

6. The Beginning of the ‘*Ayyār* – Sufi Connection, and the Decline and Fall of the ‘*Ayyār* 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 ‘*ayyār* can best be defined as “Sunni *mutaṭṭawwi‘* 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 ‘*ayyār* 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 ‘*ayyār*, ‘Amr b. al-Layth, in order to trace both the continuity of the original *mutaṭṭawwi‘* meaning of the word and the emergence, clearly seen in ‘Amr’s reign, of an ‘*ayyār*-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.

‘*Amr b. al-Layth*

‘Amr b. al-Layth’s public career is a bit more difficult to draw conclusions from than is Ya‘qūb’s, because ‘Amr 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 Ya‘qūb’s soldiers in order to continue Ya‘qūb’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.

‘Amr b. al-Layth had begun his career in the same ‘*ayyār* band as his brother Ya‘qūb.¹ He had served as Ya‘qūb’s deputy and viceroy on several occasions – as

¹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 194.

had Ya‘qūb’s other surviving brother, ‘Alī² – although ‘Amr did not distinguish himself particularly in this capacity.³ He had always been overshadowed by Ya‘qūb, and on at least one occasion there had been a break in their relations which was said to have grieved Ya‘qūb considerably,⁴ although the two siblings were reconciled soon thereafter.⁵ ‘Amr then served Ya‘qūb personally during the latter’s final illness.⁶

Ya‘qūb’s death seems to have left his troops somewhat at a loss. There was no one obvious leader to fill Ya‘qūb’s position, so it was therefore natural that they turned to Ya‘qūb’s two brothers, both of whom had fought alongside Ya‘qūb from his earliest ‘*ayyār*’ days. It appears that the army originally leaned toward ‘Alī b. al-Layth:

When Ya‘qūb passed away, his two brothers ‘Amr and ‘Alī were present. The army considered ‘Alī’s reign and his command more proper, for the reason that ‘Amr had come to Sistān 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 Ya‘qūb’s close companions] took back the seal from ‘Alī’s hand and gave it to ‘Amr. ‘Amr accepted rule [*kār*] and the army assented; and ‘Alī regretted his own hesitation.⁸

‘Amr’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-Mu‘tamid, to whom he immediately professed allegiance. Belying assertions that the Ṣaffārids were seen as anti-‘Abbāsīd, the Caliph straightaway invested ‘Amr with patents for Fars, Kirmān, Sistān, Khurāsān, Iṣfahān and Sind and the *shurṭa* of Baghdad and Samarra,⁹ rather than taking advantage of ‘Amr’s weakness during a critical time.¹⁰ In fact, the good will appears to have been reciprocal; we read that in

² *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 208.

³ E. g. *ibid.*, p. 204, in the year 248/862, when ‘Amr was put in charge of Sistān while Ya‘qūb was campaigning in Bost and was surprised and captured by Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naṣr; Ya‘qūb was never so unprepared in his career, not even when he was betrayed and attacked by al-Muwaffaq.

⁴ *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 230; there is a lacuna in the text here, so the cause of the rift is unknown.

⁵ *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 232.

⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 233.

⁷ I. e. after his afore-mentioned quarrel with Ya‘qūb.

⁸ *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 234. There is a lacuna in the text where the actual process of electing a ruler is described; presumably, ‘Alī’s lack of decisiveness was elaborated there. Note that Ṭabarī relates the succession of ‘Amr as though this were a smooth and uncontested transition (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 544).

⁹ ‘Amr is reported as having delegated in the following year ‘Ubaydallāh b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir as his representative in charge of the Baghdādī *shurṭa* (al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 18).

¹⁰ *Tārīkh-i Sistān*, p. 234; *Rawḍat al-ṣafā’*, vol. 4, p. 15; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, vol. 5, p. 360; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 326, 332 (where ‘Amr’s appointment of a representative is discussed). Gardīzī (*Zayn al-akbbār*, p. 9) merely states that “Mu‘tamid and Muwaffaq gave Khurāsān and Sistān and Fārs to ‘Amr b. al-Layth,” without mentioning any oath of allegiance on ‘Amr’s part. Al-Dhahabī (*Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 16) states that ‘Amr “entered into obedience” to the caliph, and also that the caliph immediately

266/879f “‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’s rule is confirmed elsewhere, in a passage which informs us that ‘Amr was “Most excellent of policy, just; and his fortunes became great, yet he obeyed the caliph.”¹² Other sources as well emphasize ‘Amr’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: ‘Amr used to levy in Fārs “fifty thousand thousand dirhams and every year he would give to the caliph [*al-sultān*] 15,000 dirhams or dīnārs.”¹³

But ‘Amr was faced with grave challenges from other quarters. First, he had troubles with his disgruntled brother and erstwhile rival ‘Alī, although the two were soon reconciled, at least outwardly.¹⁴ Far more formidable was the revolt on the part of virtually all of Ya‘qūb’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 ‘Amr’s authority.¹⁶

The most serious challenge, though, was the rebellion led by a man named Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khujistānī in Khurāsān. This revolt had begun in Ya‘qūb’s time and had been going on for several years by the time ‘Amr 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. Ṭāhīr’s, who had joined the Ṣaffārids – particularly Ya‘qūb’s brother ‘Alī b. al-Layth – after Ya‘qūb 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-Isfahānī, *Ta’rīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ* (p. 171), states simply that “Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth died in Jundishāpūr, one of the towns of Khurāsān, in the year 265. His brother ‘Amr entered into the obedience of the *sultān* and the *sultān* entrusted him with the government of the *shurṭa* in Baghdad and the districts of Khurāsān, and those districts of the Ṭāhīrids which were attached to it.” Ṭabarī (*Ta’rīkh*, vol. 9, p. 544) also states merely that ‘Amr preferred his obedience. Ṭabarī also omits the *shurṭa* of Baghdad and the Ḥaramayn from his listing of the areas that ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’s investiture of ‘Ubaydullāh b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhīr with the Baghdad *shurṭa*, and of Muḥammad b. Abī’l-Sāj as governor of the Ḥaramayn (p. 549). Ibn al-Jawzī (*al-Muntazam*, vol. 12, p. 197) follows Ṭabarī.

¹¹ *Tārikh-i Sistān*, p. 234. ; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 371.

¹² al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a’lām 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 *Tārikh-i Sistān*, 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.*

sources; al-Dhahabī calls him “an oppressive, unjust tyrant [*jabbār^{an} zālim^{an} ghāshim^{an}*],”¹⁹ and Ibn al-Athīr relates some particularly unflattering stories about al-Khujistānī’s envy, cruelty, conniving, treachery, and general nastiness.²⁰ In fact, Ya‘qūb is said to have perceived al-Khujistānī’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 Nishāpūr,²² then that of Bisṭām, in Qūmis.²³ In 262/875²⁴ al-Khujistānī, after much maneuvering, apparently gained mastery over Nishāpūr for the first time,²⁵ immediately thereafter attempting to join forces with several rebels; one of these, Rāfi‘ b. Harthama, responded favourably to these overtures.²⁶ Rāfi‘, too, came from the area of Bādghīs, and was an erstwhile Ṭāhirid supporter who had joined Ya‘qūb 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 Ya‘qūb (“One of the group of those favouring Ya‘qūb over Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir”). Rāfi‘ himself is personally described as being “a man of long beard, unpleasant face [*karīh al-wajh*] and little cheerfulness.”²⁷ Ya‘qūb, however, distrusted and disliked him and his ambition, so Rāfi‘ 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, ‘Amr went to Nishāpūr to fight al-Khujistānī in that

¹⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Ta’rikh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51. It is particularly noted that he killed Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhli, 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 Nishāpūr, 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’rikh*, vol. 9, p. 544, states merely that al-Khujistānī took over Nishāpūr 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 Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 248.

³⁰ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 335; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh*, vol. 9, p. 552. The description of al-Khujistānī’s vandalism is from Ṭabarī.

same year, but his own brother and erstwhile rival ‘Alī was collaborating with the rebel and ‘Amr was defeated.³¹ ‘Amr withdrew to Herat and imprisoned anew his treacherous brother ‘Alī, while al-Khujistānī “entered Nishāpūr, and killed a group of those who inclined towards ‘Amr.”³²

In the aftermath of ‘Amr’s defeat we see the Caliph taking ‘Amr’s part, in the year 267/880f. :

The caliph [*al-sulṭān*] jailed Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir and a number of the members of his household [*abl bayṭibi*] after al-Khujistānī’s victory over ‘Amr b. al-Layth, for ‘Amr 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 ‘Abbāsids 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 Nishāpūr itself, however, by the son of the man who had been Ya‘qūb’s staunchest supporter in Khurāsān:

Ḥaykān³⁴ he is Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī – and a group of the *mutaṭawwi‘a* and the *fuḡabā’* in Nishāpūr inclined toward ‘Amr 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 *fuḡabā’* who adhered to the *madhhab* of the people of ‘Irāq [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 *aṣḡāb al-ra’y* as a counterweight to his opponent Ḥaykān, who was, like his father and the other pro-Ṣaffārid ‘*ulamā’*, a member of the *abl al-ḥadīth*. Khujistānī’s behaviour suggests that a religious significance was injected into this

³¹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 237. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 335, does not mention ‘Alī’s treachery, nor do Ṭabarī (*loc. cit.*) and al-Dhahabī (*Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 19). It is unclear whether Ṭabarī and al-Dhahabī are referring here to al-Khujistānī’s first sojourn in Nishāpūr, or his second, in the following year, about which other sources as well report the killing of ‘Amr’s supporters (see *infra*).

³² Al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 19; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 552. .

³³ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 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 ‘Amr’s support by the *mutaṭawwi‘a*, particularly Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad, is more than a little disingenuous, given the previous history of Ṣaffārid support on the part of the Dhuhlis and others which we have seen in Chapter Four when discussing Ya‘qūb’s takeover of Nishāpūr.

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-*abl al-ḥadīth* connections we delineated in the previous chapter continued under ‘Amr. This impression is further strengthened by the casual mention in an ‘ulamology which implies that Traditionists found a very hospitable climate in Sīstān under ‘Amr; we are told that the son of the great traditionist Abū Dā’ūd, who had been living in Baghdad, returned to Sīstān “in the days of ‘Amr b. al-Layth, and *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* gathered to him ...”³⁷

Al-Khujistānī next followed ‘Amr 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 [*asā’a al-sīra*], “and [this] strengthened the ‘*ayyārūn* and evildoers [*abl al-fasād*],” according to Ibn al-Athīr, “so the people gathered around Ḥaykān [who, as will be recalled, was supporting the ‘*ayyār* Ṣaffārids], and he revolted against [Khujistānī’s] deputy, and ‘Amr b. al-Layth aided them with his army.”⁴¹

³⁶ Bosworth has described Khujistānī’s actions as follows: “Khujistānī now occupied Nīshāpūr once more, expelling ‘Amr’s *‘āmil* [representative] and slaughtering ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr’s support ... came from the *muṭṭawwi’a* [*ghāzīs*] and *fuqahā’* 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 Hanafis (*abl al-‘Irāq*), 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-Dhuhli.

³⁷ Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtaṣar ta’rīkh 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-Akbbār*, p. 9. Gardīzī simply states that the *mutatawwi’a* – the term is apparently once again being used synonymously with ‘*ayyārūn* – were united with the *abl al-ḥadīth* in support of ‘Amr: “Ḥaykān [for Jankān] Qārī and Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad and Yaḥyā al-Dhuhli [*sic*] and all the *muṭṭawwi’a* of Nīshāpūr had an inclination toward ‘Amr 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 “*abl al-fasād*” as a definitional description for his readers, even

The Ṣaffārid force succeeded in retaking the city; al-Khujistānī hastened back to Nishāpūr upon hearing the news that ‘Amr’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 *mutatawwi‘a* in Khurāsān, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Dhuhli, 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 ‘Amr 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. ‘Abdallāh al-Khujistānī, grabbed his bridle and said: “O tyrant [*zālim*], you assassinated⁴³ the *imām* the son of the *imām*, the ‘*ālim* son of the ‘*ālim*.” Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh 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 [*sāhib 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 ‘Amr al-Mustamlī, in a dream: “I asked him: ‘What has God done with you?’ He an-

though the term itself was not used in the original source. It is this passage in particular which causes Jürgen Paul to neglect the ‘*ayyār*’ nature of the Ṣaffārid state and, in keeping with the ruling “bandit” paradigm, posit that the ‘*ayyārs*’ all supported Khujistānī: “In the confused period during which the lordship of the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān and especially in Nishāpūr was approaching its end, the representative of the usurper al-Khujistānī relied upon, among others, the ‘*ayyārs*, while the Islamic dignitaries in the city and their military exponent Ḥaykān had pronounced themselves [in favour of] the Ṣaffārid ‘Amr b. al-Layth. Also in this case the ‘*ayyārs* 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 ‘*ayyārūn*’ of Nishāpūr were a rural element. Bosworth, too, (“Ṭāhirids and Ṣaffārids,” p. 117) understands ‘*ayyārūn*’ and *abl 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 al-‘ālam al-nubalā*, vol. 12, p. 288), writes simply “*qaltal*.” 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, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51. On the same page it is stated that “Yaḥyā b. al-Dhuhli” 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.

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 Nishāpūr 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 Nishāpūr, 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 Nishāpūr, 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 Nishāpūr and, the next year, in the revived mint of Herāt,⁵² which had been closed since the time of al-Ma'mūn's reforms in the coinage.⁵³ This is one of the most fascinating issues in the entire 'Abbāsīd period, first, because of the uniqueness of the coins themselves among the uniform coinages of post-Ma'mūn ninth-century issues.⁵⁴ The Nishāpūr 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 *ḍinārs* 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-Mu'tamid 'Alā Allāh; "*bi'l-yumn wa'l-sa'āda*." And on its other side: al-Wāfi Aḥmad bin 'Abdallāh.⁵⁶

⁴⁶ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, 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." (Gardīzi, *Zayn al-Akhhār*, p. 9)

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362

⁵⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 51.

⁵¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 362. Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh 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 [*ra'iyya*] by this."

⁵² It is unclear in precisely which year he took Herat; al-Isfīzārī's *Rawḍat al-jannāt* (p. 383) gives no date, but *Tārikh-i Sistān*, 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 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma'mūn," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 36 (1993), pp. 58-83.

⁵⁴ M. Bates, "The 'Abbāsīd 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, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 25, states merely that "He minted coins in his own name, and left out the name al-Mu'tamid on the reverse side."

⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 9, p. 600.

The layout of those coins, as they have survived from Nishāpūr,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 Nishāpūr 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 ‘Abbāsīd 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-Mutawakkil’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 Nishāpūr 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 Nishāpūr 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 ‘Abbāsīd 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-Mutawakkil, surely there must have been many more available dies of al-Muṭaḍid 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-Mutawakkil” coins are found only in Herāt and not in Nishāpūr also, and why al-Khujistānī should have instituted such a radical departure from ‘Abbāsīd 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 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, who called himself caliph (*amīr al-mu’mīnīn*) with the regnal title al-Mutawakkil. ‘Abd 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.

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^m ghulāt^m bi-ajma‘ihim*]⁶⁰ – and to have made his submission to ‘Alī 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, ‘Alī 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 ‘Abbāsīd 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 ‘Abbāsīd 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’llāb*” – 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 ‘*ulamā*’ were concerned. Yet the inscription “*al-mulk wa’l-qudra li’llāb/al-ḥawāḥ wa’l-quwwa bi’llāb*” [“rulership and power are God’s; might and strength are in God”], together with the aforementioned anomalous Qur’ānic 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 ‘Irāq;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 ‘Irāqī 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 *Chabār 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, *Tārīkh*, vol. 9, p. 599; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 25; pace Bosworth, *Ṣaffārids*, p. 197, who claims that Ṭabarī must have meant ‘Irāq ‘Ajāmī.

flirtation with Khārijism is further strengthened by the opposition of the *abl al-ḥadīth* in Nishāpūr 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 Nishāpūr] 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 'Uthmān 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 'ayyār-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-quḍwa al-rabbānī*], Shaykh Khurāsān 'Amr (or 'Umar) b. Salm (or Salma) al-Naysābūrī 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 'Amr b. 'Alwān, 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

⁶⁵ al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh 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-Dhuhli with Yahyā b. Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Dhuhli; 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 a'lām al-nubalā'*, Dār al-Fikr edition, vol. 11, pp. 152-153, where Abū 'Uthmān's timely intervention with God saves the Nishāpūrī population from al-Khujistānī's exactions and threats as well as his general unrighteousness.

⁶⁷ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 510. See also R. Gramlich's biography (*Alle 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, *Tabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p. 104.

⁶⁹ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 512.

⁷⁰ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol. 12, p. 511.

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 Nishāpūr 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 Nishāpūr 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 ‘*ayyārs* 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 ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Husayn 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-‘ibāra wa’l-lisān*].’ Al-Junayd said: ‘*Futuwwa* is not making a show of piety, and forsaking genealogy⁷⁵ [*isqāt 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 ‘Abd al-Rahmān 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*

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 a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 512. Note that he also appears in Sulamī’s chapter on *futuwwa* in *al-Muqaddima fi’l-taṣawwuf*, ed. Husayn Amin, 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-awliyyā’*, p. 195.

⁷⁴ Qazvini, *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*.

‘*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 ‘Abdallāh 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 ‘Abdallāh, 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 Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Nazwayh, “was of the shaykhs of Nishāpūr. He saw Abū Ḥafṣ and became friends with Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥirī, 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. Khidrawayh al-Balkhī, “of the most celebrated *shaykhs* of Khurāsān in *futuwwa*. He came into Nishāpūr, on a visit to Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nishāpūri.”⁸¹

The most important acquaintance of Abū Ḥafṣ for our purposes, however, is Abū Šāliḥ Ḥamdūn b. Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣār. He appears in some of our sources as transmitting *ḥadīth* directly from the mainstay of Šaffārid support in Nishāpūr, Ibn Ḥanbal’s friend Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhli.⁸² Ḥamdūn, praised by both al-Tustarī and Junayd, was said to have been not only an associate but a friend

⁷⁷ al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, pp. 117-118.

⁷⁸ Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 245; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 254.

⁷⁹ Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 255. Note that Abū’l Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Jawzī (*Talbīs iblīs*, ed. Ayman Šāliḥ, Cairo, 1415/1995, p. 405) speaks of the ‘*ayyārūn*, as practitioners of *futuwwa*, wearing a distinctive garment based on the sufi one (*vide infra* Chapter Seven).

⁸⁰ Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, 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-šūfiyya*, p. 103. *Vide infra* for more on this figure’s ‘*ayyār*’ connections.

⁸² Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 171.

[*rafiq*] of Abū Ḥafṣ;⁸³ he was also associated with one “Nūḥ, who had a reputation for ‘*ayyārī*’ and was known for *futuwwa*⁸⁴ [*nām-i ‘ayyārī būd be-futuwwat ma’rūf*], and all the ‘*ayyārān*’ of Nishāpūr were under his command.”⁸⁵ Here, then, we have an explicit ninth-century connection among *Sufis*, *futuwwa* and ‘*ayyārān*’, a point to which we shall be returning in the following chapter. Furthermore, the wording makes it sound as though the ‘*ayyārān*’ of Nishāpūr formed a single group with a command structure or hierarchy (something we saw as well in the case of Ya‘qub b. al-Layth and the ‘*ayyārān*’ of Sistān).

A star pupil of Abū Ḥafṣ – Abū ‘Uthmān 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 ‘Uthmān, Sa‘īd b. Ismā‘īl b. Sa‘īd b. Manṣūr al-Naysābūrī al-Ḥīrī al-Ṣūfī” was born in Rayy in the year 230/844f, and studied in both Rayy and ‘Irāq.⁸⁶ He then came to Nishāpūr 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 ‘Irāqīs.”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-Dhuhli was killed, the people were prevented by Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khujistānī from frequenting *majālis al-ḥadīth*; no one dared to carry an inkwell, until al-Sarī b. Khuzayma arrived, and the ascetic Abū ‘Uthmān 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 ‘Uthmān’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 ‘Uthmān in the circles surrounding the leader of the pro-Ṣaffārid *muḥaddithīn* in Nishāpūr, Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-

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 *jawānmardī*.

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 a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. 14, p. 63; similarly, “In the world there are three who have no fourth: Abū ‘Uthmān al-Ḥīrī in Nisābūr; al-Junayd in Baghdad, and Abū ‘Abdallāh b. al-Jalā’ in Syria,” Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā’*, p. 188; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-‘ayān*, 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-Nisābūrī, *Tārīkh-i Nishāpūr*, p. 115.

⁸⁹ Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 166.

⁹⁰ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. 14, pp. 64-65. The year must be slightly off, unless Rāfi‘ b. Harthama continued al-Khujistānī’s policies.

Dhuhli Ḥaykân, and particularly connects him to al-Mustamlî, who as we have just seen was one of Ḥaykân's closest associates.

Abū 'Uthmân 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 Ḥaḥṣ are quoted defining the concept of *murūwra*.⁹² One of his companions, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ja'far Shibhî, is called "of the *javānmardān* of the shaykhs of the time; he kept company with shaykh Abū 'Uthmân Ḥîrî ..." This same al-Shibhî is quoted as an authority on *futuwwa*.⁹³

In fact, there appears to have been a larger circle of Abū 'Uthmân's friends who are said to have belonged to the *fityān*. Abū'l-Fawāris Shāh b. Shujā' al-Kirmānî, for instance, a very famous sufi, and Abū 'Uthmân's teacher,⁹⁴ is described as follows: "Of the friends [*rafiqān*] of Abū Ḥaḥṣ al-Nishāpūrî ... he became the teacher of Abū 'Uthmân Ḥîrî. 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 'Uthmân's associate Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alî b. Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Šūfi al-Būshanjî, 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 'Uthmân Ḥîrî ... and [was] adept in *futuwwa*."⁹⁸ He is also referred to as "the most knowledgeable of the *shaykhs* of his time ... and the most excellent of them in *futuwwa* and renunciation [*tajrîd*]."⁹⁹ It is even said that "the way of *futuwwa* and *ikhlās* was cut off in Nishāpūr by his death [in 340/951f.]."¹⁰⁰ Al-Būshanjî 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-tazarruf 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

⁹¹ Anṣārî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 199.

⁹² Anṣārî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 193.

⁹³ E. g. Anṣārî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, 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-ma' rûf*]

⁹⁴ Al-Hujvîrî, *Kashf al-Mahjûb*, pp. 167, 174.

⁹⁵ Anṣārî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 195; al-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 192. al-Qushayrî writes that he was "*Aḥad al-fityān, kabîr al-sba'n*" (*al-Risāla al-Qushayrîyya*, p. 77).

⁹⁶ Al-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 193.

⁹⁷ Al-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 458.

⁹⁸ Anṣārî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 421.

⁹⁹ Al-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 458; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 196. al-Būshanjî, too, (Sulamî, *ibid.* p. 460; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *ibid.*) speaks about *murūwra* as well.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, p. 196.

¹⁰¹ Al-Sulamî, *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyya*, p. 460.

¹⁰² See *supra*, Chapter One.

The nature of the Nishāpūrī religious leadership supporting ‘Amr and the Šaffārīds, and opposing Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Khujistānī, is significant for another reason as well. Taken together with the attestations of personal contact between Ya‘qūb and al-Tustarī, it strengthens the proof we saw above, when discussing Abū Ḥafṣ’s friend Ḥamdūn and his ‘*ayyār*’ associate, that an ‘*ayyār-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 ‘*ayyārs*.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 *fiṭyān* 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 *fiṭyān*, 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-Šaffarid forces in Nishapur, let us return to the events in Khurāsān. Whether due to the efficacy of Abū ‘Uthmān’s prayers or not, al-Khujistānī was murdered by two of his own disgruntled men in 268/881.¹⁰⁵ His confederate Rāfi‘ b. Harthama assumed control of Khurāsān in his place, after some minor skirmishes with the representative of ‘Amr’s son Muḥammad;¹⁰⁶ Rāfi‘ is said to have impoverished the Khurāsānī villages to the point of ruin with his heavy taxation.¹⁰⁷ In 269/882f. he began issuing coins in Marv, Nishāpūr 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. ‘Arif-i ‘Ayyār (al-Anṣārī, *Ṭabaqāt al-šāfiyya*, 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 *mutaṭawwi‘* circles.

¹⁰⁴ With the exception of Dhahabī.

¹⁰⁵ Dhahabī, *Ta’riḫ 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 *Tāriḫ-i Sistān*, 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.

while ‘Amr’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. ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr 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 Iṣba¹¹¹ saying: “Now that the affairs of Fārs, the two ‘Irāqs, Arabia, Syria, and Yemen are all straightened out, [‘Amr] 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 “*ayyār*,” as in the previous chapters, being defined as some sort of holy warrior; the caliph expects – and ‘Amr accepts such expectations – that ‘Amr should function as a *ghāzī*. ‘Amr accordingly went eastwards, first to Sīstān, then to Khurāsān, to try to put the latter province in order, presumably in preparation for resuming Ya‘qūb’s conquests in the East. ‘Amr 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 Rāfi‘ b. Harthama had true control over Khurāsān only between 278 and 280/891-893f.¹¹³

Part of ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr, 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 ‘Abbāsīd courtier had slandered ‘Amr before the caliph.¹¹⁵ The Caliph called in the Khurāsānī pilgrims and announced to them that ‘Amr was deposed from everything he had previously been awarded,

¹⁰⁹ This Ṭulūnid effort was thwarted: “The people of Mecca aided ‘Amr’s representative and they kept ‘Amr’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 “‘Amr 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-Kurdi.” 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*, Ya‘qūb 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, *Tārīkh sinī mulūk al-ard*, p. 171.

¹¹⁴ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 241-245; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 368. Iṣṭakhri 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.”

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-

¹¹⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* pp. 242-243; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 7; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 414; Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh 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 ʿAbbāsīd Recovery. The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 37, p. 140). The original can be found in Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 9, pp. 663-664; see also the lengthy account and panegyric in Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 399-406.

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 ʿAbbāsīd 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 *khutba* was eliminated. Only one source provides an explanation for this sudden reversal: according to the *Tārikh-i Sīstān* this *volte-face* oc-

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, *Tā’rikh*, 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-a’yān*, vol. 5, p. 364; *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 250 – 252; Dhahabī, *Tā’rikh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 220, 230. After this he was apparently busy raiding Khwārazm, whence he supposedly brought back 10,000 prisoners (Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 252-253).

¹²⁰ Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, pp. 253-254.

¹²¹ Ṭabarī, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 12.

¹²² Ṭabarī, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 16; Dhahabī, *Tā’rikh 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, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 9; Dhahabī, *Tā’rikh 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-Muntazam*, vol. 12, p. 359).

¹²⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 7; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 413.

¹²⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, pp. 13-14.

curred after the Caliph heard that ‘Ali b. al-Layth had escaped from prison and joined with Rāfi‘ b. Harthama, re-igniting the latter’s rebellion.¹²⁷

Thus, the ‘Abbāsīd attitude toward the Ṣaffārīds seems to have been based not on righteous indignation or disapproval of wicked or irreligious practices, but rather on opportunism; the ‘Abbāsīds 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 ‘Amr was not even aware of it for quite some time, even after an army was sent by the Caliph into Fārs; ‘Amr thought that the forces must be acting without higher authority.¹²⁸ ‘Amr defeated the Caliphal army and entered Shīrāz in 277/890f. ; there he was informed of the ‘Abbāsīd betrayal. It is significant that ‘Amr 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-Mu‘tamīd’s son al-Mufawwaḍ, who was not supposed to be named in the East.¹²⁹ After yet a further victory by ‘Amr over the caliphal forces, the caliphal vizier sent friendly letters to ‘Amr (of the “there must have been some misunderstanding” variety).

The grounds on which the ‘Abbāsīds appealed to ‘Amr are, once again, highly instructive, for they show what the caliphal circle thought was likely to move ‘Amr:

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 ‘Amr’s sense of religious duty succeeded where force had not; ‘Amr obligingly withdrew from al-Ahwāz.

One should note that the ‘Abbāsīds 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 ‘Abbāsīds, by virtue of their inherited position, would still have held all the cards. No orthodox public figure could dispense with ‘Abbāsīd legitima-

¹²⁷ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 247. The renewed break itself is mentioned in other sources, though – e. g. Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 229.

¹²⁸ In fact, ‘Amr 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, “‘Abbāsīd Coinage.”

¹³⁰ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 248.

tion, no matter how venal or cypher-like the particular representatives of 'Abbāsīd authority might be; the 'Abbāsīds, 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 'Abbāsīd with another, usually the objectionable 'Abbāsīd's brother, son, or nephew. Both Ya'qūb and now 'Amr (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 wars¹³¹ finally ended in 279/892, with the accession of al-Muwaffaq's son al-Mu'taḍid to the throne. After al-Mu'taḍid became caliph he immediately restored or confirmed good relations with 'Amr, sending him once again the banners for all the eastern provinces but Transoxiana and enjoining him to fight the renegade Rāfi' b. Harthama, who then promptly took an oath of allegiance to the Zaydi Shī'ite *imām*.¹³²

Then [al-Mu'taḍid] sent Ismā'il b. Ishāq al-Qāḍī as an emissary to 'Amr, and made peace with him, and he fulfilled all of 'Amr's wishes. He commanded that ['Amr's] name be written in all places and that they make the *khuḍba* 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, Kimān, Khurāsān, Zābulistān, Sistān, Kābul and the guards of Baghdad [*shurṭat Baghdad*], and he commanded that he must go fight Rāfi' b. Harthama.¹³³

Only one source explicitly states the reasons for al-Mu'taḍid's renunciation of Rāfi' and renewed embrace of 'Amr. We are told that the caliph wrote to 'Amr "commanding him to fight Rāfi' when [news of] Rāfi's preference for Muḥammad b. Zayd reached him, and [Rāfi's] condemnation of the killing of al-Mu'tamid and al-Mu'taḍid'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 'Abbāsīd 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-

¹³¹ For accounts of these see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 416, 426, 436.

¹³² Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān* p. 254. According to Ṭabarī the impetus for the rapprochement came from 'Amr, who sent emissaries to the new caliph (*Tā'rikh*, vol. 10, p. 30). This is contradicted by what is written in the *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān* (p. 254), which states rather that the caliph had sent envoys, ominously, to summon Rāfi' to 'Irāq. Rāfi' refused to go and imprisoned the envoys, possibly because he may have known that al-Mu'taḍid was about to patch up Caliphal-Ṣaffārid relations.

¹³³ *Tārikh-i Sistān*, p. 249. Al-Mu'taḍid apparently delegated Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Abī Dulaf at this point to expel Rāfi' from al-Rayy, which was successfully accomplished. (Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh*, vol. 10, p. 31; Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-i Ṭabaristān*, p. 254)

¹³⁴ Ibn al-Faḥih al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 312.

riographical press had been near neighbor to the ‘Abbāsids 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 ‘Amr 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 *mutatawwi‘a* 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 Rāfi‘ 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, ‘Amr apparently managed, during the periods when he had control of his provinces, to do a good job. We are told by the author Gardizī, for instance, that ‘Amr, “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 ‘Amr’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 [*bidāya ilā qawānīn al-mamlaka*] over a long period of time. And al-Sallāmi mentions in the book *Akbbār 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 [‘Amr] would pay the army every three months, and would preside himself in person over this ...¹⁴⁰

In the same vein, ‘Amr 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 ‘*ayyārs* –

¹³⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 444-449; Dhahabī, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, vol. 20, pp. 232-234.

¹³⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 453, Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj*, vol. 5, p. 275.

¹³⁷ E. g. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 453, 464. Mas‘ūdī, *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 275, does not mention the *mutatawwi‘a* of Mosul, but only the Caliph as having gone to fight the marauders, and Dhahabī (*Ta’rīkh 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 Gardizī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, vol. 5, p. 361.

¹⁴¹ Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. 10, p. 351.

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, ‘Amr was now free to return to what we are arguing was the primary purpose of any ‘*ayyār*: executing the Islamic imperative to order the world according to God’s will, through the complementary duties of *al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf* (restoring good and just rule within the Dār al-Islām) and *jihād* (fighting the Infidel and heretic, both within and without Islamdom). ‘Amr thus spent the next several years campaigning against the veteran rebel Rāfi‘. In 279/892f. ‘Amr regained Nishāpūr and Khurāsān.¹⁴² Rāfi‘ thereupon be-took himself to Ṭabaristān, joining forces with the ‘Alid Muḥammad b. Zayd.¹⁴³ The climax of the war against Rāfi‘ came in 283/896f, when ‘Amr left Nishāpūr,¹⁴⁴ and Rāfi‘ seized the opportunity to retake the city. Rāfi‘ then openly assumed the banners of, and allegiance to, the Zaydī Shi‘ite leader.¹⁴⁵ ‘Amr quickly returned and besieged the city; Rāfi‘ was again defeated and fled, with ‘Amr, then ‘Amr’s men, in pursuit.

Rāfi‘ 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 Rāfi‘’s killing read from all the pulpits in the Friday mosque services. After Rāfi‘’s head was brought to the caliph by ‘Amr’s messenger, al-Mu‘taḍid 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 ‘Amr “robes of honor, the standards of the governorship of Rayy [*wilāyat al-Rayy*], and gifts.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² *Idem.*, *Ta’riḫ al-Islām*, vol. 20, p. 238.

¹⁴³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 457-458. According to Ṭabarī (*Ta’riḫ*, vol. 10, p. 34) ‘Amr retook Nishāpūr in 280/893f. Interestingly, Qazvīnī’s *Tāriḫ-i guzida* (p. 372) depicts Rāfi‘’s revolt as though he had allied with the ‘Alids from the beginning; this is probably due to that source’s telescoping of events, although the very detailed *Tāriḫ-i Ṭabaristān* depicts Rāfi‘ as having allied himself with Muḥammad b. Zayd immediately pursuant to ‘Amr’s reinstatement in caliphal favour (p. 254). This source further claims that both Rāfi‘ and ‘Amr turned to Muḥammad b. Zayd for help, which seems extremely unlikely on ‘Amr’s part, particularly given that Rāfi‘ and the Dā’ī 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 ‘Amr would have been too positive.

¹⁴⁵ *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, pp. 131-132; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 483; Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ*, vol. 10, p. 44. According to Ibn Isfandiyyār, (*Tāriḫ-i Ṭabaristān* p. 256) Rāfi‘ had already declared ‘Alid allegiance the year before.

¹⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, pp. 458-459; 483; Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ*, vol. 10, pp. 49-50; Qazvīnī, *Tāriḫ-i Guzida*, pp. 372-374; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, vol. 5, p. 364; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 12, p. 359. Ṭabarī speaks of two different dispatches sent by ‘Amr to the caliph in this year to keep him closely apprised of developments. In the first, ‘Amr informs the caliph of Rāfi‘’s defeat and flight, and in the second he recounts how he, ‘Amr, sent men to attack Rāfi‘ in Ṭūs, whence he fled to Khwārazm and was finally killed.

¹⁴⁷ Ṭabarī, *Ta’riḫ*, vol. 10, p. 50. Note that the *Tāriḫ-i guzida*, which as we have seen down-plays any good relations between the Ṣaffārids and the ‘Abbāsids, omits all mention of

As for the Jihad, witness is borne to ‘Amr’s *ghāzī* activities in the East in these years by the issuing of coins in Nishāpūr and Herāt in 282/895f. , and of Andarāba farther east in 283/896f. and 285/898.¹⁴⁹ These Andarāba coins strongly suggest that ‘Amr 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 Mas‘ūdī, who describes gifts and idols that ‘Amr 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. Mas‘ūdī 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 Mas‘ūdī is the only written source to state explicitly that ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr, like Ya‘qūb, made fairly frequent sorties into infidel lands in the East, despite his ongoing troubles with Rāfi‘.

The war with Rāfi‘ in Khurāsān had fateful consequences in that it embroiled ‘Amr with the Sāmānids of Transoxiana, with whom Rāfi‘ 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 Rāfi‘, forcing the Ṣaffārid governor to retreat from Khurāsān.¹⁵⁴ Thus, though the Sāmānid-Ṣaffārid tension which culminated in ‘Amr’s defeat has traditionally been viewed as a product of ‘Amr’s supposed un-

‘Amr’s sending the head on to the caliph and of the caliph’s public rejoicing at the good service ‘Amr 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 [‘Amr] remained in Sistān, and it must have been within those otherwise unknown years that ‘Amr directed operations in eastern Afghanistan, perhaps through Zābulistān towards Kābul.”

¹⁵¹ Mas‘ūdī, *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 Rāfi‘ he went to Transoxiana and sought the aid of Naṣr b. Aḥmad. Naṣr sent his brother Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad, accompanied by 4,000 cavalymen, in aid.”

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 Ya‘qūb’s name was read in the *khuṭba* in Bukhārā until the Sāmānids took over there in 262/875f, after Ya‘qūb’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 ‘Amr and re-appointed Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir over Khurāsān, the latter in turn deputed Rāfi‘ 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, Ya‘qūb – and ‘Amr after him – were, by any measure, the rightful rulers of Transoxiana until the Caliph broke

¹⁵⁵ Much of this probably had to do with the fact that Ibn al-Athīr’s account does not report Rāfi‘ b. Harthama’s relations with the Sāmānids. Note the contrast with the Persian anti-Ṣaffārid accounts; the *Tārīkh-i guzīda* actually attributes ‘Amr’s entanglement with the Sāmānids not to ‘Amr’s aggression or any Rāfi‘ connection, but rather to a supposed caliphal appeal to the Sāmānids to save him from ‘Amr: “‘Amr’s power became great. He became desirous [reading *tama‘ kard* for *taba‘ kard*] for Khūzistān and ‘Irāq, and sought the way of strife with the Caliph al-Mu‘taḍid. The caliph [therefore] sent Ismā‘il Samānī to war with [‘Amr].” (p. 373) No other source states – or even implies – that such was the state of affairs.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Tārīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, p. 178, states of Ismā‘il b. Aḥmad that, when he became governor of Khurāsān after his defeat of ‘Amr, ‘there was appointed to him what the Ṭāhirids had had of the provinces appended to Khurāsān [*ma kāna ilā al-Ṭāhirīyya min al-‘māl al-muttaṣila bi-Khurāsān*]”.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, p. 108. Another argument in favour of Transoxanian allegiance to Ya‘qūb is the suspiciously emphatic protestation of the Sāmānid source *Tārīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, which under its entry for Ya‘qūb (p. 170) claims that “As for Transoxiana, Naṣr b. Aḥmad Asad Sāmānī was governor over her from the beginning [*min al-‘asl*], 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 Ya‘qūb b. al-Layth’s governorship of Khurāsān.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafāyāt al-‘ayyān*, 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’llāh deposed ‘Amr 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 ‘Abdallāh – 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] Rāfi‘ Harthama, and Transoxiana he gave to Aḥmad Sāmānī, also in deputyship to Muḥammad Ṭāhir.”

relations in 271/884.¹⁵⁹ It is not surprising, then, that ‘Amr, 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. ‘Amr 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, Rāfi‘ b. Harthama.

One might posit, of course, that any allegiance Transoxiana had toward Ya‘qūb must have been tenuous. Ṣaffārid claims to Khwārazm, however, were rather more serious; according to the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ‘Amr appointed the governors of Khwārazm.¹⁶¹ This assertion is backed by the fact that when Rāfi‘ fled to Khwārazm, the Khwārazmshāh killed him and sent his head to ‘Amr, as though to an overlord, who in turn sent it on to the Caliph al-Mu‘taḍid.¹⁶² Some time after the killing of Rāfi‘ in that province, however, the Sāmānid Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad sent an invading army into Khwārazm, a province that clearly did not belong to the Sāmānids. ‘Amr sent out a counterforce which was defeated, for “Ismā‘īl 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 Qur‘ān.”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, ‘*ayyārs*¹⁶⁴ – though, as we shall see, ‘*ayyārs* 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 Ismā‘īl’s war against ‘Amr, 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 Ismā‘īl’s appreciation of this favour: “Ismā‘īl 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 ‘Amr b. al-Layth, Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad held Transoxiana [*mā warā‘ al-nabr dāshī*]” *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 ‘Amr, slips when reporting the letter that ‘Amr wrote to Ismā‘īl 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-‘ayyān*, vol. 5, p. 364.

¹⁶³ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 253-254.

¹⁶⁴ Although Qazvīnī’s *Tārīkh-i guzīda*, pp. 376-377, does claim that Sāmān, the eponymous founder of the dynasty, was an ‘*ayyār*.

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, Ismā‘īl’s brother, is described as “a professor of religion” (*ḍayyāna*),¹⁶⁶ and Ismā‘īl 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 Ismā‘īl’s commitment was as real as Ya‘qūb’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, “‘Amr took over Transoxiana, and Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad was deposed.”¹⁷⁰ According to some accounts, ‘Amr had apparently requested the patent to Transoxiana at the time when he sent Rāfi‘ b. Harthama’s head on to Baghdad, presumably as a reward for having defeated the rebel¹⁷¹ – although, as we have already seen and as Bosworth also has pointed out, Transoxiana had in any case always been considered subordinate to Khurāsān.¹⁷²

al-Sallāmī said: When Amr sent the head of Rāfi‘ b. Harthama to al-Mu‘taḍid, he asked to be entrusted with the district of Transoxiana, as had been the custom in the time of ‘Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir,¹⁷³ and they promised him this. Then al-Mu‘taḍid sent to him gifts which reached him in Nishāpūr, but he refused to accept them without the fulfillment of what they had promised him regarding the governorship of the province of Transox-

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, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 34; Dhahabī, *Tā’rikh 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 *mutatawwi‘a*, against the Turks, who had been on the march against the Muslims (Ṭabarī, *Tā’rikh*, 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 ‘Amr’s appointment, *Tā’rikh*, vol. 10, p. 76. Gardizī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, p. 11: “When ‘Amr sent the head of Rāfi‘ to Mu‘taḍid 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. ‘Abdallāh.”

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 Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr as well, until the caliph seems to have somewhat arbitrarily decided to end that custom in 271/884.

iana, so the messenger wrote to al-Muktafi bi'llāh b. al-Mu'taḍid, 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-Mu'taḍid 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 Transoxiana upon 'Amr was at his own instigation.¹⁷⁵ One early source specifically states that this was a subtle caliphal idea, whose purpose was to incite 'Amr and Ismā'īl to destroy one another, thereby leaving the field free for the fulfilment of the recidivist ambitions of the weak 'Abbāsids. Moreover, the fact that this was done after the killing of Rāfi' would make it seem like a reward to 'Amr for his good services:

Khurāsān was added to [the provinces of] al-Ṣaffār, and when it was in the year 285/898 al-Mu'taḍid wrote to al-Ṣaffār commanding him that he seek [*yaṭlubā*] Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad, and [informing 'Amr] that [the caliph] had already deputed ['Amr] over [Ismā'īl's] province; and he wrote the like to Ismā'īl.¹⁷⁶

'Amr accordingly was invested with the province by the caliph and sent an army to fight Ismā'īl. According to the descriptions of the investiture ceremony performed by the Caliph's envoy,¹⁷⁷ the latter – after showering 'Amr 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. 'Amr] prayed two *rak'as* and thanked God for it.” Supposedly, 'Amr then prophetically stated that it would be impossible to wrest Transoxiana from the hands of Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad except by “100,000 drawn swords.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol. 5, p. 365. Cf. Jūzjāni, *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣiri*, p. 200: “Amr-i Layth sent the head of Rāfi' to the presence of the Caliph, and at this time the throne of the caliphate came to the Commander of the Faithful al-Mu'taḍid bi'llāh, and Amr-i Layth [asked] from the caliph the governorship of Transoxiana, Khurāsān, Nimrūz, 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 *sarbangān* in the caliphal palace held, and mention his name in the *khutba* and [on] the coinage of Madīna and the Hījāz – all [this] he asked from the caliph and was promised, with many robes of honour and innumerable favours.”

¹⁷⁵ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 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-Mu'taḍid [a statement] regarding the investiture of 'Amr b. al-Layth with the governorship of Transoxiana, and the deposition of Ismā'īl 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-akbbār*, 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 'Amr as engaging in such religious devotions, even in the midst of court ceremonial. The subsequent prophetic statement does seem a bit contrived; why would 'Amr attempt something he knew to be impossible, given the fact that he did not have 100,000 men?

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.

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-akbbār*, p. 12.

¹⁸¹ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-akbbār*, p. 12.

¹⁸² See *supra*, Chapter 5.

¹⁸³ Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 312.

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 [*ḍunyā ʿarīḍa*]; but in my hands is [only] Transoxiana, and I am in a marcher land [*ḥa-anā fi ṭhaḡhr*]; therefore be content with what is in your hands, and leave me established in this marcher land [*ḥāḍḥā al-ṭhaḡhr*].¹⁸⁵

This word, *ṭhaḡhr*, is a very loaded one, particularly in the tradition of *ṭaṭaʿawwīʿa* 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 [*raḡul ṭhaḡhrī*] drawn up in battle array against the Turk; my clothing is coarse [*ḡurḍawāʿī*], my men are rabble without pay, and you have already treated me wrongly.”¹⁸⁷ Ismāʿīl, in other words, was appealing to ʿAmr on *ḡḥāzī* 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 *mutaṭaʿawwīʿa*.

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/mutaṭaʿawwīʿi* 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 *ṭaṭaʿawwīʿ 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-

¹⁸⁴ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501.

¹⁸⁵ Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 76; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501; Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʿ*, 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-nubalāʿ*, vol. 12, p. 517.

¹⁸⁸ Ṭabarī, *Taʿrīkh*, vol. 10, p. 76; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 501.

ration of proper order in the world. In fact, when ‘Amr’s and Ismā‘īl’s forces met near Balkh in the year 287/900, Ismā‘īl persuaded most of ‘Amr’s generals to defect by appealing to them on the very grounds which had attracted them to the Ṣaffārids in the first place:

Ismā‘īl converted [to his cause] the heads of the troops, from among ‘Amr’s commanders, and made them afraid of God, saying: “We are *ghāzīs* and do not possess wealth; while this man [‘Amr] continually seeks this world, we [seek] the Next. What does he want from us?”¹⁸⁹

Pursuant to this appeal, ‘Amr’s commanders abandoned him,¹⁹⁰ his army collapsed,¹⁹¹ and ‘Amr himself was captured; worse, his unworthy heirs in Sistān 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 Rabi‘a, Amr b. al-Layth’s secretary, fled to Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad, and with him one of the commanders, with a great body of people ... Then the flight of his companions to Ismā‘īl grew, so that ‘Amr’s heart grew faint and he fled; Ismā‘īl 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 *‘ayyārs* and other volunteer warriors toward the Ṣaffārids was predicated upon a shared ideology and sense of holy mission. According to all these sources, ‘Amr lost the allegiance of his fighting men, and this was due largely to the perceived contrast between Ismā‘īl’s obvious piety and ‘Amr’s growing worldliness.

Several sources give a very positive view of ‘Amr’s and Ismā‘īl’s relations. In these sources, all blame for ‘Amr’s eventual fate is placed upon the caliph,¹⁹⁴ and Ismā‘īl and ‘Amr are shown as having had the closest and kindest relations with each other. The pro-Sāmānid *Tārīkh-i Guzīda* relates the following story:

¹⁸⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 256.

¹⁹⁰ Although according to several later account it was not ‘Amr’s army but rather the people of Balkh who turned against him: “Niḥawayh said: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad told us that the reason for ‘Amr’s rout from Balkh was its people were weary from his army and their injustice ...” al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, vol. 12, p. 516. This version, of course, does not explain the collapse of ‘Amr’s army. See also Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 12, pp. 401-402: “Ismā‘īl b. Aḥmad crossed the river of Balkh, seeking ‘Amr 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 [‘Amr’s] companions in their houses ...”

¹⁹¹ See e. g. Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 313: “Ismā‘īl 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 ‘Amr’s cavalry scattered [*tafarraqat khayl al-Ṣaffār*] and he was taken prisoner ...”

¹⁹² *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 258.

¹⁹³ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, vol. 5, p. 267.

¹⁹⁴ This version is perhaps given added confirmation by the claim of some sources that the caliph praised Ismā‘īl and criticized ‘Amr when he heard the news; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, pp. 76-77; quoted by Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, vol. 5, p. 366.

Ismā'īl Sāmānī sent a *ḥājib* before 'Amr-i Layth and consoled him, saying: "God willing, I shall rescue you from the Caliph's wrath." 'Amr praised Ismā'īl and said: "I know that there is no hope of rescue from the caliph for me; nevertheless, Amīr Ismā'īl 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 Ismā'īl, and say to him ... 'Send me to the Caliph's presence!'"¹⁹⁵

The *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* portrays Ismā'īl as having been very regretful upon receiving the caliph's request that Ismā'īl send 'Amr to Baghdad; Ismā'īl purportedly tells 'Amr "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 'Amr that he, Ismā'īl, will send 'Amr with only a very small escort, so that 'Amr 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 Ismā'īl say to 'Amr "It is difficult for me, O my brother, what has overtaken you," wash 'Amr'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-Mu'taḍid came, asking that he send 'Amr 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 'ālim 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 'Amr (due to his own moral compunctions or to popular sentiment regarding 'Amr); if fabricated, the stories were obviously designed for one of two reasons: either to bolster Ismā'īl's reputation or to bolster 'Amr's. If these stories were propaganda for Ismā'īl, 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 'Amr's eventual fate on the Caliph – Ismā'īl wanted to protect 'Amr; he simply owed a higher obedience to the Caliph.

¹⁹⁵ Qazvīnī, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, p. 374. Ibn Khallikān (quoting from Salamī), *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, vol. 5, p. 367) shares this version, according to which 'Amr was sent to Baghdad by caliphal request. According to Ibn al-Athīr (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 502), however, Ismā'īl let 'Amr himself choose by whom he would rather be held, Ismā'īl or the caliph, and 'Amr then rather incredibly chose al-Mu'taḍid: "Then Ismā'īl gave 'Amr the choice between remaining with him, or his being sent to al-Mu'taḍid; and he chose to be with al-Mu'taḍid."

¹⁹⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 260-261.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 12, p. 402.

If, on the other hand, the stories were put out as pro-Şaffārid propaganda, then they show something equally interesting. *Tāriḫ-i Guzīda* obviously included this information simply because it shows Ismā‘īl the Sāmānid in a merciful, ruthless light. Its appearance in Ibn al-Jawzī’s work, however, probably indicates the survival of a pro-Şaffārid strain in certain Ḥanbalite sources or circles, as one would expect given what we have seen of the Khurāsānī *abl al-ḥadīth*’s strong and consistent support for the Şaffārids.

However willing or reluctant the Sāmānid role may have been, in the end ‘Amr was sent to the caliph. Al-Mu‘taḍid then supposedly

brought ‘Amr before himself, aroused in him good hopes, and treated him kindly [or: praised him]. He intended to set ‘Amr 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. ‘Amr’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-Mu‘taḍid to have ‘Amr killed; “When ‘Amr had been killed, [Mu‘taḍid] was sorry [for ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr’s killing; rather, one of the ambitious court functionaries wanted to get him out of the way because he was afraid ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’s death brought about, and of the execution having actually been against caliphal will and better judgment:

Al-Mu‘taḍid, after he had ceased speaking [in his final illness], commanded Şāfi al-Khurrāmī, by signs of his head and hands, to kill ‘Amr b. al-Layth; he placed his hand on his neck and on his eye to signify that the one-eyed one should be killed – ‘Amr was one-eyed. But Şāfi did not carry this out, due to his knowledge that the death of al-Mu‘taḍid was near, and his repugnance for the killing of ‘Amr. When al-Muktafi reached Baghdad he asked the wazīr about [‘Amr]. He replied: He lives; and [al-Muktafi] was glad about that, and he wished to be good towards him because [‘Amr] used to give many presents to him when [the former] was in Rayy. But the wazīr hated this, so he sent to [‘Amr] someone who killed him.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, p. 262. Mas‘ūdī merely notes briefly: “al-Mu‘taḍid saw him.” (*Murūj al-dhahab*, vol. 4, p. 302)

¹⁹⁹ *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, p. 262.

²⁰⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tāriḫ*, vol. 10, p. 88. Ibn al-Athīr in his first exposition of ‘Amr’s death skirts the issue entirely by stating merely that ‘Amr was killed (*al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 502).

²⁰¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 516, quoting almost exactly from Ṭabarī, *Tāriḫ*, vol. 10, p. 86; also Ibn Khallikān, acknowledging Ṭabarī, *Wafayāt al-a‘yān*, vol. 5, pp. 368-369.

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 Ṣāfi 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

²⁰² Also al-Sallāmī as transmitted through Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 367). Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 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-Akbbār*, pp. 12-13; also Qazvinī, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, p. 375 – which latter source, however, has ʿAmr duly executed on caliphal command.

²⁰⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 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 fi dbikr-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-

An Evaluation of ʿAmr’s Rule

ʿAmr, the second-best documented ʿ*ayyār* 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 [*bishtarī*] 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

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, *Tārīkh-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 Khūzīstān – *ʿIrāq-i ʿajam*], Fārs, Kirmān, Sīstān, Qūhīstān, Māzandarān and Ghazna.”

²⁰⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 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.

Ibn al-Athīr recites several equivocal anecdotes, which are designed to shed light on ‘Amr’s character, but are fairly difficult to interpret. For instance, we are told that ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’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. ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr, who is said to have remarked “By God, I don’t know which of the two to wonder over more, Abū Sa‘īd [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!” ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr furious at Abū Sa‘īd 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 Ya‘qūb, ‘Amr is said to have shunned self-aggrandizement and emphasized his fundamental equality with his men. There is an unusual description of how ‘Amr would preside over the paydays of his troops:

The custom of ‘Amr 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 [*hasham*] would receive the news that it was payday. Then Sahl b. Ḥamdān the ‘*arīd*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 Qazvini, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, p. 374.

²¹³ On the responsibilities and duties of the ‘*arīd* see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, pp. 122-124; Bosworth’s succinct summation of the importance of this position is as follows (p. 122): “The army’s mustering, internal organisation, commissariat and pay-arrangements were directed from the *Dīwān-i ‘Arḍ*, and the office of ‘*Arīd* was accounted second only to that of the Vizier.” Elsewhere Bosworth writes that “The *Dīwān [al-jaysh]* was presided over by the ‘*Arīd 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

of dirhams, and the servant of the *ʿarīḍ* 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 *ʿarīḍ* 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,

their pay.” Bosworth, “Military Organisation under the Būyids of Persia and Iraq,” *Oriens* 18-19 (1965-1966), p. 162.

²¹⁴ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, pp. 10-11; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, 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-Akbbār*, 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.

and then forgives him. To the modern mind, ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr 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. ‘Amr’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 ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr; in the treasury of gifts²¹⁸ no money remained, the appointed time for gifts to his retainers was drawing near – and ‘Amr always needed money. So ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’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.” ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’s pious holy warrior reputation can be gleaned from a source which is very critical of ‘Amr. In the midst of an otherwise hostile account we suddenly encounter a tradition incompatible with the author’s general

²¹⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *loc. cit.*

²¹⁸ Gardīzī (*Zayn al-Akbbār*, p. 10) informs us that ‘Amr kept three separate treasuries, which stemmed from different sources and served different purposes.

²¹⁹ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, p. 10.

²²⁰ Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, p. 11. Such forbearance would also be in keeping with the definitions of *futuwwa* which we have just seen to have been prevalent among ‘Amr’s Nishāpūrī supporters.

stance – in this case, a prophetic dream informing us that all ended well with ‘Amr due to his *ghāzī* efforts:

al-Qushayrī related that ‘Amr 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 ‘Amr’s under-appreciated *ghāzī* campaigns, and his utilization of his armies in the service of Islam.

Finally, we have seen that although ‘Amr, like his more dominant brother, started out as an *‘ayyār-mutaṭawwī‘*, he was eventually abandoned by his supporters because he was perceived as having strayed from those original *‘ayyār* ideals of *ghazw* and ascetic zeal in favour of the kind of “state-building” – mostly just plain building, in fact²²² – 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 *‘ayyār-mutaṭawwī‘* at all – ‘Amr’s grandson Ṭāhir.

Although Ṭāhir was never, according to any of the sources, an *‘ayyār*, and therefore in himself cannot help us illuminate the term, the process by and reasons for which he lost the support of Ya‘qūb’s and ‘Amr’s core constituency do indeed help us understand, by contrast, the values and practices of the former rulers, who were of course *‘ayyārs*.

Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad b. ‘Amr b. al-Layth and the Collapse of the ‘Ayyār State

The fall of the Ṣaffārids – that is, of the first line of them – was as meteoric as their rise. After the capture of ‘Amr 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 *‘ayyār*. From the his-

²²¹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā‘*, vol. 12, p. 517.

²²² For ‘Amr’s building activities see e. g. al-Iṣṭakhri, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 241; whereas in Zarang Ya‘qūb built only a minaret and a fortress (al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, p. 305), ‘Amr built a fortress, a treasury, and a market, not to mention a governor’s palace [*dār al-imāra*] in Nishāpūr (Iṣṭakhri, *Kitāb masālik al-mamālik*, p. 254). ‘Amr did, however, also build a border fortress [*ribā‘*] on the frontier between Sistān and al-Rukhkhaj, an activity more in line with what one would expect of a *mutaṭawwī‘ ‘ayyār* (Iṣṭakhri, *ibid.* p. 252), and a minbar in Nishāpūr (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 ‘Amr was captured (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 83).

torical records, it seems incontrovertible that he took far more interest in wine and debauchery than in *ghāzī* – ‘*ayyār*’ campaigns, or any other religious matter.

Real power was held by ambitious generals and functionaries such as Ya‘qūb’s former slave Subkarī or Sebūk-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 Ya‘qūb 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, Ya‘qūb b. Muḥammad, favoured the *aṣḥāb al-ra’y*. 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 ‘Amr’s two grandsons espoused different religious positions.²²⁸ In light of the religious connections we have traced above between the Ṣaffārid ‘*ayyār*s on the one hand and the proto-Ḥanbalite ‘*ulamā*’ 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, *Tārīkh-i Guzīda*, p. 375.

²²⁶ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 275

²²⁷ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 276.

²²⁸ E. g. Bosworth, *The Saffarids*, p. 253.

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 ‘*ayyār* state seems to have been thoroughly lost by this point (as was perhaps inevitable, given that ‘Amr’s grandchildren had never been ‘*ayyārs* and had never fought – for the faith or anything else – when they came to power); thus, the hitherto firm of ascendancy of *abl al-ḥadīth* in Sīstān was, for the first time since Ya‘qūb’s assumption of power, open to challenge. It would have been logical for the *aṣḥāb al-ra’y* 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 ‘Amr’s grandsons:

... Iyās b. ‘Abdallāh, who was a chief of the Arabs [*mehtar-i ‘Arab būd*], a valiant man, with judgment and integrity, who had served Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr, 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 Ya‘qūb and ‘Amr’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 ‘*ayyār* state as conceived under Ya‘qūb, and at least aspired to under ‘Amr: “justice and religion ... the scourge and the sword.” Iyās’s description matches perfectly this work’s suggested definition of ‘*ayyārī* in the ninth century: militant proto-Sunni *taṭarwawī* (including *al-amr bi’l-ma‘rūf*) in brotherhoods or bands.

Iyās was, moreover, not the only erstwhile Ṣaffārid commander to defect once this very non-‘*ayyār* 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. ‘Alī and Subkāri, the *marwā* of ‘Amr b. al-Layth [*sic*] took over rule in Fārs, and

²²⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 279.

²³⁰ See the reference to ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak’s well-known tradition, *supra*, Chapter 4.

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 Ṭāhīr’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 Ṭāhīr and Yaʿqūb fled from Sīstān to Fārs, where they intended to fight Subkarī, whom they had been warned was disloyal. Subkarī, however, sent to Ṭāhīr’s remaining army commanders reminding them of how incompetent and generally detrimental to the public welfare Ṭāhīr was; the army officers agreed with Subkarī’s assessment, trussed up Ṭāhīr and Yaʿqūb, and sent them off to Baghdad post-haste.²³⁴

In 296/908f., the year Ṭāhīr 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 Although 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

²³¹ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, vol. 7, p. 546; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 161 (*sub anno* 293/905f.). The commander, much to Ṭāhīr’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 Ṣaffarid Dynasty in Sīstān*, New York, 1936, p. 22, #1; C. M. Fraehn, *Numi Mubammedani qui in Academiae Imperialis scientiarum Petropolitanae Museo Asiatico asservantur. Recensio Numerorum Mubammedanorum*, St. Petersburg, 1826, vol. 1, Ṣaffarid #8.

²³⁴ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 285-286. A very laconic mention of this is found in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 141 and in Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, vol. 5, p. 371. According to Miskawayhi, *Tajārīb al-umam: The Eclipse of the ʿAbbāsīd 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.”

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 ʿ*ayyār* 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 *mutatawwiʿi* 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 ʿ*ayyār* brothers who had served as his trusted sub-commanders; then Sīstān might have witnessed the establishment of an ʿ*ayyār* state on the Mamluk model, with the ʿ*ayyār* troops choosing a new, competent leader from among their ranks in each generation, dedicated to their founding ideals.²⁴⁴ The historical reality, however,

²³⁸ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-290. Most of the information is also in Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 143. Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhbab*, 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, *Tārīkh*, vol. 10, p. 144. Miskawayhi, *Tajārīb*, 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 (*Tārīkh*, 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. (*Tārīkh*, 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.

was that after ‘Amr’s removal from the scene, Sīstān, together with its dependent territories, was no longer ruled by an ‘*ayyār*, nor did it any longer espouse ‘*ayyār*/*mutaṭawwi‘* ideals. The polity built by the Ṣaffārids thereby lost not only its *raison d’être*, but also its motive force, although there surely must have been some of Ya‘qūb’s and ‘Amr’s former support base who did not wholly abandon ‘Amr’s degenerate progeny.

The ‘*ayyārs*, in fact, remained a potent force in Sīstān even after the collapse of the first Ṣaffārid state, and the memory of Ya‘qūb 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 Tāhir’s father, led the ‘*ayyārs* in revolt in the name of ‘Amr b. Layth’s ten-year-old great-grandson.²⁴⁵ Interestingly, we also get a hint that the ‘*ayyārs* 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 ‘*ayyārs*.”²⁴⁷

After defeating the Sāmānid governor Mawlā Ṣandalī put aside his Ṣaffārid figurehead,²⁴⁸ whereupon a large group of his ‘*ayyārs* 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 ‘*ayyārs* 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 *mutaṭawwi‘* nature. Ya‘qūb was concerned with restoring Islam to

²⁴⁵ For the entire episode, see Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akbbār*, 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 Nāsirī*, vol. 1, p. 207)

²⁴⁶ See e.g. the case of the famous ‘*ayyār* of Baghdad, al-Burjūmī (Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 15, pp. 233-234), or the retreats of the fictional *Samak-i ‘ayyār*.

²⁴⁷ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 297.

²⁴⁸ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 299. See also C. Edmund Bosworth and Gert Rispling, “An ‘*ayyār* Coin From Sīstān,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd Series, vol. 3, part 2, 1993, pp. 215-218.

²⁴⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 299.

²⁵⁰ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 300.

²⁵¹ Vide Walker, *Coinage*, p. 14.

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 *‘ayyār* ideology has been, however, systematically misunderstood by modern historians, who have consequently misinterpreted the whole nature and *raison d’être* of Ṣaffārid rule, as well as the nature and meaning of *‘ayyārī*. Modern historians have, indeed, therefore condemned Ya‘qūb for not having engaged in activities which would have been antithetical to that *‘ayyār raison d’être*.

‘Amr, 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 *‘ayyār* ideals. The torch of *taṭawwun*, devout warfare in service of the Faith, together with the *‘ayyār* standard-bearers of that torch, passed over to the Sāmānids. We shall see evidence in Chapter Eight that *‘ayyārs* played an important role in the military forces of that dynasty as well.

In short, we have already seen *‘ayyārs* 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 ‘Amr 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.

