional concept of the *ʿayyār* as outlaw or bandit, after having seen in this chapter the historical context in which the *ʿayyārs* operated and in which their activities took place. Most telling is how the sources repeatedly contextualize their activities for us, by telling us that they plundered and extorted "as the government officials would," and naming their companions and accomplices in these activities – the Turkish officials, army troops, Banū ʿAbbās and the Hashimites, and various other social elites. These kinds of activities were, in other words, something in which respectable and

136 But then again, no set of public relationships in the Buyid period seems to have been conflict-free.

137 One can find some confirmation of this in the sources, in the way the *ʿayyārūn* are sometimes reported as acting both in *al-amr bi'l-maʿrūf* as well as against non-Sunnis. For instance, in the year 392/1001f. "the *ʿayyārūn* attacked the house of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Mālikī in order to kill him. He oversaw the inheritances and some of the commercial transactions of *abwāb al-māl*, and in this [capacity] he acted in commercial transactions without weights or measures [*jāzafa fi'l-muʿāmala* – that is, he cheated]. They did not find him, but they found [his son-in-law] Abū Ṭāhir … and killed him [instead]. " The account then states that "the *ʿayyārūn* also killed on this day … one of the chiefs of … the people … of *ʿaṣabiyya*." (al-Rūdhrāwarī, *Dhayl tajārib al-umam*, vol. 3, p. 447).

138 There is a great abundance of negative statements about and depictions of *ʿayyārs*, aside from the above examples in both this chapter and the previous one (e. g. Tanūkhī's statement at the beginning of *Nishwār*, cited in Chapter Seven); see e. g. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī, *Kitāb al-akhlāq wa'l-siyar fi mudāwāt al-nufās*, ed. Ṭāhir A. Makkī, Cairo, 1981, p. 171.

139 Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍat al-ṣafā'*, vol. 4, p. 175.

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powerful people habitually engaged, often together with the *ʿayyārs*; in the case of the *ʿayyārs*, moreover, such activities often proceeded from ideological religious motives.

In short, it is striking how well-connected the *ʿayyārs* were, how freely they consorted with the social and political elites, and how the overwhelming preponderance of their violent activities which can be traced contain a partisan Sunni component. Although what the chroniclers are telling us about the *ʿayyārs'* violence was surely real, the meaning of that violence, what it says about the *ʿayyārs*, cannot be comprehended divorced from the context that the chroniclers themselves supply. Furthermore, *ʿayyār* violence and its contribution to disorder in Baghdad, although it undeniably made a deep impression upon the chroniclers, was not the whole picture, nor even the most essential picture, of *ʿayyār* activity, any more than Gregory VII's definition of kings and rulers is a good basis upon which to define the nature and role of medieval kingship.

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Conclusions

In this work we have attempted to examine the *ʿayyār* phenomenon afresh, by adopting the following methodological innovations: a) limiting ourselves only to those people specifically and explicitly designated as *ʿayyārs* in the sources; b) broadening our source base to include not only the Arabic chronicles almost exclusively relied upon by many previous scholars, but many other genres of Arabic literature, and Persian writings as well; c) arraying our evidence in chronological order in order to discover whether any change or development in the use of the term could be detected; d) taking into account the social provenance and outlook of our sources in order to understand differences in their portrayal of the *ʿayyārs*; and e) contextualising the disputed actions of the *ʿayyārs*, both in their own specific milieu (i. e. with whom did the *ʿayyārs* associate, particularly when they were committing their more unappealing actions; and who else habitually did the kinds of things they did) and in the larger context of comparative medieval history.

We began this work by reviewing the treatment which the term has received at the hands of modern scholars, comparing and contrasting this treatment with the origins and meaning assigned to the word in the medieval lexicons, which scholars had not previously utilized in elucidating the signification of the term. This lexical examination revealed that there was no negative denotation at all to the word until the late Buyid period, and that the dominant dictionary definition of *ʿayyār* in our period was "errant."

Next, in Chapter Two, we examined the ideological and religious milieu in which the *ʿayyārs* developed and first appeared. In that chapter we saw that not only is the word *ʿayyār* employed interchangeably with *mutaṭawwiʿ*, but the earliest appearances of *ʿayyārs* occur in unmistakably Sunni holy warrior contexts: fighting infidels on the border and heretics (*videlicet*, non-Sunnis) at home.

Afterwards we analyzed at length the careers of Yaʿqūb and ʿAmr b. al-Layth, history's best-known and -documented *ʿayyārs*, demonstrating that there are two alternative and mutually exclusive understandings of their lives and actions: the first (which Nöldeke promulgated on the basis of a very limited source base, and which has been the standard interpretation ever since), which holds a negative view of the Ṣaffārids as grasping adventurers, devoid of principle; and a contrasting, positive view, one that is clearly present in the sources, which reveals the Ṣaffārids – and particularly Yaʿqūb – as devoted warriors for the faith, allied with leading proto-Sunni and proto-Sufi religious figures.

We determined that the latter, holy warrior interpretation is more persuasive, for several reasons. First, the holy warrior interpretation is earlier; it chronologically precedes the negative portrayal in the sources. Second, while we can discern the motives for bias in the negative portrayal, we can unearth no such motive for

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the positive one – on the contrary, we often find later, consciously anti-Ṣaffārid authors quoting earlier, positive material, thereby undermining their own claims and lending credence to the positive material they are citing. Third, the positive portrayal is far more coherent, and is also the only explanation which can possibly account for the Ṣaffārids' many religious associates and supporters, and also for their consistent nature: respectable members of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* who had deep and intimate connections to the scholarly side of the *mutaṭawwiʿī* tradition. The holy warrior explanation is also the only explanation that logically accounts for the two first Ṣaffārid rulers' career trajectories, especially the numerous Eastern campaigns and, in particular, Yaʿqūb's otherwise puzzling lack of interest in taking over areas such as Fārs the first two times he campaigned there.

Finally, there is the cumulative and combined effect of the explicit statements equating the Ṣaffārid *ʿayyārān* with volunteer warriors for the faith, together with the demonstrably militant Sunni Traditionist nature of their affiliates and supporters: when taken together, there is a preponderance of evidence in favour of the holy warrior version found in the sources. The reason why and how previous scholars overlooked these strong proto-Sunni connections of the Ṣaffārids is clear: although they were careful and painstaking scholars, they never utilized the prosopographical material. In particular, they failed to consult the biographical literature to ascertain just who were the Ṣaffārid supporters named in the chronicles, and whether or not these men shared a common ideological or religious denominator.

We also began to see, commencing in ʿAmr's reign, the emerging *ʿayyār*-Sufi connection (Chapters Six and Seven). As a result of our having examined and elucidated the religious meaning and origins of the *ʿayyārs*, and in particular the connection of the *muṭṭawwiʿī* movement to both the Sufis and the *ʿayyār*s, this connection is far more logical and comprehensible than earlier scholars found it to be. Also, once we have understood the *muṭṭawwiʿī* origin of the *ʿayyārs*, the *ʿayyār* connection with *futuwwa*, what Taeschner called the Islamic *Edelmannsideal*,[1] becomes more comprehensible as well. For Taeschner himself long ago pointed out that the development of the concept of the *fatā* in Islamic times strikingly parallels that which we have shown the concept of *ʿayyār* to have undergone:

> Erstens erhielt der Begriff der *futuwwa* eine teilweise religiöse Färbung als Tugendkomplex der Kämpfer "auf dem Wege Gottes", das hei t im Heiligen Kriege (*ǧihād*) zur Ausbreitung der Herrschaft des Islams, und zweitens nahm er bisweilen bündische Formen an, indem sich Kreise bildeten, die sich das mit dem Worte *fatā* ausgedrückte Edelmannsideal und den im inzwischen aufgekommenen Worte *futuwwa* ausgedrückten Tugendkomplex zur Richtschnur für ihr leben nahmen.[2]

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1 Taeschner, *Zünfte und Bruderschaften*, p. 14.

2 *Ibid*. Note that Hammer-Purgstall already suggested a connection between Islamic chivalry (*futuwwa*) and Jihad in 1849 (J. von Hammer-Purgstall, "Sur la chevalerie des arabes anté-

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We then examined the question of chivalry (*futuwwa/javānmardī*), in both the Sufi and the *ʿayyār* contexts, and asked why there are such radically different depictions of a chivalric group such as the *ʿayyārān* in works of secular culture on the one hand, and the clerically-authored chronicles on the other. We have suggested that there are two related factors contributing to clerical hostility: First, the fact that the *ʿayyārs* were one of what Jürgen Paul has termed the "non-statal" military groups, whose "cooperation [with the central authorities] is limited by the purposes given for military action."[3] As we have seen in the case of *ʿayyār* behaviour throughout the Buyid period, that cooperation did indeed have limits. The *ʿayyārs*, as militant Sunnis, had a definite interest in combating Shiʿites – particularly the presumptuous ones of the Buyid era, who actually had the temerity to publicly express their religion in the streets of Baghdad – while the Buyids had a definite opposing interest, both in allowing at least minimal Shiʿite public religious expression, but also (and more importantly) in maintaining public order.[4]

The *ʿayyārs* of the Buyid period were a classic illustration of what happened when the loyalties of men to the multiple social categories to which they belonged conflicted with one another: "If ... loyalty to one category overwhelmed their other feelings of obligation, then the interest which created that loyalty would feed itself at the expense of the rest of society, which would be oppressed." The corresponding need for a ruler who was not part of that society and had no loyalties within it (and was therefore at least theoretically free from the intense partisanship by which the medieval eastern Islamic world was riven) "explains why, in many situations in which modern historians might expect Near Eastern Communities of this period to yearn to be free, they instead yearned to be ruled."[5] Bids for lordship or independence by autochthonous groups such as the *ʿayyārs*, as Mottahedeh shows, never met with widespread support from their compatriots. Such bids were seen as bringing disorder, despite the sympathy that a large segment of the populace must have had with the goals of certain groups – particularly militant Sunni ones – attempting to arrogate power unto themselves.

The *ʿulamā'*, ideologically, were always on the side of the government. Although this might at first glance appear paradoxical (why would a fanatical

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rieure à celle de l'Europe et sur l'influence de la premiére sur la seconde," *Journal Asiatique*, 4th series, 13 (1849), p. 12.

3 Paul, *The State and the Military*, p. 7.

4 As Mottahedeh notes, "The Buyids were Shiʿis, but kept their Shiʿism undefined and adaptable to the expediencies of their political lives." (Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, p. 187) The present author reached much the same conclusion in earlier research, noting that the Buyids' political expression of their religious affiliation found its utmost manifestation in their permitting public Shiʿite religious practices – although they never provided that public expression with the necessary protection from Sunni partisans – and entrusting important missions to Shiʿite religious leaders. (D. Tor, *The Status of the Shiʿa in ʿIraq During the Late Buwayhid Period*. Unpublished M. A. Thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996)

5 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, pp. 175-176.

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Ḥanbalite such as Ibn al-Jawzī not favor Sunni brotherhoods over the Shiʿite Buyids?), it is actually in keeping with the political philosophy of the times in which the chroniclers lived; even Miskawayh was already living in the age of al-Māwardī, and by the time of the later chroniclers, disorder was feared above all else.[6]

Second, while the clerics may have liked in theory the idea of Sunni paramilitary bands, especially when those bands were far away at the frontiers fighting infidels, their actual presence in the midst of the city, stirring up dissension and disorder which inconvenienced Sunnis as well, was quite another matter. Even when the merchants and townsmen (among whom, after all, the *ʿulamāʾ* are numbered) agreed with the aims and purposes of such groups, the way in which the power of such groups was wielded was not always to their liking. In practice, the *ʿulamāʾ* expressed the same distaste for the *ʿayyārs* as for the Turkish soldiery.

This dislike of the clerics toward those who wielded military power, and of the settled, commerce-oriented populace generally toward the military elite that exacted taxes and tolls from them, whether by governmental appointment or not, is a common feature of medieval Christian as well as medieval Islamic society. Thus, a letter from the famous cleric Peter of Blois

> ... develops a general criticism of knighthood. [Peter] makes the following accusations: Knights slander and malign clerics; their speech is scurrilous; their behavior is inordinate; they esteem most him whose speech is filthiest and whose curses are foulest, who fears God and the Church the least; they claim the license to rob and slander; hardly girded with the sword, they turn to plundering the church, persecuting the poor and suffering mercilessly; they let their exorbitant lusts and desires run wild; they are slothful and drunken; corrupted by otium, they neglect the practice of arms; they go to battle as if to a banquet, their pack animals laden with wine, cheese, sausage and roasting forks instead of weapons ...[7]

But, whereas scholars of Islamic history have tended to uncritically accept this sort of clerical valuation, scholars of the medieval West have understood that such scathing commentary is a product of "the tensions between knights and clerics [which] are a reality of social life in the period ... Peter of Blois is speaking in the interests of his own social group. He has not fabricated the social tensions in which the letter originates, [but neither] is he standing back from a disengaged distance."[8]

Mīrkhwānd's or Ibn al-Athīr's texts, in the same fashion as Peter of Blois's, engage in caricature because they exhibit an unbalanced focus on some aspects of the behaviour of the armed part of Islamic society, to the exclusion of other,

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6 See A. K. S. Lambton, "Islamic Political Thought," *The Legacy of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. Schacht and Bosworth, pp. 410-415 (reprinted in *Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government*); also C. Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazali's Views on Government," *Journal of Persian Studies* 26 (1988), pp. 81-94.

7 C. Stephen Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change," *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. T. N. Bisson, Philadelphia, 1995, p. 291.

8 Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change," pp. 291-292.

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at least equally essential aspects of the armed elite's conduct and goals. The failure of scholars to understand the partisan, biased nature of the text they are reading results in what one medieval Europeanist has called "the mimetic fallacy":

> This is the assumption that a text like Peter of Blois's letter … operates in the mode of empirical, mimetic observations, that it wants to reproduce reality ... [Yet much] medieval writing that brings disapproval to bear on a social group or practice is speaking a polemical language ... The statement, "knights are slothful brutes" has the historical value of the statement, "police are violent racists." Both comments conceal an agenda of social change beneath an appearance of an objective observation ... They mask the imperative or optative mode in the indicative."[9]

To be perfectly fair, the Islamic scholars faced a more difficult task than did the Europeanists when confronting the problem of chivalric groups that engaged in violence. Firstly, because many of the analytical tools the Islamicists employed were invented for a very different age and civilization – the modern Western one – and were therefore unsuited to the use being made of them; in the words of Bernard Lewis:

> It is difficult enough to relate religious movements to social conditions when both are well documented and thoroughly explored; very much more so when one is trying to relate the little-known to the unknown – and with intellectual tools forged for another purpose.[10]

Secondly, while every Western scholar who ever approached the problem of medieval European chivalric groups was familiar with popular romances such as the works of Chretien de Troyes, and therefore had a fairly good idea of what chivalry meant to those who practiced it, regardless of what the clerics and other outsiders thought of it, most medieval Islamicists were not equally familiar with Islamic courtly and popular productions, such as *Samak-i ʿayyār* and the *Qābūs nāma*, which were invariably written in Persian.

That is, the vast majority of surviving medieval Islamic works are clerically authored, and share the social outlook and values of that class. There is not only far less courtly material preserved in the medieval Islamic corpus; virtually all of it that is preserved is written in Persian rather than Arabic – and very few of the scholars working on defining the *ʿayyārs*, from Nöldeke to Cahen, read these Persian works. This has resulted in a seriously skewed definition of who and what the *ʿayyārs* were, one based entirely upon the views of those who disliked certain aspects of their behaviour. The Europeanists, in contrast, found both kinds of sources, the clerical and the courtly, in one language and literature, Latin, and in fair abundance.

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9 Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change," p. 295. Jaeger demonstrates that in other contexts Peter himself paints a very different portrait of knights, and acknowledges that he had been exaggerating in what he wrote previously.

10 Bernard Lewis, "On the Revolutions in Early Islam," *Studia Islamica* 32 (1970), p. 219.

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The importance of understanding, and taking into account, the social context and provenance of sources when conducting historical analysis cannot be overemphasized; just as no one would dream of defining kingship or knighthood in the medieval West solely from the writings of popes, bishops and monks, so scholars of Islamic society should be equally chary of defining chivalric military organizations solely from clerical fulminations against them – particularly when those very same sources show us other, unquestionably elite and respectable elements of society both fraternizing with the *ʿayyārs* and engaging in exactly the same kinds of unsavoury activities in which the *ʿayyārs* engaged.

Georges Duby captures the essence of the courtly sources' importance to the historian when writing of the *chanson* that was commissioned by the heirs of William Marshal, the foremost exponent of Western chivalric ideals in early-thirteenth century England:

> He [the author of the *chanson*] drew upon other sources that, without him, would have remained inaccessible to us, for they are located on the secular side of [medieval] culture. Of this aspect of cultural creation, almost everything has evaporated … The work of a man who did not belong to the clerical intelligentsia, or who at least turned away from it during the course of his work, it bears exceptional witness to what was, among the knights of the period, the meaning and knowledge of history. It is the determination of a memory that I shall not even call courtly, for in the great princely courts the weight of ecclesiastical influences on secular ways of thinking was notably greater than in William's household. What is given us is infinitely precious: the memory of chivalry in an almost pure state, about which, without this evidence, we should know virtually nothing.[11]

In short, in order to analyze any historical phenomenon, it helps greatly to weigh and consider the full range of evidence; hitherto this has not been done with the *ʿayyārs*, and the aim of this work has been to take a first step toward rectifying this partial, and therefore skewed, analysis.

There was yet another pitfall that awaited scholars of medieval Islamic society: the fact that, subsequent to the Mongol invasion, *ʿayyārī*, like many other institutions of Islamic society, fell into decay; and, undoubtedly, from some undetermined point between the Mongol cataclysm and the nineteenth century, the meaning of "*ʿayyār*" really did, at least in popular parlance, become something quite disreputable and *déclassé*; this does not, however, mean that such was the word's connotation or denotation half a millenium earlier.[12]

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11 Duby, *William Marshal*, p. 33.

12 Although note that modern day Sunni *mutaṭawwiʿa* still use the word in precisely this sense, and even still equate *ʿayyārūn* and *futuwwa*; see ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām, *Fī'l-taʿmmur al-ʿalamī*, Peshawar, 1990, pp. 94-5, where in 1929 an *ʿayyār* in the time-honoured *mutaṭawwiʿa* tradition, castigates the reformist Afghan king and summons him back to the Sunna from his heretical ways in much the same terms as Ibn al-Mubārak or Yaʿqūb b. al-Layth might have used. Even more telling is an article in al-Qāʿida's journal *al-Jihād* (October 1993, pp. 34-36), on an Afghani jihadist of the 1920s, possibly the same one as

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Then again, Western scholars researching the phenomenon have been so influenced by their own contemporary outlook (e. g. the late nineteenth – and early twentieth-century German scholars seeing "Aryan male brotherhoods" in the *futuwwa*; Sabari the fervid Marxist seeing proletarian "liberation movements" in the *ʿayyārs*, and so forth) that it has predisposed them to a particular, preconceived understanding of the *ʿayyārs*.

This anachronistic projection of modern political and social sensibilities has, in a different fashion, continued, despite the more cautious approach of contemporary researchers; for the activities in which all wielders of military power in medieval societies, both Islamic and Christian, habitually engaged are so alien and so reprehensible to modern Western sensibilities, that there is a scholarly tendency to attribute such behaviour to lawless aggression and outlaw elements, rather than to what were considered in their own time to have been eminently respectable and even elite members of society. Referring to the pillage and rapine wreaked by European lords and knights, one Europeanist has cautioned against this tendency to judge a very different era by our own values and standards: "The temptation to seize or encroach on lordship seems to have been a constant factor in these local situations ... we might be pardoned for supposing from our outlook in a vastly different world that such ambitions and temptations molded a type of manipulative power … but that would be to lose sight of the deeper lesson …"[13]

In order to understand what the *ʿayyārs'* activities meant in their own times and places, we need to historically recontextualize the *ʿayyārs*. All the evidence we have seen, when arranged in its proper chronological order, shows that the original meaning of the term *ʿayyār* when it first appears in the Islamic sources was "member of an errant band of Sunni holy warriors for the faith," and, while never during the period under our examination entirely losing this aspect, the word gradually acquired new shades of meaning, first a Sufi one but then, overwhelmingly, a chivalric one. Next, our recontextualization has shown both with whom the *ʿayyārs* associated (always a good indication of someone's social standing; the social equivalent of janitors and investment bankers, for instance, are rarely friends, not only in today's world, but in any age; and never systematically so in the way that people of the same social milieu, such as bankers and lawyers, are); and, secondly, who else was engaging in the sort of activities in which the *ʿayyārs* were occupied (namely, the Turkish military elite and, as the sources tell us over and over again, the officials of the government).

This evidence is gleaned not only from the pro-*ʿayyār* courtly sources, but from the very same clerical sources that so vehemently deplore this same *ʿayyār* activity. Obviously, if the sources are telling us that most other armed elites in

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ʿAzzām mentioned, who is referred to as "*ʿayyār min Khurāsān*." The present author is indebted to David Cook for both these references.

13 Bisson, *Tormented Voices*, p. 95.

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society (including undeniably legitimate ones such as the government's own Turkish troops and the Banū ʿAbbās) not only often aided, abetted, and befriended the *ʿayyārs*, but also frequently engaged in precisely the kinds of activities in which the *ʿayyārs* also engaged, oftentimes together with them, then there is no reason for assuming that *ʿayyār* violence per se indicates either outlaw practices and status, or proletarian rage or maladjustment.

While no one can state for certain who constituted the membership of the *ʿayyār* bands, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that various scholars' (most notably Sabari's) assumption of proletarian – let alone criminal – origins or affiliation are unsupported. No king would exhort his son to be a "perfect *ʿayyār*" if this were the case, as did the kingly author of the *Qābūs nāmah*; nor would important Baghdadi officials and religious notables be consorting with *ʿayyārs*, as we find repeatedly occurring in the sources. In short, the *ʿayyārs* were a far more integral and respectable part of the social fabric of the pre-Saljuq Eastern Caliphate than has hitherto been acknowledged.[14]

There remains, of course, much research to be done on the various aspects of the *ʿayyārs* raised in this work. The geographical and chronological scope of inquiry could very well be extended to other times and places; this work has focused entirely on the Eastern Caliphate, the culturally Iranian lands, yet we know that *ʿayyārs* existed in at least some of the more westerly realms of the Caliphate as well – and their social importance did not cease with the coming of the Saljuqs. Another fruitful area of further inquiry would be to document the relations between the *ʿayyārs* and the official military forces in different periods and areas: in this work we saw them both integrated in the military ranks of certain states, such as the Sāmānid one, and alternatively allies and rivals of the official military forces, such as the Turkish armies stationed in Baghdad during the Buyid period.

Limited as this work has necessarily been, however, its findings possess a significance beyond simply an understanding of the meaning of the term *ʿayyār*. First, they uncover the integral and deep-rooted – yet hitherto overlooked – role that ideological religious warfare continued to play in medieval Islamic civilization during the ninth and tenth centuries. This continuing border warrior tradition, moreover, had deep connections with the nascent, fervently orthodox Ḥanbalite movement and the rise of proto-Sunnism generally.

Second, the findings prove that Islamic chivalry arose earlier than has previously been traced, and had its origins as a religious movement – at least in part, in these militant Sunni circles. This fact also explains why Islamic chivalry, *futuwwa*, was and remained a Sunni phenomenon, at least until the Mongol inva-

[14] Most probably, in this aspect as well the *ʿayyārs* resembled the European knights of the High Middle Ages, who were recruited from diverse social backgrounds ranging from well-to-do peasants to the upper echelons of society; *vide* e. g. Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble*, pp. 5-6.

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sions – a fact which has also been little remarked until now. Moreover, the discovery that the *ʿayyār* phenomenon developed into a chivalric order may call for a total reassessment of not only the *ʿayyārān*, but also of the entire history of chivalry, which would now have to be dated several hundred years earlier – and more eastward – than heretofore. Most curiously, it would highlight the fact that, albeit in very different ways, in both East and West deep religious conviction gave rise to organized brotherhoods espousing a very similar standard of noble conduct. Perhaps it will then be possible to convincingly show that when the European crusaders arrived in the Islamic world in the eleventh century, their encounter with the world's first chivalrous society gave them some sort of model to bring back home with them.[15]

Finally, this work's findings regarding the *ʿayyārs'* social milieu and associates, and the historical context of their activities, demonstrate that the *ʿayyārs* occupied a central and respectable place in the social fabric of the Eastern Caliphate in pre-Saljuq times. The revised understanding of the social role and position of the *ʿayyārs* laid forth in these pages will enable us to better recognize, trace, and contextualize both this and other manifestations of that native Muslim military and political initiative whose seeming absence has so baffled scholars until now. There is a vast treasury of unexploited material in the medieval sources relating to extra-governmental armed groups; and, although there have been a few scattered attempts to examine the role and impact of such groups,[16] no one has yet undertaken a comprehensive, systematic study of the larger place and function of organized paramilitary bands of free Muslims in classical Islamic civilization. The present author hopes that this book has, at the very least, demonstrated that one cannot really understand most aspects of the medieval Islamic world without first comprehending the role and nature of such paramilitary groups. These bands were far more pervasive, and far more integral to Islamic religious, political, and social history, than scholars have hitherto acknowledged.

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15 This is what J. von Hammer-Purgstall attempted to demonstrate in 1849 ("Sur la chevalerie des Arabes," *passim)*.

16 E. g. Richard Bulliet's *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, Cambridge, MA, 1972; Jürgen Paul's Sāmānid study, frequently cited by the present author; and, more recently, Paul's "The Seljuq Conquest(s) of Nishapur: A Reappraisal," and David Durand-Guédy's "Iranians at War under Turkish Domination: The Example of Pre-Mongol Isfahan," both of which appeared in *Iranian Studies* 38:4 (2005), pp. 575-585 and 587-606 respectively.

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