?Who is Mukhtar Thaqafi

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In his youth, spent in Medina after the death of his father. Mukhtar was known to be an Alid sympathiser. Yet, according to Tabari (2nd vol.,p.520) there is a story which depicts him as anti-Shiite, based on the advice he gave to his uncle, Sa'd bin Masud at the time when Hasan, the son of Ali bin Abu Talib, was carried wounded to the White Castle in Madain. The advice was that Hasan be handed over to Muawiya to win the latter's favour. His uncle refused this advice and cursed Mukhtar.

The first man to pay homage to Muslim bin Aqil in Kufa was Mukhtar, but the tradition relates that he was imprisoned by Ibn Ziyad during the event of Karbala. He appeared in Kufa as a revenger of Hussain's blood. His mission was the same as that of the Tawwabun (the penitents) insofar as the revenge of Hussain's blood, but differed in that he intended to achieve political authority through a more organised military power. Mukhtar, therefore, tried to persuade the Tawwabun not to take any hasty action and to join him for a better chance of success. The Tawwabun refused to join Mukhtar, as they had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure. Mukhtar also tried to propagate in Kufa that Suleman bin Surad, the leader of the Tawwabun, did not know how to organise the military warfares, nor did he has any knowledge of diplomacy.

Mukhar then turned to Zayn al-Abidin to seek his support to this effect. Baladhuri writes in "Ansab al-Ashraf" (5th vol., p. 272) that, "Mukhtar wrote to Zayn al-Abidin to show his loyalty to him, asking if he could rally the Kufans for him. He sent with the letter a large sum of money. Zayn al-Abidin refused this offer and declared Mukhtar publicly to be a liar who was trying to exploit the cause of Ahl-al-Bait for his own interests." Ibn Sa'd (5th vol., p. 213) also describes that Zayn al-Abidin had publicly denounced Mukhtar's mission.

Mukhtar lost all hopes of winning Zayn al-Abidin, he then turned to Ibn al- Hanafiya, the third son of Ali from a Hanafite woman. On his part, Ibn al-Hanafiya did not repudiate Mukhtar's propaganda for his Imamate and Messianic role; he nevertheless, maintained a carefully non-committal attitude and never openly raised his claims to the heritage of Hussain.

Baladhuri (5th vol., p. 218) writes that, "Ibn al-Hanafiya gave Mukhtar only a non-committal reply. He neither approved nor disapproved of Mukhtar's intention to avenge Hussain, and only warned him against bloodshed." In the event, however, the hesitation and political inactivity of Ibn al-Hanafiya emboldened Mukhtar more and more to exploit his name for his own interest.

Mukhtar propagated that Ibn al-Hanafiya was the Mahdi, and he himself was his minister (vizir) and commander (amir).

Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed his caliphate in 61/680 and established his power in Iraq, southern Arabia and in the greater part of Syria. When the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik wished to stop the pilgrimages to Mecca because he was worried lest his rival Abdullah bin Zubayr should force the Syrians journeying to the holy places in Hijaz to pay him homage, he had recourse to the expedient of the doctrine of the vicarious hajj to the Qubbat al-Sakhra in Jerusalem. He decreed that the obligatory circumambulation (tawaf) could take place at the sacred place in Jerusalem with the same validity as that around the Kaba ordained in Islamic law. The famous theologian al-Zuhri was given the task of justifying this politically motivated reform of religious life by making up and spreading a saying traced back to the Prophet. Abdullah bin Zubayr was at last killed in a battle against Hajjaj bin Yousuf in 73/692 after ruling for almost nine years. On the other hand, Mukhtar seized possession of Kufa in 66/686 and captured Mesopotamia and some parts of the eastern provinces from the Umayyads mainly in the name of the blood of Hussain.

In Kufa, he continued his mission in the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya. Thus, the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya appeared for the first time four years later, when the Tawwabun were almost ready for the action. The Shiites of Kufa, especially the mawali among them, wanted an active movement which could relieve them from the oppressive rule of the Umayyads. They found an outlet only under the banner of Mukhtar, and saw a ray of hope in the Messianic role propagated by him for Ibn al-Hanafiya.

It must be pointed out here that the Shiites from Iran were not granted equal status by their Arab co-citizens in the social system of Kufa, and thus they were called mawali (sing. mawla) means "clients", a term to indicate inferior social standing, or second-class citizens. The expression mawla at the latest stage of its evolution means the people descended from foreign families whose ancestors, or even they themselves, on accepting Islam, have been adopted into an Arab tribe, either as freed slaves or free-born aliens. Juridically there were three classes of mawali: mawla rahimin (blood relation), mawla ataqa (freed man) and mawla'l aqd (free Arab who becomes a member of a tribe to which he belongs neither by birth nor by previous affiliation as slave).

Of these the first is conceivably a way of incorporating matrilineally related persons into a patrilineal society; the second type is the freedman who would often, be freed born but enslaved through capture in war; while the third type is the man who by compact or covenant voluntarily accepts the position of "client" to a "patron".

One week after Mukhtar's arrival in Kufa, Abdullah bin Zubayr sent Abdullah bin Yazid al-Khatmi as governor of Kufa. While, after the departure of Suleman bin Surad, Mukhtar's activities aroused the suspicions of the nobles of Kufa, who reported the new governor to warn him against the movement, saying that it was more dangerous that of Suleman bin Surad, for Mukhtar wanted to revolt against the governor in his own city. Mukhtar was hence imprisoned, where he remained until the return of the remnant of Suleman bin Surad's followers from the battle of Ayn al-Warda. He was however released only after the request of his brother-in-law, Abdullah bin Umar and other ten influential men, on the condition that he would not engage in any subversive activities against the governor of Kufa as long as he was in power. Abdullah bin Zubayr, considering the danger of Mukhtar and his movement, appointed a new governor for Kufa, Abdullah bin Muti in 65/685, and presumably ordered him to be more cautious and prudent than his predecessors. Meanwhile, Mukhtar became enough capable and began to prepare to seize Kufa in 66/685. He stationed near Dair Hind in the Sabkha, and his army contained about five hundred soldiers. To counter him, the governor sent Shabath bin Rabi al-Tamimi with three thousand soldiers to Sabkha, and Rashid bin Iyas with four thousand soldiers from Shurta. Mukhtar sent his nine hundred men in command of Ibrahim to meet Rashid, and three hundred men in command of Nuaim bin Hubaira against Shabath. In this battles, Mukhtar succeeded and captured Kufa. Nevertheless, the circumstances eventually changed when Abdullah bin Zubayr proclaimed himself caliph in 64/683, Ibn al-Hanafiya and Abdullah bin Abbas, with their followers, refused to pay him homage on the grounds that he had not yet been unanimously recognised as caliph. In 66/685, Abdullah bin Zubayr detained Ibn al-Hanafiya and his family and threatened them with death if they did not pay homage within a specified time. Ibn al-Hanafiya sent a letter to Mukhtar, apprising him of his perilous condition. Thus, Mukhtar marshalled out four thousand men and managed to liberate to Ibn al-Hanafiya, who left Mecca for Taif. In 67/686, Mukhtar subdued Ibn Ziyad and killed him. He also hunted down the other murderers of Hussain and his followers, and slaughtered. At length, Kufa was brought under an incursion by Musab bin Zubayr with a huge army, in which Mukhtar was killed .in Shawal, 67/April, 687