

THE
OCCULTATION
OF THE
TWELFTH, IMAM

A, Historical, Background
Jassim M. Hussain

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TRANSLITERATION

Arabic Letter	Transliteration	Short Vowels
ا	'	ā
ب	b	u
ت	t	i
ث	th	
ج	j	
ح	h	ā
خ	kh	ū
د	d	ī
ذ	dh	
ر	r	
ز	z	
س	s	
ش	sh	
ص	ṣ	
ض	ḍ	
ط	ṭ	
ظ	ẓ	
ع	ʿ	
غ	gh	
ف	f	
ق	q	
ك	k	
ل	l	
م	m	
ن	n	
ه	h	
و	w	
ي	y	
ة	t	

Long Vowels

اَ ā
 اُ ū
 اِ ī

Diphthongs

اَو aw
 اِی ay
 اِیْ iyy
 اُو uw

Persian Letters

پ p
 چ ch
 ژ zh
 گ g

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Preface by Dr. I. K. A. Howard

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

With the permission of the author, we are able to re-publish this book in the interest of propagation of its contents, which represent a study in depth of the occultation 'of the Twelfth Imam'. According to Professor I.K.A. Howard, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Edinburgh, «too little attention has been paid to this subject by scholarship generally, and specially in the West». His point is well taken in so far as publications in English and other foreign languages are concerned.

We reproduce below similar other noteworthy views of Prof. Howard, extracted from the Preface of the Muhammadi Trust publication of this book in 1982:

«For the first time in English, the evidence for the existence of the Twelfth Imam is fully presented and while it is of a circumstantial nature, it is much more convincing than the usual picture presented by Western scholarship. Dr. Hussain's thorough and sympathetic treatment of this is to be greatly welcomed.»

«The greater occultation of the Twelfth Imam is a matter of religious faith. It, like other great religious beliefs, is not something which scholars can prove or disprove. However, it has an inner religious reality which no one can reject. The proof of this inner religious reality is that it is a doctrine which has sustained and strengthened the faith of millions of Shi'ite Muslims up to the present time. Despite persecution and tribulation, this community and their faith have survived. ...»

We may add that the belief that Imam Zaman (ع) will reappear in time has indeed sustained millions of Muslims, even in the modern context of secularism, materialism, nationalism and the like.

INTRODUCTION AND SURVEY OF THE SOURCES

1. Introduction

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī is the twelfth Imam of the “Imamates” or “Twelve-Imam Shī‘ites”, *al-Ithnā ‘Ashariyya*, who form the second largest denomination in Islam after the Sunnis. He appears to have been born in 256 A.H./869 A.D. Four years later, after the death of his father al-‘Askarī, the eleventh Imam, he was hidden from the authorities of the ‘Abbāsid caliphs as a precaution. His whereabouts were disclosed only to a very few of his followers. Four of his father’s close associates became successive mediators between the Imam and his followers until the year 329/941. This period has been considered by the Imamites as the first or the short occultation (*al-Ghayba*) of the twelfth Imam. During it the four *safīrs* directly supervised the underground religious and political activities of the Imamites.

The last *safīr* announced on his death-bed in 329/941 that the twelfth Imam had decided not to appoint another *safīr* and had entered into total occultation. The Imamites considered this declaration the beginning of the twelfth Imam’s second occultation, which has continued until the present time.

Because of the second occultation the series of Imams stopped at the number twelve. Accordingly the Imamites believe that the twelfth Imam is *al-Qā‘im* (“he who will rise”), whose rising was promised by the Prophet. For the Prophet is said to have predicted that a descendant of his daughter Fāṭima would rise with the sword and fill the world with justice and equity. For this reason the Imamites believe that he is still alive, but in a state of occultation until the moment of his rising at an unspecified time in the future.

Since the first half of the fourth/tenth century many scholars have examined the occultation of the twelfth Imam purely from the theological point of view, even though this event appears to have been historical. However, because of the close connection between the

occultation and the Imamate (*al-Imāma*) or the religious and political leadership, it became involved with Shī'ite theological discussions and gradually its historical aspects came to be ignored. Thus modern scholars like Ignaz Goldziher, Margoliouth, Snouck Hurgronje and Darmesteter were inclined to study the occultation of the twelfth Imam as a theological phenomenon and tried to trace its pre-Islamic origins.

The present inquiry is an attempt to study the historical background and circumstances of the occultation of the twelfth Imam. The Imamites had political ambitions to obtain political power under the leadership of an Imam called *al-Qā'im bi-l-sayf* (the one who will rise with the sword). This study tries to examine the role of these ambitions in his occultation and to trace as well the evolution of the underground Imamite organization (*al-Wikāla*) and its role during the time of the twelfth Imam's short occultation.

It is essential to make a survey of the main sources of this study so that the viewpoint of each of them can be understood and the information they contain evaluated accordingly.

2. Survey of the Sources

2.1. Books on the question of the *Ghayba*

It is indeed an old idea in Imamite history that one Imam from the progeny of the Prophet would go into hiding to prepare for the day when he would rise again under the title *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and fill the world with justice. The concealment (*al-Ghayba*) was considered a sign of the true *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, and both before and after the occultation of the twelfth Imam in 260/874. Many Shī'ite writers collected traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams concerning this issue. These traditions were used by many Shī'ite groups to back up the claims of their leaders who aspired to power by adopting the title of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. Before 260/874 they were used even by some Imamites themselves as evidence that one or another of their deceased Imams was in fact *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. Finally the same traditions have been used by the Imamites to support their claims that the twelfth Imam was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* himself. These works on the subject of the *Ghayba* can be divided into three groups based on the dates of their authorship.

2.1.1. Books on the question of the occultation written before 260/874

The Imamite scholars wrote about four hundred books (*al-Uṣūl al-Arbaʿ miʿa*) during the lifetimes of the first eleven Imams. Some of these dealt with the subject of the Imam's concealment, recording traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams predicting that an Imam would go into occultation. These traditions, however, neither named the Imam nor fixed the time at which his occultation would begin. The ambiguity of these traditions encouraged many Shīʿites to apply them to different Imams. Hence the *Wāqifa* sect held that Mūsā al-Kāẓim, the seventh Imam, was the hidden Imam whereas *al-Imāmiyya al-Qaṭʿiyya* and *al-Zaydiyya al-Jārūdiyya*¹ held that the hidden Imam would be the twelfth, but they did not identify him by name. Despite the fact that a great majority of these early works are not extant, it appears that during the fourth and fifth centuries the Imamite authors based their works concerning *al-Ghayba* on these early writings. The following works are examples of the Wāqifite, Zaydite and Imamite views on this matter.

i) The *Wāqifa*

1. Al-Anmāṭī Ibrāhīm b. Sāliḥ al-Kūfī, was a companion of the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir (d. 114/732). He wrote a book entitled *al-Ghayba* which represents the Wāqifite point of view, although the information he gave was used by such later scholars as Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Nūḥ (d. before 423/1031) and al-Ṭūsī to support the Imamite view.²

2. Al-Ṭāʾī al-Ṭāṭārī, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan, was a companion of the seventh Imam, al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799), whom he named as the hidden Imam. In defence of his view he wrote *Kitāb al-Ghayba*, which became the framework for the works of later Wāqifite authors like Ibn Sumāʿa (d. 263/877) on this issue.³

3. Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Sumāʿa, composed a book on *al-Ghayba*, following the footsteps of his Wāqifite teacher al-Ṭāʾī al-Ṭāṭārī.⁴ However, those Imamites who lived during the period from 260-329/874-940-1, like al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār (d. 292/904) and al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940), used his information to support their claim that the hidden Imam was not the seventh Imam but the twelfth Imam.⁵

ii) The *Zaydites*

Abū Saʿīd ʿAbbād b. Yaʿqūb al-Rawājīnī al-ʿAṣfarī (d. 250/864)

was one of the leading scholars of the Shī'ite sect *al-Zaydiyya al-Jārūdiyya*. He compiled a book of traditions entitled *Kitāb Abū Sa'īd al-ʿAṣfarī*. The importance of this work is that its author cites a tradition referring to the occultation at least ten years before its occurrence. He also mentions other traditions which point to the fact that the number of the Imams would end with the twelfth Imam and that he would be *al-Qā'im*. However in contrast to the Imamites he does not mention the names of the twelve Imams.

Al-ʿAṣfarī's work along with the works of Sulaym b. Qays (d. 80-90/699-707) and al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb al-Sarrād (d. 244/838) were used extensively by such Imamites as al-Kulaynī (d. 329/941), al-Nuʿmānī (d. 360/970) and al-Ṣadūq (d. 380/991) to prove the existence of the twelfth Imam and his subsequent occultation.

iii) The Imamites

1. ʿAlī b. Mahzayār al-Ahwāzī was a close associate of the ninth Imam, al-Jawād. He was appointed by the latter as his representative in al-Ahwāz and continued to remain in office throughout the reign of the tenth Imam, al-Hādī. He wrote two books, called *Kitāb al-Malāḥim* and *Kitāb al-Qā'im*, both dealing with the occultation of the Imam and his subsequent rising with the sword.⁶ Then between the years 260/874 and 329/940 his two sons Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad became the authorised representatives of the twelfth Imam in al-Ahwāz. It is on their authority that al-Kulaynī and al-Ṣadūq give important information concerning the communication methods employed in the underground activities of the Imamites.

2. In his work on the subject of *al-Ghayba* called *al-Mashyakha*, al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb al-Sarrād (d. 224/838) records several anecdotes which are often attributed to the Imams. This work has been lost but several quotations from it are included in the available Imamite sources.

3. Al-Faḍl b. Shādhān al-Nisābūrī (d. 260/873) was a well-known Imamite scholar and secured the trust and the praise of the eleventh Imam. He also compiled a book called *al-Ghayba*,⁷ but most of its material seems to have been quoted from the work of al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb.⁸ Since al-Faḍl died two months before the death of the eleventh Imam in 260/874, the importance of his work lies in the traditions he recorded indicating that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Qā'im*. Many later writers like al-Ṭūsī in his own work entitled *al-*

Ghayba, relied on al-Faḍl's work. Bahā' al-Dīn al-Nīlī (d. 790/1388) also compiled a work entitled *al-Ghayba* by summarising al-Faḍl's work.⁹ Despite the fact that the actual work of al-Faḍl is lost, the works *Kifāyat al-Muhtadī fī Ma'rifat al-Mahdī* by Mīrlawhī (d. 12th/18th century) and *Kashf al-Astār* by Mīrza Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 1320/1902) seems to be copies of his work.¹⁰ Therefore it is not unreasonable to make use of these later sources for our present purposes.

2.1.2. Books on the Question of the *Ghayba* written between the years 260-329/874-941

During the years of the short occultation (260-329/874-941) many books reflecting different views were composed on the question of *al-Ghayba*. These were mainly collections of anecdotes based on works written before 260/874. Their authors were either jurists or propagandists and they participated in the activities of the underground organization of the Imamites led by the twelfth Imam himself. Thus they recorded important information, which cannot be found in books on history compiled during the same period.

In 262/876, Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Nahāwandī (d. 286/899) claimed to be the representative of the twelfth Imam in Baghdad.¹¹ He composed a book about the *Ghayba* reflecting the view of the extremists (*al-Ghulāt*). Later al-Nu'mānī (d. 360/970) used al-Nahāwandī's information extensively in composing his well-known book *al-Ghayba*.¹²

ʿAbd Allāh b. Jaʿfar al-Ḥimyarī (d. after 293/905) wrote a book entitled *al-Ghayba wa-l-Ḥayra*. The importance of his work lies in the fact that he was one of the close associates of the tenth and the eleventh Imams and later became the agent of the first two deputies (*saʿfirs*) of the twelfth Imam. Unfortunately this work and the work called *al-Imāma wa-l-Tabʾīra min al-Ḥayra* by Ibn Bābawayh (d. 329/940) are not extant. However, the latter's son, al-Ṣadūq (d. 382/991) and al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) made thorough use of these works.

Al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940) devoted much space in the section entitled *al-Ḥujja* of his book *al-Kāfī* to the question of the occultation. He backs up this study with important information on the general

situation of the Imamites between the years 260-329/874-940 with special emphasis on the role of the *saḥībs* of the Imam in this period. He recorded many traditions attributed to the Imams concerning the concealment of the twelfth Imam. He quoted this information from the earlier Wāqifite and Imamite authors like al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb (d. 224/838), ‘Abbād b. Ya‘qūb al-‘Asfarī (d. 250/864) and al-Ḥasan b. Sumā‘a (d. 263/877). Moreover the agents of the twelfth Imam were the main source of his information on the underground activities of the Imamites.

2.1.3. Books on the question of the *Ghayba* written after 329/941.

The occurrence of the second occultation in 329/941 led to a state of confusion among the Imamites. Hence several works were composed to justify the twelfth Imam’s occultation and to explain the reasons for its prolongation. Five works of this period can be considered the basis for all later Imamite opinions concerning the occultation. Since these primary sources have been widely used in this book, it is worth evaluating the information they contain in some detail.

1. Al-Nu‘mānī, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ja‘far, known as Ibn Abī Zaynab, was a native of the town of Nu‘māniyya, one of the districts of Wāsiṭ. He moved to Baghdad where he was educated in *Ḥadīth* transmission under the supervision of al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940) and Ibn ‘Uqda (d. 333/944). He then went to Syria where he died around the year 360/970.

Because of the confusion which had spread amongst the Shī‘ites after the death of the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, in the year 260/874, al-Nu‘mānī wrote a book entitled *al-Ghayba*. He tried to prove the necessity of the twelfth Imam’s occultation by relating traditions on the authority of the Prophet and the Imams predicting its occurrence. He acquired most of his information from early authors who wrote on this subject, irrespective of their doctrinal views. Among such early authors are al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb, an Imamite (d. 224/838), al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, an Imamite (d. 260/873), al-Ḥasan b. Sumā‘a, a Wāqifite (d. 263/877), Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Nahāwandī, an extremist (d. 286/899), al-Kulaynī, an Imamite (d. 329/940), the well-known Zaydite jurist Ibn ‘Uqda (d. 333/944), and al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956).¹³

Al-Nu‘mānī’s outstanding contribution was that he was the first

compiler after al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956) to give an interpretation of those traditions attributed to the Imams by al-Kulaynī, which indicated that *al-Qā'im* would have two occultations, the first short and the second long. Al-Nu'mānī stated that the first occultation was the period of the four representatives of the twelfth Imam, lasting from the year 260/874 until the year 329/940-1, and that the second began after the death of the fourth *saḥīr* in 329/941.¹⁴ Some of his remarks reflect how the complete occultation of the twelfth Imam threw the Imamites into confusion and caused a massive decrease in their numbers. His interpretation became the basis for all later Imamite works on this subject.

2. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bābawayh, who is better known as al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), wrote a book on the question of the *Ghayba* entitled *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'ma*. The information contained in this work is valuable because al-Ṣadūq relied on the Shī'ite primary sources (*al-Uṣūl*) which had been compiled before 260/874.¹⁵ Thus we find that he often refers to the authors al-Ḥasan b. Maḥbūb, al-Faḍl b. Shādhān, al-Ḥasan b. Sumā'a, al-Ṣaffār, al-Ḥimyarī and his own father, Ibn Bābawayh,¹⁶ who had close ties with the third and fourth *saḥīrs* of the twelfth Imam. Because his father was an eminent jurist and the Imam's agent in Qumm, al-Ṣadūq was able to give reliable information regarding the underground communications between the agents and the Imam via his four *saḥīrs*. However, a study of the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) of some of his reports concerning the birth of the twelfth Imam indicates that al-Ṣadūq obtained his information from extremists such as Muḥammad b. Baḥr. Consequently, one must be careful in using these reports.

3. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān, who is known as al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), was at one time the leader of the Imamites. During this time the question of the occultation began to penetrate theological discussions. Hence he wrote five articles in defence of the occultation of the twelfth Imam and also compiled an independent work entitled *al-Fuṣūl al-'Ashara fī al-Ghayba*. Despite the dogmatic approach of this work, it records valuable information concerning the historical circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the twelfth Imam before 260/874. Al-Mufīd also presents an exposition similar to that of al-Nawbakhtī and Sa'd al-Qummī putting forward the fifteen different views held by the Imamites after 260/874. Al-Mufīd bore witness to the disappearance of all fifteen groups by

373/983, except the Twelvers who believed that their leader was the twelfth Imam and that he was in concealment. In his book *al-Irshād*, al-Mufīd follows the method employed by al-Kulaynī and al-Nu'mānī in the narration of *Ḥadīth*, first of all by proving the existence of the twelfth Imam and then by vindicating the prolongation of his age beyond the life-span of an ordinary person.

4. After al-Mufīd his two eminent pupils 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, better known as al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), and Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Karājakī (d. 449/1057), followed his rational approach in their treatises on the prolongation of the twelfth Imam's concealment. This approach is clear in the extant article of al-Murtaḍā which was published in Baghdad in 1955 under the title *Masa'la wajīza fī al-Ghayba* and translated into English by Sachedina.¹⁷ In 427/1035 al-Karājakī compiled a work entitled *al-Burhān 'alā Ṣiḥḥat Tūl 'Umr al-Imam Ṣāhib al-Zamān*, in which he mentions many people whose ages had been prolonged beyond the life-span of an ordinary person. His aim in this was to prove, like al-Ṣadūq and al-Mufīd before him, that the prolongation of the twelfth Imam's life during his occultation was not an extraordinary phenomenon. On account of the dogmatic approach of these two works they are devoid of any historical information concerning the actual career of the twelfth Imam between the years 260-329/874-941.

5. The well-known Imamite scholar Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) deals with the question of the *Ghayba* of the twelfth Imam in most of his dogmatic works. But the most important of these is *Kitāb al-Ghayba*, in which he makes use of both tradition and reason to prove that the twelfth Imam was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, and that he must be in a state of occultation. Through his refutation of the other Shī'ite claims, which held that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661), Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 84/703), al-Ṣadiq (d. 148/765), Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl, and al-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) were *al-Qā'im* and that they were in hiding, he suggests that the traditions concerning the occultation go back to the time of 'Alī.

Al-Ṭūsī also provides reliable historical information on the underground activities of the four representatives of the twelfth Imam, quoting from a missing book entitled *Akhbār al-Wukalā' al-Arba'a* by Aḥmad b. Nūḥ al-Baṣrī. Al-Ṭūsī's work became the main source for all the later Imamite writers regarding the concealment of the twelfth Imam, particularly al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1699) in his work *Biḥār al-Anwār*.

A contemporary of al-Kulaynī was Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī, a Muʿtazilite, who died around the year 301/913. He held that the eleventh Imam had died heirless and gave expression to these opinions in his work *al-Mustarshid*, which is a refutation of Ibn Qubba's book, *al-Inṣāf*. Unfortunately his work has been lost. However judging by the quotations recorded in the book *al-Mughnī* by al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1024), it appears that al-Balkhī relied on al-Ḥasan al-Nawbakhtī (d. ca. 310/922) for information concerning the divisions among the Imamites after the year 260/874.¹⁸

As for al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935), he depended on al-Balkhī for his information about the Imamites. In fact after al-Ashʿarī's conversion to the group of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, later to be the Sunnites, his books became the main source for the later Sunni writers, such as al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) in his work *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*¹⁹, the writer Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1063) in his work *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa-l-Ahwā' wa-l-Niḥal* and later al-Shahristānī (d. 548/1153) in his work *al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal*.²⁰ However the information contained in the latter works concerning the Imamite schisms after the death of al-ʿAskarī is so far removed from the original exposition of al-Balkhī and al-Nawbakhtī that one has to be careful about relying upon it.

2.2 The Biographical Works

Among the primary sources of this study are the books of *al-Rijāl*, which deal with the scientific biographies of the narrators and compilers of traditions by estimating the degree of their authority and deducing their reliability from their dogmatic and political inclinations.

The Imamites compiled four main biographical works concerned with the domain of the present study in the 4th-5th/10th-11th centuries.

1. The first is *Maʿrifat al-Nāqilīn ʿan al-Aʿimma al-Ṣādiqīn*, compiled by Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Kashshī. He was a native of the town of Kashsh near Samarqand, where he was brought up under the auspices of the Imamite scholar Muḥammad b. Masʿūd al-Samarqandī and where he spent the whole of his life. According to al-Ṭūsī he died in 368/978.²¹ Al-Kashshī quoted his information from fifty-three narrators, but his main source was ʿAlī b. Muhammad b.

Qutayba of Nishapur,²² who was contemporary with the short occultation and had close ties with the agents of the twelfth Imam in Khurasan. Ibn Qutayba provides important information concerning the evolution of the underground organization of the Imamites (*al-Wikāla*) after al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and the reason behind the rise of the Wāqifite groups after the death of the seventh Imam in 183/799.

Al-Kashshī's work became an important source for later Imamite scholars like al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), who summarised it and gave it the title *Ikhtiyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl*.

2,3. Al-Ṭūsī's works, *al-Fihrist* and *al-Rijāl*, are two of the four main Imamite books of al-Rijāl. He cites different chains of transmitters (*isnād*) regarded as authentic and enables us to discover the links between the Imamite scholars and the agents during the short occultation.

4. The fourth Imamite work on *al-Rijāl* is *Fihrist Asmā' Muṣannifī al-Shī'a*, which was written by Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Najāshī (d. 450/1058), a native of Kufa. He received his Shī'ite education there and then moved to Baghdad, where he was one of the leading Imamite scholars along with al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044). His residing in these two cities enabled him to establish close contact with forty-five Imamite scholars who had in their possession documents related to the period of the short occultation. These documents cast light on the different ranks within the Imamite organization and provide useful information on works on the *Ghayba* compiled before and after 260/874.

Al-Barqī (d. 278/891), in his work on *al-Rijāl*, provides valuable reports concerning the relationship between the Imams and their followers in particular the tenth and eleventh Imams, since he was their contemporary.

Despite the fact that the work of al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347) entitled *Mizān al-I'tidāl* is a later source, it contains some reports which elucidate the background of the *Ghayba* and its connection with the rise of *al-Qā'im*.

2.3 The books of general history

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922) lived during the periods of the short occultation. His work *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk* is devoid of any information on the activities of the representatives of the twelfth Imam, which points to the fact that their activities were underground.

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However he does follow the militant activities of the other Shi'ite groups like the Qarāmiṭa and the Ismā'īlīs until the establishment of their state in 296/908. He also traces the use of the prophetic traditions regarding *'al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* by these groups in their struggle for power during the time of the short occultation.

Al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346/957) lived during the period of the second occultation and provides important information regarding the harsh treatment of the Imams and their followers by the 'Abbāsids and the effect of this policy on the occurrence of the *Ghayba*. This can be found in his works, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, *al-Tanbīh wa-l-Ishrāf* and *Ithbāt al-Waṣīyya* (attributed to him).

In his work *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1232) provides a useful report concerning the schisms among the agents of the twelfth Imam and the role of the extremists in these schisms, especially al-Shalmaghānī. It is possible that Ibn al-Athīr quotes his information from an Imamite work entitled *Tārīkh al-Imāmiyya* by Yahyā b. Abī Ṭay (d. 630/1232). Unfortunately, however, this work is not extant.

Many other historical and geographical works and books of traditions have also been used in the present study. Before they have been employed, they have been considered with the same critical method as that used above.

CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONS IN THE OCCULTATION OF THE TWELFTH IMAM

After the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, the Imamite Imams from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn to al-Ḥasan al-‘Askari followed a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids. But they expected that all their suffering would be terminated by *al-Qā’im*, whose rising in arms they were awaiting. The Imamites based their expectations on their interpretation of certain Qur’anic verses and on numbers of traditions attributed to the Prophet concerning the political and religious role of *al-Qā’im*. So it is essential to discuss some of these Qur’anic verses and traditions in order to see their effect upon the attitude of the ‘Abbāsids towards the Imamites, and consequently their reactions to the question of the occultation (*al-Ghayba*) of the twelfth Imam.

1. The early usage of the term *al-Mahdī*

The term *al-Mahdī*, which means “the one who is guided by Allah”, is the passive participle of the stem *hadā*, “to guide”. A term that occurs twice in the Qur’an is the active participle of the same stem, *al-Hādī*, the Guide. The first verse states, “*Allah is surely the Guide of those who believe*” (XXII, 53), while the second states, “*But the Lord is a sufficient Guide and Helper*” (XXV, 33). In the usage of the Qur’an the eighth form of the same stem, *ihtadā*, “he accepted the guidance for himself”, is used strictly as a reflexive passive, whose participle is *Muhtadī*. So Man, who is guided by Allah, is not simply guided, but reacts himself to the divine guidance (*hidāya*)¹, either by instinct or intellect. Through these two means he can acquire knowledge of Allah, which leads him to worship Him by following His laws on earth. However, Allah’s laws cannot be discovered through these two sources of knowledge, so throughout the course of history Allah has

revealed His knowledge and laws to a group of people who have been divinely guided to lead mankind towards His straight path. These people are called “Prophets” and possessed charismatic qualities which enabled them to implement the commands of Allah and to lead the people without error. Hence they are called in the Qur’an *al-Hudāt* (sing. *al-hādī*), because they were already rightly guided (*muhtadūn*) by Allah.²

The term *al-Mahdī* (the guided one) has the same meaning as *al-Muhtadī*. However, it has been applied to certain individuals in the early Islamic period as an honorific title, while also being applied to *al-Qā'im*. Many examples can be cited showing that the term *al-Mahdī* was used in these two senses. For example the poet Ḥassān b. Thābit (d. 54/673) applied the term *al-Mahdī* to the Prophet in a *qaṣīda* when he says:

جَزَاءٌ عَلَى الْمَهْدِيِّ أَصْبَحَ ثَاوِيًا
يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ وَطَأَ الْحَصَا لَا تَبْعِدِي

Sorrow for the Mahdī who is buried!
O best of those who walked on Earth, be not far!

The poet Jarīr applies this term to Ibrāhīm, the prophet.⁴ The Sunnites often applied it to the four caliphs after the Prophet, who were called *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn al-Mahdiyyūn*, the divinely guided caliphs.⁵ Sulaymān b. Ṣurḍ called al-Ḥusayn, after his martyrdom, *Mahdī b. al-Mahdī*.⁶

As for the theological usage of this term, according to Rajkowski, Abū Ishāq Ka'b b. Mātī b. Ḥaysū al-Ḥimyarī (d. 34/654) was the first individual to speak of *al-Mahdī* as the Saviour.⁷ But it is worth mentioning that the second caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, had spoken of occultation before Ka'b. When the Prophet died in 11/632, 'Umar contended that Muḥammad had not died but had concealed himself as Moses did and would return from his occultation. 'Umar's claim, however, was refuted by Abū Bakr, who reminded him of the Qur'anic verse revealing the death of the Prophet⁸ which states: "Surely you shall die and they [too] shall surely die. Then surely on the Day of Resurrection you will contend with one another before your Lord" (al-Zumar, XXXIX, 30-1).

The follower of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya (d. 81-4/700-3),⁹ al-Mukhtār, who was in revolt in Kufa in 66/685, named him as claimant to the Imamate and called him *al-Mahdī* in the messianic context.¹⁰ Later the name of Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya became associated with the Kaysāniyya sect, which denied his death and held that he was the promised Mahdī, who had concealed himself in Mound Radwā, and who would rise in arms to eliminate injustice.¹¹ The Kaysāniyya dogma played an important role in Islamic political history during the Umayyad period, since the ‘Abbāsid propaganda, which brought about the collapse of the Umayyads, was in fact derived from this sect.¹² The dogma of al-Kaysāniyya can be seen in the poetry of Kuthayyir (d. 105/723) and al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (d. 173/789). The latter had followed this sect, but it is said that he became an Imamite after a discussion with al-Ṣādiq, who clarified for him that the concealed Imam mentioned by the Prophet was not Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya but the twelfth Imam from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn.¹³

The Zaydites also applied the term *al-Mahdī* in its eschatological sense to their leaders who rose in arms against the ‘Abbāsids, such as Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya (d. 145/762), Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 203/818), and Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Tālqān, who disappeared in the year 219/834.¹⁴ An example of the Zaydite usage of this term is recorded by Ibn Ṭawūs,¹⁵ who states on the authority of Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allah b. al-Ḥasan, the brother of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, that the latter had rebelled hoping that Allah might make him the Mahdī promised by the Prophet:

ذكر يحيى بن الحسين الحسيني في كتاب الامالي باسنادة عن طاهر بن عبيد عن ابراهيم بن عبدالله بن الحسن عليه السلام انه سئل عن اخيه محمد فهو المهدي الذي يذكر؟ فقال ان المهدي عدة من الله تعالى لنبيه صلوات الله عليه وعدة ان يجعله من امته مهديا لم يصمه بعينه ولم يوقت زمانه وقد قام اخي لله بفريضة عليه في الامر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر فان اراد الله تعالى ان يجعله الذي يذكر فهو فضل الله يمن به علي من يشاء من عباده ولا فلم يترك اخي فريضة الله عليه لانتظار ميعاد لم يؤمر بانتظاره .

As for the Imamites, a considerable body among them applied the title of *al-Mahdī* in its messianic sense to each Imam after his death. This can be seen in the claim of *al-Nāwūsiyya*, *al-Wāqifa* and the followers of al-‘Askarī, the eleventh Imam. After the death of al-Šādiq in the year 148/765 the Nāwūsiyya group held that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and that he did not die but went into occultation.¹⁶ The Wāqifa group applied this title to the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) and denied his death, contending that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and that he would rise to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny.¹⁷ Other Imamites held that the eleventh Imam al-‘Askarī was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*,¹⁸ whereas the last important usage of this term was given to the twelfth Imam, who became the magnate of the Imamites' hope in their struggle for justice and equity.

It is worth mentioning that all these claims relating to the eschatological usage of the term '*al-Mahdī*' were based mainly on Prophetic traditions concerning a future restorer of Islam. Hence it is essential to discuss the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, especially these traditions which concern the twelfth Imam, so as to see their role in the question of his occultation.

2. The Occultation of *al-Qā'im al-mahdī* in the Qur'an

In Shi'ite exegesis many Qur'anic verses are regarded as references to the role of *al-Qā'im* and his occultation. The most important is the following verse: *O, but I call to witness the planets, the stars which rise and set* [al-Takweer, LXXXI, 15-6]. According to Imam al-Bāqir, this verse means that an Imam would go into occultation in the year 260/847; then he would reappear suddenly like a bright shooting star in the dark night.¹⁹

Ibn al-Furāt, al-Kāfī and al-Šadūq interpret the following Qur'anic verse: "*Say: Have you thought: If (all) your water were to disappear into the earth, who then could bring you gushing water*" [al-Mulk LXVII, 30]. They maintain that this verse is a metaphor for the concealment of the Imam, whose presence among people is like the water they need to drink.²⁰

The Ismā'īlī writer Maṣṣūr al-Yamān (ca. 4th century A.H.) agrees with al-Kulaynī that some Qur'anic verses which apparently deal with the Day of Judgement actually concern the appearance of *al-*

Qā'im after his occultation. According to al-Kulaynī the verse “*And those who sincerely believe in the day of Judgement*” [al-Ma‘rāij, LXX, 26] refers to those who believe in the reappearance of *al-Qā'im*.²¹ Maṣṣūr al-Yaman gives a similar esoteric interpretation of another verse:

And of mankind are some who say, we believe in Allah and the Last Day, when they believe not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, but they beguile none save themselves; but they perceive not. [al-Baqara, II, 8-9].

Maṣṣūr al-Yaman states that the Last Day (*al-Yawm al-Ākhir*) in this verse is the “Commander of the Age” (*Ṣāhib al-Zamān*), that is *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.²² Al-Kulaynī interprets many Qur'anic verses with the same kind of approach and links them to the future role of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. In his view, when *al-Qā'im* reappears he will establish the political state of the “People of the House” (*Ahl al-Bayt*) that is, the Imams, upon the ruins of the state of inequity. This is al-Kulaynī's esoteric commentary on the verse: “*And say: The truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is a vanishing thing.*” [Banū Isrā'īl, XVII, 81].²³

Al-Ṭūsī follows in al-Kulaynī's footsteps in commenting on certain Qur'anic verses. Take, for example, this passage:

And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them. [al-Qaṣaṣ XXVIII, 5-6]

Al-Ṭūsī holds that the above verses predict the establishment of the state of Justice by *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, who would inherit what had been in the possession of the wrong-doers.²⁴

Other Imamite scholars maintain that the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir, said that Allah's promise of victory to an Imam from the People of the House is mentioned explicitly in the following verse:

And verily We have have written in the scripture (al-Zabūr), after the Reminder My righteous slaves will inherit the earth. [al-Anbiyā', XXI, 105]²⁵

Other verses have also been interpreted by the Imamites to be connected with the role of *al-Qā'im*, after his rising from occultation,

such as the verse:

Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and He will surely establish for them their religion which he has approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe nothing as a partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the wrong doers. [al-Nūr, XXIV, 55]

Al-Qummi and al-Ṭūsī report that the People of the House mentioned that this verse concerns the *Mahdī* because he would live during his concealment in a state of fear, would appear after the removal of fear, and would certainly become victorious.²⁶

3. The traditions concerning the twelfth Imam and his occultation

3.1 The traditions concerning *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*

There are many traditions attributed to the Prophet in the books of tradition concerning the identity of *al-Mahdī*, his family, his epithet (*kunya*) and his character. The conclusion of these numerous traditions is that *al-Mahdī* is a descendant of the sons of Fāṭima,²⁷ the daughter of the Prophet; and more particularly, that he is of the progeny of her son al-Ḥusayn. His colour is similar to that of the Arab, and his body is like the Israelite, and his name and *kunya* are similar to the name and *kunya* of the Prophet.²⁸ Moreover some traditions claim that the Prophet said that *al-Mahdī*'s father's name is like the name of the Prophet's grandson, al-Ḥasan. Below are a number of these traditions.

i) We, the family of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, are the Masters of the inhabitants of Paradise: I, Ḥamza, Ja'far, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and *al-Mahdī*.²⁹

ii) *Al-Mahdī* is from my progeny. His name is similar to mine and his epithet is similar to mine. In his physique and character he looks exactly like me. He will be in a state of occultation and there will be confusion (*Ḥayra*) in which people will wander about. Then he will come forth like a sharp, shooting star to fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled before with injustice and inequity.³⁰

iii) *Al-Mahdī* is from my family (*‘itra*) from the sons of Fātima. It is worth mentioning that this tradition was reported on the authority of Umm Salama by ‘Alī b. Nufayl, who died in 125/742.³¹

iv) On the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, the Prophet is reported to have said, “How shall Allah destroy a nation whose beginning is myself, whose end is Jesus and whose very centre is *al-Mahdī*, who will be from my family?”³²

v) The name of *al-Mahdī*’s father is similar to the name of my son al-Ḥasan.³³

The conclusion of Osman concerning these traditions seems to be rather forced. “All these *ḥadīths* are weak and contradictory (*muṭadārib*), therefore their attribution to the Prophet Muḥammad is to be very much doubted.”³⁴ For the use of the epithet *al-Mahdī* by numerous Islamic groups, particularly the Zaydites, in their struggle for power during the Umayyad period shows that these traditions were well-known among the Muslims of that period. Moreover, many traditionists from different Islamic sects transmitted these traditions before the downfall of the Umayyads in 132/749, and later they were collected in the books of tradition (*ḥadīth*). The earliest of these books was *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays*, attributed to Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī, who died between the years 80-90/699-708. He reports many Prophetic traditions concerning *al-Mahdī*, his occultation and his reappearance.³⁵ It appears from these two points that Osman’s judgement is somewhat hasty, particularly if one takes into account the fact that Prophetic traditions regarding *al-Mahdī* were narrated by twenty-six companions of the Prophet. On their authority thirty-eight traditionists recorded these traditions in their collections of *ḥadīth*.³⁶

The evidence suggests that from the earliest times in Islam there was a belief that the Prophet had given his followers a promise about a man from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn, who would rise in arms in the future to purify Islam from innovation. But political rivalry amongst the Muslims encouraged some people to exploit this hope and to distort these Prophetic traditions in order to use them in their struggle for power.³⁷

These traditions only mention that *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* will be from the progeny of the Prophet. But there are also other traditions attributed to the Prophet which state that *al-Mahdī* will, in fact, be the twelfth Imam.

It is true that Montgomery Watt objects that,

Until al-‘Askarī died on 1st Jan. 874, there was nothing to make people expect that the number of the Imams would be limited to twelve or that the twelfth would go into occultation. It follows the theory of the twelve Imams was worked out after 874.³⁸

Nevertheless, there is ample proof that traditions claiming *al-Qā'im* would be the twelfth descendant of the Prophet were in circulation before 874. It is thus necessary to throw light upon these traditions, which were transmitted by Sunnites and Zaydites as well as Imamites, so that one can see to what extent these traditions were used by the Imamite scholars to support the belief that the twelfth Imam had not died but was in a state of occultation.

3.2. The traditions of the Sunnites (*Ahl al-Ḥadīth*)

The Sunni books of tradition report three Prophetic traditions pertaining to the twelve Imams who would be the successors of the Prophet. These were narrated on the authority of seven companions of the Prophet, namely Jābir b. Samura, ‘Abd Allah b. Mas‘ūd, Anas b. Mālik, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Wā‘ila b. Aṣqa, ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar and Abū Hurayra.

i) Jābir b. Samura narrates that he heard the Prophet say, “There will be after me twelve *Amīrs*.” Then he mentioned something which I did not hear, so I asked my father, who was sitting beside me, who said, “All of whom will be from Quraysh.”³⁹

ii) ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb reports that he heard the Prophet say, “The Imams (*al-A‘imma*) after me will be twelve, all of whom will be from Quraysh.”⁴⁰

iii) ‘Abd Allah b. Mas‘ūd was once reciting the Qur’an in the mosque in Iraq, when a young man came and asked him if the Prophet had informed them about the number of his successors. Ibn Mas‘ūd replied, “The Prophet informed us that his successors will be twelve caliphs, whose number is similar to the number of the leaders (*al-nuqabā’*) of Banū Isrā‘īl.”⁴¹

These traditions have been related by the traditionists and considered authentic. Ibn Ḥanbal narrates the first with thirty-four chains of transmitters (*sanaḍ*), all of which are on the authority of Jābir b. Samura,⁴² although there are slight differences in the versions. Some of the narrators used the words *Amīr* and *Khalīfa* instead of *Imām*. But these traditions, as reported by the Sunnites,

indicate only that the Prophet would be succeeded by twelve successors; none reveals that the twelfth would go into occultation, nor that he would be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. But the Zaydite and the Imamite narrators relate the same traditions with phrases which indicate that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.⁴³

3.3 The twelfth Imam in the Zaydite traditions

The Zaydite sect, the Jārūdiyya, narrate many traditions attributed to the Prophet and al-Bāqir concerning the political role of the twelfth Imam. One of their distinguished scholars in Kufa was Abū Sa'īd 'Abbād b. Ya'qūb al-Rawājīnī al-ʿAṣfarī (d. 250/864).⁴⁴ He wrote a book entitled *Kitāb Akhbār al-Mahdī*.⁴⁵ Al-Dhahabī reports that 'Abbād was a Rāfiḍite propagandist, and was awaiting the rise of *al-Mahdī* in the near future. He used to carry a sword, and once said that he kept his sword ready in order to fight for *al-Mahdī*.⁴⁶ It is worth mentioning that 'Abbād held this view before the occultation of the twelfth Imam in 260/874, since he died in 250/864.⁴⁷ He reports three Prophetic traditions concerning the twelfth Imam. Below are two of them:

i) The Prophet is believed to have said, "From my descendants there will be eleven leaders [who will be] noble, receivers of tradition [and] possessed of knowledge, the last of whom will be '*al-Qā'im bī-l-Ḥaqq*' who will fill it [i.e. the world] with justice, just as it was filled with tyranny."⁴⁸

ii) The Prophet is reported to have said: "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O 'Alī, are the axis of the earth, that is, its tent pegs and its mountains. By us Allah has secured the world so that it will not sink with its people. For when the eleventh of my descendants has died the world shall sink with its people without warning."⁴⁹

These traditions along with other sayings predicting the historical circumstances and the signs which would precede the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* were used by the Shī'a in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the events of the general 'Alid uprising which occurred in 250-1/864-5, when many Shī'ites applied the Prophetic traditions concerning the signs of the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* to the historical circumstances surrounding this revolt. Ibn 'Uqda (d. 333/944) reports that al-Ṣādiq said:

A man from the People of the House of the Prophet will rise in arms in Mecca holding a white standard in his hand: the

Euphrates will become dry, and, at the same time, a group of people, whose eyes are small, will advance towards you from the East and will force you to leave your houses. Moreover, the graves of your dead will be opened and predatory animals will attack your houses. Afterwards a fair-complexioned man will install a chair in Mecca calling people to curse ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, and killing many people, but he will be killed on the same day.⁵⁰

According to ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim al-Kharrāz (d. ca. 250/864) all these signs occurred during the revolt of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in 250/864. As a result, some Shī‘ites, particularly the Jārūdiyya, believed that the leader of this revolt, Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, was himself *al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī*.⁵¹

3.4 The twelfth Imam in the Imamite traditions

The Imamite traditionists are distinguished from the Sunnites and the Zaydites by their claim that the twelfth Imam mentioned in the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditions is in fact Muḥammad the son of the eleventh Imam al-‘Askarī, and that he is *al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī*. Moreover they have written in more detail about his occultation, and his political role, the signs which would precede his reappearance and the social and political conditions which might pave the way for it.

3.4.1. The traditions concerning the twelfth Imam

The Prophetic traditions concerning the twelve Imams related by the Sunnite and the Zaydite traditionists were also narrated by the Imamites.⁵² They applied these traditions to their twelve Imams and added traditions of the Imams themselves which indicate explicitly that the successor of the eleventh Imam was *al-Qā‘im*. The traditions attributed to the Prophet do not indicate explicitly that *al-Qā‘im* would be the successor of al-‘Askarī, the eleventh Imam, whereas the sayings of the Imams do.

The earliest reference to a Prophetic tradition concerning the twelfth Imam is recorded by the Imamite traditionists on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī. He was a companion of five Imams, ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and al-Bāqir, and died in 90/701.⁵³ The Imamites regard his work as the first Shī‘ite collection of *Ḥadīth*.⁵⁴ He reports numerous narrations concerning

the twelve Imams and the political role of the last Imam. The first of these narrations is attributed to a Christian monk who met 'Alī after his return from the battle of Ṣiffīn. He informed him that he had found in the Gospels that the successors of the Prophet Muḥammad would be twelve; the last of them would fill the world with justice, and Jesus would perform the prayer behind him.⁵⁵

All the other narrations in Sulaym's work are attributed to the Prophet. The most important of these is quoted on the authority of the companions 'Alī, 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Ṭayyār, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū al-Haytham b. al-Tayhān, Khuzayma b. Thābit, 'Ammār b. Yāsir, Abū Dharr, al-Miqdād and Abū Ayyūb. They narrated that the Prophet gathered his companions together at Ghadīr Khumm and said to them:

O people, the legal power (*al-wilāya*) is granted only to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the trustees from my progeny, the descendants of my brother 'Alī. He will be the first, and his two sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, will succeed him consecutively. They will not separate themselves from the Qur'an until they return to Allah.⁵⁶

Sulaym adds that the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī, told him, "O brother, son of Hilāl, the *Mahdī* of my nation is Muḥammad, who shall fill the earth with justice and equity as it was filled with tyranny and injustice. I know who will pay the oath of allegiance to him."⁵⁷

Sulaym states that he met al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn in Medina after the assassination of their father, 'Alī, and related to them this tradition on 'Alī's authority. They confirmed that they had also heard it from the Prophet. Sulaym adds that he informed 'Alī b. al-Husayn, the fourth Imam, in the presence of his son al-Bāqir about this tradition, and they also confirmed its authenticity. Moreover Abbān b. Abī 'Ayyāsh reports that he met al-Bāqir during the rite of pilgrimage and mentioned Sulaym's tradition to him, and that he confirmed its authenticity.⁵⁸

But al-Mas'ūdi doubts the authenticity of this tradition claiming that this tradition was transmitted only through Sulaym.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that this tradition is related on the authority of Sulaym b. Qays by many Imamite scholars, such as al-Kulaynī, al-Nu'mānī, and al-Ṭūsī,⁶⁰ it was related and confirmed by others as well.⁶¹ In addition al-Ṣadūq relates the above tradition on the authority of 'Alī,⁶² and he

narrates another prophetic tradition on the authority of ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās:

I am the master of the Prophets and ‘Alī the master of my trustees, of whom there will be twelve; the first one is ‘Alī, and the last is *al-Qā’im*.⁶³

Moreover the Imamite scholars relate numerous traditions attributed to their Imams, which confirm that the twelfth Imam will be *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*.⁶⁴ It is worth noting that al-Ḥaḍramī (fl. 3rd/9th century) reports a tradition which gives the Imam who will rise in arms the epithet *al-Qā’im*.⁶⁵ At the same time other narrations employ the epithet *al-Mahdī*, particularly in the works of al-Ṣaffār (d. 290/902).⁶⁶

The use of these two terms caused such confusion amongst the followers of al-Jawād that some were not sure whether *al-Qā’im* and *al-Mahdī* were the same individual or not. Therefore, according to al-Ṣadūq, al-Jawād was reported as having said that *al-Qā’im* is from “us” and that he would be *al-Mahdī*; he must be awaited by his followers during his occultation and obeyed at his rising and that he would be his descendant in the third generation.⁶⁷ The Imamites of the fourth/ninth century called the twelfth Imam *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*. Al-Mufīd states that he was called *al-Mahdī* because he would guide people to a forgotten dogma and law.⁶⁸

3.4.2. The political role of *al-Qā’im*

It has already been pointed out that the Imams from ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn onwards adopted publicly a quiescent policy towards the Umayyads and the ‘Abbāsids. Accordingly, they stressed the propagation of their teachings, which they expected, would result in religious and political awareness among the people and would prepare the ground for the task of *al-Qā’im*. Al-Nu‘mānī reports that al-Bāqir advised his partisan Abū al-Jārūd to keep quiet at home, and not to implicate himself in the militant activities of some ‘Alids against the Umayyads, since the Umayyad state had a natural lifespan and the moment of its downfall had not yet come.⁶⁹ He added that any ‘Alid who rebelled against tyranny before the rise of *al-Qā’im* would inevitably fail.⁷⁰ Al-Ṣādiq and the later Imams followed the same policy. They ordered their followers not to allow despair to find a place in their hearts and to wait for the rise of *al-Qā’im* in the

near future.⁷¹ This policy enabled the Imamites to spread their doctrine and at the same time to organize themselves - during the period between 132-260/749-874 - into a well-established political and financial organization (*al-Wikāla*). It seems probable that this underground organization was preparing for the rise of *al-Qā'im*. For they expected his rising⁷² and placed important political and religious duties upon his shoulders.

Several narrations suggest that the quiescent policy of the Imams was established after their followers caused two abortive rebellions. According to al-Kulaynī, al-Ṣādiq once said:

This matter (*al-Amr*), that is, the endeavour to reach power, was hidden until it reached the hands of the Kaysāniyya. They revealed it on the roads and circulated it among the villagers of al-Sawād.⁷³

According to al-Nu' mānī the Imamites endeavoured to rise in arms twice, first in the year 70/689 and second in the year 140/758, but their followers spoiled their plans by revealing the name of their leader to their foes,⁷⁴ an act which resulted in the arrest or the assassination of the Imams. In this connection a conversation between al-Bāqir and his partisan 'Abd Allah by 'Aṭā al-Wāsiṭī is revealing. Al-Wāsiṭī said to the Imam:

You have many followers in Iraq and there is no one among your family who has the merit for leadership but you. So why do you not rise in arms? Al-Bāqir replied: O 'Abd Allah, do not listen to the masses, because none of us has his name mentioned by the people nor a hand pointing at him as the Imam, without soon facing inevitable death. So search for him whose birth is concealed from the people, because he will be the one who will manage such an affair.⁷⁵

Moreover al-Ṣādiq was reported to have said:

This matter (the rising in arms) was vested in me, but Allah delayed it; He shall do with my progeny whatever He wants.⁷⁶

These sayings indicate that the Imams had suffered the consequences of revealing the fixed dates of their militant endeavours to reach power. Hence the later Imams did not reveal explicitly to their followers which Imam would be *al-Qā'im* with the sword. At the same time they encouraged their followers to follow their

instructions,⁷⁷ for this would pave the way for one of the Imams to reach power under the title of *al-Qā'im*.

Several traditions reveal that the establishment of *al-Qā'im*'s political state will occur through the "natural" course of events. A Prophetic tradition states that a group of people from the east will start underground activities and pave the way for the installation of *al-Mahdī* by military means.⁷⁸ The latter will struggle for power without any miraculous aid and will face difficulties and opposition against the propagation of his teachings, similar to the opposition which the Prophet faced with Quraysh.⁷⁹ Furthermore he will not take any militant action unless he has at least 10,000 partisans.⁸⁰

According to al-Bāqir the main goal of *al-Qā'im* will be to establish an Islamic state and to apply Islamic law as it was revealed to the Prophet. Al-Šādiq asserts that he will follow the Prophet's policy by eliminating and demolishing all the innovations which derive from a situation of ignorance (*al-Jāhiliyya*) and apply Islam in a new form.⁸¹ Other narrations indicate that he will apply the law of David and Solomon along with the Islamic law⁸² and apply the rules of the Torah to the Jews and the rules of the Gospel to the Christians. According to al-Nu'mānī, his state will include, in addition to the Islamic lands, the territories of Rūm, Sind, India and China.⁸³

Some functions attributed to *al-Qā'im* indicate the unrest and disappointment felt by the Imamites in the face of the political and economic situation of the time. Al-Faḍl b. Šādhān (d. 260/873) and al-Kulaynī report that *al-Qā'im* will rise with the sword as God's avenger against those who caused troubles to 'Alī and his wife Fāṭima. He would also take vengeance against those who were responsible for the suffering of the Imams and their followers,⁸⁴ particularly against those who assassinated al-Ḥusayn. Al-Šādiq considered al-Ḥusayn's assassination the main reason for the rise of *al-Qā'im* as an avenger.⁸⁵ Other functions of *al-Qā'im* depict the political annoyance of the Imams towards the allegiance of the Arabs, and especially towards the clan of Quraysh who had monopolized political authority since the death of the Prophet. Al-Nu'mānī mentions a tradition attributed to Imam al-Šādiq: "When *al-Qā'im* rises he will deal with the Arabs and Quraysh only by the sword."⁸⁶

The Imamites also vested *al-Qā'im* with another task which reveals their dissatisfaction with the economic system of the 'Abbāsīd state. According to al-Ḥimyārī, al-Bāqir stated that when *al-Qā'im* rose all

the feudal systems would be abolished.⁸⁷ Al-Kulaynī agrees with al-Ḥimyarī and adds that *al-Qā'im*, after carrying out this operation, may allow his partisans to administer and cultivate the lands with the condition that they pay the legal land-tax.⁸⁸

In the light of these hopes and the repeated failure of the Zaydite uprisings, as had been expected by the Imams, the Imamites concentrated all their hopes on the uprising of *al-Qā'im*, whose state had been awaited since the time of al-Bāqir.⁸⁹ Al-Nu'mānī reports that when the 'Abbāsīd revolution broke out in Khurasan and black banners were raised, Abū Bakr al-Ḥaḍramī and Abbān went to the Imam al-Ṣādiq, and asked his opinion about participating in the revolution. He warned them against it saying: "When you see us follow a man, then you must join us with weapons."⁹⁰ Although the Imam did not reveal the identity of the man to be followed, he confirmed that he would struggle for power by militant means and eliminate the rule of his opponents.⁹¹ It appears that because of the militant role of *al-Qā'im* the Imams refrained from giving any explicit statement of his identity. However, they did indicate that since the rulers, first the Umayyads and then the 'Abbāsīds, had reached power by "natural" means, their fall would also occur by "natural" means.

There is a good deal of evidence to indicate that some of the Imams would have taken militant action if they had had strong and faithful partisans. But they delayed this task indefinitely until the intellectual activities of their followers could bear fruit and be converted into a political awareness which might enable one of the Imams to gain power by militant means. The Imams also wanted their partisans to be more optimistic in gaining immediate success, and not to leave the task of propagation of their teachings to *al-Qā'im*, whose military uprising relied on the outcome of the activities of the Imamites themselves. Finally, it seems most likely that the uprising of the Imam who would be *al-Qā'im*, was later attributed to the twelfth Imam, because the Imamite propaganda reached a developed, political stage during the life-time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams, and this might have enabled the twelfth Imam to reach power.

3.4.3 The signs of the rise of *al-Qā'im*

The early Imamite traditionists delineated five signs which would precede the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*: first, the rise of al-Yamānī,

then the rise of al-Sufyānī, thirdly the assassination of the Pure Soul (*al-Nafs al-Zakiyya*) in Mecca only fifteen days before the rise of *al-Qā'im*, fourthly an outcry in the morning from the sky in the name of *al-Qā'im*, and finally the sinking of an army into the earth (*al-Baydā'*) during its march on Mecca.⁹² Despite the fact that al-Nu'mānī, al-Ṣadūq and al-Tūsī differ as to the chronological occurrence of these signs, they all agree that they will occur in the same year.⁹³

It seems that the delineation of these signs along with the expectations of the Imamites and al-Jārūdiyya that *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* would rise in the near future⁹⁴ caused the 'Abbāsīd authorities to be suspicious, since some of these signs were connected with their regime and indicated that *al-Qā'im's* uprising was directed mainly against them. The fact that the Imams had the 'Abbāsīds in mind can be seen in the discussion between al-Ridā, the eighth Imam, and his adherent al-Ḥasan b. al-Jahm,⁹⁵ who said to him:

"May Allah make you prosper! The people are saying that al-Sufyānī will rise after the fall of the 'Abbāsīds." Al-Ridā said: "They lie. He will rise while they are still in power."⁹⁶

This statement has been confirmed in other traditions attributed to al-Ṣādiq. For example his companion Ya'qūb b. al-Sarrāj asked him:

"When will your Shī'a gain their release from suffering?" He replied, "When conflict occurs amongst the 'Abbāsīds, and their power begins to decline. Then their partisans and their subjects will be encouraged to threaten the authorities. Thereafter al-Sufyānī will rise from the West, while the Yamānī will advance from the East, until they both reach Kufa, where they will destroy the 'Abbāsīds. At the same time the Ḥasanī will start his rebellion. Then the Master of this matter, *al-Qā'im*, shall advance from Medina towards Mecca to rebel."⁹⁷

According to al-Nu'mānī, al-Ṣādiq added that because of these events, the fall of the 'Abbāsīd regime was inevitable. Its fall would be similar to a piece of crockery dropped from the hand of its possessor, which then splits into pieces.⁹⁸

In the light of these statements attributed to the Imams it is clear that from the time of al-Ṣādiq onwards, the Imamites awaited the political uprising of one of their Imams, called *al-Qā'im* while the 'Abbāsīds were still in power.⁹⁹ Indeed the spread of these traditions caused the 'Abbāsīds to fear the Imams, who might have been behind some 'Alid revolts. Perhaps this is why the 'Abbāsīd caliphs became

suspicious of the Imams. Even the caliph al-Mansūr himself related a tradition on the authority of al-Bāqir stating that *al-Qā'im* would be from the progeny of 'Alī.¹⁰⁰ He restricted the movements of al-Šādiq and his followers and made it a policy to discriminate against them. Moreover he invested his successor Muḥammad with the epithet "*al-Mahdī*" (158-169/775-785) in order to turn the attention of his subjects from the 'Alid family toward the family of 'Abbās.¹⁰¹

Despite the fact that the movements of the seventh Imam, Mūsā al-Kāzim, were also restricted by the authorities, so that he died in prison,¹⁰² the Shī'ite propaganda for the rise of an Imam in the name of *al-Qā'im* and *al-Mahdī* spread on a wide scale, particularly after the rebellion of Ibn Ṭabātabā in 199/814. Probably because of this situation the caliph al-Ma'mūn devised a new policy towards the eighth Imam al-Riḍā. He made overtures to him asking him to be his heir apparent. By this means he hoped to split the 'Alids some of whom were in rebellion and to keep al-Riḍā within the 'Abbāsīd palace under close watch.¹⁰³ Al-Ma'mūn followed this same policy with the ninth Imam, al-Jawād, marrying him to his daughter Umm al-Faḍl, and keeping him under house-arrest.¹⁰⁴ Thereafter house-arrest became the cornerstone of the policy of the caliphs towards the Imams. It obliged the Imams to stress the idea of the occultation as the means the Imam would employ to avoid the 'Abbāsīd restriction, which increased from the time of al-Mutawakkil onwards.

Because his agents discovered connections between the underground activities of the Imamite agents in Baghdad, Madā'in and Kufa and the Imam al-Hādī, al-Mutawakkil followed the policy of al-Ma'mūn. He wrote to al-Hādī a letter full of kindness and courtesy asking him to come to Sāmarrā where they could meet. Afterwards al-Hādī was summoned to the capital in 233/848,¹⁰⁵ where he spent the rest of his life under surveillance. As a result he was prevented from meeting most of his adherents. He was only able to meet a few of his associate agents (*wukalā'*) in secret.¹⁰⁶ In fact al-Mutawakkil's policy managed to prevent the 'Alids from rising in arms against his regime. However it failed to destroy the system of the *wikāla* or to end the underground activities of the Zaydites and the Imamites. These spread throughout the empire to the extent that they were capable of causing a revolt.

Between the years 245-260/859-874 the Imamite and Zaydite traditionists were relating traditions stating that *al-Qā'im* would be the twelfth Imam and urging people to join his side when he rose. The

Zaydite al-‘Aṣfarī (d. 250/864)¹⁰⁷ and the Imamite Aḥmad b. Khālīd al-Barqī (d. 274-80/887-93) both related such traditions. For example, in 250/864 al-Barqī passed on a narration attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Prophet al-Khiḍr, which states explicitly that *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* would be the twelfth Imam.¹⁰⁸ The spread of such narrations encouraged the Imamites to expect the rise of *al-Qā’im* in the near future and to link his rising with ‘Abbāsīd rule. Some of them applied these traditions along with others concerning the signs of the rise of *al-Qā’im* to the circumstances surrounding the ‘Alid revolt which broke out in 250/864. Ibn ‘Uqda relates that the leader of the rebellion, Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, was expected to be *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*, since all the signs concerning the rise of *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* related by al-Sadiq occurred during the revolt.¹⁰⁹

Although Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar died in 250/864, the ‘Abbāsīds’ fear increased because of the continuation of this revolt and al-Ḥasan b. Zayd’s (250-270/864-884) success in establishing a Shī‘ite state in Ṭabaristān. This fear is not surprising if one bears in mind the fact that there was a well-known Prophetic tradition which stated, “A people will appear in the East who will pave the way for the Mahdī’s rise to power.”¹¹⁰ This tradition, at that time, might seem to refer to the establishment of the ‘Alid state in Ṭabaristān, which would prepare the way for the rise of *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*. Other factors supported the ‘Abbāsīd fears. According to al-Ṭabarī, ‘Abbāsīd spies discovered secret correspondence between the founder of the ‘Alid state in Ṭabaristān, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Khalaf al-‘Aṭṭār,¹¹¹ a follower of the tenth Imam al-Hādī. Moreover many pure Imamites took part in the ‘Alid revolt of 250/864, such as Muḥammad b. Ma‘rūf, who held the banner of the rebels in Mecca,¹¹² and ‘Alī b. Mūsā b. Ismā‘īl b. Mūsā al-Kāzim, who joined the rebels in al-Rayy and was arrested by the caliph al-Mu‘tazz.¹¹³ It seems that the ‘Abbāsīd authorities linked these factors with the activities of al-Hādī. Therefore they imposed tight restrictions upon al-Hādī and his followers, and arrested prominent figures in Baghdad, such as Abū Ḥāshim al-Ja‘farī, and Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-‘Aṭṭār, and sent them to Sāmarrā.¹¹⁴ This campaign of arrest also included al-‘Askarī and Ja‘far, al-Hādī’s two sons.¹¹⁵

Another reason the ‘Abbāsīds’ feared the position of al-Hādī and his successor, al-‘Askarī, is the traditions of both the Prophet and the Imams concerning the series of the twelve Imams, the last of whom

would be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. This series could only be interpreted as applying to the Imamites' tenth Imam, al-Hādī, and his successor al-ʿAskarī. So it was plausible that the successor of the latter would be the twelfth Imam, about whom so many traditions were being related. Moreover further traditions, attributed to al-Hādī and al-ʿAskarī, themselves appeared around this period emphasizing the important political and religious role of al-ʿAskarī's son.¹¹⁶ For example, Abū Hāshim al-Jaʿfarī (d. 261/875), the associate and follower of al-Hādī, reports the latter as having said,

“The successor after me is my son al-Ḥasan but what will you do with the successor of my successor?” Al-Jaʿfarī said, “May Allah make me your sacrifice! Why?” The Imam said, “Because you will not see his physical body and it is not permissible for you to reveal his name.” Al-Jaʿfarī said, “How shall we mention him?” Al-Hādī said, “Say ‘The proof [*al-Hujja*] is from the family of Muḥammad.’”¹¹⁷

It seems from al-Kulaynī's report that the Imamites considered al-Hādī's statement as applying to *al-Qā'im*. Moreover, they felt it explained a statement by the eighth Imam, al-Riḍā, who had said that the body of *al-Qā'im* would not be seen and his name would not be revealed.¹¹⁸ Perhaps al-Bāqir and al-Jawād's interpretation of a Qur'anic verse, referred to on page 15, may be linked with the above two statements. For as we have seen, he stated that an Imam would go into concealment in 260/874, and would later rise like a bright, shooting star in the dark night.¹¹⁹

On account of the spread of these Imamite traditions and the ʿAlid underground activities, the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, was forced to stay in the capital under house-arrest and had to report to the ʿAbbāsid court twice a week.¹²⁰ The authorities hoped that through these measures they would be able to prevent the appearance of any danger from the twelfth Imam.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE IMAMS IN THE SHI'ITE UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE UPON THE EVOLUTION OF THE *Ghayba*

1. Al-Šādiq's Attitude towards the new Regime

It appears that the members of the 'Abbāsīd family who became part of the revolutionary movement against the Umayyads adhered to the belief, in common with the various groups of the Shī'a, that the first lawful caliph after the Prophet was 'Alī,¹ and that the caliphate must belong to the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*). The 'Abbāsīds preached against the Umayyads by calling for reform and justice. They invited the people to rally around the most suitable person from the progeny of Muḥammad (*al-Da'wa li-l-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*). Many Shī'ite thought that this slogan referred only to the descendants of Imam 'Alī. Thus they joined the 'Abbāsīd movement.² Some of the Shī'a, such as Abū Salama al-Khallāl, reached high rank in the 'Abbāsīd movement without cognizing the fact that the 'Abbāsīds were the founders of the movement, and they aimed to monopolize the caliphate for themselves. When the propagandists overthrew the Umayyads in 132/749, Abū Salama al-Khallāl, having discovered the reality of the 'Abbāsīd's goal, endeavoured to transfer the caliphate to the 'Alīds by corresponding with Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq, 'Umar al-Ashraf and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd, offering it to each of them, Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq rejected the offer bluntly by burning Abū Salama's letter, and he warned 'Umar al-Ashraf and 'Abd Allah al-Mahd against accepting it.³ Al-Šādiq had already held a secret meeting with the leading personalities of the 'Abbāsīd family, such as al-Saffāh and al-Manšūr at al-Abwā', near Medina, around the year 120/737, to discuss the situation of the People of the House (*Ahl al-*

Bayt). At this meeting the attendants wanted to form an underground collusion to bring about the downfall of the Umayyads. A proposal also was made to support the Ḥasanid claims put forward by ‘Abd Allah al-Maḥd on behalf of his son Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya,⁴ but al-Ṣādiq refused to have anything to do with it. Although the ‘Abbāsids present at this meeting made a nominal pledge to Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, al-Ṣādiq seems to have been aware of the possibility that their involvement with the revolutionaries, particularly the Kaysāniyya or its Hāshimiyya branch, would be successful and that they would replace the Umayyads. Also al-Ṣādiq knew he was the true divinely appointed Imam of the Muslims and he achieved the Imamate by the testament of his father, Imam al-Bāqir. Thus people should rally around him to recover his right in the caliphate. Al-Ṣādiq’s view did not please the ‘Abbāsids, so, they carried out their underground activities against the Umayyads without his participation.

When the ‘Abbāsids succeeded in seizing the reins of power in 132/749 they were naturally aware of the danger from their kinsmen, the ‘Alids, whose claims to succession would be greater than their own if ‘Alī’s right to the caliphate were to be accepted by the general populace. As a result the ‘Alids now faced ‘Abbāsīd oppression more severe than that of the Umayyads.⁵ The motives for this oppression seem to have been first of all doctrinal. The early members of the ‘Abbāsīd family, such as ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās,⁶ had confirmed ‘Alī’s right to the Imamate (the political and religious authority) by relating many traditions attributed to the Prophet supporting it. They had also supported ‘Alī against the first three Caliphs and participated in the Caliphate of ‘Alī, and they gave some support to his son al-Ḥasan.⁷ In the eyes of the ‘Alids by taking over the Caliphate the ‘Abbāsīds became usurpers of the political authority of the Imamate. Hence the ‘Abbāsīds became suspicious of the ‘Alid attitude toward their authority. Secondly there were economic motives for the ‘Abbāsīd oppression since Imam al-Ṣādiq continued to collect the *khums* secretly from his followers,⁸ an act which the ‘Abbāsīds considered as a preparatory step towards some conspiracy to overthrow them. These two factors obliged the ‘Abbāsīds to keep al-Ṣādiq in Medina and to hold his followers, especially in Iraq and later in Egypt, under close scrutiny as measures to ensure the security of the state.

Thus al-Ṣādiq maintained an externally quiescent policy towards

the 'Abbāsids. Yet at the same time he spread traditions amongst the Shī'ite narrators of traditions stating that the Imamate was a prerogative bestowed by God upon one of the descendants of al-Ḥusayn, who, before his death and at the Prophet's order, had transferred it to his successor by a clear stipulation (*al-Naṣṣ al-Jalī*).⁹ Al-Ṣādiq held that it was not necessary for the divinely appointed Imam to rise in revolt immediately in order to recover his rights to political authority. He should be satisfied with the spiritual leadership and perform its duties until the time when the community is sufficiently aware of his right to political power. Then God will assist him in his quest.¹⁰ In accordance with his quiescent policy al-Ṣādiq announced openly that *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and not himself would achieve political power.¹¹

Al-Ṣādiq's quiescent policy did not satisfy a considerable body of his adherents. Their political ambitions caused schism amongst the Imamites. The instigator of this political movement was called Abū al-Khaṭṭāb. At first he was trusted by al-Ṣādiq and nominated as agent (*wakīl*) of the Shī'ite group in Kufa. But al-Ṣādiq then repudiated and denounced him because of his extremist theological view,¹² which he had endeavoured to enforce by militant means. It seems likely that Abū al-Khaṭṭāb wanted to circumvent the influence and the interference of al-Ṣādiq by propounding his political and revolutionary ideas to al-Ṣādiq's son Ismā'īl, who was more inclined to such thoughts than his younger brother Mūsā. Thus Abū al-Khaṭṭāb hoped to give his revolutionary ideas religious legitimacy under Ismā'īl's name.

Although the rebellion of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb was easily subdued at Kufa, his failure and al-Ṣādiq's continued insistence on a quiescent policy forced Abū al-Khaṭṭāb's followers to resort to underground activities under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl. This event led the adherents of al-Ṣādiq to split into the Ismā'īlīs and the Mūsawiyya. After his death, they split into Mūsawiyya, who held the Imamate of Mūsā al-Kāzim, al-Faṭḥiyya, who held the Imamate of the eldest son of al-Ṣādiq, Abd Allah al-Aṭṭah; al-Muḥammadiyya, who held the Imamate of Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the Wāqifa, who thought that al-Ṣādiq had not died but was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*; and the two Ismā'īlī sects who held the Imamate of Ismā'īl and his son Muḥammad respectively.¹³

2. The Imamite activities during the period of al-Kāzim (148-183/765-799)

As a consequence of al-Šādiq's death the Imamites became so weak that even if military rebellion might have been possible during his life-time, there was little chance of it now. The rise of the Ismā'īlīs during al-Šādiq's lifetime, followed by the rise of the *Faṭḥiyya* sect, which included most of the Imamite *fuqahā'*,¹⁴ made the position of al-Šādiq's successor, Mūsā al-Kāzim, very weak, and obliged him to follow the quiescent policy of his father. For this reason al-Mansūr (d. 158/774) did not take any action against him or his followers during his life-time. However he continued his pursuit of the representatives of the revolutionary branch of the Ḥasanids.¹⁵

The regime of al-Mahdī, who was installed in the Caliphate after the death of his father al-Manšūr in 158/774,¹⁶ was distinguished by his "orthodox" policy. He encouraged the traditional *muḥaddithūn*, pursued the *zindiqs*, and oppressed the People of the Book.¹⁷ However, "this policy could be described as less religious policy than a political weapon. The promotion of the Sunna by the 'Abbāsids was, in fact, a means in the struggle against the religio-political enemies or opposition movements."¹⁸

This statement is illustrated by al-Mahdī's attitude towards the Imamites. When he came to power in 158/774, the followers of al-Kāzim became active and more powerful than the *Faṭḥiyya* and the Ismā'īlīs.¹⁹ Al-Mahdī thought that the religious and intellectual activities of al-Kāzim's partisans might endanger his regime, especially as there was a report indicating "that an important body of opinion had been turning towards the 'Alids and away from the 'Abbāsids or rather, had been insisting that the Ḥāshimite charisma was not equally spread through all the clan, but was peculiarly present in the 'Alids alone."²⁰ Perhaps for this reason, al-Mahdī summoned al-Kāzim from Medina and imprisoned him in Baghdad. But in so doing he neither reinforced the legitimacy of his rule nor changed public opinion towards the charismatic character of al-Kāzim.²¹ Therefore, he decided to follow a policy which depended on bribery and the intimidation of the Shī'ā. Al-Kāzim was released in 159/775, after he had sworn that he would not rise in arms against al-Mahdī or his successors.²² According to al-Ṭabarī, al-Mahdī simultaneously approached the Zaydites in order to gain their assistance in monitoring the activities of the 'Alids and their

followers.

For example, he made overtures to Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd, who belonged to a family which had worked in the secretarial affairs of Khurasan during the Umayyad period,²³ and made him his "brother in God". Then, in 163/799, al-Mahdī made him his vizier and vested him with full powers to handle all the affairs of the Caliphate, whereupon Ya'qūb gathered together the Zaydites and appointed them to the high offices of the state.²⁴ Al-Mahdī may have been motivated by the fact that the non-revolutionary Zaydites (*al-Jarīriyya*) believed in the Imamate of the Inferior (*al-Mafḍūl*) as long as the Superior (*al-Afḍal*), was present, and such dogma might give a legitimate foundation to his Caliphate which could be used against the 'Alids.

During al-Mahdī's regime the claim was put forward that the lawful Imam after the Prophet was not 'Alī but al-'Abbās, and that therefore the Imamate belonged to his family.²⁵ In fact Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd brought many jurists together from Baṣra, Kūfa and al-Sham and organised them²⁶ so as to further this claim. Al-Kashshī reports two transmissions to support this. He says that the Zaydite Hishām b. Ibrāhīm wrote many Zaydite works, one of them entitled "The Confirmation of the Imamate of al-'Abbās", and he adds that another Zaydite, called Ibn al-Muq'ad, wrote a heresiographical work illustrating the dogmas, places and activities of the pro-Imamites, such as *al-Ya'fūriyya*, *al-Zurāriyya*, *al-Ammāriyya*, and *al-Jawālīqiyya*, and submitted his work to al-Mahdī. This work was then recited together with a warning by the Caliph at the gates of Baghdad, Medina and other cities.²⁷ The recitation of this work was the first step to al-Mahdī's pursuit of the other factions of the pro-'Alids. Some of these pro-'Alids were obliged to flee from Kūfa to remote provinces, like Yemen,²⁸ while al-Kāzim spread instructions amongst his adherents for them to follow his quiescent policy carefully. Al-Kashshī's report seems to indicate that the tense relationship between the 'Abbāsids and the pro-'Alids continued until the death of al-Mahdī in 169/785.²⁹

Although some of this tension seems to have been alleviated with the accession of al-Hādī, the Ḥasanids were closely watched and their salaries cut. They began to increase their propaganda in Khurasan and the other provinces in a new Zaydite form, and they contacted the leading personalities of the Ḥasanids in Medina, encouraging them to revolt.³⁰ As a part of al-Hādī's precautionary policy the Ḥasanids of

Medina were forced to come to the office of the governor every evening. They exploited a gathering of their followers from numerous provinces during the Pilgrimage and made their ill-treatment by the governor an excuse to rebel in 169/785. But their uprising was easily defeated and resulted in their being massacred in the battle of Fakhkh.³¹ However the Caliph accused al-Kāzim of provoking the rebels and decided to kill him, but died in 170/786 before he could put his decision into practice.³²

The battle of Fakhkh and the commitment of al-Hādī's successor, al-Rashīd, to the anti-ʿAlid policy of his predecessors only served to entrench the political strategy of the three ʿAlid parties, the revolutionary Ḥasanids, the Ismāʿīlīs and the Imamites.

The Imamite group under Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim became stronger and more organised, and insisted on a gradual movement towards their political goal, but the Imam rejected any bid to rise in arms because he considered this the task of *al-Qā'im*.³³ His adherents, most of whom were originally from Kufa, were scattered throughout the Islamic state and used the rite of Pilgrimage to communicate with each other. They succeeded in maintaining an important body of followers in Akhmim in Egypt, which became a centre for communication between the Shīʿa in Kufa and those in Egypt.³⁴ They had other followers in al-Maghrib.³⁵ Al-Kāzim permitted a few of his adherents to work in the ʿAbbāsīd administration, especially in the offices of *al-wizāra* and *al-barīd* (governmental mail), so that they could help to save their fellows in times of danger. Hence several Imamite families held office, such as that of ʿAlī b. Yaqtīn³⁶ and that of al-Ashʿath, including Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ashʿath and his son al-ʿAbbās, who became the governor of Khurasan, and Waḍḍāh (or Wāḍih), who worked in the *barīd* of Egypt.³⁷

The enlargement of al-Kāzim's party increased his wealth, for there is much evidence to indicate that he collected secretly from his adherents³⁸ the *khums*, the *zakāt*, gifts and other taxes enjoined in the *Sharīʿa* as part of what was due to his Imamate.

The second Shīʿite party was the Ismāʿīlīs, who had already disassociated themselves from the quiescent policy of al-Šādiq and his son al-Kāzim by adopting the Imamate of Ismāʿīl first and then of his son Muḥammad, both of whom were more inclined toward more actively revolutionary underground political activities. They learnt from the repeated failure of the Ḥasanid uprisings, which were initiated without political preparation, and they decided to struggle

for power through a gradual political process. This decision encouraged them to adopt ideas from beyond the circle of Islam, and their adoption of these ideas may have "liberated" their minds from the limits of *Sharī'a*. They put forward new interpretations of the Islamic texts, according to which each passage had an esoteric and an exoteric meaning.³⁹ For example, a tradition attributed to the Prophet says that the *Mahdī* will appear when the sun rises from the place of its setting. According to them, this meant not the rising of the real sun, but that of *al-Mahdī*, who would appear in al-Maghrib. Therefore, they became more interested in preaching their doctrine in al-Maghrib and encouraged their followers in the east to emigrate there.⁴⁰ Nawbakhtī's reports suggest that the relationship between the Ismā'īlīs and al-Kāẓim's followers was tense, since the Ismā'īlī leaders allowed their followers to assassinate the Imamites who supported al-Kāẓim.⁴¹ Moreover the Imamites accused the Ismā'īlīs of being implicated in the arrest of al-Kāẓim.⁴²

In the Hijaz the situation of the third Shī'ite group, the Hasanids, was very difficult following the total defeat of their second revolt in Fakhkh in 169/785. The 'Abbāsids discovered that the notion of *al-Mahdī* had been in circulation amongst the Hasanids and that they believed that he might rise in Mecca. It was such a notion that encouraged two Hasanid leaders to rise in arms, first al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in 145/762 and then al-Husayn b. 'Alī in 169/785, each of whom hoped that he might be the promised *Mahdī*.⁴³ Thus the 'Abbāsids continued to restrict the movements of the Hasanids and forced them to present themselves to the governor (*al-Wālī*) every evening.⁴⁴ This critical situation made it impossible for the Hasanids to take any militant action in the Hijaz, so two of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's brothers left Medina after the battle of Fakhkh to promote their claims elsewhere. The first of these was Yahyā al-Mahdī, who went to the province of Daylam and preached his ideas there, winning considerable support from the native princes and the people of Daylam, whom he provoked to rebellion against the caliph al-Rashīd in 175/791.⁴⁵ The second brother, Idrīs, fled to Egypt, where he already had a large body of partisans, and, with the assistance of a certain Wāḍih, a Shī'ite working in the *barīd*, managed to escape from there to al-Maghrib. It seems most likely that his partisans in al-Maghrib had already spread much propaganda against the 'Abbāsids, because within three years Idrīs succeeded in rebelling against them and establishing the Idrīsid state, in 172/788.⁴⁶

The numerous Shīʿite activities mentioned above seem to have been the causes of al-Rashīd's anti-ʿAlīd policy, which covered most of his Caliphate. In 171/787 he became suspicious of the loyalty of the ʿAlids in Baghdad, and decided to gather all of them together and exile them to Medina.⁴⁷ He followed this step with the appointment of Bakkar al-Zubayrī, a descendant of ʿAbd Allah b. al-Zubayr, as governor of Medina and he ordered him to put the ʿAlids under close watch and to restrict their movements.⁴⁸ As for the rebellion of Yaḥyā al-Maḥḍ in Daylam, al-Rashīd sent an army against him (fifty thousand according to al-Ṭabarī) under the leadership of al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī. Through diplomacy and promises of amnesty he managed to persuade Yaḥyā al-Maḥḍ to end his uprising and to surrender, after giving him a guarantee of security from al-Rashīd. But the Caliph was not satisfied, so he had al-Maḥḍ arrested in Baghdad and killed.⁴⁹

As for the revolt of Idrīs al-Maḥḍ, al-Rashīd followed the policy of his father al-Mahdī by using the Zaydites against the other ʿAlids. He sent a Zaydite scholar called Sulaymān b. Jarīr to kill Idrīs. In order to hide his secret target, Sulaymān pretended to be a Shīʿite partisan who had escaped from the ʿAbbāsids' oppression. He became one of the courtiers of Idrīs and managed to poison him in 177/793.⁵⁰ However the assassination of Idrīs did not bring about the disintegration of his state, as the Berber tribes installed his child, Idrīs II, after his death. For this reason al-Rashīd vested Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab with the government of Ifriqiyya and, four years later, encouraged him to establish the Aghlabid state, possibly to counteract the danger posed by the Idrīsids.⁵¹

In the meantime the Imamite scholars were active in the intellectual field in Egypt, Yaman, Iraq and Khurasan.⁵² Hishām b. al-Ḥakam, for example, attempted to prove the legitimacy of the Imamate of al-Kāzīm, which means that he considered the ʿAbbāsids as usurpers of al-Kāzīm's rights.⁵³

The Ḥasanid uprisings in Daylam and al-Maghrib and the underground activities of the Imamites and the Ismāʿīlīs worried al-Rashīd and made him think that al-Kāzīm, whom he already knew to be receiving the *khums*, the *kharāj* and gifts from his followers, was behind all these activities and had prepared a conspiracy to overthrow him. Therefore he initiated a campaign of arresting the Imamites.⁵⁴ He started by arresting al-Kāzīm in Medina in 179/795, and sent him to prison in Baṣra and Baghdad.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ibn al-

Muʿtazz reports that al-Rashīd ordered the Zaydite Abū ʿIṣma to kill the Imamite poet Maṣṣūr al-Nammārī.⁵⁶ It was this campaign of persecution that forced the Imamite missionary Hishām b. al-Ḥakam to hide in Madāʿin, from whence he escaped to Kufa, where he died two months later.⁵⁷ However al-Rashīd's arrests did not deter the Imamite underground activities, especially in Baṣra. Therefore, according to the Imamite narrations, al-Kāẓim was poisoned for al-Rashīd in 183/799 at the instigation of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī.⁵⁸ Al-Rashīd also put to death sixty ʿAlids who were in his prisons.⁵⁹

The death of al-Kāẓim led to another schism amongst the Imamites. The first group, which represented quite a large body, was called the *Wāqifa*. They held that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, but they differed amongst themselves concerning his death and split into four sub-groups, three of whom maintained that he had died while the fourth denied it.⁶⁰ A few anecdotes mentioned by the *Ithnā' Ashariyya* suggest that the cause of the denial of al-Kāẓim's death was that some of his agents, like ʿUthmān b. ʿĪsā al-Rawāsī in Egypt, and Ziyād, al-Qindī, ʿAlī b. Abī Ḥamza, Ḥayyān and al-Sarrāj in Kufa, possessed a large amount of money (more than a hundred thousand dinars) which belonged to al-Kāẓim. Since they had used this money for their own benefit, they denied his death and rejected the Imamate of al-Riḍā in order that they would have an excuse for not returning the money.⁶¹ However, it is hard to agree with al-Kashshī's view concerning the reason behind the emergence of the *Wāqifa* sect. Most of the traditions concerning the occultation and the rise of *al-Qā'im* are attributed to al-Ṣādiq, who did not indicate explicitly which of his descendants would be *al-Qā'im*.⁶² Therefore it is very likely that a considerable number of the *muḥaddithūn* thought that the Imam had indicated his son Mūsā and hence stopped at him, contending that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and was in a state of occultation.

The second group resulting from the schism after al-Kāẓim's death held that he had passed away and the Imam was his son ʿAlī al-Riḍā, who, according to al-Kulaynī, assumed the Imamate by the designation of his father.⁶³ Al-Riḍā faced many difficulties in proving his right to the Imamate, not only to his father's prominent followers, but also to his brother Aḥmad.⁶⁴ However, between the years 183-199/799-814, he managed to maintain a considerable number of followers, and administer an underground system of communication to carry on the religious functions of his Imamate.⁶⁵ Moreover his

preference for the religious dimensions of Islam, rather than its political dimensions, made him a magnet for many individuals, including the precursors of the sufi movements, especially in Khurasan.⁶⁶ But many Imamites who had accepted his Imamate were not satisfied with his quietist attitude and involved themselves in the underground activities of the revolutionary Zaydites, probably without his permission.⁶⁷

3. The Attitude of al-Riḍā towards the 'Alid Revolt against al-Ma'mūn

When al-Amīn became caliph, Iraq was the centre of his power. It was here that he maintained the support of the Arabs, and especially that of the Murji'ite scholars (*al-Āmma*, later called the Sunnites), while his brother al-Ma'mūn was governor of Khurasan and gained the support of its military leaders and senior administrators, especially the Persian vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl and his partisans, who eventually helped him to overthrow al-Amīn.⁶⁸ Al-Ma'mūn's success in gaining the caliphate was contrary to the political and economic interest of al-Amīn's supporters. Therefore many regional revolts took place in Syria, al-Jazīra, Yemen and Iraq, headed by the local 'Abbāsīd governors.⁶⁹ At the same time the 'Alids used their underground propaganda which was influential in the Yemen, Hijaz and Iraq, to exploit al-Ma'mūn's difficulties in Iraq and to cause a revolt in Kufa in 199/815. Thus these regions fell out of al-Ma'mūn's control.

Although reports about the ideological identity of the 'Alid uprising and the events surrounding it are confused, apparently it was a Zaydite revolt⁷⁰ maintained with the support of some Imamite sects. These included the followers of Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim and the *sab'iyya*, the followers of Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Šādiq,⁷¹ along with some of the Imamites, but without the direct order of the eighth Imam, al-Riḍā.⁷²

The spiritual leader of this revolt was Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabāṭabā, while its military leader was Abū al-Sarāyā. It broke out under the slogan "We invite people to rally around the most suitable leader from the progeny of Muḥammad and to practice the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunna"⁷³ in Kufa on the 10th Jumādā 199/26th January 815, where the rebels had the support of the people of the

environs of Kufa and of the bedouins. Abū al-Sarāyā minted coins in his own name in Kufa, managed to defeat three ‘Abbāsīd armies and occupied Madā’in.⁷⁴ Moreover he dispatched many successful campaigns under the leadership of al-Riḍā’s brothers and relatives to extend his authority in Iraq, al-Ahwāz, Fars, the Hijaz, and Yemen. They fulfilled their tasks and became the governors of these regions. For example, Zayd b. Mūsā al-Kāzim became the governor of al-Ahwaz and Baṣra, Fars came under the control of Ismā‘īl b. Mūsā al-Kāzim, and Yemen came under the control of his brother Ibrāhīm, Wāsiṭ was ruled by Ḥusayn b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. Abū al-Sarāyā appointed Sulaymān b. Dāwūd in Medina, and nominated al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣṭas as governor in Mecca, authorising him to be the leader of the pilgrims and to provide the *Ka‘ba* with a white *kiswā*.⁷⁵

The authority of Abū al-Sarāyā increased after the mysterious death of the spiritual leader of the revolt, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā on the 1st Rajab 199/15th February 815, and the refusal of the eminent ‘Alid, ‘Alī b. ‘Ubayd Allah, to accept the position of Ibn Ṭabāṭabā. Abū al-Sarāyā, in order to evade the interference of any strong spiritual leader, nominated for this post a young ‘Alid called Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Zayd b. ‘Alī,⁷⁶ and monopolised all affairs of the leadership of the revolt.

Abū al-Sarāyā’s full control in Iraq did not continue, because the ‘Abbāsīd army defeated him at Qaṣr b. Hubayra near Kufa and forced him to withdraw towards Baṣra along with 800 horsemen. But news came to him that his governor in Baṣra, Zayd b. Mūsā al-Kāzim, had also been defeated after hard combat and had been captured by the ‘Abbāsīd troops. Thus he went towards al-Ahwāz, but was defeated by the ‘Abbāsīd governor of that city and his followers dispersed. A few months later the troops of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl captured him at Jalawlā’ and on 10th Rabi‘ I 200/18th October 815 they beheaded him, after which his body was impaled in Baghdad.⁷⁷

It is worth mentioning that the failure of this revolt caused some Imamites to hold that Mūsā al-Kāzim, the seventh Imam, was *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*. They had considered his son Aḥmad as the lawful successor of his father. But since he had participated with Abū al-Sarāyā, they rejected his Imamate and denied the death of al-Kāzim.⁷⁸ This fact reveals the general attitude of the Imamites towards any militant action and indicates that they had *Ḥadīths* concerning the rise of an Imam with the sword, whose uprising would never be defeated, for he could not die without establishing the

government of the People of the House.⁷⁹ This may be the reason behind the quiescent attitude of those followers of al-Riḍā who did not take any open or active part in the revolt of Abū al-Sarāyā.

On hearing of the military defeat of their comrades on the Iraqi front after the death of Abū al-Sarāyā, the rebels in Mecca, who had full control of the Hijaz and the Yemen, made overtures to Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, asking him to be their leader and finally persuading him to accept their offer. They swore the oath of allegiance to him as their caliph and called him *Amīr al-Muʾminīn* on 6th Rabiʿ II 200/13th November 815.⁸⁰ He himself claimed that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, and based his claim on prophetic traditions.⁸¹ But the eighth Imam al-Riḍā denied his claim, although he endeavoured to save him from a military defeat by advising him to postpone his revolt against the ʿAbbāsids.⁸²

The installation by the rebels of an ʿAlid caliph in Mecca with the epithet *al-Mahdī* threatened the authority of al-Maʾmūn. Having failed to subdue the revolt by force, al-Maʾmūn decided to resort to political methods, by conciliating the eighth Imam al-Riḍā. He dispatched an army under the leadership of ʿĪsā b. al-Julūdī to Medina for this purpose.⁸³ But this army was badly defeated at the hands of Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. Therefore al-Julūdī asked al-Riḍā to contact Muḥammad and ask him to end his resistance, but he rejected al-Riḍā's mediation and insisted on continuing his rebellion. This led to skirmishes between the ʿAbbāsīd troops and the rebels until the end of the year 200/815, when the ʿAbbāsīd army captured Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and forced him to renounce his claim publicly.⁸⁴ Because his arrest did not return the areas of revolt into the hands of the authorities, al-Julūdī returned with him and al-Riḍā to Merv. According to al-Kulaynī, al-Maʾmūn welcomed al-Riḍā and offered him the caliphate, but he refused. However, after a few months of negotiation with al-Maʾmūn, al-Riḍā agreed to be his successor.⁸⁵ The caliph announced his acceptance on 5th Ramaḍān 201/28th March 817 and called him "*al-Riḍā min Āl Muḥammad*". At the same time he ordered his soldiers to wear green clothes instead of the black which was the emblem of the ʿAbbāsids. Then he strengthened his relations with al-Riḍā by marrying his sister Umm Ḥabība to al-Riḍā.⁸⁶

The installation of al-Riḍā was in reality a political step arranged by the Persian vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl and associated with other policies aimed at consolidating his Persian support and harming the interests

of his Arab opposition in Baghdad. This can be concluded from the points mentioned below:

Firstly, the fact that al-Ma'mūn continued to reside in Merv caused complaints amongst the military and administrative groups in Iraq, who had been the courtiers of Al-Amīn (193-198/808-814) and who then had to struggle for their economic and regional interests against the Persian vizier of al-Ma'mūn, al-Faḍl b. Sahl, and his brother al-Ḥasan b. Sahl.⁸⁷ Because he was busy with this conflict, al-Ma'mūn failed to subdue completely the 'Alid rebellion in the Hijaz and Yemen. Therefore, with the encouragement of his vizier, al-Ma'mūn installed al-Riḍā as his successor to the caliphate in order to divide the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's adherents and those who were hoping for the appearance of an inspired 'Alid leader.⁸⁸

Secondly, al-Ma'mūn changed the colour of the 'Abbāsīd emblem from black to green. The latter colour was associated with the Sasanids, whereas the 'Alid emblem was white.⁸⁹ Such a step suggests the influence of the Persian vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl.

Thirdly, by installing al-Riḍā as his successor, al-Ma'mūn succeeded in splitting the rebels by gaining the support of al-Riḍā's brothers, who accepted the conciliation of al-Ma'mūn and mentioned his name in the *khutba* along with the name of al-Riḍā. According to al-Ṭabarī, al-'Abbās b. Mūsā al-Kāzim accepted the governorship of Kufa on behalf of al-Ma'mūn, a fact which encouraged some of the rebels to mention the names of al-Ma'mūn and al-Riḍā in the *khutba*. But the majority of the Kufans insisted on mentioning only al-Riḍā's name or that of any prominent person from the descendants of 'Alī.⁹⁰ Such attitudes indicate the Zaydite inclination of the Kufans. However, the leader of the rebels in Mecca, Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Kāzim agreed to mention both his brother al-Riḍā and al-Ma'mūn in the *khutba*. For this reason, al-Ma'mūn confirmed his office and authorised him to lead the pilgrimage in Mecca.⁹¹ But a year later, in 202/817, the caliph gave the governorship of Mecca to an 'Abbāsīd leader, 'Isā al-Julūdī, and dispatched Ibrāhīm to Yemen to subdue the rebellion there. He also granted him Yemen's governorship. After he had fulfilled this task, Ibrāhīm set out for Mecca, but during his return he was arrested, as was his brother Zayd, and sent to al-Ma'mūn.⁹² Moreover, al-Nawbakhtī mentions that a considerable body of the *muḥaddithūn* and Zaydites (the non-revolutionary branch) became Imamites after the installation of al-Riḍā. But the accounts of al-Kashshī and al-

Ṣadūq suggest that these same people, for example Hishām b. Ibrāhīm al-Rashīdī, had been used by al-Ma'mūn to watch the partisans of al-Riḍā, and this might explain why they returned to their previous faith directly after the death of al-Riḍā in 203/817.⁹³

Fourthly, after he had quashed the 'Alid rebellion, al-Ma'mūn decided to go to Baghdad, taking with him al-Riḍā and Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. During his advance, his vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl was assassinated, then al-Riḍā died in Tūs, probably of poison,⁹⁴ and Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq passed away and was buried in Jurjān.⁹⁵ Their mysterious deaths seem to indicate that al-Ma'mūn, having used them to fragment the 'Alid opposition, was now moving on to a more rigorous anti-'Alid programme.

Fifthly, the numerous measures initiated by al-Ma'mūn after his arrival at Baghdad on Rabī' I 204/819 revealed the political aim of his previous policy. He cast aside the green banner and ordered his subjects to wear the black colour of the 'Abbāsids.⁹⁶ He granted al-Riḍā's successor, al-Jawād, two million dirhams,⁹⁷ and gave back the district of Fadak to prominent 'Alids, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn and Muḥammad b. 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Ḥasan.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the land-tax (*al-kharāj*) of the *sawād* was adjusted in favour of the tax-payer. The share of the treasury was to be two-fifths instead of half of the produce.⁹⁹ Through these actions, al-Ma'mūn wanted to cut the support given by the prominent 'Alids and the peasants of the *sawād* to the revolutionary 'Alid activities, which, according to Abū al-Fidā, he had brought to an end. He was also endeavouring to work against his Arab opposition in Baghdad. When he entered the city everything there returned to normal as if the uprising had never occurred.¹⁰⁰

Finally, in 205/820 al-Ma'mūn started to hold symposiums between the Imamites and the Zaydites, and encouraged them to discuss the question of the *Imāma* in his presence. It is worth mentioning that the non-revolutionary Zaydites believed in the Imamate of the inferior (*al-Mafḍūl*) in spite of the presence of the superior (*al-Afḍal*). This view was based on the belief that even though 'Alī b. Abī Tālib was the most excellent of the community after the Prophet, he fully recognized the caliphate of Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Because of this belief of the Zaydites, in the discussions with the Imamites, al-Ma'mūn often agreed with the viewpoints of Zaydite scholars such as 'Alī b. al-Ḥīm, as regards the Imamate.¹⁰¹

Then al-Ma'mūn managed to capture the 'Alid rebel 'Abd al-

Rahmān b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, who rose in arms in Yemen. By subduing this rebellion, al-Ma’mūn ended the last military opposition of the ‘Alids during his rule. Finally, in 206/821 his real attitude towards the ‘Alids was revealed when he ordered them to wear black, and announced that all the descendants of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and their close kindred (*al-Ṭālibiyūn*) should be prevented from entering his palace.¹⁰²

4. The development of the Imamite organization (*al-Wikāla*) during the time of al-Jawād

Despite the well-developed status of the Imamite organization during the last period of al-Riḍā’s Imamate, he died, leaving a successor only seven years old, thus causing further splits amongst his followers. Al-Mas‘ūdī mentions that because of the age of Muḥammad al-Jawād, the ninth Imam, al-Riḍā’s followers were confused as to whether or not he possessed the requisite qualifications for the Imamate. Therefore eighty leading personalities from various provinces, among them al-Rayyān b. al-Ṣalt, Ṣafwān b. Yahyā, Yūnis b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān, Muḥammad b. Hakīm, ‘Alī b. al-Hasan al-Wāsiṭī, and Ishāq b. Ismā‘īl b. Nawbakht, gathered together at the house of ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Ḥajjāj in Baghdad to discuss the validity of al-Jawād’s Imamate. They decided to test his knowledge during the pilgrimage. Two groups concluded that al-Jawād’s age precluded his being qualified for the Imamate; the first group supported the Imamate of his uncle, Aḥmad b. Mūsā al-Kāzim, whereas the second group, including Ibrāhīm b. Ṣāliḥ al-Anmāṭī, joined the *Wāqifa* and held that the seventh Imam was *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*.¹⁰³ But the rest were satisfied that al-Jawād’s knowledge was exceptional and held that he was well qualified in spite of his age.¹⁰⁴ Hence they continued with the affairs of the organization, and sent propagandists from Kufa and Medina to various provinces. According to al-Najāshī, many Kufan *muhaddīthūn*, such as Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath, Aḥmad b. Sahl, al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Misrī, and Ismā‘īl b. Mūsā al-Kāzim, moved to Egypt and carried on their activities there. One of these activities was to circulate the traditions of the Prophet concerning *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* and the fact that he would be from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn.¹⁰⁵ A narration mentioned by al-Kulaynī

suggests that they gained considerable adherents there, namely, that ‘Alī b. Asbāt al-Kufī came from Egypt to Medina to see al-Jawād so as to describe him to the Imamites in Egypt.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the land of the caliphate the Imamite system of sending out agents (*wukala’*) became more developed and managed to save their organization from certain disintegration. The Imam’s agents spread in many provinces, like al-Ahwāz¹⁰⁷, Hamadān¹⁰⁸, Sīstān, Bīst¹⁰⁹, Rayy¹¹⁰, Basra¹¹¹, Wāsiṭ, Baghdad¹¹², and the traditional centres of the Imamites, Kufa and Qumm.¹¹³ They allowed their partisans to work in the ‘Abbāsīd administration. Thus Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl b. Bazī and Aḥmad b. Ḥamza al-Qummī occupied high ranks in the vizierate,¹¹⁴ and Nūḥ b. Darrāj was the qāḍī of Baghdad and then of Kufa. Because his relatives were the agents of al-Jawād, he hid his faith during his occupation of this post.¹¹⁵ Other Imamites became governors of some ‘Abbāsīd provinces, such as al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd Allah al-Nisābūrī, the governor of Bīst and Sīstān, and al-Ḥakam b. ‘Alyā al-Asadī, the governor of Bahrain. Both of these men paid the *khums* to al-Jawād while hiding their allegiance to him.¹¹⁶

At this stage the underground activities of the agents only aimed at controlling and carrying on the religious and financial affairs of the Imamites, not at endangering al-Ma’ mūn’s rule. However in the year 210/825 the people of Qumm, most of whom were Imamites, appealed to the caliph to reduce their land-tax (*al-kharāj*), just as he had reduced the *kharāj* of the inhabitants of Rayy, but he ignored their appeal. Therefore they refused to pay the *kharāj* and took control of the affairs of Qumm.¹¹⁷ As a result al-Ma’ mūn dispatched three regiments of his army from Baghdad and Khurasan to quash their revolt. The leader of the ‘Abbāsīd army, ‘Alī b. Hishām accomplished his task. He demolished the wall of Qumm and killed many people, amongst them Yaḥyā b. ‘Umrān, who, according to Ibn Shahr Āshūb, was the agent of al-Jawād.¹¹⁸ Moreover al-Ma’ mūn collected seven million dirhams from Qumm’s inhabitants as a *kharāj* instead of the normal amount, which had been two million dirhams before the uprising. The reports of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr indicate that some of the leaders of this revolt were exiled to Egypt, among them Ja‘far b. Dāwūd al-Qummī.¹¹⁹ But these measures did not end the military activities in Qumm. According to al-Ṭabarī, Ja‘far b. Dāwūd escaped from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in 214/829, but his revolt was subdued and he was arrested and banished again to Egypt.¹²⁰ Unfortunately the Imamite sources are

silent about these military actions in Qumm and their relationship with the Imamites' organization. But al-Ma'mūn linked these activities with al-Jawād. Thus he endeavoured to end them through the Imam. According to al-Azdī and al-Ṭabarī, during his march to invade al-Rūm, al-Ma'mūn summoned al-Jawād and welcomed him in Tikrīt in Ṣafar 215/830, where he married his daughter Umm al-Faḍl to him. He asked him to celebrate his marriage in Baghdad, then to go back with his wife to Medina.¹²¹ But this marriage neither gave al-Ma'mūn the support of the Imamites nor stopped the revolts in Qumm. Ja'far b. Dāwūd managed to escape again from Egypt and rebelled in Qumm in 216/831, where he defeated the army sent by al-Ma'mūn and killed its leader 'Alī b. 'Īsā. He continued his resistance until the end of the year 217/832, when the 'Abbāsīd troops ended his uprising and executed him.¹²² But afterwards the underground activities of the 'Alids increased on a wide scale. Therefore al-Mu'taṣim, who succeeded al-Ma'mūn to the caliphate in 218/833, was obliged to summon al-Jawād and Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Ṭalqān, so as to investigate their role in the underground activities. The latter, on hearing of al-Mu'taṣim's decision, escaped from Kufa to Khurasan.¹²³ whereas al-Jawād was arrested in Medina and taken along with his wife, Umm al-Faḍl, to the caliph in Baghdad, where he was put under house-arrest. He died a few months later in Dhū al-Hijja 220/835. Some Imamite writers claim that his wife Umm al-Faḍl poisoned him at the instigation of al-Mu'taṣim, but al-Mufīd thinks that he died naturally.¹²⁴

In the last few years of al-Jawād's Imamate the system and the tactics of the Imamite agents were highly developed. The Imam's followers in Khurasan allowed themselves to be recruited into the 'Abbāsīd army and participated in subduing the rebellion of the *Khurramiyya*. According to al-Ṭūsī, in 220/834 they seized a large amount of booty from the rebels, so al-Jawād ordered them to pay the *khums* either to him directly or to his agent.¹²⁵ Al-Jawād himself, on hearing of al-Mu'taṣim's command to present himself in Baghdad, asked his representative Muḥammad b. al-Faraj to hand the *khums* to his son 'Alī al-Hādī as a sign that he was to be his successor.¹²⁶

5. The 'Abbāsids' Attitude toward the activities of al-Hādī

According to the Imamite sources, the bulk of the followers of al-Jawād accepted the Imamate of his successor 'Alī al-Hādī, who was then seven years old. His age presented no obstacle to their accepting his Imamate, since they had faced the same problem with his father, who had also been seven years old when he took over the office. A few of al-Jawād's followers, however, supported the Imamate of his son Mūsā, but after a short time they rejoined the rest of the Imamites, accepting the Imamate of 'Alī al-Hādī.¹²⁷

At this stage the Imamites concentrated their efforts in re-organising the activities of their followers. This was especially necessary considering the fact that the flourishing state of the 'Abbāsīd economy had decreased the 'Alids' opportunities to obtain supporters for further military action.¹²⁸ Perhaps for this reason the caliph, al-Mu'taṣim and his successor al-Wāthiq (227-232/841-846), were more tolerant towards the 'Alids than al-Ma'mūn before them or al-Mutawakkil after them. According to Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, the descendants of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib and their close kindred (*al-Tālibiyūn*) assembled in Sāmarrā where they were paid salaries by the caliph al-Wāthiq.¹²⁹ The latter also distributed a large amount of money among the 'Alids in the Hijaz and other provinces.¹³⁰

After the death of al-Wāthiq certain events had serious consequences for the 'Abbāsīd attitude towards the activities of the adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hādī. Al-Mutawakkil was chosen to the caliphate in 232/837,¹³¹ and his installation was seen by the narrators (*al-Muḥaddithūn al-Āmma*) as a major setback for those who favoured the 'Alids. The majority of the latter were from the ranks of the Mu'tazila and the Shī'ites, who formed the progressive and indeed radical element in society. Recognising this, al-Mutawakkil carried out certain measures with the aim of destroying the economic and political foundations of both the Mu'tazila and the Shī'ites.

Firstly, he abandoned the "inquisition" (*al-Miḥna*) against the narrators of the *Āmma*, which had been implemented by al-Ma'mūn with the support of the Mu'tazilites, and he encouraged these narrators and their adherents to openly adopt anti-Shī'ite slogans.¹³²

Secondly, al-Mutawakkil discharged the vizier, al-Zayyāt, and his staff from their offices and appointed instead al-Jarjārā'ī and Ibn

Khāqān, who were more inclined to go along to with his anti-Shī'ite policy.¹³³

Thirdly, he decided to rebuild the whole structure of the army in two stages. First he began to gradually weaken the power of the Tāhirids, who were in charge of ruling Khurasan and of policing Baghdad and the Sawād. He did this by nominating his three sons, al-Muntaṣir, al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad, as his successive heirs apparent, and then appointing al-Muntaṣir as governor in *ʿIfriqiyya* and al-Maghrib, al-Mu'ayyad as governor in Syria, and al-Mu'tazz as ruler of the eastern provinces, in particular Khurasan. Simultaneously the caliph divided the army in the capital among his sons and sent them to the provinces to which he had appointed them, so as to prevent any direct conspiracy on the part of the leaders of the army. His second move was to begin to build a new army called *al-Shākirīyya*, recruiting people from areas which were well-known for their anti-ʿAlid attitudes, particularly from Syria, al-Jazīra, al-Jabal, Hijaz, and even from the *ʿAbnā*, who had rebelled against the "inquisition".¹³⁴

While carrying out these measures, al-Mutawakkil turned towards the opposition to deal with the organised underground activities of the ʿAlids in general and the Imamites in particular. The intellectual activities of the Imamites in Egypt, which had been encouraged by Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim, had borne fruit and expanded into the sphere of underground political activities, even penetrating into remote parts of North Africa.¹³⁵ The system of communication of their organization (*al-Wikāla*) was highly developed, particularly in the capital Sāmarrā, Baghdad, Madāʿin, and the districts of the Sawād.¹³⁶ Furthermore al-Yaʿqūbī's report seems to indicate that the Imamites had hidden the name of their Imam to the extent that the caliph was not sure exactly who he was¹³⁷ or if he had direct links with Shī'ite underground activities.

Al-Mutawakkil instigated a campaign of arrests against the Imamites in 232/846, accompanied by such harsh treatment that some of the agents of the Imam in Baghdad, Madāʿin, Kufa and the Sawād died under torture, while others were thrown into jail.¹³⁸ By these measures the caliph caused serious damage to the communication network within the *Wikāla*. In order to fill the vacuum left by the arrested agents, the Imam had to appoint new agents instead, such as Abū ʿAlī b. Rashīd, who was nominated to lead the activities of the Imamites in Baghdad, Madāʿin and the

Sawād, and Ayyūb b. Nūḥ, who was appointed as the agent of Kufa. Al-Hādī also provided them with new instructions concerning their duties during this critical situation.¹³⁹

Despite all the Imamite efforts to save their organization, the investigation of the governor of Medina, ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad, led to the discovery that al-Hādī was in fact behind these activities. He informed al-Mutawakkil, warning him of the danger of al-Hādī’s presence in Medina. So the caliph summoned al-Hādī to Sāmarrā in 233/848, where he kept him under house-arrest.¹⁴⁰ Two years later the caliph discovered that Egypt and the areas near the tomb of al-Ḥusayn in the Sawād were the strongest centres of the underground communications of the ‘Alids. Therefore he ordered that the tomb of al-Ḥusayn and the houses nearby be levelled to the ground. Then he ordered that the ground of the tomb be ploughed and cultivated, so that any trace of the tomb would be forgotten. Furthermore he issued an order prohibiting people from visiting the tombs of any of the Imams and warning them that anyone found in their vicinity would be arrested.¹⁴¹

Al-Mutawakkil also waged another campaign of arrests. Among those taken prisoner was Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar al-‘Alawī, who was accused of conspiracy and held in the jail of *al-Muṭbaq* in Baghdad.¹⁴² At the same time al-Mutawakkil ordered the governor of Egypt to deport the *Ṭālibiyyīn* to Iraq, and he did so. Afterwards in 236/850,¹⁴³ al-Mutawakkil banished them to Medina which had been used as a place of exile for the ‘Alids.

Several remarks suggest that al-Mutawakkil went even further in his policy, aiming in the long term to destroy the economic and social status of the ‘Alids, and issued many orders so as to achieve this end. He confiscated the properties of the Ḥusaynids, that is the estate of Fadak, whose revenue at that time, according to Ibn Ṭāwūs, was 24,000 dinars, and granted it to his partisan ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar al-Baz̧yār.¹⁴⁴ He also warned the inhabitants of the Hijaz not to have any communication with the ‘Alids or to support them financially. Many people were severely punished because they did so. According to al-Iṣfahānī, as a result of al-Mutawakkil’s measures the ‘Alids faced harsh treatment in Medina, where they were totally isolated from other people and deprived of their necessary livelihood.¹⁴⁵

The caliph also wanted to remove the Shī‘ites from the ‘Abbāsīd administration and to destroy their good standing in public opinion. Al-Mas‘ūdī gives an example of this policy: he mentions that Ishāq b.

Ibrāhīm, the governor of Şaymara and Sīrawān in the province of al-Jabal, was discharged from his office because of his Imamite allegiance, and that other people lost their positions for the same reason.¹⁴⁶

According to al-Kindī, al-Mutawakkil ordered his governor in Egypt to deal with the 'Alids according to the following rules:

- 1) No 'Alid could be given an estate or be allowed to ride a horse or to move from al-Fuṣṭāṭ to the other towns of the province.
- 2) No 'Alid was permitted to possess more than one slave.
- 3) If there was any conflict between an 'Alid and a non-'Alid, the judge must first hear the claim of the non-'Alid, and then accept it without negotiation with the 'Alid.¹⁴⁷

By these measures, al-Mutawakkil managed to prevent the Shī'ites from plotting against his regime, but he failed to end their underground activities. Reports indicate that al-Hādī continued his communications with his adherents secretly, receiving the *khums* and other taxes from his agents in Qumm and its districts.¹⁴⁸ According to al-Mas'ūdī, al-Mutawakkil was informed about this, and he also heard that in al-Hādī's house there were arms and letters from his supporters indicating a conspiracy against him. Therefore the house was searched by the caliph's soldiers, but they did not find any proof, and so al-Hādī was set free.¹⁴⁹

The suppression of the Imamites decreased after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, who was succeeded by his son al-Muntaṣir in 247/861. He was more tolerant toward them than his father. He issued an order to stop the campaign of arrests and the oppression of the 'Alids and their adherents, and permitted them to visit the tombs of al-Ḥusayn and the other Imams. He also gave the properties of Fadak back to them.¹⁵⁰ But this new attitude on the part of the caliph ceased with the succession of al-Musta'in in 248/862. According to al-Kindī, the Imamites in Egypt were persecuted by its governor, Yazīd b. 'Abd Allah al-Turkī, who arrested an 'Alid leader called Ibn Abī Hudra along with his followers. They were accused of carrying out underground activities and deported to Iraq in 248/862.¹⁵¹ Al-Kulaynī also states that the campaign of arrests and pursuits affected the followers of al-Hādī in Egypt. For example, Muḥammad b. Hajar was slain and the estate of Sayf b. al-Layth was seized by the ruler.¹⁵²

Meanwhile in Iraq some of the followers of al-Hādī in Sāmarrā were arrested,¹⁵³ and his main agent in Kufa, Ayyūb b. Nūh, was pursued by the *qāḍī* of the city.¹⁵⁴

It appears, however, that the ‘Abbāsīd oppression did not deter the Shī‘ite ambition to reach power. Many historians like al-Īsfahānī report that ‘Alid revolts broke out in 250-1/864-5 in the areas of Kufa, Ṭabaristān, Rayy, Qazwin, Egypt and Hijaz. These might have been directed by one group, or to be more accurate, by one leader. It is beyond the scope of this work to deal with the details of these revolts, but it is worth mentioning that the rebels employed the Prophetic traditions concerning *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* and the signs of his rising to achieve immediate political success. According to Ibn ‘Uqda, the leader of this uprising, Yahyā b. ‘Umar al-‘Alawī, was expected to be *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*, because all the signs and events predicted by the sixth Imam, al-Sādiq, regarding the rise of *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* occurred during the course of that revolution:

قال ابو عبد الله لا بد ان يخرج رجل من آل محمد
ولا بد ان يمسك الراية البيضاء . قال علي بن
الحسن : فاجتمع اهل بني رواس ، وكانوا
قد عقدوا عمامة بيضاء على قنطرة فامسكها
محمد بن معروف وقت خروج يحيى بن عمر
وقال ابو عبد الله في هذا الخبر: ويحذف فراتكم
فجف الفرات . وقال ايضا : يحونكم قوم
صغار الاعين فيخرجونكم من دوركم . وقال
علي بن الحسن : فجاءنا كنجر والاثراك فاخرجوا
الناس من دورهم . وقال ابو عبد الله ايضا :
وتجيئ السباع الى دوركم .

قال علي : فجاءت السباع الى دورنا . وقال
ابو عبد الله : وكأني بجنائزكم تحفر . قال
علي بن الحسن : فرأينا ذلك كله . وقال

ابو عبد الله: يخرج رجل اشقر ذو سبال ينهب
له كرسي على باب دار عمرو بن حريث،
يدعو الناس الى البراءة من علي بن ابي طالب
عليه السلام ويقتل خلقا من الخلق ويقتل
في يومه فرأينا ذلك كله .

This document indicates that the Imamites were expecting the establishment of their state by *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* in the near future. Despite the uprising's Zaydite facade, many pure Imamites participated. According to Ibn 'Uqda, the holder of the rebel standard in Mecca was Muḥammad b. Ma'rūf al-Hilālī (d. 250/864), who was among the eminent Imamites of the Hijaz.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the leader of the rebels in Kufa, Yahyā b. 'Umar, who was assassinated in 250/864, attracted the sympathy and praise of al-Hādī's agent, Abū Hāshim al-Ja'farī.¹⁵⁷

In addition al-Mas'ūdī reports that a certain 'Alī b. Mūsā b. Ismā'īl b. Mūsā al-Kāzim took part in the revolt in Rayy and was arrested by the caliph al-Mu'tazz. Since this man was the grandson of the Ismā'īl b. Mūsā al-Kāzim who had preached the Imamite doctrine in Egypt, it seems extremely probable that the revolt was essentially Imamite.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, al-Ṭabarī gives information concerning the underground activities of the Imamites and their role in this rebellion, which the authorities considered purely Zaydite rather than Imamite. He also reports that the 'Abbāsīd spies discovered correspondence between the leader of the rebels in Ṭabaristān, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, and the nephew of Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Khalf al-'Aṭṭār. Both of these men were adherents of the tenth Imam, al-Hādī.¹⁵⁹ This led the authorities to the conclusion that the Imamites had direct links with the rebels. So they arrested the leading Imamite personalities in Baghdad and deported them to Sāmarrā. Among them were Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-'Aṭṭār, Abū Hāshim al-Ja'farī,¹⁶⁰ and the two sons of al-Hādī, Ja'far and al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, later to be the eleventh Imam.¹⁶¹ One can link these 'Abbāsīd precautions to the sudden death of al-Hādī in Sāmarrā in 254/868, because the authorities believed him to be behind all these disturbances, and felt that his death would bring them to an end.¹⁶²

The cautious attitude of the authorities towards the Imamites continued during the short Imamate of the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (254-60/868-74). He was put under house-arrest and his movements were restricted, since he was obliged to present himself at the palace of the caliph in Sāmarrā every Monday and Thursday.¹⁶³ Despite these restrictions, al-‘Askarī managed to communicate with his agents by secret means.¹⁶⁴ It appears that the continuation of the rebellion of the ‘Alids, who extended their penetration into new areas, was behind the restriction of the Imam’s movements. According to al-Ṭūsī, the caliph al-Muhtadī arrested some Imamites in 255/869, accusing them of the assassination of ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad al-‘Abbāsī, who had been murdered by the rebels in Kufa. Al-‘Askarī was also arrested, but was set free soon after the death of the caliph, al-Muhtadī.¹⁶⁵ Despite the fact that the eleventh Imam managed to carry out his activities without the knowledge of the authorities until his death in 260/874,¹⁶⁶ the policy of house-arrest, which had been imposed upon the Imams by the caliph al-Ma’mūn and had been continued until the time of al-‘Askarī, seems to have led him to search for a method by which he could prevent ‘Abbāsīd surveillance being imposed on his son, the twelfth Imam, so that he could disguise his identity and carry on his activities in secret.¹⁶⁷

6. Conclusion

From the death of al-Ḥusayn onward, the Imams of the Shī‘a followed a more or less passive policy towards the ruling caliphs, but this did not indicate their acceptance of the rights of the Umayyads and then the ‘Abbāsids to the caliphate. Rather they believed that, since these families had come to power through natural means, their downfall would also be according to the will of Allāh, that He would indicate their imminent downfall to them and assist them in carrying out His will when the appropriate time had arrived. Towards this end they were always prepared to rise and take their rightful position, because any Imam could be ordained by Allāh as *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*. This can be noted in the statement of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib,

والمهدي يجعل الله من يشاء منا أهل البيت

“Allah will choose the Mahdī, whom He wants, from among us, the People of the House.”¹⁶⁸

Thus al-Šādiq, who was strong and capable of leading an uprising might have risen against the caliph if his followers had adhered to his instructions, but schisms appeared amongst their ranks and the Imam's aspirations came to naught. A considerable body among al-Šādiq's followers were not satisfied with his political methods, and cut themselves off from him in order to struggle for power without his interference. This was manifested in the emergence of the Zaydites and the Ismā'īlīs, who put forward a new interpretation of the traditions (*Ahādīth*) concerning *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and his rising and used it in their struggle for power. This can be seen in the Zaydite and Ismā'īlī revolts between the years 145-296/762-908, which ended with the establishment of an Ismā'īlī state and the installation of an Imam with the title *al-Mahdī*.

The Imams, however, denied the claim of any 'Alid who claimed that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* promised by the Prophet, but they sympathised with some 'Alid rebels who were loyal to them. This might encourage us to assume that the Imams had two methods designed to help them reach power. The first was the scholarly, cultural and religious activities which they fostered amongst the people without openly involving themselves in any political activities. Secondly, they secretly supported some Shī'ite rebels who were loyal to them, hoping that they would hand the power over to them after their success.

The military activities of the various Shī'ite groups confused the 'Abbāsids and led them to believe that the Imamite Imams were behind them or at least that the result of their intellectual activities would be militant action. Therefore the 'Abbāsīd authorities forced the Imams to reside in the capital from the year 202/817 under house-arrest. This policy was imposed upon the Imams al-Riḍā, al-Jawād, al-Hādī, and al-'Askarī, and led them to develop the underground system of their organisation (*al-Wikāla*) so that it could function under these difficult conditions. At the same time this critical situation forced the eleventh Imam, al-'Askarī, to search for a method by which he could prevent 'Abbāsīd surveillance being imposed upon his son, later to be the twelfth Imam, so as to enable him to disguise his identity and carry on his activities beyond the careful watch of the authorities.

CHAPTER III

THE IMAMITES' VIEWS CONCERNING THE CONCEALED IMAM AND HIS BIRTH

1. The Schisms Amongst the Adherents of al-Hasan al- ‘Askarī After His Death.

1.1 Introduction.

The Imamate during the life of the last six Imams of the Twelver Imamites (*al-Imamiyya al-Ithnā ashariyya*) was distinguished by the many splits which occurred after the death of each Imam, who was considered by the Imamites as one of the twelve Imams, over the recognition of his successor. In spite of these repeated schisms, after a hard struggle each Imam was able to maintain the obedience of the majority of the followers of the previous Imam.¹

Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Askarī was born in 232/845 and died in 260/874. According to some later Shī‘ite sources, he was poisoned through the instigation of the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mu‘tamīd.²

During the six years of his Imamate, al-‘Askarī lived in hiding and prudent fear because of the restrictions imposed upon him by his being surrounded by the spies of al-Mu‘tamīd. This was the reason for his lack of open contact with the mass of his followers. Only the elite of his adherents were able to communicate with him personally.³

The same sources report that in the year 260/874 the eleventh Imam became ill. As soon as news of his sickness reached al-Mu‘tamīd, he dispatched five of his special servants to al-‘Askarī’s house, ordering them to keep close watch on him. Thereafter the caliph sent physicians and the *Qādī al-Qudāt* in the company of ten men whom he considered trustworthy, to al-‘Askarī’s house to remain with him and observe his condition and the situation within

his home at all times. Al-‘Askarī’s malady became worse and he passed away on 8th Rabī‘ I 260/1st January 874.

Al-Mu‘tamid dispatched Abū ‘Īsā b. al-Mutawakkil to say the prayer for the dead over the body of al-‘Askarī. After this rite was completed al-‘Askarī was buried within the confines of his house in *Sirr Man Ra’ā* (Sāmarrā), next to his father.⁴

According to the early Imamite sources al-‘Askarī did not leave a publicly acknowledged son, nor did he determine upon or install his successor openly.⁵ As al-Mufīd says, the Imamites were suffering oppression at the hand of the ‘Abbāsids, while the caliph, al-Mu‘tamid, was searching for al-‘Askarī’s son and trying to arrest him by any means possible. Moreover, the views of the Imamite Shī‘a about him were being circulated, and it was becoming known that they were waiting for him to rise. For this reason al-‘Askarī had not revealed his son during his lifetime, not even to the greater portion of his own adherents.⁶

Because the Imamites were distinguished from other Islamic denominations by the principle of the designation of the Imam by his predecessor they seem to have found themselves in a critical situation after their Imam’s death, since he had not designated his successor openly. Therefore the Imamite jurists had recourse to the traditions of the Prophet and his progeny to determine who was to be the twelfth Imam. They found many traditions to support their various claims. Amongst them were transmissions which stated that an Imam could not die without seeing his offspring who would succeed him; that the world cannot be without a Proof;⁷ that the Imamate cannot pass to two brothers after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and that it will be occupied by one of the progeny of ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn;⁸ that the Imam knows who will succeed him and does not die until he gives his testament to his successor;⁹ and that the Imamate should belong to the eldest son of the preceding Imam.¹⁰ These traditions seem to have been adopted by the greater portion of the Imamites, and their interpretation of these traditions led to various viewpoints, which in turn led to new divisions amongst the Imamites.

Sa‘d al-Qummi counted fifteen schisms, whereas al-Nawbakhtī and al-Mufīd enumerated them as fourteen. Al-Mas‘ūdī thinks that there were twenty sects, while al-Shahrastānī counts only eleven.¹¹ Nevertheless a study of the claims of these factions reveals that there were apparently only five major schisms. However, each of these became further split over the theological and traditional arguments

employed to support their claims. At any rate it seems important to set down the major claims of these schisms in order to achieve a clear conception of the Imamites at that time.

1.2 Schism I: the *Wāqifa* at al-‘Askarī

What brought the people of this faction together was their claim that the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* although they differed as to how he became *al-Qā'im*.

i) The first faction of this schism deemed that al-‘Askarī had not died, but had gone into occultation.¹² They based their assumption on the traditions reported from the previous Imams, which said that an Imam could not die without having a publicly acknowledged son to succeed him, because the world cannot be without a Proof.¹³ While the people were not obliged to accept the Imamate of those who were now laying claim to it, they should acknowledge the Imamate of al-‘Askarī whose Imamate had been confirmed by the testament of the former Imam. They also maintained that they had a tradition which said that *al-Qā'im* had two occultations. Therefore, since al-‘Askarī had not left a publicly acknowledged son and since the earth cannot remain for an hour without a Proof, it was right to claim that he had not died but was hidden, and that he was truly *al-Qā'im*. This was his first occultation, after which he would rise again. Then, when his rising became known, he would conceal himself once more in his second occultation.¹⁴

In their discussions with their opponents, they tried to distinguish themselves from the Imamites who had stopped at the seventh Imam, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (183/799), claiming he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, by faulting them for stopping at al-Kāẓim. They pointed out that he had died and left his successor, ‘Alī al-Riḍā (202/817) as well as other sons, while al-‘Askarī had obviously passed away and left no heir.¹⁵

ii) The second faction of the *Wāqifa* at al-‘Askarī believed that he had died, but was then raised to life, and was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. Basically, the members of this faction established their doctrine on a transmission from Imam Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, who said that *al-Qā'im* was called *al-Qā'im* because he would “rise” again after his death. They stated that it was certain that al-‘Askarī had died without leaving a successor and without designating anyone as his legatee. Thus there was no doubt about his being *al-Qā'im*, nor about his being alive after

death, although he concealed himself for fear of his foes. They supported their theories with a saying of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, contained in his advice to his follower Kumayl b. Ziyad, “O Allah, indeed You do not leave the earth without a *Qā’im* with proof from You, whether manifest or hidden, for then Your proofs and Your signs would be invalidated.”¹⁶ On the basis of ‘Alī’s words they concluded that al-‘Askarī was absent and hidden, but that he would rise to fill the earth with peace and justice after it had been filled with tyranny.¹⁷

iii) *Al-Wāqifa al-lā Adriyya* also stopped at al-‘Askarī. They deemed that he had died and had been the Imam. Although the earth could not be without a Proof from Allah, they were not sure who had succeeded al-‘Askarī, his son or his brother. Therefore they stopped at the Imamate of al-‘Askarī, and decided to make no decision until the matter became clear to them.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the contemporary sources do not mention anyone as representing the three factions of *al-Wāqifa* at al-‘Askarī. However, from the doctrine of the first faction of the *Wāqifa*, it seems that its partisans lived in places which were far from Sāmarrā, the city of the Imam. Since they were not present at the moment of his death, they tended to believe that he had not in fact died, but was *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*.

1.3 Schism II: The Ja‘farites

The representatives of this schism claimed that the Imam after al-‘Askarī was his youngest brother, Ja‘far, but they differed as to how the Imamate had passed on to him, and therefore split into four factions.

i) The first faction believed that al-‘Askarī had died and that he had held the Imamate by the testament of his father. Since the Imamate can only pass to the eldest living son of the former Imam, the Imamate passed from ‘Alī al-Hādī not to his eldest son Muḥammad, who had died before him, but to al-‘Askarī, who was the elder of the two sons who had outlived their father.¹⁹

This faction believed that al-‘Askarī had not left a publicly acknowledged son to take over the Imamate and, therefore, his sole remaining brother, Ja‘far, was the Imam. In order to support their dogma they were obliged to repeat the Faṭḥiyya’s²⁰ arguments about the Imamate. The latter claimed that Mūsā al-Kāẓim received the

Imamate, not from his father Ja‘far al-Šādiq, but from his eldest brother ‘Abd Allah, according to the tradition which says that the Imamate passes on to the eldest son of the Imam when he dies. Like the Faṭḥiyya, this faction of the Ja‘farites accepted the authenticity of the tradition which says that the Imamate will not fall to two brothers after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. But they maintained that this could only be applied if al-‘Askarī had left a son. Since al-‘Askarī had passed away without leaving a publicly acknowledged successor, his brother Ja‘far was the designated Imam²¹ and the Imamate would pass on in his offspring. They also recognised ‘Abd Allah b. Ja‘far al-Šādiq as the seventh Imam. Consequently Ja‘far was thirteenth in the chain of Imams.

ii) The second faction of the Ja‘farites contended that the eleventh Imam had himself designated Ja‘far as his successor according to the principle of *al-Badā’*.²² The same thing had happened in the case of Ismā‘īl, the eldest son of Imam Ja‘far al-Šādiq. God had clarified His ultimate decision concerning him by taking away his soul and placing his brothers ‘Abd Allah and Mūsā consecutively in the Imamate instead. Similarly, in the case of Ja‘far b. ‘Alī, God had entrusted al-‘Askarī with the Imamate, but thereafter He had made it clear that the Imamate should not pass on in the progeny of al-‘Askarī. Therefore He transferred it to his brother Ja‘far, who was the Imam after al-‘Askarī’s death. Like the previous factions, this faction used the argument and dogma of the Faṭḥiyya to support their viewpoint.

This sect was probably more popular than the first among the theologians, especially in Kufa. Its leader was a Kufī theologian called ‘Alī b. Ṭaḥī or al-Ṭalḥī al-Khazzāz, who had been famous amongst the surviving members of the Faṭḥiyya for his skill in theological discussions. He upheld Ja‘far’s Imamate and encouraged people to take his side. He was supported in his propaganda by the sister of Fāris b. Ḥātim b. Māhawiyya al-Qazwīnī, although she rejected the Imamate of al-‘Askarī and claimed that the Imamate had been transferred to Ja‘far from his father, ‘Alī al-Hādī.²³ She may have had this claim because her brother, Fāris b. Ḥātim, was killed on the order of al-‘Askarī.²⁴ It is also possible that the Kufan scholastic family Banū Faḍḍāl, who were active supporters of the Faṭḥiyya, adopted the doctrine of this faction, especially Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Faḍḍāl, who died in 260/874, and his brother ‘Alī.

iii) The members of this faction claimed that the Imamate had passed on to Jaʿfar through the designation of his father. They based their doctrine on a tradition attributed to Jaʿfar al-Šādiq, which states that the Imamate cannot be held by two brothers after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.²⁵ Since Muḥammad, the eldest son of ʿAlī al-Hādī, died during the lifetime of his father, and since the Imamate should belong to those who survive the death of their father, it had not been transferred to Muḥammad. They may have accepted the Imamate of al-ʿAskarī because he was the eldest son after the death of his father, but they rejected his Imamate after his death, because he had passed away without leaving a publicly acknowledged son as his successor. It was a matter of course to them, they said, that the Imam could not die without leaving a publicly acknowledged and well-known successor, designated by him and entrusted with the Imamate. Therefore the claim of al-ʿAskarī to the Imamate must be invalid. So it was inevitable that the Imam was Jaʿfar, by the designation of his father.²⁶

It is worth mentioning that this faction existed within the lifetime of al-ʿAskarī. When the tenth Imam died in 254/868 the majority of his followers accepted the Imamate of his eldest surviving son, al-ʿAskarī, as confirmed by the testament of his father, but a minority took Jaʿfar's side.²⁷ He became more powerful after al-ʿAskarī's death, since some of al-ʿAskarī's adherents abandoned his Imamate and accepted that of Jaʿfar. A leading scholar of this faction was ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Bashshār, who wrote a book on the *Ghayba* and disputed fiercely with his opponents.²⁸ There is some evidence that this faction achieved a certain degree of success by persuading a few of the people who had accepted al-ʿAskarī's Imamate to join their side. Al-Šadūq and al-Majlisī report a letter attributed to the twelfth Imam, and sent to his agent, ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿUmarī. This letter reveals that an adherent of this faction argued with a Twelver called al-Mukhtār, and succeeded in making him accept the Imamate of Jaʿfar.²⁹ The sister of Fāris b. Ḥātim, who was mentioned above, was one of the partisans of this group.

iv) The followers of this faction were called al-Nafisiyya. They believed that the tenth Imam had designated his eldest son Muḥammad as his legatee. Then, according to the principle of *Badāʾ*, Allah took away his life while his father was still alive. But when Muhammad b. ʿAlī passed away, by the order of his father, he designated his brother Jaʿfar as his successor. He entrusted his

testament, the books, the secret knowledge and the weapons needed by the community to his trustworthy young slave called Nafīs. And he ordered him to hand them over to his brother Ja‘far when his father died. However, when Muḥammad died, the adherents of al-‘Askarī discovered the secret arrangement and the role of Nafīs. Since Nafīs was afraid of them and feared that the Imamate might be cut short, he called Ja‘far and handed over the trust of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Hādī. Ja‘far himself claimed that the Imamate had been passed to him from his brother, Muḥammad.³⁰ The members of this faction denied the testament of al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, because his father, they claimed, had neither designated him nor changed his testament from Muḥammad. Nafīs was killed by being drowned in a well.³¹

1.4 Schism III: The Muḥammadiyya

This sect denied the Imamate of Ja‘far and al-‘Askarī and considered Muḥammad, who had died in the lifetime of his father, as their Imam. They argued that ‘Alī al-Hādī, the tenth Imam, had neither designated nor indicated either al-‘Askarī or Ja‘far as his legatee. Therefore neither of them had any right to make claims upon the Imamate. Since the Imam could not die without leaving a successor, and since al-‘Askarī had passed away and not left a publicly acknowledged or well-known son, his Imamate was invalidated. Ja‘far, they added, was not worthy of putting forward a claim because his immorality and sinfulness were infamous. His wicked character could not be prudent fear (*Taqiyya*) in the face of his enemies, for *Taqiyya* cannot be practiced by committing sins.

They concluded that since it was forbidden for the Imamate to be nullified, they were obliged to return to the Imamate of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, since he had left offspring and his acts were distinguished by probity and virtue.³² Others of them even considered him as *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*³³ and some of them went as far as to deny his death.³⁴

1.5 Schism IV: The Qaṭ‘iyya

This faction constituted the greater portion of the Imamites. They believed that al-‘Askarī had died and left a son to succeed him, but they differed about the day of his birth, his name, and whether or not he was *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*. For this reason they split into six groups:

i) The first group maintained that al-‘Askarī had died and left a son called Muḥammad. According to Sa‘d al-Qummi, they held that his son had come of age, while, according to al-Nawbakhti and al-Shahrastani, they believed that he had been born two years before his father’s death. He was the Imam because his father had designated him so, and because it was well-known that al-‘Askarī had left no other son. So inevitably he was the Imam and *al-Qā’im*. But due to fear of his uncle, Jā‘far, he went into concealment and this became one of his occultations. This group built their doctrine on a tradition attributed to Jā‘far al-Ṣādiq, which says that *al-Qā’im*’s date of birth is hidden from the people, information concerning him is obscure, and the people cannot know him.³⁵ Unfortunately little is known about this faction, but al-Ṣadūq, while trying to prove the birth of the twelfth Imam, mentions traditions which are presumably attributed to this faction’s adherents. One of these was called Ya‘qūb b. Manfūsh, who claimed that he had visited al-‘Askarī and asked him about his successor. Al-‘Askarī showed him his son, who was between eight and ten years old, indicating that his son would succeed him. Another was called Ḍaw’ b. ‘Alī al-‘Ijlī, who maintained that he had met al-‘Askarī in his house where he saw his son, who was then two years old.³⁶

ii) The members of this group held the same dogma as the previous faction. They agreed with them on the death of al-‘Askarī, but they thought that he had left a successor whose name was not Muḥammad but ‘Alī. They said that al-‘Askarī had no son except ‘Alī, who had been seen by his father’s trustworthy followers. According to Sa‘d al-Qummi this sect had few adherents and they were concentrated within the suburbs of the Sawād of Kufa.³⁷

iii) This sect held that the Imam after al-‘Askarī was his son, who had been born eight months after his father’s death and had then gone into concealment. They argued that those who claimed that a son was born to him during his lifetime were making false statements, because al-‘Askarī had died without leaving a publicly acknowledged son. But the pregnancy had been known to the caliph as well as other people, and for this reason the caliph delayed dividing his share in the state until the pregnancy was proved invalid. In fact, they said, the son was born eight months after the death of his father and was hidden, and his father had ordered that he be called Muḥammad. They based their doctrine on a tradition attributed to the eighth Imam, ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, which says, “You would test the foetus

which is within the womb of his mother, and the suckling child.”³⁸

iv) The partisans of this faction held that al-‘Askarī had no sons at all. The arguments about a hidden son, who was born during the lifetime of al-‘Askarī, were rejected by them, because they had searched for him during the life of the eleventh Imam using various means, but had failed to find him. But since the Imam cannot die without leaving an heir, they claimed that a slave girl had conceived a child belonging to al-‘Askarī, and that when she gave birth to him he would be the Imam, even if, as they are reported to have said by al-Mufīd, the pregnancy should last a hundred years. They established their doctrine on a tradition of al-Ṣādiq, which states that *al-Qā’im* is he whose conception and date of birth are hidden from the people.³⁹

v) This faction held that the Imam after al-‘Askarī was his son Muḥammad, who was the Awaited One (*al-Muntaẓar*). They claimed that he had died but would rise to life with the sword to fill the earth with peace and justice after it had been filled with tyranny and injustice.⁴⁰

This group is mentioned neither by Sa‘d al-Qummī nor by al-Nawbakhtī. Presumably the latter dealt with it but this discussion was later dropped from his work, since al-Mufīd who based his information on al-Nawbakhtī’s work, mentions this group in *al-Uyūn wa-l-Mahāsin*.⁴¹

vi) This group, entitled the *Imāmiyya* by Sa‘d al-Qummī and al-Nawbakhtī, held that al-‘Askarī had died and that inevitably Allah’s *Hujja* on earth was his son. He was his sole successor and legatee, charged with the affairs of the Imamate after him in accordance with the method laid down by previous tradition. Thus the Imamate should pass on to his offspring until the Day of Resurrection, but he was absent and hidden by an order. It was prohibited to seek him out before he chose to manifest himself, because his adherents would endanger his life and their own if they looked for him. In spite of his occultation a few reliable followers could contact him.⁴² He was born on 15th Sha‘bān 256/29th July 868.⁴³

Basically this group directed their arguments against those factions which supported the Imamate of Muḥammad and Ja‘far. With the partisans of Muḥammad they argued that the Imamate could be held neither by the descendants of Muḥammad, who had died during his father’s lifetime, nor by his legatee, such as his brother or someone else, because there was no evidence or proof for accepting the Imamate of a son who had died before his father. Perhaps this

argument was also directed against the Nafīsiyya.

Presumably with the Ja'farites they argued that the Imamate could not pass from brother to brother after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and that the Imamate should fall to the eldest son of the preceding Imam. The eleventh Imam al-ʿAskarī, was designated by the testament of his father, so the Imamate had to pass to his offspring.⁴⁴ They also said that it was improper for the faithful to select an Imam for themselves. Allah had to choose him and to manifest him at the proper time.⁴⁵

This faction constituted the majority of the Imamites who had accepted the Imamate of al-ʿAskarī, such as Abū Sahl Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Nawbakhtī, al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, Saʿd b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī (the author of *Kitāb al-Maqālāt wa-l-Firaq*), ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿUmarī and his son Muhammad.⁴⁶

1.6 Schism V: The Cessation of the Imamate

This group held that from the moment al-ʿAskarī died there was no longer an Imam. Al-Nawbakhtī, al-Mufīd and al-Shahristanī considered this group as one faction, whereas Saʿd al-Qummī was presumably more accurate when he divided it into two,⁴⁷ since the partisans of this schism agreed on the death of al-ʿAskarī and the cessation of the Imamate, while they differed on the dogma of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* as follows:

i) The first group deemed that it had been confirmed by successive transmission that al-ʿAskarī would die without leaving a successor. For this reason there was no Imam after al-ʿAskarī and the Imamate ceased. This, they contended, was reasonable and permitted. Since the cessation of the prophecy after Muḥammad was possible, the cessation of the Imamate was also possible. They established their doctrine on a transmission attributed to the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, which states that the earth cannot be without a Proof unless Allah becomes angry at the sins of His creatures and retains him from them for as long as He wills. This group did not believe in the rising of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.⁴⁸

ii) The people of the second group held the same doctrine as the previous faction, but they separated from them over the dogma of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. They said that since al-ʿAskarī had passed away without leaving a successor, the Imamate had ceased until Allah raised the *Qā'im* from among the Imams who had died, such as al-

Hasan al-‘Askarī, or from among any of his descendants. Furthermore the rising of *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* was inevitable because this was confirmed by successive tradition. They considered the period after the death of al-‘Askarī and the rise of *al-Qā’im* as an interval of time devoid of prophecy and Imamate, like the period between Jesus and Muḥammad.⁴⁹

There is some evidence that many people from various countries doubted the existence of the twelfth Imam, such as Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Mahzayar al-Ahwāzī from al-Ahwāz,⁵⁰ and many of the persons from Banū Ṭālib in Medina who had been agents of the eleventh Imam.⁵¹

1.7 Conclusion

This historical and theological survey suggests that on the death of al-‘Askarī, the Imamites fell into problems similar to those which had beset them after the death of the seventh Imam, Mūsā al-Kāzim. They split into *al-Wāqifa*, Muḥammadiyya, Ja‘fariyya and Qat‘iyya. Possibly the causes of this split were as follows:

i) Although the bulk of the Imamites accepted the Imamate of al-‘Askarī, they retained their cultural and sectarian backgrounds. For example, al-‘Askarī himself had allowed his adherents to accept the traditions related by the Banū Faḍḍal, who belong to the *Wāqifa* Mūsā al-Kāzim, but had urged them to reject their doctrine. The influence exerted by these cultural ties can be noted in the traditional arguments held by the Imamites after the death of al-‘Askarī, arguments which led to the rise of the *Wāqifa* at al-‘Askarī and the encouragement of the Ja‘farites.

ii) Despite its developed system the Imamite organization (*al-Wikāla*) did not widely disseminate the testament of Imam al-‘Askarī concerning his successor amongst the populace and the lower missionaries. The organization may have acted in this way because of the tense political situation. Thus no successor was openly indicated by al-‘Askarī, nor was any well-known to the general mass of the Imamites. For this reason the Imamites who knew nothing about al-‘Askarī’s testament had recourse to the traditions adopted by the majority of the Imamites to determine who was to be the twelfth Imam. The interpretation of these traditions led to various different points of view which, in turn, led to new sub-divisions amongst the Qat‘iyya and the Muḥammadiyya.

iii) The third cause contributing to these divisions was the personal ambition of al-‘Askarī’s brother, Ja‘far, who claimed the Imamate during the lifetime of al-‘Askarī. Ja‘far became more powerful after the death of his brother, because he was encouraged by the Faṭḥiyya, in order to vindicate their doctrine, and especially by Banū Faddāl in Kufa. However Ja‘far’s success did not continue, because his followers differed as to how he gained the Imamate, and because their arguments in the field of traditions were weaker than those of the Qat‘iyya.

Thus, as al-Mufīd and al-Ṭūsī state, all these divisions and splits gradually vanished, except for the Qat‘iyya, who became the Twelvers in the fourth/tenth century.⁵²

2. The question of the birth of the twelfth Imam

The possibility that the twelfth Imam was born and his birth was kept hidden is supported by a number of narrations. The fact that there were already narrations about the twelfth Imam as *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* gave rise to other narrations which can only be described as hagiographical. But from the time of al-Ṣadūq onwards, even these were accepted by the Imamites as historical facts. Nevertheless, other early narrations present his birth as a purely historical fact without the embellishment of miraculous reports.

2.1 The Origin of the Mother of the twelfth Imam

The earliest Imamite scholar to give an account of the twelfth Imam’s mother is al-Mas‘ūdī. He reports that she was a slave-girl called Narjis.⁵³ Al-Shahīd (d. 786/1384) states that her name was Maryam b. Zayd al-‘Alawīyya,⁵⁴ and other reports give her name as Rayḥāna, Ṣaḳīl and Sawsan.⁵⁵ It is possible that her name was in fact Narjis and the other names, except Ṣaḳīl, were given to her by her owner Ḥakīma bint Muḥammad al-Jawād. People at that time used to call their slave-girls by different names as a form of flattery, and Narjis, Rayḥāna and Sawsan are all names of flowers.

The earliest report concerning the nationality of the twelfth Imam’s mother goes back to the year 286/899. This was written down for the first time by al-Ṣadūq, on the authority of Muḥammad b. Baḥr al-Shaybānī, who attributed his narration to Bishr b. Sulaymān al-

Nakhhās. According to this report she was a Christian from Byzantium who had been captured by Islamic troops. She was sold as a slave and bought by al-Nakhhās in the slave-market in Baghdad. Al-Nakhhās sent her to the tenth Imam, ‘Alī al-Hādī, in Sāmarrā. After this, however, the narration begins to lose much of its credibility and becomes hagiographical. It is related that she was Malīka b. Yashshū’, the granddaughter of the Emperor of Byzantium, whose mother was a descendant of Simon (Sham’ūn) the disciple of Jesus. When Malīka was in her grandfather’s palace, she dreamt that she saw Jesus’s mother, Mary, and Muḥammad’s daughter, Fāṭima. In this dream Fāṭima converts her to Islam and persuades her to allow herself to be captured by Islamic troops.⁵⁶

The authenticity of this narration is questionable in many aspects, the most doubtful points being found in the last part.

Firstly there was no major battle between the ‘Abbāsids and the Byzantines after 242/856⁵⁷ and there is no indication in the sources that the Emperor of Byzantium appealed to the ‘Abbāsids to liberate his granddaughter.

Secondly, the early Imamite authors, particularly al-Qummī, al-Nawbakhtī, al-Kulaynī and al-Mas‘ūdī, who were contemporaries of al-Shaybānī, the narrator of this report, do not refer to it in their works. In addition, al-Kashshī, who was a companion of al-Shaybānī, and the later scholars al-Najāshī and Ibn Dāwūd claim that he was an extremist.⁵⁸

Thirdly, al-Kulaynī states that *al-Qā’im’s* mother was a slave-girl from al-Nawba, the northern province of Sudān.⁵⁹ Moreover al-Nu‘mānī and al-Ṣadūq related other narrations which indicate that *al-Qā’im’s* mother was to be a black slave-girl.⁶⁰ It may be that the later Imamites ignored these transmissions and considered the narration of al-Shaybānī as authentic because the latter makes *al-Qā’im’s* mother of noble ancestry and high social status. They would have been particularly attracted by the connection the report establishes between the twelfth Imam, *al-Qā’im*, and Jesus, since prophetic traditions state that the two of them will rise together to rid the world of tyranny.⁶¹

In the light of these three points the narration of Muḥammad b. Baḥr al-Shaybānī can be rejected despite the fact that al-Ṭūsī and Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī consider it reliable.⁶² Possibly the correct account of the origin of *al-Qā’im’s* mother is given by al-Mufīd, who states that she was a slave-girl brought up in the house of Ḥakīma, the sister

of the tenth Imam. According to his report the Imam saw her one day and predicted that she would give birth to someone with special Divine blessing.⁶³ According to al-Ṣadūq she died before the death of her husband, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, in 260/874.⁶⁴ But al-Najāshī's report indicates that she was alive after this year hiding at the house of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ḥamza, one of the close associates of her husband al-ʿAskarī.⁶⁵

2.2 The birth of the Twelfth Imam

Since the eleventh Imam died without leaving an obvious son, most of his followers, who held that he had in fact left a successor, based their belief on traditions attributed to the preceding Imams concerning *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and his occultation.⁶⁶ The following statements, some of which we have already had occasion to relate, are examples of these traditions: The world cannot be void of a Proof, either manifest and well-known, or hidden because of fear.⁶⁷ The Imamate cannot be vested to two brothers after al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.⁶⁸ According to al-Ṣādiq, the "Master of the Command" (*Ṣāhib al-Amr*) will have two occultations. One of them will be so prolonged that some will say that he has died and others will say that he has been killed, and finally only a few of his followers will remain faithful to his Imamate. No one will become cognizant of his whereabouts and his affairs except his intimate partisans, who will look after his affairs.⁶⁹ It is worth mentioning that this last tradition had also been recorded before the death of al-ʿAskarī in 260/874 by the Sevens Imamites, the *Wāqifa* who had applied these traditions to the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim.⁷⁰

Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī reports that al-ʿAskarī had intimate partisans who used to narrate traditions concerning Islamic law on his authority and were his deputies. When al-ʿAskarī died in 260/874 all of them agreed that he had left a son who was the Imam. Al-Nawbakhtī adds that they forbade their adherents to ask about his name or to reveal his existence to his foes, who were at that time trying to arrest him.⁷¹ The ʿAbbāsids' political pressure, which forced al-ʿAskarī to hide the birth of his son from the ordinary Imamites, may also have led the twelfth Imam to transmit different reports concerning the date of his birth, some of which took on a hagiographical form.

Most of the Imamite sources agree that al-‘Askarī’s son was born on Friday, the 15th of Sha‘bān,⁷² but they differ about the year of his birth. Al-Qummī gives an account of a group of Imamites who held that al-‘Askarī had died and left a son called Muḥammad, who had already come of age when his father died.⁷³ But they did not fix the year of his birth. Perhaps this group based their belief in the existence of al-‘Askarī’s son mainly upon the tradition which says that the earth cannot be void of a Proof. Unfortunately al-Qummī does not report any witnesses to the birth of the Imam from this group to support their opinion.

Al-Kulaynī, al-Mufīd and al-Ṭūsī mention four different viewpoints concerning the date of the twelfth Imam’s birth. The first was related by ‘Allān al-Razī and al-Kulaynī on the authority of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, who states that the twelfth Imam was born in 255/868.⁷⁴ Al-Ṭūsī reports two narrations attributed to Ḥakīma bint al-Jawād which support this date.⁷⁵

The second report states that he was born in 258/871. This report is attributed by Ḍaw‘ b. ‘Alī al-‘Ijlī to an anonymous Persian who related that in the year 260/873 he had come to Sāmarrā from Persia to serve in the house of al-‘Askarī. According to the Persian one of al-‘Askarī’s slave-girls had given birth and he saw the child in the arms of another slave-girl. He estimated his age at about two years.⁷⁶ Another transmission, on the authority of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Bilāl, relates that al-‘Askarī informed him twice about his successor: once in 258/871, then three days before his death in 260/874.⁷⁷ The narration attributed to Ḍaw‘ does not mention explicitly the date of the Imam’s birth nor the time when the narrator gave his estimation, whether it was before or after the death of al-‘Askarī. Regarding the narration of Ibn Bilāl, although al-‘Askarī informed him about the existence of his successor in 258/871, this does not indicate or reveal that the birth of his son occurred in that year. In fact it leads us to think that the birth occurred before 258/871.

The third viewpoint was that of a group of Imamites who thought that al-‘Askarī’s son had been born after his father’s death in 261/874. They claimed that a slave-girl had conceived a child belonging to al-‘Askarī, and that her pregnancy had been known to the caliph as well as to other people. Thus the authorities delayed the division of his share of the estate until the pregnancy was proved invalid to the caliph. They contended that the Imam was born eight months after his father’s death, and was then hidden. Al-‘Askarī had

commanded that he be named Muḥammad.⁷⁸ From the historical viewpoint, the account given by this group is completely unconvincing and in itself does not encourage one to believe that al-‘Askarī had left a successor. Firstly, al-‘Askarī’s slave-girl, Ṣaḡīl, who had claimed that she was pregnant by her master, was detained by the ‘Abbāsīd authorities for two years until the pregnancy was proved invalid.⁷⁹ Secondly, al-Kulaynī reports that Abū Hāshim al-Ja‘farī⁸⁰ once asked the eleventh Imam,

“O master, do you have a son?” He replied, “Yes.” Abū Hāshim said, “If something should happen to you, where should I ask for him?” The Imam said, “In Medina.”⁸¹

It is well-known that al-‘Askarī died in 260/874 and that Abū Hāshim died the following year. Therefore this narration would suggest that the birth occurred before 260/874. Thirdly, al-Mas‘ūdī reports that the twelfth Imam was born two years after the death of his grandfather, al-Hādī.⁸² As the latter died in 254/869,⁸³ the birth would have occurred in 256/870.

Al-Mas‘ūdī’s narration adds weight to the fourth viewpoint, which places the birth of the twelfth Imam in 256/870. The Imamite sources record many narrations in favour of this date.⁸⁴ The most important one, however, is mentioned on the authority of Mu‘allā b. Muḥammad and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allah, who related that al-‘Askarī issued a letter to his reliable followers after the assassination of al-Muhtadī, the caliph, saying,

“This is the punishment of him who has sinned against Allah, the Exalted, in regard to his legatees. He thought that he would kill me without offspring. Now he has seen the omnipotence of Allah, the Exalted.”

The narration continues to report that in fact the Imam had a son called Muḥammad, who was born in 256/870.⁸⁵

Al-Muhtadī was dethroned and died in Rajab 256/870.⁸⁶ Moreover all the Imamite narrators agree that the birth of the twelfth Imam occurred on the 15th of Sha‘bān. So if one links the death of al-Muhtadī in the month of Rajab with the letter of al-‘Askarī which was issued in the next month, Sha‘bān, it would seem plausible that the Imam’s birth occurred on the 15th of Sha‘bān in 256/870. Furthermore al-Mas‘ūdī reports an anecdote attributed to Khadīja

bint Muḥammad al-Jawād to support such a hypothesis. In 262/875 a certain man called Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm asked her about al-‘Askarī’s successor, and she confirmed his existence, adding that he had taken over the Imamate on 11th Rabi‘ I 260/874 at the age of four years and seven months,⁸⁷ which means that he was born on 15th Sha‘bān 256/18th July 870.

It is worth quoting here a narration concerning the birth of the twelfth Imam which was viewed as authentic by the time of al-Mas‘ūdī, who died in 345/956. Al-Ṣadūq presented it as follows and attributed it to Ḥakīma bint al-Jawād, who related,

“ Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, peace be upon both of them, called on me with the message, ‘O aunt, break your fast at our house tonight, because it is the fifteenth of Sha‘bān. Tonight Allah, the Exalted, will manifest the *Hujja*, His Proof on earth.’ (When I went to the house), I asked him who the mother of the child was. He said, ‘Narjis.’ I said, ‘May Allah make me your sacrifice! But there is no sign of pregnancy in her!’ He said, ‘What I am telling you is so.’ Therefore I went in and greeted them. When I had taken my seat Narjis came forward to take off my shoes and said to me, ‘My mistress and the lady of my family, how are you tonight?’ I said, ‘Nay you are the mistress of myself and my family.’ But she denied my speech and replied, ‘What are you saying, O aunt?’ I said to her, ‘O my daughter, tonight Allah the Exalted will give you a son who shall be the Master in this world and in the hereafter’ She became embarrassed and blushed.

“After I had finished my evening prayer I broke my fast and then went to sleep. At midnight I woke for prayer. I performed my prayer while Narjis was sleeping, without any sign of childbirth. Then I sat down performing the supererogatory prayer. Thereafter I went to bed and got up again, but she was still sleeping. Then she got up, performed her supererogatory prayer and lay down again.”

Ḥakīma continued, “I went out to see the dawn and found that its first stage was about to appear. But she was still asleep. So I began to doubt al-‘Askarī’s expectation. Just then he called out from his place, ‘Do not be in a hurry, O aunt, the matter is approaching.’ I sat down and recited the Qur’anic suras *Hā Mīm al-Sajda* (XL) and *Yāsīn* (XXXVI). At that moment she

got up alarmed. I ran to her and said, 'The name of Allah be upon you, do you feel anything?' She replied, 'O aunt, yes.' Then I said to her 'Gather yourself and procure peace in your heart.' However at that moment we felt sleepy and drowsiness overcame us. After that I got up at the voice of my Master, and when I raised the covering from him I saw him, peace be upon him, prostrate on the ground.⁸⁸ I took him to my bosom and noticed that he was pure and clean.

Abū Muḥammad called out to me and said, 'O aunt, bring my son to me,' and I did so. . . Afterwards al-ʿAskarī put his tongue in his mouth and gently stroked his eyes, ears and joints with his hand. Then he said, 'O my son, speak.' The child replied, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, He is unique and has no partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Prophet of Allah.' Then he sent his greetings upon the commander of the faithful (*Amir al-Mu'minīn*), and upon the Imams respectively until he stopped at the name of his father. Then he stopped speaking.

"Abū Muḥammad said, 'O aunt, take him to his mother, so that he may greet her, and then bring him back to me.' I took him to her and when he had done so I brought him back and left him there. Al- Askarī said to me, 'O aunt, come to visit us on the seventh day.' The next day I came to greet Abū Muḥammad and raised the curtain to see my Master. But I did not see him. So I asked the Imam, 'May Allah make me your sacrifice! What has happened to my Master?' He replied, 'O aunt, we have entrusted him to the one to whom the mother of Moses entrusted her son.' "

Ḥakīma said, "On the seventh day I came and greeted him and took my seat. Abū Muḥammad said, 'Bring my son to me.' I brought him wrapped in a piece of cloth, and the Imam repeated what he had done on the first day and the child said what he had said before. Then he recited the Qur'anic verse⁸⁹ *And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them Imams and to make them the inheritors. And to establish them in the earth, and to show Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts that which they feared from them.*"⁹⁰

The hagiographical nature of this account is obvious. However, certain of its elements suggest something about the nature of the

birth. It seems that the pregnancy of Narjis was deliberately concealed, and a close relative was brought in to act as midwife only when the birth was due. If this was the case and a son was indeed born to al-‘Askarī – the likeliest date being 256/870 – then the reasons for the concealment of the pregnancy and the birth would be the same as the reasons for the Imam’s occultation.

3. The Reasons for the First Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

The early Imamite works mention three reasons for the occultation of the twelfth Imam, reasons which mirror the new tactics of the Imams in their religious and political activities.

Al-Ṣādiq was reported to have said that *al-Qā’im* would go into occultation before he rose again, because he would be afraid of being killed.⁹¹ A second reason is mentioned on the authority of the twelfth Imam, who was reported as having informed his partisan Ishāq b. Ya‘qūb that all his forefathers had paid the oath of obedience to oppressive rulers, but that he had hidden himself in order to rise in arms, and had made no oath of obedience to any oppressive ruler.⁹² This reason had already been mentioned by al-Ḥasan and al-Riḍā, who both said that *al-Qā’im* alone would not swear fealty to an oppressive ruler.⁹³ The third reason is mentioned by al-Kulaynī, who states that the occultation was a test set by Allah for his creatures, so as to see who would remain steadfast in acknowledging the Imamate of the twelfth Imam.⁹⁴

These three reasons depict a new phase in the attitude of the Imamites toward their struggle for power. It appears that the quiescent policy of the Imams towards the ‘Abbāsīd regime, along with their continued intellectual activities, had led the Imamite organization to a more politically developed situation. This fact encouraged the twelfth Imam to instigate underground political activities against the ‘Abbāsīds. At the same time, he knew that certain followers of his forefathers had caused the failure of two bids for power in 70/689 and 140/757 by revealing the activities of the Imams to their enemies, which led to their arrest and the failure of their attempt.⁹⁵ Perhaps such incidents obliged the twelfth Imam to live in a state of concealment even from his own followers so as to practice his underground activities through the Imamite organization

and to evade any ‘Abbāsīd bid to arrest him. This is indicated by many traditions commanding the Imamites to keep the name of *al-Qā’im* a secret.⁹⁶ Al-Kulaynī reports that, after the death of al-‘Askarī in 260/874, some people among his adherents asked the agent (*wakīl*), Abū ‘Abd Allah al-Ṣāliḥī, to ask about the name and residence of the twelfth Imam for them. When he did so, the answer was,

“If you reveal the name to them, they will reveal it in public; and if they realize the place of his residence they will lead foes to it.”⁹⁷

Al-Kulaynī mentions another report which asserts that the occultation of the twelfth Imam was a preparatory step for the overthrow of the state of injustice.⁹⁸ It is relevant to study the plan of al-‘Askarī to hide his son and the ‘Abbāsīd attitude towards the Imamites after the death of al-‘Askarī so as to see why the later felt it necessary to hide his son.

4. Al-‘Askarī’s Plan to Hide his Successor

The circumstances which accompanied the birth of al-‘Askarī’s son suggest that al-‘Askarī wanted to save his successor from the restrictive policy of the ‘Abbāsīds, which had been established by al-Ma’mūn. Hence he did not circulate in public the news concerning the birth of his son, but only disclosed it to a few reliable followers, such as Abū Hāshim al-Ja’farī, Aḥmad b. Ishāq, and Ḥakīma and Khadīja, the aunts of al-‘Askarī.⁹⁹ Moreover he decided to move his son to a place safer than Sāmarrā so that he could carry on his religious and political activities through the *Wikāla* without suffering the interference of the ‘Abbāsīds.

Study of the hagiographical and historical anecdotes concerning the first occultation of the Imam and his reappearance reveals that al-‘Askarī hid his son first in Sāmarrā and then in Medina, where he lived under the guardianship of his paternal grandmother. According to al-Ṣadūq, al-‘Askarī sent his son to an unknown place forty days after his birth, and then his son was brought back to his mother.¹⁰⁰ According to al-Mas‘ūdī, three years later, in the year 259/873, al-‘Askarī asked his own mother, Ḥadīth to go on the pilgrimage. He explained his critical position to her, gave her full instructions, and sent his son with her. His son had already received from his father the

signs of the Imamate, the most esteemed name of Allah, the inheritance and the weapon. Thereafter Ḥadīth and her grandson went to Mecca under the protection of a close friend called Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Muṭṭahir.¹⁰¹ It appears that after they had performed the rite of pilgrimage they went to Medina, which was used as the place of concealment for the twelfth Imam.

Many reports incline one to accept the above description of the twelfth Imam's early life. As we have seen, Abū Hāshim al-Ja'fari once asked al-ʿAskari where he should ask for his successor were he to die. Al-ʿAskari said, "In Medina." Another report states that the residence of *al-Qā'im* would be in Medina, surrounded by thirty intimate followers.¹⁰² All the traditions concerning the rise of *al-Qā'im* indicate that it will occur in Mecca.¹⁰³ The Imamite sources record that the twelfth Imam *al-Qā'im* went on the pilgrimage every year.¹⁰⁴ Such evidence indicates that the twelfth Imam was in an area not far from Mecca, perhaps Medina.

As part of al-ʿAskari's prudent fear, he made his manifest testament only to his mother, Ḥadīth, and did not mention any successor openly to anyone else.¹⁰⁵ From all this it seems most probable that the twelfth Imam spent most of his early life in Medina, because al-ʿAskari recognised the danger which his son would face were he to remain in Iraq.

5. The Abbāsīd Attempt to Arrest al-ʿAskari's Son

The caliph al-Mu'tamid continued the ʿAbbāsīd policy of putting the Imams under close watch and enforced it even more vigorously with the spread of the traditions concerning the role of the twelfth Imam. On hearing about the deterioration of al-ʿAskari's health, al-Mu'tamid sent five of his most trusted officers, amongst whom was his servant Naḥrīr, to the house of al-ʿAskari to watch over him. He also ordered the chief judge, al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Shawārib¹⁰⁶, to send ten reliable people to participate in this task. When al-ʿAskari died on 8th Rabi' I 260/ 1st January 874, the caliph sent a contingent to search his house. They sealed off all his estate and then looked for his son to the extent that they even brought women to examine his slave-girls in case any of them were pregnant.¹⁰⁷

Despite the fact that the primary investigation proved to al-Mu'tamid that al-ʿAskari died without leaving a son, the vast

majority of the Imamites held that he had in fact left one.¹⁰⁸ According to the Imamite works, Ja'far, the brother of al-'Askari, who had already claimed to be the Imam and tried to succeed his brother, revealed to the authorities the Imamites' belief in the existence of al-'Askari's successor. Al-Ṣadūq reports that a band of people from Qumm, among whom was Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Himyarī, arrived at Sāmarrā in ignorance of the death of al-'Askari with letters of inquiry and legal taxes. There they learned about his death and were directed to Ja'far. They met him and wanted to indulge in the ceremonies which they had practiced before on such occasions. They asked Ja'far to tell them about the amount of money they had brought and who had given it to them. Ja'far replied that he was no soothsayer and that the things the Imamites claimed about al-'Askari were mere lies, because Allah alone could know such things. He then told them to hand the money over to him, but they refused to do so, and their quarrel became public. While they were arguing someone came, called them by name and led them to a house. There he showed them someone who was believed to be the agent of the twelfth Imam and who revealed to them how much money they had brought. Therefore they accepted the Imamate of the twelfth Imam. Having done so they were commanded that they should henceforth hand the money to a certain man in Baghdad.¹⁰⁹ According to al-Ṣadūq, Ja'far went straight to the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, and informed him that the Imamites still believed in the existence of a son of al-'Askari. Al-Mu'tamid immediately had this investigated by sending a band of soldiers with Ja'far to search the house of al-'Askari and the houses of the neighbours.¹¹⁰ They arrested a slave-girl called Ṣaḡīl and demanded that she show them the child, but she denied having given birth to a child. According to al-Ṣadūq, in order to save the life of the twelfth Imam, Ṣaḡīl claimed to be pregnant.¹¹¹ Thereupon al-Mu'tamid incarcerated her in his harem for observation. Under the supervision of Naḥrīr, the caliph's wives and slave-girls and the wives of the chief judge, Ibn Abī al-Shawārib, observed Ṣaḡīl for two years until they felt that further observation was no longer necessary. When disturbances occurred in various parts of the Empire and the vizier 'Ubayd Allah Ibn Khaqan suddenly died, they ignored her completely.¹¹²

Many reports indicate that while Ṣaḡīl was imprisoned the 'Abbāsids carried out a campaign of persecution against the Imamites and that Ja'far was behind it. In spite of the fact that the

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Imamites lost many people, all attempts on the part of the authorities to arrest the twelfth Imam proved fruitless.

According to al-Mufīd, al-‘Askarī wanted to deny the ‘Abbāsids the opportunity to find any trace which might endanger the life of his successor. Hence he devised a plan whereby according to his public will he left his estate only to his mother, Ḥadīth.¹¹³ On hearing of the death of her son, she came from Medina to Sāmarrā to take over the estate, but found that it was under ‘Abbāsīd control. Furthermore, Ja‘far quarrelled with her about his brother’s inheritance, insisting on his right to the estate. He raised the case with the authorities, who were trying to confirm that al-‘Askarī had no son by interfering in it. Ḥadīth maintained that al-‘Askarī had made her his sole heiress, and that according to Imamite law Ja‘far had no right to the estate of his brother.¹¹⁴ This quarrel went on for two years until the pregnancy of Ṣaqīl proved false. Although the judge adjudicated in favour of Ḥadīth, Ja‘far’s claim was not disputed because of his influential connections. In the end the estate was divided into two parts, in spite of Imamite law.¹¹⁵

CHAPTER IV

THE UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES OF THE TWELFTH IMAM AS SEEN IN THE ACTIONS OF THE *SAFĪRS*

I. A Brief Study of the *Wikāla* Before the Twelfth Imam

As mentioned in Chapter Two, a critical situation the Imams faced, brought about by the ‘Abbāsids, forced the Imams to search for a new means to communicate with the members of their congregation. The Imamite sources indicate that the sixth Imam al-Ṣādiq was the first Imam to employ an underground system of communication (*al-Tanzīm al-Sirrī*) among his community.¹

The main purpose of the *Wikāla* was to collect the *khums*, the *zakāt*, and other kinds of alms for the Imam from his followers. Although the *Wikāla* may have had other purposes at that time, the sources rarely record them. Al-Ṣādiq directed the activities of the organization with such care that the ‘Abbāsids were not aware of its existence. As part of his prudent fear (*al-Taḥiyya*), he used to ask some of his followers to carry out certain tasks for the organization without informing them that they were in fact his agents. Al-Ṭūsī reports that Naṣr b. Qābūs al-Lakhmī spent twenty years working as an agent (*wakīl*) for al-Ṣādiq, without knowing that he had actually been appointed as one.

Al-Ṣādiq's most important agent in Iraq was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥajjāj, who continued in this office until his death, after the time of the eighth Imam al-Ridā.² Mu‘allā b. Khunays was al-Ṣādiq's agent in Medina. In 133/750 he was arrested by the ‘Abbāsids and sentenced to death because he refused to reveal the names of the Imamite propagandists.³

Despite the difficulties which faced the *Wikāla* in its early stages,

the areas covered by the agents and their training were extended during the time of al-Kāẓim as activities were intensified. The rite of pilgrimage was used as a means to communicate with each other. Al-Kāẓim's agent in Egypt was 'Uthmān b. 'Īsā al-Rawwāsī.⁴ He also had agents in numerous other places, such as Ḥayyān al-Sarrāj in Kufa, Muḥammad b. Abī 'Umayr in Baghdad, and Yūnis b. Ya'qūb al-Bajlī in Medina.⁵ Al-Mas'ūdī's report suggests that all the agents received their instructions from 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥajjāj, who was then resident in Baghdad.⁶

The agents faced another campaign of arrests in 179/795 instigated by the caliph al-Rashīd. It caused the Imamite organization considerable damage. The agent in Baghdad, Muḥammad b. Abī 'Umayr, was arrested and tortured in the unfulfilled hope that he would reveal the names and locations of al-Kāẓim's followers, while his sister was put in jail for four years.⁷ Another agent, 'Alī b. Yaḳṭīn, who used to send money and letters to the Imam through an individual called Ismā'īl b. Salām, was also arrested and spent the rest of his life in prison.⁸ According to the Imamite sources the campaign of arrests led to the arrest of al-Kāẓim himself and to his death in prison.⁹ Sixty other 'Alids also died under torture in prison.¹⁰

After the death of al-Kāẓim the members of the Imamite organization found themselves faced with an internal theological and political question involving the doctrine of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and his occultation. Al-Kāẓim's agents, such as al-Rawwāsī in Egypt, Ziyād al-Qindī in Baghdad, 'Alī b. Abī Ḥamza and Ḥayyān al-Sarrāj in Kufa, and al-Ḥasan b. Qayāmā in Wāsiṭ, had received many traditions attributed to al-Ṣādiq concerning *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* and his occultation, but these traditions did not explicitly state his identity.¹¹ Perhaps for this reason, they applied these traditions to the seventh Imam al-Kāẓim by denying his death and contending that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, but that he had gone into occultation.¹² Consequently, they rejected the Imamate of his son al-Riḍā and split into a new group called the *Wāqifa*, using the money of the organization to their own ends. As a result al-Riḍā lost a considerable number of trained agents and over 100,000 dinars.¹³ Between the years 183-202/799-817 al-Riḍā managed to solve this problem at least partially by clarifying to the members of the *Wāqifa* the true nature of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, as transmitted on the authority of the previous Imams. According to al-Kashshī, he seems to have been able to persuade some of the members of the *Wāqifa*, like al-Rawwāsī and

his followers to recognize his Imamate.¹⁴

Meanwhile the role of the *Wikāla* was expanded to embrace the new needs and tasks of the congregation. Al-Ridā's agents were 'Abd al-'Azīz b. al-Muḥtadī in Qumm,¹⁵ Saḥwān b. Yaḥyā in Kufa,¹⁶ 'Abd Allah b. Jandab and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥajjāj in Baghdad.¹⁷ Along with another eighty agents 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥajjāj controlled the leadership of the organization through the time of the ninth Imam, al-Jawād,¹⁸ who achieved considerable success in protecting the organization from new schisms. Moreover the tactics of his agents developed in new directions especially in widening the sphere of *al-Taḥiyya* (prudent fear) by allowing some of his partisans to participate in the administration and the army of the 'Abbāsids.¹⁹

During the long Imamate of the tenth Imam, al-Ḥādī (220-254/835-868) new trends emerged amongst the Imamites due to historical circumstances, trends which were later to play a dangerous role during the time of the twelfth Imam.

As was pointed out above (Ch. II, pp 48-53), al-Mutawakkil practiced the policy of al-Ma'mūn, who had made al-Ridā and his son al-Jawād join his courtiers so that their links with their partisans could be restricted and closely watched. Al-Mutawakkil did the same with al-Ḥādī. In 233/847 he summoned him from Medina to Sāmarrā, where he spent the rest of his life.²⁰ The absence of direct contact between the Imam and his followers led to an increase in the religious and political role of the *Wikāla*, so that the agents of the Imam gained more authority in running its affairs. Gradually the leadership of the *Wikāla* became the only authority which could determine and prove the legitimacy of the new Imam. For example the ninth Imam, al-Jawād, gave his testament concerning his successor to his chief agent Muḥammad b. al-Faraj. He told him that in case he should die, he should take his orders from al-Ḥādī.²¹ When al-Jawād died in 220/835 the prominent leaders of the organization held a secret meeting at the house of Muḥammad b. al-Faraj to determine the next Imam, who was proved to be al-Ḥādī.²²

The agents of the Imam gradually gained a great deal of experience in organizing their partisans into separate units. Several reports suggest that the agents divided their followers into four separate groups according to area. The first included Baghdad, Madā'in, Sawād and Kufa, the second Basra and al-Ahwāz, the third Qumm and Hamadān, and the fourth the Hijaz, Yemen and Egypt. Each area was entrusted to an independent agent, beneath whom many

local agents were appointed. The workings of this system can be observed in letters of instruction attributed to al-Hādī concerning the organization's administration. It is reported that he sent a letter in 232/847 to his local agent, 'Alī b. Bilāl, saying:

"I have substituted Abū 'Alī b. Rashīd for 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Rabba. I have entrusted him with this post since he is sufficiently qualified so that no one can take precedence over him. He has been informed that you are the chief (*shaykh*) of your own area, since I wished to invest you with that area. However, you have to follow him and hand all the revenues to collect over to him."

In a letter to his agents in Baghdad, Madā'in and Kufa, al-Hādī wrote,

"O Ayyūb b. Nūḥ, I am commanding you to cut off relations between yourself and Abū 'Alī. Both of you should engage yourselves with what you have been entrusted and ordered to do in your areas. If you do so you should be able to manage your affairs without consulting me. . . O Ayyūb, I am ordering you neither to receive anything from the people of Baghdad and Madā'in, nor to give anyone amongst them permission to contact me. If anyone brings you revenue from outside your area, order him to send it to the agent of his own area. O Abū 'Alī, I am ordering you to follow what I have ordered Ayyūb."²³

This system saved the organization from otherwise inevitable damage after the harsh attack of al-Mutawakkil upon its underground political cells in 235/850. In the same way it was saved from the attack of al-Musta'in in 248/862.

It should be noted that during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams, the leadership of the organization in the four areas, was monopolized by a few individuals. Their tasks later fell to their descendants and remained under their control during the shorter occultation of the twelfth Imam. For example, 'Alī b. Māzyār was the agent of al-Jawād and al-Hādī in al-Ahwāz²⁴, while his sons were the agents of the twelfth Imam in the same region.²⁵ Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Hamadānī was the agent of al-Hādī in Hamadān,²⁶ while his offspring inherited this post from father to son until the time of the twelfth Imam.²⁷ Another agent was Ismā'īl b. Ishāq b. Nawbakht,²⁸ whose family later directed the members of the organization in Baghdad, while one of his relatives, al-Ḥusayn b.

Rūḥ, became the third *safīr* or “representative” of the twelfth Imam.

Among the agents, the most important was ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-‘Umarī, who, as we shall see, was brought up under the auspices of the tenth Imam, al-Hādī. He made him first his own agent and then the agent of his son, Imam al-‘Askarī. After the death of the latter ‘Uthmān controlled the whole leadership of the organization as the first representative of the twelfth Imam, and his son Muḥammad later succeeded him to the post, as the second *safīr*.

The fact that the Imam’s activities were underground made it easy for certain people to claim falsely to be the representatives of al-Hādī and al-‘Askarī, and thus to collect money from the Imamites. It seems that this practice was carried out by the extremists (*al-Ghulāt*) and increased throughout the time of the twelfth Imam at the expense of his rightful agents.²⁹

2. The Main Functions of the *Wikāla*

For the Twelver Imamites the series of Imams ends with the twelfth Imam, who, from the death of his father in 260/874 up to the year 329/940-1, is believed to have lived in occultation. According to al-Nu‘mānī this period was called the “short occultation,” *al-Ghayba al-Qaṣīra*,³⁰ and according to later scholars the minor occultation, *al-Ghayba al-Ṣuḡhrā*.³¹ It was of decisive importance for the organization and the internal evolution of the congregation. During it the twelfth Imam is considered to have pursued his activities from behind the scenes and to have led his followers by means of four specially chosen representatives. These were called *sufarā* (sing. *safīr*) or “ambassadors.” The first was ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-‘Umarī, the second his son Muḥammad, the third al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī and the fourth ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Sammārī.

A critical study of the history of this period (260-329/874-941) reveals that the main function of the *safīrs* was to implement certain tasks previously undertaken by the Imams so as to save him from the political pressure of the ‘Abbāsids. His predecessors had suffered this pressure since the time of al-Ma‘mūn, especially since it was widely accepted among the Imamites of that period that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Qā’im bi-l-Amr li-Izālat al-Duwal*, that is, “he who is to be in charge of eliminating the governments (of the oppressors by militant means).”³²

One of the ambassadors' tasks was to draw complete darkness over the name of the Imam and his whereabouts, not only as regards his foes, but even as regards his followers. Simultaneously the *safīr* had to prove the existence of the Imam to his reliable adherents. This statement can be illustrated by a report of al-Kulaynī. 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Ḥimyarī once asked the first *safīr* whether or not he had seen the successor of the eleventh Imam. Al-ʿUmarī, the *safīr*, confirmed that he had seen him. But he added that people were forbidden to ask about his name, because if the government discovered his name they would certainly try to arrest him.³³ In this way the first *safīr* led the court of the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, to think that the eleventh Imam had died without a successor.³⁴ According to al-Kulaynī's report, the conclusion reached by the ʿAbbāsids seems to have released the Imamites from the humiliation which they had suffered throughout the time of the previous Imams. The agents of the twelfth Imam began to carry out their activities without being afraid of the authorities, since they were sure of the non-existence of the twelfth Imam, and thus did not bother to investigate the Imamite's activities.³⁵

The activities of the *safīrs* also aimed at protecting the congregation from any more schisms by proving the authenticity of the Imamate of al-ʿAskarī's son. Towards this aim they employed those sayings of the Prophet and the Imams which indicate that the series of Imams will end with the twelfth, who would then go into occultation.³⁶

The four *safīrs* carried out another task in the name of the Imam. They received and collected the taxes which the Imamites had previously paid to their Imams. According to the Imamite sources all the *safīrs* performed miracles before receiving the money so that their adherents would believe in their legitimacy. According to the Imamite belief, whoever proclaimed himself a *safīr* and did not work miracles had lied about the Imam and was driven out of the organization.³⁷

The *Tawqīʿāt* (written and signed answers or pronouncements) attributed to the twelfth Imam indicate that he neither gave any statement to elucidate his attitude towards the political and economic situation of his time, nor ordered his followers to implicate themselves in an open political struggle with their rivals, the ʿAbbāsids. In fact, it is reasonable to agree with Muḥammad al-Ṣadr that by acting in this manner the Imam enabled his partisans to

pursue their activities without attracting the attention of the ‘Abbāsids by statements criticising their rule.³⁸ Moreover it seems most likely that in following this policy the Imam wanted his agents and propagandists to concentrate their efforts upon strengthening the size and quality of their party, until it developed its political means and ideology to a degree which might enable it to put its goal into action. But the involvement of the agents in an immediate political struggle would have taken place at the expense of an increase in the size and the development of the ideological and political basis of the organization.

3. The Early Career of Uthmān b. Sa‘īd

Most of the Imamite information concerning the activities of the four *ṣafīrs* is attributed to al-Ṭūsī in his work *al-Ghayba*. The latter depended mainly on two early missing works, that is, *Kitāb fī Akhbār Abī ‘Amr wa Abī Ja‘far al-‘Umariyyayn* by Ibn Barīna al-Kātib, the son of the granddaughter of the second *ṣafīr*, and *Kitāb Akhbār al-Wakilā al-‘Arba’a* by Aḥmad b. Nūḥ.³⁹ Unfortunately, the work of al-Ṭūsī and other works give very few details concerning the background to the career of the first *ṣafīr*. We know that the latter was Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-‘Umārī from the tribe of Asad. Javad ‘Alī, whose opinion was followed by Rajkowski, thought that the grandfather of ‘Uthmān was ‘Amr b. Hurayth al-Ṣayrafī al-Kūfī, a well-known Shī‘ite from Kufa who belonged to Banū Asad. According to Javad ‘Alī, since both belonged to the same tribe, both are known by the epithet al-Asadī.⁴⁰ But this cannot be accepted because there is no explicit evidence leading one to link the lineage of the two individuals. Nothing is known about the *ṣafīr* nor of his position in the congregation. Moreover, the year of his birth and the details of his youth have not been handed down.

It is said that at the age of eleven ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd was contracted to become a servant in the house of the ninth Imam, al-Jawād, and that he never left his service. Later he became his gate-keeper and chamberlain. As the Imam’s “right hand”, he enjoyed his entire confidence and was entrusted with the execution of all his commissions.⁴¹ ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd occupied this same position of trust throughout the lifetime of al-Hādī, the tenth Imam⁴², who was watched carefully and suspiciously by the government of the day, so that he even avoided speaking with the individual members of the

community. For this reason, al-Hādī presented ‘Uthmān to those who found it difficult to consult him directly. He told them that ‘Uthman was his trusted associate and a man of honour, and that whatever he did was done in the Imam’s name.⁴³ Furthermore, al-Kashshī’s account indicates that during the last ten years of the time of al-Hādī, the leadership of the underground organization (*al-Wikala*) was in ‘Uthmān’s hands. He organized its internal affairs and systematized the relations between the centre of the organization and its branches in the remote provinces. When the agent, ‘Alī b. ‘Amr, came to Sāmarrā from Qazwīn with money and contacted Fāris b. Ḥātim, without knowing that the latter had been cursed by the Imam in 250/864, ‘Uthmān quickly moved his lieutenants to save the money and prevented ‘Alī b. ‘Amr from having contact with Fāris b. Ḥātim.⁴⁴

‘Uthmān continued to hold this position of trust under the eleventh Imam al-‘Askarī, who appointed him using the same words as had his father. It is reported that al-‘Askarī had only informed a few of his followers that ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd was his agent. However, at one point a group of Yemenite Shī‘ites brought money to al-‘Askarī, and he revealed to them that ‘Uthmān was his agent and that his son, Muḥammad, would be the agent of the twelfth Imam, *al-Mahdī*.⁴⁵ According to another narration al-‘Askarī presented his successor to forty reliable Shī‘ites, such as al-Ḥasan b. Ayyūb, ‘Alī b. Bilāl, Aḥmad b. Hilāl, and ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd. He informed them that they would not see him again and commanded them to obey ‘Uthmān during the concealment of the twelfth Imam, because he would be his representative.⁴⁶ Moreover, during the last illness of the eleventh Imam, ‘Uthmān looked after him and cared for him. According to al-Ṭūsī, he performed the last rites for the dead man, washed the corpse, wrapped him in his shroud and buried him. For the Imamites these are the unmistakeable signs that ‘Uthmān was the rightful representative *saḥīr* of the hidden Imam. They contended that ‘Uthmān did all this on the orders of al-‘Askarī.⁴⁷

4. The Career of the First *Saḥīr*

The first *saḥīr* managed to satisfy the prominent Imamites who were already members of the organization that the twelfth Imam was in a state of occultation and thus safe from his enemies, while also convincing them that he was the rightful representative of the Imam.

It appears that his occupation of the leadership of the organization during the time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams encouraged the agents to accept his claim and follow his instructions, without asking him to show a miracle or proof.⁴⁸ However, the ordinary Imamites, who had nothing to do with the organization, were confused by the occultation of the Imam and, as has been noted,⁴⁹ held different views concerning the twelfth Imam's successor. Many Imamites refused to pay the *khums* to 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd unless he showed, by means of a miracle, that he had been rightfully appointed by the twelfth Imam. This is illustrated by a narrative of al-Kulaynī attributed to Sa'd al-Ash'arī al-Qummi:

"Al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr, Abū al-Ṣaddām and a number of others spoke together after the death of Abū Muḥammad (the eleventh Imam) about the agents and decided to search for the new Imam. Al-Ḥasan b. Naḍr came to Abū al-Saddām and said to him, 'I desire to make the pilgrimage.' Abu al-Saddām said to him, 'Delay it this year.' Al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr said to him, 'I am frightened by my dreams, so I must go.' He made Aḥmad b. Ya'īā b. Ḥammād his executor. The latter had devoted some money to the Imam. Hearing of al-Ḥasan's decision, he gave the money to al-Ḥasan and commanded him not to hand anything over without proof.

"Al-Ḥasan said, 'When I arrived at Baghdad I rented a house. Thereafter an agent brought me clothes and money and entrusted them to me. I said to him, "What is this?" He said to me, "It is what you see." Then another one brought similar goods, and a third one until they filled the house. Afterwards Aḥmad b. Ishāq (the assistant of the *ṣafīr*) brought me all the goods he had. Thus I became confused. But later I received a message from *al-Rajul* (the Imam), peace be upon him, ordering me to take the goods to *al-ʿAskar* (Sāmarrā). . . When I arrived there I received a message ordering me to bring the goods (to him). So I loaded them in the baskets of the carriers. When I reached the corridor of his house, I found a black slave standing there. He asked me, "Are you al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr?" I said, "Yes." He replied, "Enter." So I entered the house, and then I entered an apartment, where I emptied the baskets of the carriers. . . There was a curtain leading to another apartment. Someone called me from behind it, "O al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr, praise Allah for His grace is upon you, and do not doubt, for

Satan would be pleased if you waver.” Thereafter he sent out two garments for me and said, “Take them, because you will need them.” So I took them and went out.’ ”

Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī reports that al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr departed and died in the month of Ramaḍān, and the two garments were used as his shroud.⁵⁰

This event was a clear proof to al-Ḥasan, because both his name and his doubts concerning the validity of the agents’ activities had been revealed to him. Moreover, according to Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī, the two garments which al-Ḥasan had received were a prediction of his death, which occurred a month later. If one studies carefully the circumstances surrounding al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr from the time of his decision to investigate the activities of the agents until his death, one can surmise that the agents arranged them so as to remove his doubts. They would have done so because al-Ḥasan b. al-Naḍr was prominent amongst the Imamites of Qumm,⁵¹ and his doubts might have affected the Imamites of his area. So perhaps the agents of Qumm informed the *ṣafīr* in Baghdad about his arrival there. This can be understood from the act of Aḥmad b. Ishāq and the other agents who brought the clothes to al-Ḥasan’s house and later sent him a letter ordering him to send the goods to Sāmarrā. There, it is reported, he met the Imam, who confirmed for him the validity of the agent’s activities. One can discover from this example and many others not quoted here⁵² the means used by the *ṣafīr* to remove the doubts and confusion of the Imamites brought about by the concealment of their Imam, and to make them obey his instructions.

As has already been indicated the *ṣafīr* forbade his partisans to ask about the name of the Imam. Perhaps, their silence along with al-‘Askarī’s last will in which he bequeathed his endowments to his mother and placed her in charge of his affair without referring to his successor,⁵³ encouraged the authorities to believe that the Imamites no longer had an Imam and, therefore, that any Imamite activities were useless. In doing so the *ṣafīr* gained a certain freedom to have communication with the twelfth Imam and his followers. This is illustrated by a statement attributed to the *ṣafīr*:

“The caliph thinks that Abū Muḥammad (al-‘Askarī), peace be upon him, died childless. Thus his estate was divided and given to someone, who had no right in the estate but he (the twelfth Imam) kept quiet. These are his agents carrying out their activities without being afraid that someone would stop

them for investigation. If the (Imam's) name is identified, the (authorities) would start searching for (his whereabouts). So, by Allah, do not ask about his name."⁵⁴

The belief that al-ʿAskarī had no successor was circulated among some sunnī scholars, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī (died around 300/912). In his account of the Imamite doctrine, he states, "In our time al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī died and had no son. Therefore they (the Imamites) became confused."⁵⁵ Gradually this belief was so disseminated among the non-Imamite circles that leading sunnī scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1063) and al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) were encouraged to view it as a matter of fact.⁵⁶ Later al-Dhahabī believed that al-ʿAskarī left a son but he disappeared when he was nine years old or less in 265/878, when he entered a cellar (*sardāb*) in Sāmarrā and was not seen again.⁵⁷ In other words the twelfth Imam died during the lifetime of the first *ṣafīr*. But al-Dhahabī is a later historian, since he died in 748/1347. Moreover he does not give the source of his narration, nor does he state explicitly how al-ʿAskarī's son died even though he presents his information concerning the concealment of the twelfth Imam in the list of people who died in 265/878 to give the impression that he had passed away in that year. The earliest report concerning the occultation of al-ʿAskarī's son in the cellar is given by al-Kanjī, who died in 658/1260, but he also does not mention the source of his information.⁵⁸ It is therefore most likely that al-Dhahabī based his report upon a belief common among the Imamite masses, that the twelfth Imam had hidden himself in the cellar of his house. This belief spread after the fifth/eleventh century and later became popular among certain scholars, such as Ibn Khaldūn.⁵⁹

Moreover, several reports in the early Imamite sources refute al-Dhahabī's narration and prove that the twelfth Imam was alive after 265/878. Al-Ṭūsī mentions that many of the Imamites received written answers to their letters from the Imam in the same handwriting as in the letters they used to receive during the lifetime of the first *ṣafīr*,⁶⁰ and al-Ṣadūq lists thirteen agents and forty-six ordinary Imamites from numerous cities who claimed to have seen the twelfth Imam both during and after the time of the first *ṣafīr*.⁶¹

From this it is clear that al-Dhahabī's report is based on popular belief rather than upon sound historical facts. So it would be foolish to give credence to his claims concerning the death and occultation of the twelfth Imam.

5. The Opposition to the First *Safīr*

As has been noted the occultation of the Imam resulted in the gradual expansion of the role of the *safīr*. However it also made it easier for a pretender to the deputyship (*al-sifāra* or *al-niyāba*) to practice his activities among the Imamites at the expense of the Imam's rightful representative. As we have seen, this was practiced mainly throughout the period of the short occultation by the extremists (*al-Ghulāt*). That they were extremists is indicated by a number of factors. Firstly, the claimant to the *sifāra* believed in the incarnation of God (*hulūl*).⁶² Most of the claimants to the *sifāra* from the time of al-Ḥasan al-Sharī^c up until al-Shalmaghānī claimed first that they were the agents of the Imam. Then when the Imam excommunicated them, they called people on their own account. Extremists had claimed to be the Imam's representative even before the occultation of the twelfth Imam, but with a slight difference. The claimant would first announce that he was the Gate (*Bāb*) of the Imam, and then claim that he was a prophet. Al-Kashshī mentions many extremists who did so, such as Muḥammad b. Furāt, al-Qāsim al-Yaḳṭīnī and 'Alī b. Ḥaska.⁶³

The third factor indicating that the claimants were extremists is that certain links existed between the extremists active during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams and the claimants who lived during the time of the short occultation. According to al-Kashshī, 'Alī b. Ḥaska was the teacher of Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Sharī^c, al-Qasim al-Yaḳṭīnī and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Bābā.⁶⁴ The last of these was a close follower of Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr, who led the extremists trend during the time of the eleventh Imam, and then claimed that he was the agent of the twelfth Imam.⁶⁵ Moreover, Ibn Nuṣayr was supported by some of Banū Furāt, the descendants of the extremist Muḥammad b. Furāt.⁶⁶

According to al-Ṭūsī, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Sharī^c⁶⁷ was the first to claim falsely to be the Imam's representative during the short occultation, but the Imamites cursed him and refused to accept him. Then the twelfth Imam issued a *Tawqī'*, in which he excommunicated al-Sharī^c and announced the falseness of his claim.⁶⁸ Although al-Sharī^c did not achieve immediate success, his following grew in strength and eventually he formed a strong threat to the leadership of the second *safīr*.

6. The Imam's *Wikāla* During the Time of the First *Safīr*

The main problem facing any historian dealing with the period of the short occultation is that most of the activities of the twelfth Imam and his representatives were carried out underground. Perhaps for this reason, the Imamite scholars such as al-Kulaynī, ‘Abd Allah b. Ja‘far al-Himyarī, Sa‘d al-Ash‘arī and al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī rarely mention the names of the Imam's agents, or refer to their activities or links with each other. However, they do refer to those of their activities which did not attract the attention of the authorities. Therefore, the historical information concerning the underground activities of the agents is to be found scattered throughout the theological and heresiographical works much more than in the histories. Because of the nature of these works the historical information has taken on a heresiographical form. In addition, both questions asked by the Shī‘ites and answers of the twelfth Imam and his *safīrs* were collected during his time, but unfortunately, most of them have been lost. Only a few are extant, especially in works dealing with the concealment (*Ghayba*). For example the second *safīr* Abū Ja‘far Muhammad b. ‘Uthmān, collected the pronouncements of his father, but his collection is not extant. However, many anecdotes which assist us in discovering the links among the Imam's agents and the nature of their activities have been recorded.

6.1 Iraq: The Centre of the *Wikāla*

After the death of the eleventh Imam, the first *safīr* had not the slightest reason to remain in Sāmarrā, which was then the capital and the headquarters of the troops of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty, which had opposed the Imams from the very beginning. Perhaps for this reason, ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd wanted to carry out the activities of the organization beyond the surveillance of the authorities in the capital. Therefore he moved to Baghdad, where he made the area of al-Karkh, which was inhabited by Shī‘ites, the centre for the leadership of the organization.⁶⁹ A part of ‘Uthmān's prudent fear (*al-Taqiyya*) was to evade the investigation of the regime by not involving himself in any open political or religious arguments. He also disguised himself as a butter-seller (*sammān*) and, used to bring money to the Imam in a butter-sack. Consequently he acquired the nickname *al-*

Zayyāt or *al-Sammān*.⁷⁰ Al-Kashshī reports that his name was Ḥafṣ b. ‘Amr al-‘Umarī,⁷¹ which may have been a pseudonym he used when he held underground meetings with other agents.

It has been noted that the twelfth Imam was sent by his father to Medina in 259/873. However, the first *saḥfīr* made Baghdad the centre of the organization. He followed the traditional geographical divisions of the Islamic provinces in organizing the underground political units (cells) of the organization. Nevertheless he took into consideration the size of each factional unit, the distance of each area from the capital, and its situation on the main roads.

According to al-Kashshī, ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd was the head of the *Wikāla* from the time of the eleventh Imam, in the sense that all the revenue sent by the adherents to the Imam through his agents was given in the end to ‘Uthmān, who in turn handed it over to the Imam.⁷² Many agents were situated below the *saḥfīr* in the ranks of the organization in Baghdad and in the other cities of Iraq, such as Ḥājiz b. Yazīd al-Washshā’, Aḥmad b. Ishāq al-Ash‘arī and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ja‘far al-Qaṭṭān, the last two of whom were the chief assistants of the first *saḥfīr*.

Aḥmad b. Ishāq was at first al-‘Askarī’s agent for his endowments (*awqāf*) in Qumm.⁷³ However, after the death of al-‘Askarī the sources begin to refer to his activities in Baghdad as assistant to ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd in the financial affairs of the organization. Al-Kulaynī reports that in 260/874 some people from the east doubted the validity of the agents after al-‘Askarī’s death and for this reason they came to Baghdad. Along with other agents Aḥmad b. Ishāq managed to remove their doubts.⁷⁴ The first *saḥfīr* may have summoned him from Qumm because he needed his service in Iraq after al-‘Askarī’s death. According to Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī, Aḥmad b. Ishāq continued his career in the organization in Iraq until his death during the time of the second *saḥfīr*.⁷⁵

Muḥammad al-Qaṭṭān was the second agent of the *saḥfīr* in Baghdad. In order to hide his activities he disguised himself as a cotton dealer. The agents used to bring money and letters to him hidden in cotton which he then took to the *saḥfīr*.⁷⁶ Ibn Rustam reports that in 261-3/875-6 the people of Dīnawar collected 16,000 dinars, which were entrusted to a certain Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dīnawarī. At Qarmisīn⁷⁷ he collected 1,000 dinars more and some garments. After an intensive search in Baghdad and Sāmarrā, he received in Sāmarrā a letter describing the money and other items and

ordering him to take them to ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd and to follow his instructions. The latter ordered al-Dīnawarī to hand over the items to al-Qaṭṭān.⁷⁸ It is reported that al-Qaṭṭān had dealings with an agent in Tus called al-Hasan b. al-Faḍl b. Zayd al-Yamānī. According to al-Muḥīd, al-Yamānī used to deal with al-Qaṭṭān as if he were the *safīr*.⁷⁹

The third agent of the *safīr* in Baghdad was Ḥājiz. His relations with a large number of agents indicate that he held a high position in the organization. He was perhaps the connecting link between the agents in the eastern provinces and the *safīr* in Baghdad, especially since al-Ṣadūq and al-Kulaynī mention certain persons from the cities of Balkh and Marv who contacted the Imam and his *safīr* through Ḥājiz.⁸⁰

While the first *safīr* seems to have led the affairs of the organization in Baghdad with the help of his three assistants, he may also have directly supervised the activities of his agents in the other main cities, such as al-Madā in, Kufa, Wāsiṭ, Baṣra and al-Ahwāz. In the last of these the leadership of the *Wikāla* had been in the hands of Banū Mazyār or Mahzayār from the time of the ninth Imam. Al-Kashshī reports that the agent of the Imam in al-Ahwāz, Ibrāhīm b. Mazyār, had collected a large amount of money. On his deathbed he revealed to his son Muḥammad a special secret code and ordered him to hand the money over to the person who would disclose to him his knowledge of this code. Al-Kashshī adds that when Muḥammad arrived at Baghdad, al-ʿUmarī the *safīr* came to him and divulged to him the exact code, so he handed the money over to him.⁸¹ It is clear from this report that the first *safīr* had already agreed on the code with Ibrāhīm al-Mazyār so as to save the organization from infiltration and misuse by false agents. According to al-Kulaynī and al-Muḥīd, a few days later Muḥammad received a letter of promotion indicating that he was installed in the post of his father in al-Ahwāz.⁸² This underground system of communication between the *safīr* in Baghdad and the agent in al-Ahwāz was similar to other such systems which existed at this stage between the *safīr* and his other agents in Iraq, such as Banū al-Rakūlī in Kufa.⁸³

6.2 The Second Area: Egypt, the Hijaz and Yemen

The main centre for the organization in this area seems to have been Medina. It is reported that al-ʿAskarī had many agents there

amongst the 'Alids (*al-Tālibiyyīn*). However, after al-ʿAskarī's death, some of them denied the existence of his son, the twelfth Imam. According to al-Kulaynī, those who held that al-ʿAskarī had left a son received letters confirming them in their posts, whereas the deniers did not receive such letters which showed that they were dismissed from their posts in the *Wikāla*.⁸⁴ Another report indicates that the principal agent in Medina in 264/877-8 was Yahyā b. Muḥammad al-ʿArīdī.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the sources neither explain how the *safīr* in Baghdad used to contact his agents in Hijaz, nor do they refer to the connecting links among the agents of Egypt, Hijaz and Yemen. However, it is most likely that the agents used the occasion of the pilgrimage to communicate with each other.⁸⁶ But it seems that the *safīr* did not keep in direct contact with his agent in Medina and preferred to employ slaves who were mostly ignorant and irreligious as the connecting link. He did this to keep the attention of the authorities away from such activities.

The agents in Egypt followed the instructions of the agents in Hijaz, especially as regards their contact with the centre in Iraq. Al-Kulaynī reports a narration attributed to al-Ḥasan b. ʿĪsā al-ʿArīdī, who was probably the agent in Mecca.⁸⁷ He says that after the death of al-ʿAskarī, an Egyptian came to Mecca with money for the Imam, but was confused because some people held that al-ʿAskarī had died without a son and that the Imam was his brother Jaʿfar, whereas other people informed him that al-ʿAskarī had, in fact, left a successor. Afterwards he sent a certain person called Abū Ṭālib to Sāmarrā with a letter, probably a recommendation from the agent in Mecca. In Sāmarrā Abū Ṭālib first contacted Jaʿfar, asking him for proof so that he could accept his Imamate, but Jaʿfar could not produce any. Therefore he went to the Gate (*Bāb*, deputy), who gave him a strong proof that he was the rightful representative of the new Imam (the twelfth), by revealing to him that his master, the Egyptian, had entrusted him with money to deal with according to his wish. For this reason Abū Ṭālib handed over the money to the *Bāb* and received a letter in reply to his letter.⁸⁸ Perhaps the agent in Mecca had sent forward complete information concerning the case of his Egyptian colleague.

Yemen was a traditional region for Shīʿite tendencies. Al-Hādī had had agents there since 248/862,⁸⁹ and there were agents who had direct contact with ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd during the time of al-ʿAskarī.⁹⁰ According to al-Kulaynī, the chief agent in Yemen during the time of

the twelfth Imam was Ja'far b. Ibrāhīm, who was related to a family working in the Imamite organization in Ḥamadān, Kufa and Yemen.⁹¹ A report mentioned by al-Najāshī indicates that the connecting link between the agents in Yemen and the first *ṣafīr* was 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Yamānī.⁹²

6.3 The Third Area: Azerbaijan and Arrān

The third area was Azerbaijan. According to Muḥammad al-Ṣafwānī,⁹³ the agent there was al-Qāsim b. al-'Alā, who had held the post from the time of al-Hādī and who continued his activities from the province of Arrān⁹⁴ during the time of the twelfth Imam. The twelfth Imam remained in touch with al-Qāsim until the latter died during the time of the third *ṣafīr*, when his post was given to his son al-Ḥasan at the twelfth Imam's order. Al-Ṣafwānī does not mention the name of the connecting link between the agent of this area and the centre of the organization. However, he states explicitly that al-Qāsim b. al-'Alā was in direct contact with the *ṣafīr* in Iraq through a messenger, who used to deal with him without revealing his name.⁹⁵

6.4 The Fourth Area: Qumm and Dīnawar

It is well-known that Qumm was a traditional area for the Shī'ites, the bulk of whom were Arab,⁹⁶ and that there were many endowments (*awqāf*) for the Imams in Qumm. Therefore, it probably received more attention from the first *ṣafīr*, who used to keep in direct contact not only with the agent of Qumm but also with the other agents in the province of Jabal. The prominent agent in Qumm was 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far al-Ḥimyarī,⁹⁷ who remained in this post during the time of the second *ṣafīr*.⁹⁸ Moreover, there were many sub-agents in numerous cities with a considerable Imamite population, such as Dīnawar, whose agent in 261-3/875-6 was Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dīnawarī. The agent in Qurmisīn was Aḥmad al-Mādrā'ī.⁹⁹

6.5 The Fifth Area: Ray and Khurasān

Al-Kashshī's account of the situation of the organization during the time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams indicates that the latter

had several agents in various cities in Khurasān and the eastern provinces, extending as far as the city of Kabul. Those agents, along with other sub-agents, used to carry out their missions according to the direct instruction of the Imam. For example, al-‘Askarī sent Ayyub b. al-Nāb to Nisapur as his agent.¹⁰⁰ However, the penetration of the movement into remote regions of the east, the rise of the Zaydite state in Ṭabaristān from 250/864, and the continual military activities of the Khawārij in Sijistān, which caused a great deal of trouble for Imamites,¹⁰¹ all helped make it difficult for al-‘Askarī to supervise directly the activities in each area. Therefore al-‘Askarī issued a letter ordering the activities of the agents in Bayhaq and Nisapur to be linked with those of the agents in Rayy so that the two former cities could only receive his instructions from the agent in Rayy, who was to take his orders directly from ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd in Sāmarrā. According to this letter al-‘Askarī appointed Ishāq b. Muḥammad as his agent in Nisapur, commanding him to pay the dues to Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abda, his agent in Bayhaq and its districts. The latter in turn was commanded to hand the dues to the agent of Rayy, Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Rāzī or to the person appointed by al-Rāzī. At the end of his letter the Imam pointed out that all the *khums* and other taxes which were sent by his followers should be given to ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd, who would then hand them to him.¹⁰² Such a statement reveals that ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd was at the top of the organization before the death of al-‘Askarī in 260/874.

After the death of al-‘Askarī the first *saḥīr* followed the system of communication which had been practiced before. Several anecdotes reveal that he directed the activities of this area through the agent in Rayy, al-Rāzī, who in turn directly supervised the activities of the agents in Bayhaq, Nisapur,¹⁰³ and perhaps Hamadān. There were many sub-agents of different ranks below the main agent in each city. Al-Najāshī reports a narration which elucidates this system. He mentions that al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Hamadānī, Bisṭām b. ‘Alī and ‘Azīz b. Zuhayr were sub-agents in one place in Hamadān and carried out their task under the instructions and commands of al-Ḥasan b. Hārūn b. ‘Umrān al-Hamadānī.¹⁰⁴ Al-Najāshī does not explain how the latter used to contact the *saḥīr*. Al-Kulaynī, however, reports that Muḥammad b. Hārūn b. ‘Umrān al-Hamadānī, the brother of the agent of Hamadān, made his shops an endowment (*waqf*) to the twelfth Imam and wanted to hand them over to his agent, whose identity was unknown to him. Thereafter Muhammad

b. Ja far al-Rāzī, the agent of Rayy, received an order to take these shops as *waqf*¹⁰⁵ in his capacity as *wakīl* for the whole of Iran. This narration reveals that there was a strong link between the agent of Rayy and the agent of Hamadān and that the latter was below al-Rāzī in the ranks of the organization.¹⁰⁶

Since the agents in this area held different ranks within the organization, it is most likely that this system existed in the other areas of the organization as well.

7. The Death of the First *Safīr*

Despite the important role of the first *safīr*, ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd, no one gives the date of his death. Modern historians have tried to supply plausible dates. Hāshim al-Ḥasanī thinks that the deputyship (*al-sifara*) of ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd continued until the year 265/879,¹⁰⁷ but he does not give any source for this information. In contrast Javad ʿAlī states as follows:

“Twenty years after the withdrawal of the twelfth Imam, in the year 280/893, the first *safīr* died, according to a *tawqīʿ*, said to have been addressed by the hidden Imam to the son of the first *safīr* and the Shīʿite congregation, in which after expressing sentiments of condolence on the death of such a pious man, the Imam appointed his son Abū Jaʿfar (Muḥammad) as his successor.”¹⁰⁸

However, Javad ʿAlī relied on al-Ṭūsī, who only indicates that the narrator, Muḥammad b. Humām, heard the narration from Muḥammad al-Rāzī in 280/893; he does not cite any date for the death of the first *safīr*.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, it seems that the first *safīr* did not remain in office for a long period, because al-Ṭūsī reports that when Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān (Abū Jaʿfar) succeeded his father, a certain Aḥmad b. Hilāl al-Abartāʿī, whose death occurred in 267/880-1,¹¹⁰ denied that Abū Ja far was the *safīr* of the twelfth Imam after his father.¹¹¹ Hence the death of the first *safīr* must have occurred after 260/874, the date of the death of the eleventh Imam, and before 267/880,

According to Ibn Barīna, ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd was buried on the western side of Baghdad in the Darb Mosque. This mosque takes its name from its position at Darb Jibla, an avenue in the Maydān

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street.¹¹² Al-Ṭūsī confirms Ibn Barīna's report when he states that he saw the grave in a place which he used to visit every month between the years 404/1013 and 433/1040.¹¹³

CHAPTER V

THE UNDERGROUND ACTIVITIES OF THE SECOND *SAFĪR* OF THE TWELFTH IMAM

1. The Designation of the Second *Safīr*, Abū Jaʿfar

The second *safīr* was Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-ʿUmarī. His *kunya* was Abū Jaʿfar. He carried out his activities first as the agent of the twelfth Imam and then as his *safīr* for about fifty years, having been the principal assistant of his father, the first *safīr*, from the time of the eleventh Imam, al-ʿAskarī. According to al-Ṭūsī, when the first *safīr* died, Abū Jaʿfar carried out the last rites for the dead man, washed the corpse, clad him in his shroud and buried him. For the Imamites, these are the unmistakable signs that Abū Jaʿfar was acting as the representative and the *safīr* of the hidden Imam. According to them he did all this at the order of the first *safīr*. Moreover he was promoted to the office of the *sifāra* both by the designation of al-ʿAskarī and of the first *safīr*, ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd, according to the order of the twelfth Imam.¹

After his father's death, Abū Jaʿfar received a letter of condolence attributed to the twelfth Imam, who offered his sympathy at his father's death and pointed out that he had been installed in his office.²

However, some of the principal agents of the organization had serious reservations and doubts about his designation, as did Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr, the leader of the extremist trend, the *Ghulāt*. So Abū Jaʿfar did not succeed to his office without encountering certain difficulties.

1.1 Ibn Hilāl

Aḥmad b. Hilāl al-ʿAbartāʾī was one of those who denied the validity of Abū Jaʿfar's designation. He was born in the year 180/796 in ʿAbartāʾ, a village in the district of Askāf near Nahrawān, and died

in the year 267/880. It is clear from the numerous references to his name in the chain of transmissions (*isnād*) of the Imamite narrations that he was a well-known theologian who had narrated most of the Shī'ite books of traditions (*uṣūl*). Beginning in 204/819 he had related several traditions indicating that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Qā'im*, having first gone into occultation.³ Al-Kashshī reports that he was a pious mystic and an eminent scholar, and some biographers respectfully mention the fact that he undertook fifty-four pilgrimages to Mecca, twenty of them on foot.⁴ According to a letter attributed to the twelfth Imam, Ibn Hilāl was one of the most important scholars in Iraq during the time of the first *ṣafīr* and possessed an amount of money belonging to the Imam, which he refused to pay to the second *ṣafīr*.⁵ The Imamite reports of his refusal to obey Abū Ja'far's instructions are confused and contradictory so it is rather difficult to discover the true state of affairs. According to al-Najāshī Ibn Hilāl had already been cursed by al-ʿAskarī, who had spoken against him on several occasions.⁶ Sa'd al-Qummī states that he abandoned Shī'ism and embraced the *naṣb* doctrine,⁷ whereas al-Ṭūsī accused him of holding an extremist doctrine (*ghulw*).⁸

It is clear that the different accusations made against him are attempts to define his beliefs rather than explanations of his dispute with the second *ṣafīr*. Al-Ṭūsī mentions a report attributed to an agent called Muḥammad b. Humām, which states that Ibn Hilāl denied neither the existence of the twelfth Imam nor the validity of the office of the first *ṣafīr*. When Ibn Hilāl was questioned about this by the Imamites, he replied that the Imam had personally installed the first *ṣafīr*, ʿUthmān b. Sa'īd, and made this known to all the faithful, but he had not done any such thing for Abū Ja'far.⁹ Because of Ibn Hilāl's attitude towards the second *ṣafīr* he was expelled by the Imam in a letter distributed amongst the agents in Iraq which warned that the mystical practices of Ibn Hilāl grew from hypocrisy and dissimulation.¹⁰

Despite the fact that the eminent agents of the organization already knew the cause of Ibn Hilāl's excommunication, some of the Imamite narrators in Iraq who were not agents were astonished at the excommunication of such a pious mystic, and so they rejected the pronouncement. In fact the considerable support for Ibn Hilāl may have been brought about by the Iraqī narrators who did not know about the dispute between Abū Ja'far and Ibn Hilāl concerning the *sifāra*. They asked the agent al-Qāsim b. al-ʿAlā to inquire about the

pronouncement against Ibn Hilāl, and he put this question in writing to the Imam via the second *saḥīf*. The Imam replied:

“Ibn Hilāl was an incorrigible sinner and Allah will not forgive his sins. He behaved like a stubborn and arrogant person. Moreover, he has kept for himself money given for the Imam and refused to carry out our commands unless they suit his wishes. However we kept our composure until Allah fulfilled our prayer by taking away his soul. Concerning his case, we had informed a few of our close associates (*mawālī*) during his time and ordered them to reveal it to the intimates among our adherents. . . There is no excuse for any of our followers to doubt the statements of our confidantes (*thuqātunā*), because we reveal these statements to them.”¹¹

This document shows clearly that Ibn Hilāl had died, but that in spite of the Imam’s strong criticism of him, the second *saḥīf* could not completely eliminate the danger he had stirred up for his office. Al-Kashshī reports that a group of people remained firm in their loyalty towards Ibn Hilāl and doubted the authenticity of the above pronouncement.¹² In fact the loyalty of this body to Ibn Hilāl was mainly based not upon his inward spiritual faith, but upon his external and personal mystic acts. According to the Imamite doctrine, the worship of Allah is invalid without the recognition of and obedience to the Imams.¹³ Hence the mystic acts of Ibn Hilāl were invalid, because he refused to recognise the second *saḥīf*, who had been installed by the Imam himself.

According to al-Ṭūsī, the influence of Ibn Hilāl continued until the time of the third *saḥīf*, Ibn Rūḥ, who circulated another *Tawqī’* on the authority of the Imam against Ibn Hilāl:¹⁴

“Although there are those among the Imamites who do not understand how such a great and pious man could have been excommunicated, what is piety if it please Allah to transform good deeds into sins? Al-Dihqān¹⁵ was also a pious man in the service of the Imam, yet Allah eventually changed his faith into impiety because of his arrogance. This also happened to Ibn Hilāl”¹⁶

In fact it is hard to attribute this *Tawqī’* to the time of the third *saḥīf*, Ibn Rūḥ (305-326/917-937), because during that time there is no trace of the influence of Ibn Hilāl’s claim upon the Imamites. It is most likely that Ibn Rūḥ circulated this pronouncement against Ibn Hilāl on the order of the second *saḥīf* while he was still working as an agent

beneath him, especially if one bears in mind that Ibn Hilāl died in 267/880, a long time before Ibn Rūh held the *sifāra*. It would appear that Ibn Hilāl's challenge had vanished before the death of the second *saḡīr* in 305/917,

1.2 al-Bilālī

According to al-Ṭūsī, a second opponent to Abū Ja'far's claim to the *sifāra* was Abū Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Bilāl, who was commonly called al-Bilālī.¹⁷ He was well known in Imamite circles as a narrator of traditions.¹⁸ Furthermore he was amongst the principal agents in Baghdad and had close relations with both the tenth and the eleventh Imams.¹⁹ The latter described al-Bilālī to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Nisābūrī with this phrase: "He is reliable, trustworthy and is acquainted with what he must do."²⁰ Moreover, according to al-Kulaynī and al-Ṣadūq, al-'Askarī twice revealed to al-Bilālī the birth of his son, the twelfth Imam: firstly in 258/871 and then three days before his death.²¹

However, al-Bilālī denied that Abū Ja'far was the *saḡīr* and claimed that he himself was the agent of the Imam. He kept the money of the Imam in his own hands and refused to relinquish it to Abū Ja'far. Al-Bilālī's claim led to a serious split amongst the Imamites, since a considerable body of Imamites accepted his claim and followed him, such as his brother Abū al-Ṭayyib and Ibn Ḥirz.²² But al-Ṭūsī neither fixes the date of this split nor the duration of al-Bilālī's claims.

It is most likely that al-Bilālī's claim lasted only for a few years after the death of the first *saḡīr*, by which time Abū Ja'far had proved himself to be the rightful *saḡīr* of the Imam. Al-Ṭūsī reports that Abū Ja'far arranged a secret meeting between al-Bilālī and the twelfth Imam to prove to him that he was acting on his behalf. Abū Ja'far took him to one of his houses where, it is said, they met the Imam, who ordered al-Bilālī to hand the money over to Abū Ja'far.²³ Al-Ṭūsī's report reveals that al-Bilālī's importance in the organization was such that Abū Ja'far had to arrange this secret meeting with the Imam in Baghdad to put an end to the doubts raised by al-Bilālī, doubts which had led to a split among the agents. According to al-Ṭūsī, shortly after this meeting Abū Ja'far went to al-Bilālī's house, where his close supporters like Ibn Ḥirz and Abū al-Ṭayyib were assembled. Abū Ja'far asked al-Bilālī,

“O Abu Ṭāhir (al-Bilālī), I ask you by Allah, did the *Ṣāhib al-Zamān* (the twelfth Imam), peace be upon him, not command you to hand the money (of the Imam) which you have over to me?” Al-Bilālī replied, “Yes.” Then Abū Ja‘far left the house.²⁴

It is clear from this report that by these two steps Abū Ja‘far managed to refute al-Bilālī’s claim. Al-Tūsī mentioned one person who abandoned his support of al-Bilālī and took Abū Ja‘far’s side, and perhaps other supporters did likewise, because the existent sources do not refer to any trace of this split during the last years of the second *ṣafīr*’s time in office, a fact which probably indicates that it had ended.

1.3 Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr

A third rival to Abū Ja‘far for the office of the *ṣifāra* was Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr, who was not an ordinary Imamite, but belonged to the extremists, (*al-Ghulāt*). It has been noted that some of the extremists, first during the time of the ninth Imam (such as Ja‘far b. Wāqid, Abū al-Ghamr and Hāshim b. Abī Hāshim), then during the time of the tenth and eleventh Imams (such as ‘Alī b. Ḥaska al-Ḥawwārī al-Qummī and his students al-Qāsim al-Sharānī al-Yaqṭīnī, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Bābā al-Qummī and Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Sharīqī or al-Sharī‘ī), had claimed that they were the agents or the Gates (*Abwāb*) of the Imam and had collected money from the ordinary believers. They also preached extremist ideas aimed at abolishing the Islamic rites, that is, the prayer, fast, *zakāt* and pilgrimage.

According to al-Kashshī their roots lay in the extremist doctrines of Ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb,²⁵ the contemporary of the sixth Imam al-Ṣādiq. However, the presence of the Imams had limited the activities of the extremists, since the Imams used to have direct contacts with their followers and circulated open letters of excommunication against false agents. But the occultation of the twelfth Imam enabled the *Ghulāt* to extend their role as agents or Gates (*Abwāb*) at the expense of the *ṣafīr*, since the *ṣafīr* could not refute their claim by declaring publicly that he was the true Imam’s *ṣafīr*, a declaration which might put his life and the Imam’s life in danger. For this reason, when al-‘Askarī died, Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Sharī‘ī claimed – as has been noted – that he was the Gate (*Bāb*) of the Imam.

According to al-Tūsī, after the death of al-Sharī‘ī, Muḥammad b.

Nuṣayr al-Numayrī aspired to the office of the *ṣafīr*.²⁶ This shows that both men may have been representatives of a single trend. According to al-Kashshī, Ibn Nuṣayr had already claimed that he was the *Bāb* of the tenth Imam.²⁷ Al-Ṭūsī's account suggests that he had abandoned this claim during the lifetime of the eleventh Imam, al-ʿAskarī. It seems that only after the death of the first *ṣafīr* did he dispute the legality of Abū Jaʿfar as the *ṣafīr* and claim that he was the *Bāb* of the twelfth Imam. Therefore Abū Jaʿfar cursed and excommunicated him. Having been excommunicated, Ibn Nuṣayr tried to make Abū Jaʿfar change his mind, but he did not even receive him, so the Imamites excluded him from their community.²⁸

Ibn Nuṣayr was encouraged in his claim by Muhammad b. Mūsā b. Furāt, who belonged to the well-known family of Banū Furāt.²⁹ He was a well-known *muḥaddith* in Kufa and Baghdad and seems to have been the first man from Banū Furāt to hold an important administrative office in the ʿAbbāsīd government.³⁰ With the support of Banū Furāt, Ibn Nuṣayr was able to circulate his claim amongst the Imamites, and, because of the participation of the two of them, their sect was known as “al-Numayriyya al-Furātiyya”.³¹ The vast majority of their followers who came from Madāʿin, and were called al-Ishāqiyya after one of their leaders, Ishāq b. Muḥammad al-Aḥmar.³²

It appears that Ibn Nuṣayr's claims neither weakened Abū Jaʿfar's position nor attracted any of his followers to Ibn Nuṣayr's side, so the latter's influence must have been limited mainly to the extremists. According to al-Nawbakhtī a certain Aḥmad was supposed to have been designated as the successor of Ibn Nuṣayr, but a Nuṣayrī work refers to a certain Muḥammad b. Jundab as Ibn Nuṣayr's successor in the view of the majority of the Nuṣayriyya. It is said that he was in turn followed by Muḥammad al-Junbulānī.³³ But this occurred at a later stage after the death of the second *ṣafīr* in 305/917, so it is beyond the topic of this section. However, it is worth mentioning that, from the time of second *ṣafīr* onwards, the followers of Ibn Nuṣayr separated themselves totally from the direct control of the second *ṣafīr*, Abū Jaʿfar, who in the Imamite view was the only representative of the hidden Imam. Moreover the Nuṣayriyya gave more importance to the role of the *Bāb* than to the Imam himself, which was proof enough to place them outside the circle of the Twelver Imamites.

2. The Activities of Abū Jaʿfar, the Second *Saḥīr*

2.1 The Career of Abū Jaʿfar

Despite the difficulties faced by Abū Jaʿfar because of the false agents Ibn Hilāl, al-Bilālī and Ibn Nuṣayr, he continued to direct the underground activities of the organization, extending its role amongst the Imamites. At the same time he followed in the first *saḥīr*'s footsteps by trying to prove the existence of the concealed Imam to the reliable Imamites. He sought to circulate amongst them the idea that the Imam's occultation had taken place because of divine intervention, that it was a vindication of the traditions related by the previous Imams, and that he, Abū Jaʿfar, was the rightful *saḥīr* of the hidden Imam. Furthermore, he sought to make it possible to continue his duties without being harassed by his encouraging the belief of the authorities, originally fostered by the first *saḥīr*, that al-ʿAskarī had died without leaving a successor.³⁴ He hoped that the government would therefore relax, content in the belief that an uprising was unlikely, because the Imamites no longer had an Imam to rally and lead them.

The dual plan of Abū Jaʿfar as regards the existence of the hidden Imam can be seen in several narrations. At one time, a certain Ḥamdān al-Qalānsī asked Abū Jaʿfar about al-ʿAskarī's successor. Abū Jaʿfar replied, "Al-ʿAskarī has died, but he has left amongst you a successor whose neck is like this",³⁵ and he indicated the size of his neck as a sign that al-ʿAskarī's son had attained maturity. According to al-Ṣadūq, Abū Jaʿfar made the same statement to the well-known scholar ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar al-Ḥimyārī, when the latter asked him about al-ʿAskarī's sons.³⁶ Furthermore on another occasion Abū Jaʿfar informed him as follows:

"The *Ṣāhib al-Amr* (the Imam) attends the pilgrimage every year and sees the people and knows them, while they see him but do not recognise him." He added that he had seen the Imam at *al-Kaʿba* holding its drapes and praying, "O Allah, avenge me against my enemies."³⁷

However, despite the fact that Abū Jaʿfar revealed the existence of the twelfth Imam to al-Ḥimyārī, he warned him against trying to discover his name. The authorities were content that al-ʿAskarī had died without leaving a successor³⁸, but if they were to come to know the name of the Imam and his whereabouts, they would search for him and endanger both his life and the life of his agents.³⁹ Other

reports indicate that the second *ṣafīr* instructed other agents similarly.

A careful study of the activities of the agents reveals that the second *ṣafīr* managed in fact to keep the existence of the hidden Imam secret from the ʿAbbāsids until the early years of the reign of al-Muʿtaḍid (278-89/891-901). Perhaps this was due to the wise instructions issued to his agents by Abū Jaʿfar who, as a part of his prudent fear (*Taqiyya*), carried out his activities unnoticed and in secret. Like his father before him he disguised himself as a butter-seller and acquired the nickname *al-Sammān*.⁴⁰ He used pseudonyms in his underground meetings with some of his agents. According to al-Kashshī, Abū Jaʿfar's name was Muḥammad b. Hafs al-ʿUmarī⁴¹, whereas his real name was Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd, and it might be that the first name was a pseudonym. Furthermore a careful study of the chain of transmitters (*asānīd*) of the Prophetic traditions and the sayings of the Imams shows that there is no reference to his name as a narrator, whereas most of the *Tawqīʿāt* (written and signed answers or pronouncements) attributed to the eleventh and twelfth Imams concerning legal matters came on the authority of Abū Jaʿfar⁴². This fact reveals that he did not wish to implicate himself in any open discussions of religious matters, so that he could hide his real position amongst the Imamites from the government and convey communications between the hidden Imam and his followers, free from the interference of the authorities.

2.2 The Agents of the Second *Ṣafīr* in Baghdad

It has been noted that the first *ṣafīr* had three agents in Baghdad, Aḥmad b. Ishāq, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qaṭṭān, and Ḥājjiz al-Washshāʾ. It appears that the responsibilities of the second *ṣafīr*, Abū Jaʿfar, were greater than that of the first, since according to al-Ṭūsī he had ten people beneath him in Baghdad to run the affairs of the organization. Amongst them was al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī, who later became the third *ṣafīr*.⁴³ Al-Ṭūsī does not name the other agents, but it is most likely that the three agents of the first *ṣafīr* were amongst them, since these three served the organization in Baghdad during the time of the second *ṣafīr*, who had direct contact with them.⁴⁴

Al-Qaṭṭān was the most active amongst the agents in Baghdad.

According to al-Ṣadūq, he had seen the Imam⁴⁵. Al-Kashshī describes his reliability when he relates that, “After Abū Jaʿfar, there was no one on earth closer to the origin (the Imam) than he”,⁴⁶ because he used to be the direct mediator between the Imam and the Imamites via the second *saḡīr*, although the Imamites had no knowledge whatsoever of his relationship with Abū Jaʿfar. Perhaps for this reason a certain agent called al-Ḥasan b. al-Faḍl, who used to deal with al-Qaṭṭān concerning legal affairs, thought that he was the *saḡīr*.⁴⁷

The available sources make it rather difficult to detect the names of the rest of the agents in Baghdad, particularly if one bears in mind the fact that Abū Jaʿfar continued in his office for about fifty years. It is therefore probable that some of the agents, like Aḥmad b. Ishāq, al-Qaṭṭān and Ḥājiz, had died and been replaced by other agents. Ibn Rustam al-Tabarī reports that Aḥmad b. Ishāq died in Hilwān on his way to Qumm, but he does not fix the date of his death.⁴⁸ According to al-Ṣadūq, when Ḥājiz died his office was filled by Muhammad b. Jaʿfar al-Asadī al-Rāzī.⁴⁹ Al-Qaṭṭān seems to have continued his activities after the years 279-282/891-894, when the government tried to arrest him after discovering the existence of the twelfth Imam.⁵⁰ He also carried out his activities during al-Muʿtadid’s regime (279-289/891-901),⁵¹ but there is no reference to him after that period, which may indicate that he died around that date.

Al-Ṭūsī gives several accounts of the last will of the second *saḡīr* in 305/917 which includes the names of the eminent agents at that time. He reports:

“During Abū Jaʿfar’s last illness, the heads of the Shīʿa congregated around him. Among them were Abū ʿAlī b. Humām, Abū ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Kātib, Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Baqtānī, Abū Sahl Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī al-Nawbakhtī, Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Wajnā, and other leaders. They asked him, “If something happens to you, who will succeed you?” He said to them, “This is Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ b. Abī Bahr al-Nawbakhtī. He will be in charge of my office and will be the *saḡīr* between you and the *Sāhib al-Amr* (the Imam), because he is his agent and is honest and trustworthy. So consult him in your matters, and depend on him in your needs, because I was ordered to announce this proclamation.”⁵²

According to another narration Ibn Rūḥ and Aḥmad b. Jaʿfar b. Maṭīl were amongst those who attended this meeting. The agents

thought that, in the case of the death of the second *safīr*, either Ja'far b. Aḥmad b. Maṭīl or his father would succeed him, because of their close relations with him.⁵³

These two reports disclose the names of the chief agents of Baghdad around the year 304-5/916-7 and the fact that the agents Aḥmad b. Ishāq, Hājiz and al-Qaṭṭān, who had been in office in Baghdad from the time of the first *safīr*, had died, as has already been mentioned. Likewise they show that some of the other agents from the time of the first *safīr* were still living and had been promoted to high ranks, like al-Baqṭānī and al-Wajnā.⁵⁴

2.3 The Relationship of the Second *Safīr* to the Agents in the other Provinces

Apart from his agents in Baghdad, Abū Ja'far had other agents in various provinces, who were mediators between the provincial Imamites and the twelfth Imam in legal inquiries and the collecting of the *khums*.

He had three principal agents in Iraq. His agent in Kufa was Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Zajawzjī, whose family had controlled this office since the time of the first *safīr* and who was to hold this office during the time of the third *safīr*.⁵⁵ According to al-Ṭūsī and al-Najashī, the twelfth Imam also had contacts in Kufa with two people from the family of Zurāra: Muḥammad b. Sulaymān (237-300/851-912),⁵⁶ and his uncle 'Alī b. Sulaymān, who died around the year 313/925.⁵⁷ It seems that they were in fact cooperating with al-Zajawzjī and were working under his instruction in their areas. The family of Zurāra had been well-known for their allegiance to the Imams from the time of their great-grandfather Zurāra b. A'yūn (d. 150/767), the companion of the Imams al-Bāqir and al-Ṣādiq.⁵⁸ His grandson Sulaymān had been the agent of the tenth Imam, al-Hādī, both in Kufa and Baghdad. Furthermore, Aḥmad, the son of Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, worked during the time of the third *safīr* under Aḥmad al-Zajawzjī,⁵⁹ which indicates the close relationship between the latter and the family of Zurāra.

In al-Āhwāz the deputyship of the Imam was still in the hands of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Mahzayār. It is said that he received an order from the Imam to follow the instructions of the second *safīr*.⁶⁰ According to al-Ṣadūq one member of this family, Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Mahzayār, doubted the existence of the twelfth Imam. His case

was raised with the Imam, who issued a letter in which he confirmed that Allah would remove his doubt and lead him to recover his faith.⁶¹

The second *safir* extended his activities to new areas. According to al-Ṣadūq his main agents in Wāsiṭ were Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥāʾirī and al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Qaṭāt al-Ṣaydalānī. The latter was the Imam's agent for endowments (*wakīl al-waqf*) in Wāsiṭ, and was contacted by the *safir* through Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Maṭīl.⁶² Al-Mawṣil was another area in which the second *safir* gained partisans, and al-Tusi mentions a certain Muhammad b. al-Faḍl al-Mawṣilī, who had accepted Abu Jaʿfar as the *safir* of the Imam.⁶³ Abu Jaʿfar himself succeeded in attracting some influential people to his side in that area. Al-Irbilī reports that al-Husayn b. Ḥamdān (from the famous ruling family, the Ḥamdānids) became the governor of Qumm in 296/908. After he had been dismissed from his office, he contacted the second *safir* in Baghdad. He paid him the *khums* on all the money he had earned while in office as a sign of his obedience to the twelfth Imam. As a result of his belief, the rest of his family also converted to the Imamite doctrine.⁶⁴

In Sāmarrā the agent was Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad. According to al-Ṣadūq, he had direct contact with both the second *safir* and the Imam.⁶⁵ Meanwhile all the affairs of the Imamites' institutions in Iran were controlled by the agent of Rayy, Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Asadī al-Rāzī. He had direct contact with the second *safir* and previously he had been answerable only to the first *safir*. The other agents of the Iranian provinces were instructed to pay the legal taxes to him. He continued in this office until his death in 312/924.⁶⁶ According to al-Tūsī, at this time al-Qāsim b. al-ʿAlā was the agent of the second *safir* in Azerbaijan. He continued in his office until the time of the third *safir*, Ibn Rūḥ.⁶⁷

The second *safir* carried out extensive secret activities with his agents, whom he used to meet in various districts of Baghdad. During the period of the caliph al-Muʿtaḍid (279-289/892-901) the agents from the remote provinces like Qumm used to contact the second *safir* and convey money and goods to him through traders who had no knowledge of the relationship between those who sent the goods and Abū Jaʿfar as the second *safir*. On the contrary they brought these goods from Qumm to Abū Jaʿfar thinking that he was involved with the traders only commercially.⁶⁸

In his relations with his agents Abū Jaʿfar was careful to leave no trace which the authorities could use against him and which would jeopardise both his own life and that of the Imam. Al-Ṣadūq reports a secret meeting between Abū Jaʿfar and Ibn Maṭīl, one of the ten agents in Baghdad. Abū Jaʿfar took Ibn Maṭīl to a ruin in al-ʿAbbāsiyya in Baghdad,⁶⁹ where he read a letter written to him by the twelfth Imam and then tore it to pieces.⁷⁰ To evade any government spies Abū Jaʿfar also did not implicate himself in any direct contact with agents from remote provinces. He used to order any person who brought letters or money to put them in a certain place, and he would give him no receipt.⁷¹

Another narration indicates that the second *ṣafīr* had established a complicated system of communications between himself and the agents in the Imamite areas. There seems to have been a secret code reserved for the *ṣafīr* and his agents, while the messengers were sometimes ignorant of both the contents of their messages and the code. For example, Abū Jaʿfar once sent messages to Sāmarrā with one of his reliable partisans, but the messenger inserted a letter amongst the other messages without the *ṣafīr*'s knowledge. In Sāmarrā he received answers to all the letters except his own.⁷²

The second *ṣafīr* sometimes dealt directly with certain agents with whom he had previously communicated indirectly. The career of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Aswad is a good example of such a case. According to al-Ṣadūq, al-Aswad used to bring the legal taxes for the Imam to Abū Jaʿfar, who commanded him to hand them over to the well-known scholar al-ʿAbbās b. Maʿrūf al-Qummi,⁷³ and did not offer him any receipt.⁷⁴ However, we later find al-Aswad dealing directly with the second *ṣafīr* and the third *ṣafīr*, who both received in person the money which al-Aswad had collected from the Imamites.⁷⁵

3. The Effect of the Shīʿite Revolutionary Activities upon the ʿAbbāsids' Attitude towards the twelfth Imam

- 3.1** The events of the second *ṣafīr*'s career suggest that he instructed his agents to avoid any act which might lead the government of the day to think that the Imamites still had political aspirations or that they had an Imam leading them secretly. Despite the fact that he directed the Imamites to maintain this policy, the political activities of the other Shīʿite groups, particularly the Zaydites, the Qarāmiṭa and the Ismāʿīlīs, complicated the Imamites' relations with the

‘Abbāsids and made it difficult for them to keep the existence of the twelfth Imam totally concealed from their opponents. When the Zanj revolution (255-270/866-883) was taking place the situation of the Imamites was critical. The leader of that revolution, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, traced his lineage to the brother of Imam al-Bāqir, Zayd b. ‘Alī. For this reason a considerable group of ‘Alids joined his side and participated in his uprising from the year 257/871.⁷⁶ In spite of the fact that the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, had openly announced that the leader of the Zanj was not a member of the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*),⁷⁷ the authorities considered this revolution to be linked with the ‘Alids. According to al-Ṭabarī, the collapse of the Zanj revolt in 270/883 was followed by governmental propaganda against the ‘Alids in general. This attitude can be discerned in the poem of Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Aslamī, who praised the ‘Abbāsīd leader al-Muwaffaq in 270/883 with this verse:

ويتلى كتاب الله في كل مسجد
ويتلقى دعاء الطالبين خاسئاً

And the Book of Allah is recited in every mosque, and the *Tālibiyyīn* invite people to their cause in vain.⁷⁸

It is most likely that the ‘Abbāsīd antagonism towards extreme Shī‘ite groups extended also to the Imamites. According to al-Ṭūsī, the Imamites were too frightened to express their doctrine openly between the years 270-273/883-887.⁷⁹

Another factor which strained relations between the Imamites and the ‘Abbāsīds was the discovery of the underground activities of the two *Ismā‘īlī* parties, the original *Ismā‘īlīs* and the *Qarāmiṭa*.⁸⁰ Like the Imamites, the *Ismā‘īlīs* had reported the Prophetic traditions stating that *al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī* would go into occultation as a preparatory action for his rising.⁸¹ However, they interpreted some of these traditions in a manner which would support their struggle to gain immediate success in North Africa (*al-Maghrib*). Thus they understood the tradition which states that *al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī* will appear when the sun rises from the place of its setting to mean that the *Qā‘im* would rise in the west (*al-Maghrib*).⁸² Furthermore they applied other traditions narrated by the Imamites about *al-Qā‘im al-Mahdī* to their own concealed leader, who had organized his followers

into a strong underground movement and had commanded them to extend their activities into new areas by military means to prepare for his rising as *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.⁸³ According to Sa'd al-Ash'arī the number of the Qarāmiṭa increased in the villages around Kufa, and according to al-Nawbakhtī, they gained about 100,000 partisans there.⁸⁴ Afterwards they expanded their propaganda on the western shores of the Gulf and Yemen, where a large number of Arabs accepted their cause, thus helping them to become powerful. As a result of all this they announced their rebellion,⁸⁵ which according to al-Ṭabarī occurred in the suburbs of Kufa in 278/891.⁸⁶

In the occultation of the twelfth Imam the Ismā'īlīs seem to have found a good opportunity to use the Imamite masses in their political struggle. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the Qarāmiṭa missionary Yahyā b. al-Mahdī went to Bahraīn, which had a large Shī'ite population. In 281/894 he contacted an eminent Shī'ite leader, 'Alī b. al-Mu'allā b. Ḥamdān, and informed him that he had been sent by *al-Mahdī* to inform his followers that his rising was at hand. 'Alī b. al-Mu'allā was satisfied with the message and revealed it to the Shī'ites in the town of Qaṭīf and other villages of Bahraīn. They in turn accepted it and promised that they too would support *al-Mahdī* if he rose. By such means the Qarāmiṭa succeeded in circulating their propaganda among the Arab tribe of Qays and began to collect the *khums*.⁸⁷ By using the same methods, they expanded their activities among the tribes of Asad, Ṭayy and Tamīm in the Sawād; while in the desert of the Samāwa, the tribe of Banū al-'Ulayṣ, which used to protect the trade route between Kufa and Damascus, also joined their side.⁸⁸

It is worth mentioning that the Qarāmiṭa took into consideration the sectarian beliefs and economic situation of the people with whom they worked. Therefore we find that their propaganda spread mainly among people who already had Shī'ite inclinations, such as the Qarmaṭiyyun, who had participated in the Zanj revolt,⁸⁹ and also among the people of the Sawād,⁹⁰ who wished to join the side of any rebel in order to improve their social and economic conditions.

There is evidence that the Qarāmiṭa permitted their followers to kill their opponents and confiscate their property.⁹¹ The Imamites seem to have been aware of the danger of such a principle, since the 'Abbasid government might accuse them of holding the same principle and it could be easy for it to attack them under this pretext. Since both the Qarāmiṭa and the Imamites were Shī'ites and lived in the same areas, practicing the same religious rites, expecting the rise

of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* in the near future, it was difficult for the government to differentiate between them without extensive and careful investigation.

3.2 The twelfth Imam wanted to protect his followers from the influence of the Qarāmiṭa and make the government of the day differentiate between the Qarāmiṭa and his own adherents. Perhaps this is why he is said to have sent a letter to his second *safīr*, in which he denounced and cursed Muḥammad b. Abī Zaynab and his followers (the Qarāmiṭa). He declared that he had no relations with them and ordered his followers neither to have any discussion with them nor to attend their gatherings. The second *safīr* circulated the pronouncement of the Imam among the Imamites via his agent Ishāq b. Ya'qūb.⁹² It seems most likely that the Imamites obeyed the instructions in the pronouncement. According to Ibn al-Athīr, a group of people from Kufa revealed to the Abbāsīd authorities the underground activities of the Qarāmiṭa in their area and informed them that they were inventing rules contrary to Islamic law, according to which it was permissible to murder any Muslim other than those who paid them an oath of allegiance.

Ibn al-Athīr also reports that later a group of Tālibiyyūn fought beside the government against the Qarāmiṭa in Kufa.⁹³ It is plausible that in both of these instances these groups were Imamites, and that these steps were part of their plan to make the 'Abbāsīds realize in a practical way that they were not responsible for the Qarāmiṭa's activities.

However, there is evidence that the 'Abbāsīds paid no attention to the Imamite claims.⁹⁴ The period of al-Mu'tadid (279-289/892-901) was distinguished as one of oppression and pursuit for the Imamites. It was well known among the Sunnī scholars like al-Ash'arī that the Imamites had achieved a consensus in respect of the prohibition of any militant revolution unless the Imam himself appeared and ordered them to such action.⁹⁵ But the propaganda of the Qarāmiṭa concerning the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* seems to have encouraged the government to link their activities with the occultation of the twelfth Imam and to consider them as a preparation for his rising. They were certainly encouraged in this direction by the fact that the cousin of the twelfth Imam, Muḥsin b. Ja'far b. 'Alī al-Hādī involved himself in the Qarāmiṭa's rebellion in Damascus.⁹⁶

This critical situation gave the opponents of the Imamites a vital weapon, which the viziers used not only against the Imamites but also against their own colleagues who were anti-Shī'ite.⁹⁷ In 278/891 the caliph, al-Mu'tamid, ordered the arrest of a member of the Imamite family Banu Furat who had held the office of *Dīwān al-Sawād*. The family members hid themselves, but Abū Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Furāt was still arrested.⁹⁸ In the same time al-Mu'tamid appointed 'Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān, who was well-known for his anti-'Alid attitude,⁹⁹ to the office of the *wizāra*.¹⁰⁰ If one can link the uprising of the Qarāmiṭa in 278/891 with these two steps – taking into account the attitude of 'Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān – one can claim that 'Ubayd Allah's appointment was part of the precautions taken by the 'Abbāsids against Shī'ite activities in general.

Afterward, al-Mu'tamid carried out a careful investigation of Shī'ite underground cells in general. In 282/895 he discovered that Muḥammad b. Zayd, the head of the Zaydite state in Ṭabaristān, was sending 32,000 dinars every year to Muḥammad b. Ward al-'Aṭṭār so that he could distribute the money among the 'Alids in Baghdad, Kufa, Mecca and Medina.¹⁰¹ The continual investigations of al-Mu'tamid caused the arrest and murder of many 'Alids; according to al-Iṣfahānī they were not Qarāmiṭa, but were simply persecuted under that pretext.¹⁰²

As a result of these measures, the authorities realized that the Imamites had their own organization. According to al-Kulaynī the spies of the vizier 'Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān discovered that the Imamites still had an Imam who guided their activities secretly. Al-Kulaynī reports:

“Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥasan al-'Alawī said that two intimates of Badr Ḥasanī (the servant of the caliph) were talking and one of them said, ‘Why, he (the twelfth Imam) is collecting money and has agents, *wukalā*.’ Afterwards they named all the agents in all the districts. Then they reported this information to the vizier 'Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān, who endeavoured to arrest them. But the caliph (al-Mu'tamid) told him to search for the place of this man (the Imam), because this matter was important. 'Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān said, ‘Let us arrest the agents.’ But the caliph said, ‘No, but infiltrate among them some spies who are unknown (in their service to the government), and ask them to give money to the agents. Then arrest anyone who accepts the money.’¹⁰³

Al-Kulaynī does not mention the date of this incident, but we know that ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān continued in the service to the caliph al-Mu‘tadid until the year 288/900, so this incident must have taken place between the years 282-288/895-900.

It is clear from this report that the ‘Abbāsīd spies had reached the conclusion that the eleventh Imam al-‘Askarī had in fact left a successor, who directed the underground activities of his agents; but they were unsure of his place of residence. So they tried to arrest some of his agents and partisans, hoping that by interrogating them they might also arrest the twelfth Imam. For this reason, the caliph ordered that spies be sent with money to infiltrate amongst the agents. However, it seems that the *saḡīr*’s network was so strong and worked so efficiently that his agents from near and far knew at once that the caliph and his vizier planned to act against them. Before the plan to arrest the agents of the Imam could be executed an order to stop the collection of taxes had gone out to almost every agent. When a spy infiltrated as far as the main agent in Baghdad, Muḥammad al-Qaṭṭān, and informed him that he had money and wanted to send it to the Imam, al-Qaṭṭān pretended that he knew nothing about this matter. The other agents acted similarly.¹⁰⁴ It appears that the caliph failed to obtain any information from his spies. Therefore he decided to try to gather information by arresting the Imamites who came to visit the tomb of al-Ḥīr, where al-Ḥusayn was buried, and the tombs of Quraysh, where the seventh and the ninth Imams were buried. However, according to the Imamite sources, this plan was revealed to the Imamites, and an order was sent out to both the families of Banū Furāt and al-Barsīyyīn, warning them not to visit the tombs of Quraysh in Baghdad.¹⁰⁵

According to al-Rāwandī, a report came to the caliph revealing that the twelfth Imam was staying in the house of his father in Sāmarrā. The caliph did not want knowledge of his information to reach the hands of the Imamites, so he himself dispatched three of his personal soldiers to Sāmarrā. He described the house of al-‘Askarī to them and commanded them to enter it and kill whomever they found inside, but he did not reveal to them the name of the person whom they were going to murder. However, the twelfth Imam managed to evade the soldiers, and they returned to the capital.¹⁰⁶

The hostile ‘Abbāsīd attitude towards the agents of the second *saḡīr* continued after ‘Ubayd Allah b. Sulaymān’s death in 288/900. His office was given to his son al-Qāsim. The latter was well-known in his

hatred toward the Imamites and the Shi'ites in general. Throughout his service in office he followed the same policies of his father towards the Imamites and showed more malevolence. Al-Ṭūsī gives a report supporting this point: Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allah of Qumm, who had seen the Imam and had obvious Imamite inclinations, attracted the attention of the vizier al-Qāsim b. 'Ubayd Allah. On several occasions he tried to murder him, so he finally fled to Egypt.¹⁰⁷ According to Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Qāsim arrested many innocent 'Alids on the pretext that they had Qarmaṭian inclinations, and they remained in jail until 291/903.¹⁰⁸

The continual campaigns of arrest carried out by the 'Abbāsids and the ill-effects of the Qarāmiṭa uprisings made the Imam and his agents even more careful. According to Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī the correspondence between the Imam and the *ṣafīr* stopped about this time,¹⁰⁹ probably in order to erase any traces which might lead the authorities to them. As another precautionary measure from the reign of al-Mu'taḍid onwards the Imam changed his place of residence several times. Reports mentioned by al-Ṭūsī indicate that, in an unspecified year, a certain agent told Abū Sawra that he was going to the Maghrib to meet the Imam. Someone else saw him in Syria and another met him in Egypt.¹¹⁰ Yet another report states that the Imam was resident in the mountains near Mecca about the year 293/905.¹¹¹ According to the second *ṣafīr*, the Imam used to perform the pilgrimage every year.¹¹² All these narrations would seem to indicate that the Imam did not stay in one place for more than a short time, perhaps fearing that the authorities would discover his identity and plot against his life.

3.3 The Qarāmiṭa's use of the Prophetic traditions predicting the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* in their struggle to gain immediate political success may have made the Imamites give greater emphasis to the physical signs which would precede the rise of *al-Qā'im* as mentioned in the Prophetic traditions and the statements of the Imams. Al-Kulaynī, who was a contemporary to the second *ṣafīr*, and his student al-Nu'mānī narrate, as has been mentioned before, five signs which must precede the rise of the real *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*: (1) al-Ṣufyānī will rise in Syria and dominate it for only nine months. (2) At the same time a rebel called al-Yamānī (al-Qaḥṭānī)¹¹³ will start a rebellion and advance towards Mecca. (3) Afterwards the pure soul, a descendant

of al-Ḥasan, will revolt in Medina. Its inhabitants will kill him and send his head to al-Ṣufyānī. (4) He will dispatch an army against Medina, but God will cause it to sink into the ground in the vicinity of the city. (5) Thereupon in the morning an outcry in the sky will announce the full name of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, who accordingly will rise in Mecca. These events will take place consecutively within one year.¹¹⁴

It is clear from the Imamite presentation of these signs that they considered them a refutation of the claims of the Ismā'īlī leader who called himself al-Mahdī after his rising in 296/908.¹¹⁵ The emphasis which was given to these signs served to prevent the ordinary Imamites from involving themselves in Shī'ite activities with which the Imamite organization (*al-Wikāla*) was not involved. This view is confirmed by the fact that around this period many traditions were being related and attributed to the previous Imams warning the Imamites not to participate in any revolution before the rise of *al-Qā'im*.¹¹⁶

The circulation of these traditions led people to feel that they should live peaceably and not involve themselves in any activities which might lead to revolution. This conclusion along with the five signs of the rise of *al-Qā'im*, encouraged some Imamites to put forward the idea that the establishment of the state of the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*) is the responsibility of *al-Qā'im* himself and that any militant decision must be delayed until the rise of *al-Qā'im*. In fact these traditions were intended as warnings against taking part in militant activities led by false claimants. But because of the way people interpreted them, very little attention was given to the traditions which encouraged the people to prepare for the rise of the twelfth Imam after his occultation. It is reported that the tenth Imam said, "If your Imam goes into occultation, expect freedom from grief (to come from) beneath your feet."¹¹⁷ It is clear that the above statement of al-Hādī meant that it is the responsibility of every follower of the hidden Imam to prepare for the rise of their Imam by their own efforts.

It is most likely that this quiescent approach was encouraged by the Imamite scholars, whose role increased during the time of the second *ṣafīr*.¹¹⁸ These people trained the ordinary Imamites to follow the instructions of the narrators during the occultation of the Imam. They were aided in achieving this aim by a statement attributed to the twelfth Imam: "Concerning the occurrences which will happen,

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consult the narrators of our traditions, because they are my proof towards you, and I am the Proof of Allah.”¹¹⁹ It appears that by such methods the Imamite narrators were able to prevent the Imamite masses from taking part in the militant activities of the Qarāmiṭa. However, this quiescent attitude, which was only a precautionary measure taken against the Ismāʿīlīs, developed later into the fundamental approach towards the question of the rise of *al-Qāʾim*.

4. The Death of Abū Jaʿfar

It is reported that the second *ṣaḥīḥ* prophesied the time of his death and prepared his own gravestone upon which Qurʾānic verses and the names of the Imams were inscribed. He died in 305/917¹²⁰ and was buried in his house on the road leading to Kufa, on the western side of Baghdad.¹²¹

CHAPTER VI

THE CAREER OF THE THIRD *SAFĪR*, AL-NAWBAKHTĪ

1. Al-Nawbakhtī's Activities During the Time of the Second *Safīr*

The third *safīr* was Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ b. Abī Baḥr al-Nawbakhtī. He remained in the office in the years 305-326/917-937, although the date of his birth is not known. According to Ibn Shahr Āshūb, al-Nawbakhtī was a close associate of the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, and was his Gate (*Bāb*),¹ but it is difficult to accept such a report because al-‘Askarī died in 260/874 and al-Nawbakhtī died in 326/937.

There are several reports indicating that al-Nawbakhtī was a native of the traditional Shī‘ite city of Qumm. Al-Kashshī and Yahyā b. Abī Ṭayy (d. 630/1232) called him al-Qummī.² Moreover al-Nawbakhtī was fluent in the Persian dialect of the people of Ābah, one of the suburbs of Qumm,³ and this suggests that he belonged to the branch of Banū Nawbakht resident in Qumm. However, he had emigrated to Baghdad during the time of the first *safīr*. According to al-Ṭūsī, he was brought up in Baghdad under the guardianship of Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Bilāl,⁴ who later denied that Abū Ja‘far al-‘Umarī was the second *safīr* of the twelfth Imam. Al-Nawbakhtī joined the service of the second *safīr* and became his agent (*wakīl*). Despite his youth al-Nawbakhtī was distinguished by his shrewdness, particularly in his relations with opponents.⁵ Perhaps it was this quality which enabled him to climb quickly in the ranks of the organization.

Al-Nawbakhtī spent several years working as an agent for the second *safīr*, who used to pay him a salary of 30 dinars a month. He also received financial support from high Shī‘ite officials and viziers like Banū Furāt. The second *safīr* employed him to look after his

properties and made him the connecting link between himself and the other leaders of the Imamites.⁶ According to al-Tūsī, al-Nawbakhtī was the intermediary between the second *ṣafīr* and the two agents of Kufa, al-Zajawzī and Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī.⁷ His service in the *Wikāla* helped him in contacting high Shīʿite officials of the ʿAbbāsīd administration, particularly his relatives Banū Nawbakht and also Banū Furāt.⁸ By the year 298/910 he had become highly respected by the people. At that time an interesting occurrence took place which reveals his importance. Al-Ṣadūq narrates that an ʿAlid called al-ʿAqīqī went to visit the vizier ʿAlī b. ʿIsā al-Jarrāḥ asking him to solve his financial problems, but the vizier would not listen to him. Therefore al-Nawbakhtī sent a message to al-ʿAqīqī and solved his difficulties.⁹ This narration gives some indication of the social position of al-Nawbakhtī while he was still an agent of the second *ṣafīr*.

2. The Installation of the Third *Ṣafīr*

As we have already seen, (106-7) the ten eminent agents in Baghdad expected that Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad b. Maṭīl would take over the office of the second *ṣafīr* when he died. But on his death bed, when the agents were all gathered together, he appointed Ibn Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī, saying that the twelfth Imam had ordered him to do so.¹⁰

At that time the Imamites put forward different reasons for the designation of Ibn Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī. Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of the second *ṣafīr*, thought that Ibn Rūḥ was promoted to the office of the deputyship (*ṣifāra*) because of his close relationship with her father. She reports that her father even used to reveal to him what had occurred between himself and his slave-girls.¹¹ However, according to the agent Ibn Qurd, the other nine agents in Baghdad, especially Ibn Maṭīl, were closer to the second *ṣafīr* than Ibn Rūḥ.¹² It seems most likely that Ibn Rūḥ had personal qualifications which made him a suitable *ṣafīr*. Indeed we have a report attributed to Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī to support this point. The latter was asked by some Imamites as to why he had not been promoted to the *ṣifara* instead of Ibn Rūḥ. He answered,

“They (the Imams) know best about whom they have selected for this office. I am a person who meets opponents and argues with them. If I had known what Abū al-Qāsim (Ibn Rūḥ) knows

about the Imam, perhaps in the course of my arguments, having found myself under the attack of enemies to give them well-founded reasons for the existence of the concealed Imam, I would have pointed out his whereabouts. But if Abū al-Qāsim had the Imam underneath his garments, and if his flesh was being cut into pieces to make him reveal his whereabouts, he would not yield or reveal his presence to his foes.”¹³



This document indicates that Ibn Rūḥ was promoted to the *sifāra* mainly because of his loyalty and the shrewdness which he had shown on several occasions. Therefore we cannot accept the opinion of Sachedina, who thinks that the appointment of Ibn Rūḥ as *saḥīr* to the twelfth Imam, “must have been influenced by another eminent member of the Nawbakht family, namely Abū Sahl Ismā‘īl b. ‘Alī. He was one of those leading Imamites, who were present in the last days of the second agent to bear witness to the designation of Abū al-Qāsim as the agent.”¹⁴

In fact, there are also many points to encourage us to disagree with Sachedina’s opinion. First, the installation of all the twelve Imams in the office of the Imamate from Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib until the time of the twelfth Imam, had been carried out neither by the interference of their followers nor by election. As has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout this work the fact is that the promotion of each new Imam occurred according to the personal stipulation (*al-Ta yīn bi-l-Naṣṣ*) of the preceding Imam in his last will. Moreover the installation of the first and second *saḥīrs* had followed the same method. They were promoted to the office of the *Wikāla* by the order of the Imam and there is no evidence to prove that Ibn Rūḥ was not similarly appointed. Second; none of the ten eminent agents, who were present at that meeting, expected to participate by election, nomination or other means in the appointment of Abū Ja‘far’s successor. On the contrary, they attended the meeting so as to know who would be stipulated as the third *saḥīr* by the order of the Imam himself. Third, the second *saḥīr* had ordered his personal servant, Dhakā, that in the case of his death, he should hand his staff and the treasure chest over to Ibn Rūḥ.¹⁵ Fourth, if we take into consideration the fact that the rest of the ten agents recognised the promotion of Ibn Rūḥ, especially Ibn Maṭīl, who was expected to be the third *saḥīr*,¹⁶ and the fact that al-Shalmaghānī, even after his own aspiration to the office of the *Sifāra* recognised Ibn Rūḥ as the *saḥīr*,¹⁷ it is clear that

Ibn Rūḥ must in fact have been appointed by the Imam himself and neither Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī nor his family did influence the Imam's decision.

3. The Activities of Ibn Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī

According to al-Dhahabī, after the death of the second *ṣafīr* in 305/917, his successor Ibn Rūḥ went to the headquarters (*Dār al-Niyāba*) of the organization, where he met the eminent Imamites such as the servant of the second *ṣafīr*, Dhakā. The latter prepared the things which his master had entrusted to him, that is, the staff and the treasure chest containing the seals of the Imams, and handed them over to Ibn Rūḥ as he had been instructed. Thereafter Ibn Rūḥ together with the other agents went to the house of Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shalmaghānī,¹⁸ his close associate who later became his rival.

From the very beginning, Ibn Rūḥ proved his ability to lead the organization successfully. His shrewdness enabled him to avoid the consequences of participation in the sectarian discussions which took place at the palace of Ibn Yasār, one of the high officials of al-Muqtadir, the caliph. He used to attend those discussions only as a listener. According to al-Tusi, Ibn Rūḥ was so cautious that he even discharged his servant because he had cursed Mu'āwiya.¹⁹ Perhaps he took this step to avoid the danger posed by the vizier, Hāmid b. al-'Abbās (306-311/918-923), who was well-known for his hatred of Shī'ites generally.²⁰

There is evidence that the ten agents of the second *ṣafīr* continued their activities under al-Nawbakhtī. Among these agents were Ja far b. Aḥmad b. Matīl, Abū Abd Allah al-Kātib, al-Ḥasan al-Wajnā', Muḥammad b. Humām, 'Ismā'īl b. Ishāq al-Nawbakhtī, Aḥmad b. Matīl, Muḥammad al-Aswad, and al-Madā'inī. Two other names also appear in the lists of the agents in Baghdad: al-Shalmaghānī and Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nawbakhtī. The latter was a narrator of traditions and the husband of Umm Kulthūm, the daughter of the second *ṣafīr*, and Ibn Rūḥ employed him as his personal secretary. The former was appointed as an agent by Ibn Rūḥ after he had become the *ṣafīr*.²¹

Through his ten agents in Baghdad Ibn Rūḥ directed the activities of the Imamite agents and their underground political cells in the other provinces. He sent his first letter of instructions to the agent of al-Ahwāz, Muḥammad b. Nafīs, on 5th Shawwāl 305/23rd

November 917, in which he confirmed him in his office.²² He appointed his agent al-Shalmaghānī to supervise the underground Imamite cells among the people of Banū Bisṭām in Baghdad²³ and made him the mediator between himself and the agents of Kufa, Abū Jaʿfar al-Zajawjī and Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Zurārī.²⁴ Al-Shalmaghānī continued his supervision of the agents of Kufa and Baghdad until the year 312/923, when Ibn Rūḥ discharged him from his office and excommunicated him after he had taught the incarnation of God in human form.²⁵

According to al-Ṭūsī, Abū ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥasan al-Wajnāʿ, one of the ten agents in Baghdad, practised his activities in Nišībīn and Mosul. In 307/919 he met a certain individual called Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Mawṣilī who denied that Ibn Rūḥ was the *saḥīr* of the twelfth Imam. He tried to convince him that Ibn Rūḥ was truly appointed as *saḥīr* by the Imam, but al-Mawṣilī argued that, if Ibn Rūḥ was so, he must show miracles as the first and the second *saḥīrs* did before. In order to content him, al-Ḥasan al-Wajnāʿ brought him to Baghdad, where he saw with his own eyes Ibn Rūḥ's miracles which prompted him to recognize him as the rightful *saḥīr*.²⁶

This report reveals that al-Ḥasan al-Wajnāʿ was appointed by the third *saḥīr* to direct the Imamites' activities in the province of Jazīra. In Wāsiṭ, al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Qaṭāt al-Saydalānī, the *Wakīl al-Waqf* during the time of the second *saḥīr*, and Ibn Matīl, who had worked as the connecting link between al-Saydalānī and the second *saḥīr*,²⁷ continued their activities during the time of Ibn Rūḥ.²⁸

As has already been noted, some reports reveal that because of the persecution of the Imamites which had been carried out by the caliphs al-Muʿtaḍid (279-89/892-902) and al-Muktaḍī (289-95/902-8) and their attempts to arrest the Imam, he changed his place of residence from Sāmarrā to the Hijaz. This situation naturally led to difficulties as regards the methods of communication between him and his agents. Furthermore information concerning the relations between the third *saḥīr* and his agents in the other provinces is rare and obscure. However, there is evidence that the Imam continued to practise his activities from Mecca. Al-Ṭūsī relates that a certain Ya qūb b. Yūsuf al-Ghassānī saw a group of men from different provinces come to the house where the Imam lived and correspond with them through an old serving woman. Some of those men were from Baghdad.²⁹ Al-Ṣadūq reports that the agent al-Ḥasan al-Wajnāʿ met the Imam at the same house in 314/926,³⁰ which indicates that the

residence of the Imam was in the Hijaz during the time of the third *ṣafīr*. But there is no available reference to the names of the agents in Mecca and Medina.

The Imam also had agents in Egypt who recognized the *ṣifāra* of Ibn Rūḥ.³¹ According to al-Tūsī, al-Qāsim b. al-‘Alā was still the agent in Azerbaijan. He directed the Imamite activities through two assistants, that is Abu Ḥāmid ‘Umrān b. al-Mufallis and Abū ‘Alī b. Jaḥdar, and also used to look after the personal domain which the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, had endowed to the twelfth Imam. Correspondence between al-Qāsim b. al-‘Alā and Ibn Rūḥ took place through a messenger who used to come to Azerbaijan. After the death of al-Qāsim his son al-Ḥasan was promoted to the office by the order of the Imam.³²

In Iran, Muḥammad b. Ja far al-Asadī al-Rāzī, the agent of Rayy, had been instructed by the second *ṣafīr* to supervise the activities of the agents of the other Iranian provinces. He continued this supervision during the time of the third *ṣafīr*. But after the death of al-Rāzī in 312/924,³³ the method of communication between the agents in Iran and Ibn Rūḥ changed from indirect correspondence via al-Rāzī to direct contact between Ibn Rūḥ and the agents. Al-Ṣadūq reports several narratives in support of this point. For example, ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Bābawayh, the leader of the Imamites in Qumm, made direct contact with the third *ṣafīr* via the agent in Baghdad, al-Aswad.³⁴ An agent from Balkh, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣayrafī, did likewise. He collected the tax dues (gold and silver) from the Imamites of Balkh and handed them over to Ibn Rūḥ in Baghdad, and he continued his direct contact even during the time of the fourth *ṣafīr*, al-Sammārī.³⁵ In the same way al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Qummī received ten gold ingots from Ibn Jāwshīr, who asked him to hand them over to Ibn Rūḥ, so he did so.³⁶ These reports indicate that the position of Ibn Rūḥ as the *ṣafīr* of the twelfth Imam became well-known amongst the Imamites, in contrast to that of the first and the second *ṣafīrs*, whose office had been kept secret. For this reason some ordinary Imamites were encouraged to ignore the agents of their areas and contact the third *ṣafīr* directly.

Ibn Rūḥ was highly esteemed by the ‘Abbāsīd court during the time of the caliph of al-Muqtadir (295-320/907-932). This can be attributed to the influence of Ibn Rūḥ’s family, Banū Nawbakht, in the ‘Abbāsīd administration, an influence which had begun during the time of the caliph al-Manṣūr (d.158/774) and lasted until the time

of al-Muqtadir. Ibn Rūḥ himself participated in the Abbāsīd administration. According to al-Jahshayārī, he was at one point in charge of the personal domain of the caliph (*Diwān al-Ḍiyā al-Khāṣṣa*).³⁷ Therefore we find some agents, such as Abū Ghālib al-Zurārī, paying respect to Ibn Rūḥ because of the economic and political influence of his family.³⁸ Abbās Iqbāl illustrates Ibn Rūḥ's influence by reporting that, during the time of the vizier Ḥāmid b. al-ʿAbbās (306-311/918-923), Ibn Rūḥ's house became the place for the meetings of administrators, nobles, and deposed viziers, especially Banū Furāt.³⁹ Most likely Ibn Rūḥ exercised his influence upon the Shīʿites, who were working in the administration, encouraging them to employ their brothers in faith in the ʿAbbāsīd administration and offer financial help to the needy among the Shīʿites in general. Certain references indicate that these instructions were put into action by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Furāt. According to Ibn Khallikān, he used to support 5,000 people financially.⁴⁰ When he was a vizier he appointed the agent Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī as governor of the Mubārīk district of Wāsīt and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Bazawfarī as governor of the district of al-Sulḥ and al-Muzāraʿāt in Wāsīt.⁴¹ Simultaneously Muḥsin b. al-Furāt appointed the Baghdad agent al-Shalmaghānī as deputy to certain governors in other districts.⁴²

Participation in the administration enabled the agents to study the economic and political situation of the government and facilitated communications through their administrative positions.

Despite Ibn Rūḥ's great influence he seems to have been put in a critical situation by the militant activities of the other Shīʿites, particularly the Qarāmiṭa. These were used by his rivals as a pretext to cause his arrest. In 311/923 a caravan of Baghdādī pilgrims, including some relatives of the caliph al-Muqtadir, were attacked and captured by the Qarāmiṭa, an act which caused the people of Baghdad to be very upset. Since the Qarāmiṭa were Shīʿites, this gave the enemies of the Shīʿites, like Naṣr al-Ḥājib the chamberlain, an excellent weapon against the vizier Ibn al-Furāt. Naṣr claimed that because Ibn al-Furāt was Shīʿite, he had encouraged the Qarāmiṭa to attack the pilgrims. Moreover, the masses were provoked to shout in public that Ibn al-Furāt and his son Muḥsin were the "greater Qarmaṭī and the lesser Qarmaṭī". In 312/924, as a result of these events Ibn al-Furāt and his son were discharged and then murdered.⁴³ Al-Tūsī reports that Ibn Rūḥ was arrested in 312/924, but does not give any reason for his imprisonment. Al-Dhahabī claims that his

arrest was caused by the inflammatory propaganda against the Qarāmita. He was accused of corresponding with the Qarāmita in an effort to have them besiege Baghdad.⁴⁴ According to Ibn ‘Arīb, Ibn Rūh was arrested because he failed to hand over to the government the money which he owed it.⁴⁵ This reveals that some officials may have falsely accused Ibn Rūh of corresponding with the Qarāmita in order to facilitate his arrest. In any case, Ibn Rūh spent five years in jail until the caliph, al-Muqtadir, released him in 317/929.⁴⁶

Ibn Rūh recovered his previous respect and reputation, renewed his direct supervision over the Imamite activities, and once again received money from the Imamites. Many of his relatives, such as Ishāq b. Ismā‘īl (d. 322/933), Alī b. al-Abbās (d. 324/935) and al-Ḥusayn b. Alī b. al-Abbās, had managed to maintain high offices in the Abbāsīd administration, so his influence increased. Many influential officials and deposed viziers like ‘Alī b. Muqla sought his acquaintance in order to pave the way for their advancement in the ‘Abbāsīd administration.⁴⁷ For example, the vizier Ibn Muqla spent 20,000 dinars on estates and endowed them as *awqāf* for the Tālībīyyīn in 319/931.⁴⁸ But later he lost his office and therefore asked Ibn Rūh to help him. Ibn Rūh contacted his relative al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. al-‘Abbās al-Nawbakhtī, who was the secretary (*kātib*) of *Amīr al-Umarā*, Ibn Rā‘iq, and asked him to support Ibn Muqla in his efforts to recover his office, which were successful in 325/936.⁴⁹

At the same time that the third *safīr* was wielding his powerful influence in official circles, he was faced with the serious deviation of his main deputy, al-Shalmaghānī, who began to make claims outside Islamic beliefs.

4. The Third *Safīr* and al-Shalmaghānī

Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Abi al-‘Azāqir al-Shalmaghānī, who was brought up in the village of Shalmaghān situated in the suburbs of Wāsīt, became one of the reciters (*qurrā*) of the Qur’an in Wāsīt. Afterwards he moved to Baghdad where he joined the ‘Abbāsīd administration, working as secretary (*kātib*).⁵⁰ He was also an Imamite scholar (*faqīh*) and wrote eighteen works dealing with Shī‘ite law and theology, among which is his book *al-Ghayba*. His writings were highly esteemed by the Imamites before his deviation.⁵¹

It has been noted that after the promotion of Ibn Rūh to the *sifāra*, he appointed al-Shalmaghānī to direct the activities of the Imamites

in Baghdad, especially those of Banū Bistām, and those of the two agents of Kufa, al-Zajawzī and al-Zurārī.⁵² Al-Shalmaghānī continued directing the Imamites' activities in Baghdad and Kufa for many years. He was well-known for his impatient political ambitions, and he may have lost hope of gaining power in the near future by following the instructions of the twelfth Imam to the letter. Therefore he decided to ignore the twelfth Imam's instructions and started searching for other groups to achieve his political ambitions. According to Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Shalmaghānī paid allegiance to the Ismā'īlī Mahdī.⁵³ However, Ibn Ḥawqal is the only narrator of this occurrence, and he gives neither the date of al-Shalmaghānī's deviation, nor the reason he later abandoned his Ismā'īlī ties. It is most likely that he turned away from the Isma'ilis to the underground movement of the *Ghulāt* because he found in their belief in the incarnation of God (*ḥulūl*) in human form the best means to put his political and economic ambitions into action.

According to al-Shalmaghānī's belief, throughout the course of history God has been incarnated in human form. In other words, God was incarnated first in the body of Adam and thereafter transmigrated to the bodies of the Prophets. After the Prophet Muḥammad, He transmigrated to the bodies of the Imams until the time of the eleventh Imam, and then He appeared in the body of al-Shalmaghānī himself. Simultaneously Allah had created His foe *Iblīs*, who was also incarnated and who transmigrated throughout the course of history into a series of wicked human forms. According to al-Shalmaghānī, Allah's purpose in His incarnation and transmigration was to prove His existence and His excellence.⁵⁴

Al-Shalmaghānī did not leave the Imamite organization immediately after his deviation nor did he announce the incarnation of God in his own body. Several reports suggest that he used his office as a deputy of the *saḥīr*, Ibn Rūh, to train gradually the agents who were below him to accept his heretical teachings. The agent Muḥammad b. Humām reports that he heard al-Shalmaghānī saying, "The truth (God) is one, but His forms are several. One day He takes on a white form, another day a red one, and on another a blue one." Ibn Humām reports, "This was the first statement which caused me to reject al-Shalmaghānī, because this was the doctrine of the people of the incarnation of God (*al-Ḥulūliyya*)."⁵⁵ According to another report al-Shalmaghānī managed to persuade some agents together with their families, especially the agents of Banū Bistām, to

accept the doctrine of the incarnation of God and the transmigration of souls. Afterwards he divulged to them that the soul of the Prophet had transmigrated into the body of the second *saḥīr* Abū Jaʿfar, the soul of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had transmigrated into the body of the third *saḥīr* Ibn Rūḥ, and the soul of Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, had transmigrated into the body of Umm Kulthūm, the second *saḥīr*'s daughter. At the same time al-Shalmaghānī told the sub-agents not to divulge this secret, because it was the true faith.⁵⁶

It appears that Ibn Rūḥ discovered the deviation of al-Shalmaghānī through a female missionary, Umm Kulthūm, who used to supervise the Imamite activities among the females of Banū Bisṭām. He ordered her to stop her relations and her secret meetings with them. He told her that al-Shalmaghānī had impressed his deviation so deeply on their hearts that they would even accept it if he were to claim that Allah Himself had become incarnated in his body; then he would follow in al-Ḥallāj's footsteps and claim that he was Allah.⁵⁷ The precise date of this incident is unknown. However, according to Ibn al-Athīr the deviation of al-Shalmaghānī began during the early time of the vizierate of Ḥāmid b. al-ʿAbbās, between the years 306-311/918-923.⁵⁸ This is consistent with al-Ṭūsī's report, which indicates that the deviation of al-Shalmaghānī must have occurred before 312/924.⁵⁹

After discovering al-Shalmaghānī's heretical ideas, Ibn Rūḥ discharged him from his office and caused knowledge of his heresy to become widespread, first among the people of Banū Nawbakht and then among others.⁶⁰ Afterwards he ordered the agents to sever their relations with him. It seems that the agent of Kufa, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Zajawjī followed this order, because al-Ṭūsī reports that he considered anyone possessing the book *al-Taklīf* by al-Shalmaghānī as extremist.⁶¹ But the agents of Banū Bisṭām in Baghdad refused Ibn Rūḥ's order and continued to receive instructions from al-Shalmaghānī. For this reason Ibn Rūḥ disclosed al-Shalmaghānī's situation to all the Imamites and excommunicated him along with all those who paid attention to him.⁶²

Ibn Rūḥ's announcement reveals that a considerable body of the agents in Baghdad and the ordinary believers had been influenced by al-Shalmaghānī. After his excommunication, he began propagating the idea that he and not Ibn Rūḥ was the rightful representative (*saḥīr*) of the twelfth Imam.⁶³ Through this claim and his belief in the incarnation of Allah in the bodies of the Prophets and the Imams, al-

Shalmaghānī tried to monopolize the economic and political positions of the organization. Later he even advanced the claim that Allah was present in his own body,⁶⁴ and that *Iblīs* was localized in the human form of the twelfth Imam, since the latter was known as *al-Qā'im*. Here al-Shalmaghānī was claiming that *al-Qā'im* ("the one standing") meant *Iblīs*, who had refused to prostrate himself before Adam when other angels had done so.⁶⁵ He also claimed that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was Allah, and that He had sent Muḥammad to be His Prophet, but that the latter had betrayed Him. Therefore 'Alī gave Muḥammad a period of truce lasting about 350 years, at the end of which Islamic law would be changed. Then the law would have a new interpretation, e.g. Paradise would be the acceptance of al-Shalmaghānī's claim and allegiance to him, while Hell would be the rejection of his doctrine. Moreover, he aimed at eliminating the main claimants to the caliphate, particularly the 'Alids and the 'Abbāsids, and considered himself the rightful claimant to all religious and political authority.⁶⁶

The political ambitions of al-Shalmaghānī are obvious in his materialistic interpretation of the Qur'anic verses concerning Hell and Paradise to serve his own ambitions. These are especially apparent with reference to two points. Firstly, he fixed a date for the change of the Islamic Sharī'a; 350/967. By this "prophecy" he was attempting to mobilise people to support him in his preparation for the "coming age". Secondly he concentrated his propaganda among the high officials of the 'Abbāsīd army and administration and gained a considerable number of followers, like Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs, Ibrāhīm b. Abī 'Awn, the author of the book *al-Tashbīhāt*, Ibn Shabīb al-Zayyāt, Abū Ja'far b. Bisṭām and Abū 'Alī b. Bisṭām, all of whom were secretaries (*kuttāb*) of the state.⁶⁷ In 312/924 al-Muḥsin b. al-Furāt, the son of the vizier Ibn al-Furāt, joined his side and enabled his followers to penetrate the 'Abbāsīd administrative circles.⁶⁸ Moreover, al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim b. 'Ubayd Allah b. Wahb, who held the vizierate between the years 319-20/931-2, was one of the partisans of al-Shalmaghānī.⁶⁹

It has already been noted that the third *saḥīr* was imprisoned in 312/924. Al-Shalmaghānī seized this opportunity to expand his activities among the Imamites, who had not yet received an answer from the Imam himself concerning the claims of al-Shalmaghānī. Therefore the Imam sent via Ibn Rūḥ this pronouncement concerning his attitude towards the claims of al-Shalmaghānī:

. . . Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, known as al-Shalmaghānī, is one of those upon whom Allah has hastened His judgement and to whom He has granted no respite. He has deviated from Islam and separated himself from it. He has become an apostate from the religion of Allah, making claims which indicate the denial of Allah, the Most Glorious and High, fabricating lies and falsehoods, and pronouncing untruths and great transgressions. Those who associate another with Allah are in far error and clearly suffer great loss. For indeed we declare ourselves free (of any relationship with al-Shalmaghānī) before Allah, may He be exalted, and His messenger and his family, may the blessings of Allah, His peace, His mercy and His benediction be upon them according to His benevolence; while we curse him (i.e. al-Shalmaghānī), may the curses of Allah be showered successively (upon him) externally and internally, secretly and publicly, at every time and in every circumstance. And (may the curse of Allah be) upon those who agree with him and follow him, and also upon those who, having heard our announcement, continue to pay allegiance to him.

So inform them (the Imamite agents) that we shall guard and take precautions against him, as was the case with those who preceded him and held similar views, like al-Sharīʿī, al-Numayrī, al-Hilālī, al-Bilālī and so forth. For the traditions of Allah are conformable to us. In Him we place our trust, and from Him we seek assistance. He is sufficient for us in all our affairs and is the best of Guardians.⁷⁰

According to al-Tūsī the agent Muḥammad b. Humām received this pronouncement from Ibn Rūḥ while he was in prison. He spread it personally among all the agents in Baghdad and sent it to the agents in the other cities until it became well-known among the ordinary Imamites.⁷¹

According to Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Rūḥ disclosed al-Shalmaghānī's claim even to the ʿAbbāsids. As a result in 313/925 the vizier al-Khāqānī tried to arrest him,⁷² an attempt which brought about the imprisonment of many people who had inclined towards him.⁷³ However he disappeared and escaped to Mosul, where he took refuge from the ruler Nāṣir al-Dawla al-Hasan b. ʿAbd Allah b. Ḥamdān. He lived there in a village called Ma althāyā in the vicinity of Mosul. However, he did not break off communication with his followers in

Baghdad. According to al-Najāshī, during his concealment in the village of Ma'althāyā, al-Shalmaghānī narrated his books to a certain Abū 'Abd Allah al-Shaybānī. He was an Imamite *Muḥaddith* who lived in the Nawbakhtiyya district of Baghdad,⁷⁴ but he later turned away from the Imamite school.⁷⁵

In 316/928 al-Shaybānī returned secretly to Baghdad⁷⁶ in order to be in direct contact with his followers, whose activities had spread widely among the officials of the Abbāsīd administration, a development which can possibly be regarded as a step toward his objective of obtaining power. Al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim b. 'Ubayd Allah b. Wahb, the partisan of al-Shalmaghānī, was promoted to the vizierate in 319/931 and his name was stamped on the coin beside the name of the caliph al-Muqtadir.⁷⁷ As a vizier Ibn Wahb enabled his partisans to assume high positions, but after a year he was discharged. Later the new caliph al-Qāhir (320-322/932-934) exiled him to al-Riqqah in Syria because of his allegiance to al-Shalmaghānī. He also arrested his comrades, especially the Banū Biṣṭām, and seized their property.⁷⁸ This campaign continued until al-Shalmaghānī himself was arrested in 323/934. Along with a few of the leading personalities of his movement, like Ibn Abī 'Awn, he was tortured and executed, and the corpses were burnt at the police headquarters (*Dār al-Shurṭa*) on the western side of Baghdad.⁷⁹

Ibn Rūḥ's influence and authority among the 'Abbāsīds increased after the persecution of al-Shalmaghānī, who was their common enemy. Thus Ibn Rūḥ recovered his high influence and became close to the caliph al-Rāḍī (322-29/934-40). Moreover it appears that Ibn Rūḥ's cooperation with the 'Abbāsīds against al-Shalmaghānī led the caliph al-Rāḍī to think that his activities with the Imamites had no connection with the twelfth Imam and would probably cease in the near future. Al-Ṣūlī reports:

Al-Rāḍī sometimes mentioned that the Imamites used to hand the *khums* (*al-amwāl*) over to Ibn Rūḥ but we refuted this accusation, and claimed that it was a lie. So he said to us, "What is wrong with that? By Allah, I wish that there were a thousand people like him to whom the Imamites might bring their possessions so that Allah might impoverish them. I do not mind if they (Ibn Rūḥ and others) become rich through receiving their possessions (i.e. those of the Imamites)."⁸⁰

The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam

Ibn Rūḥ died on the 18th of Shaʿbān 326/20 June 938, and was buried in al-Nawbakhtiyya district⁸¹ in the western side of Baghdad.⁸² He was succeeded by Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sammārī.⁸³

CHAPTER VII

THE FOURTH *SAFĪR* AND THE COMPLETE OCCULTATION OF THE TWELFTH IMAM

1. The Career of the Fourth *Safīr* (326-329/937-941)

Al-Ṭūsī reports that Ibn Rūh designated Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Sammārī as his successor.¹ According to al-Ṭabarsī, this designation was by the stipulation and order of the twelfth Imam himself.²

His surname is derived from the name of al-Sammar or al-Ṣaymar, situated in one of the districts of Baṣra, where the relatives of al-Sammārī used to live.³ According to al-Mas‘ūdī many members of this family, like al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad, the sons of Ismā‘īl b. Ṣāliḥ and ‘Alī b. Ziyād, had large estates in Baṣra. They devoted half of the income from these estates to the eleventh Imam, who used to receive it every year and correspond with them.⁴ Moreover, some of al-Sammārī’s relatives were agents of the twelfth Imam. Among these was ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ziyād, who had also been an agent to the tenth and eleventh Imams and who wrote a book called *al-Awṣiyyā* to confirm the Imamate of the twelfth Imam.⁵ He was the brother-in-law of the vizier Ja‘far b. Muḥammad, a relationship which enabled him to achieve an important office in the ‘Abbāsīd administration.⁶ According to al-Kulaynī, the twelfth Imam divulged to him in a letter that his death would occur in 280/893, when it actually occurred.⁷

These points indicate that al-Sammārī came from a family whose members were well-known for their Shī‘ite beliefs and their service to the organization. In fact, such a background was necessary to enable al-Sammārī to reach the office of the *sifāra* with little opposition, especially if one takes into consideration the prolonged occultation of the twelfth Imam, which shook the faith of a considerable body of the Imamites.

However, the *sifāra* of al-Sammārī was too short-lived to cause any remarkable changes in the relations between him and the other agents. Although nothing is known about the details of his activities,

a report mentioned by al-Ṣadūq makes it clear that the agents recognised him as the rightful *ṣafīr* and handed the *khums* over to him.⁸

Al-Sammārī died on the 15th of Shaʿbān 329/15th May 941 and was buried in al-Khaljanī street in the quarter of al-Muḥawwal.⁹ According to Yāqūt, this quarter was situated to the north of the village of Burāthā, on the western side of Baghdad.¹⁰

A week before the death of al-Sammārī the following pronouncement (*Tawqīʿ*) was issued by the twelfth Imam:

May Allah give good rewards to your bretheren concerning you (i.e. on your death), for indeed you shall die after six days. So prepare your affairs, and do not appoint anyone to take your place after your death. For the second occultation has now occurred, and there can be no appearance until, after a long time when Allah gives His permission, hearts become hardened and the world becomes filled with injustice. And someone shall come to my partisans (*Shīʿa*) claiming that he has seen me; but beware of anyone claiming to have seen me before the rise of al-Ṣufyānī and the outcry from the sky, for he shall be a slanderous liar.¹¹

Six days after the announcement of this document the principal agents congregated at the death-bed of the fourth *ṣafīr* and asked him who was to take charge of his office. Al-Sammārī replied, "To Allah belongs the matter which He shall accomplish" (*Li-llāh amr huwa bālighuk*).¹² This was the last statement heard from al-Sammārī, the fourth *ṣafīr*. Thereby direct communication between the *ṣafīrs* and the twelfth Imam was brought to an end. In other words the short occultation had ended and the second occultation or, according to the later sources, the major occultation had begun.

2. An Analysis of the *Tawqīʿ* of the Fourth *Ṣafīr*

The pronouncement of the twelfth Imam illustrates five points:

Firstly, it reveals that the fourth *ṣafīr*, al-Sammārī, would die six days after the issue of the *Tawqīʿ*. According to the Imamite reports, al-Sammārī did die on the mentioned day. It is worth pointing out that the twelfth Imam is also said to have predicted the times of the deaths of the three previous *ṣafīrs*.¹³ For the Imamites this prediction was strong proof that the *Tawqīʿ* had been issued by the Imam

himself.

Secondly, the Imam ordered the fourth *saḥīr* not to designate anyone to succeed him or to be in charge of his office, “*wa-lā tūṣī ilā ahad fa-yaqūm maqāmak ba‘d wafātik.*”¹⁴ This clearly indicated the end of direct communication between the Imam and his *saḥīrs* and agents. Hence the Imam in the *Tawqī‘* denies that he will have any personal *saḥīr* during the second occultation before his return:

And someone shall come to my partisans (*Shī‘a*) claiming that he has seen me; but beware of anyone claiming to have seen me before the rise of al-Ṣufyānī and the outcry from the sky, for he shall be a slanderous liar.¹⁵

The highly developed activities of the organization, which continued for about 69 years between the years 260-329/874-941 were ended by the death-bed statement of the fourth *saḥīr* as regards his successor: God would do what He wished in this matter, “*Li-llāh amr huwa bālighuh.*”¹⁶

Thirdly, the *Tawqī‘* announces the beginning of the second, or the complete occultation (*Fa-qad waqa at al-Ghayba al-Thāniya aw al-Tāmma*),¹⁷ which al-Nu‘mānī describes as the period of confusion, *al-Hayra*.¹⁸ Al-Muḥīd calls it the longer occultation (*al-Ghayba al-Tūlā*), whereas the later Imamites refer to it as the major occultation (*al-Ghayba al-Kubrā*).¹⁹

Fourthly, there can be no appearance of the Imam until Allah gives him His permission. His return will take place when it becomes far from the expectation of the people because of the hardening of their hearts and the filling of the world with tyranny.²⁰

Fifthly, the *Tawqī‘* indicates that the appearance of the Imam will be preceded by two inevitable signs, that is the rise of al-Ṣufyānī, who according to early traditions will rise and dominate Syria, and the outcry in the sky in the name of the Imam.

After quoting the *Tawqī‘* Rajkowski states as follows:

... this document is a clear indication that the leaders of *al-Shī‘a al-Qaṭ‘iyya* had lost hope in the speedy arrival of al-Mahdī and thought that the moment of *al-Zuhūr* might still be very distant; so that it was no longer possible to keep up the pretences of direct communication between the successive Ambassador and the *Ṣāhib al-Zamān*. It was better to leave the Shī‘ites without an official mediator, and rely only on al-Mahdī’s invisible protection and inspiration.²¹

Rajkowski seems to be suggesting that the eleventh Imam died heirless and the leading Imamites invented the idea of the occultation (*al-Ghayba*) and claimed that the *safīrs* had direct communications with al-‘Askarī’s successor. Rajkowski’s theory seems to have inspired Jihād al-Ḥasanī to hold similar views concerning the role of the four *safīrs*. He says,

...by resorting to the claim of being agents for the concealed Twelfth Imam, the four Twelver agents were apparently able to put themselves forward in the position of the leadership though they were not from the line of descent of the Prophet.²²

The hypothesis of these two authors might be sound if there were no clear proof that al-‘Askarī had left a successor or that traditions were circulating in Imamite circles before 260/874 indicating that the series of the Imams would end with the twelfth Imam, who would be *al-Qā’im*.²³ However, it has been demonstrated that it was highly probable that the eleventh Imam had showed his son to about forty of his adherents among whom were the first two agents, ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd and Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān.²⁴ Furthermore, the evidence has strongly suggested that the eleventh Imam sent his son to Medina in 259/873,²⁵ where he stayed during the time of the first *safīr*. Moreover, the Imamite organization, the *Wikāla*, was established during the time of the sixth Imam al-Ṣādiq. Had it appeared suddenly after the death of al-‘Askarī without the spread of traditions before 260/874 predicting the *Ghayba* and without the explicit appointment of ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd and his son Muḥammad (Abū Ja‘far) by the eleventh Imam as the agents of his son the twelfth Imam,²⁶ one could agree with Rajkowski’s statement and with Montgomery Watt, who says:

...the Imamite theory of twelve Imams did not come into being of its own accord, as it were, following upon certain events known to all. The theory was an interpretation of selected events, and was deliberately created by politicians to further their own – perhaps very worthy – ends.²⁷

We have already mentioned that the Imamites consider *Wilāya* (allegiance and obedience to *Ahl al-Bayt*) as the fifth pillar of Islam. According to them, the practice of all the other pillars (the prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, pilgrimage) is invalid without the recognition of the rights of the Imam.²⁸ They report many traditions stressing the

necessity of the existence of an Imam until the Day of Judgement, such as the well-known saying attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib:

Allah, I know that knowledge (*al-‘Ilm*) cannot disappear completely, its sources cannot cease, and You cannot leave Your earth without a proof (*Hujja*) of You for Your creation, either manifest and unobeyed or afraid and unknown (i.e. in a state of occultation). Otherwise Your proofs (*hujāj*) would be (sent) in vain, and Your followers would go astray after You have guided them.²⁹

Al-Saffār (d. 290/902) reports that al-Bāqir interpreted the Qur’anic verse, “*Indeed you are a warner and for every people there will be a Guide.*” (al-Ra‘ad, XIII, 7), as follows: The “warner” is the Prophet, peace be upon him, and in every time there is someone who will guide others to what the Prophet brought. These guides are first the Prophet of Allah, then the Guided ones (*al-Hudāt*); that is, ‘Alī and the Imams (the “legatees”, *al-Awsiya*).³⁰

Al-Kashshī reports a tradition attributed to the eighth Imam, al-Riḍā: “The Imam cannot pass away unless he sees his successor, except for *al-Qā’im*.”³¹

All of these traditions depict the Imamite belief in the necessity of the continuity of the *Imāma*. Any break in its continuity would mean its overthrow as a principle of the religion. The short occultation did not signify the non-existence of the twelfth Imam, because he continued to carry out his activities via his four *safīrs* until the year 329/941. Thus, regardless of the “creations of politicians,” it is quite clear that the first occultation of the twelfth Imam occurred within a religious environment where this event had come to be expected.

As we have noted, the ‘Abbāsīd authorities wanted to restrict the activities of the Imams, so they included them amongst their courtiers and placed them under house arrest, so that they could no longer practice their activities amongst their followers. Restrictions were placed upon the Imams from the time of al-Riḍā and were greatly increased during the Imamate of the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī.³² As a result, the Imams devised a policy to save their last successor from a similar situation. They realized that any son born to the eleventh Imam would be hidden from the eyes of the ‘Abbāsīds so that he could carry out his activities *incognito*. To this end they encouraged the transmission of traditions (*ḥadīth*) predicting an Imam who would be hidden from sight and would implement his policies in

secret amongst his followers; and this would be the twelfth Imam. Such steps were taken so as to prepare the Imamites to accept the *saḥīrs* as the Imam's intermediaries.

In the light of this explanation, it is worth mentioning a few of the traditions which were reported by al-ʿAsfarī, who died in 250/863, that is, ten years before the death of al-ʿAskarī:

i) Al-Bāqir said to his companion Abū al-Muqdam, "O Abū al-Muqdam, what would you do if an occultation (*sabta*) occurred between the Haramayn (i.e. Mecca and Medina) . . . My father used to say that would happen and that Allah does what He wills. . ."

ii) The Prophet is reported to have said, "I and eleven of my descendants and you, O ʿAlī, are the axis of the earth, its pegs and its mountains. . . When my eleven descendants pass away, then chaos and disorder will occur among the people."

iii) The Prophet is reported to have said, "(There will be) from my descendants eleven leaders (who will) be noble and receive and understand (knowledge). The last of them will be *al-Qā'im*, who will fill the world with justice after it has been filled with tyranny."³³

These and other traditions were spread in both Imamite and Zaydite circles. Al-ʿAsfarī, who was a member of *al-Zaydiyya al-Jārūdiyya*, was himself awaiting the rise of *al-Mahdī* in the near future and used to carry his sword with him. As already mentioned, he once said that he carried his sword so that he would always be ready to fight along with *al-Mahdī*.³⁴

According to al-Ṣadūq these traditions and others predicting the occurrence of the *Ghayba* were the main reason for the Imamite acceptance of the *Ghayba* and for their being satisfied that the series of the Imams should stop at the twelfth. For the Imamites the acceptance of the *Ghayba* is a matter of obedience to the orders of the Imams.

3. The Imamite Learned Men's Attitude Towards the Second Occultation

As has already been indicated, during the period of the short occultation (260-329/874-941) more than two generations of Imamites were brought up under the careful supervision of the agents and with the teachings of the Imamite narrators (*al-Muḥaddīthūn*), in order that the new generation would recognize that religious authority derives from indirect communication with the hidden

Imam, via his four *safīrs*. Their arguments and instructions concerning the hidden Imam were based mainly on the traditions attributed to the previous eleven Imams before the year 260/874, including the traditions narrated by al-‘Aṣfarī. Although the Imamites split into fifteen groups and held different views concerning the successor of al-‘Askarī at the time of the first *safīr*, the teaching and the underground activities of the second *safīr* met with success. His followers (*al-Imamiyya al-Qat‘iyya*) carried out intensive propaganda to prove the existence of the twelfth Imam and the necessity for his occultation without specifying the date of his reappearance: “concerning the release from suffering (i.e. the rise of the Imam) it is in the hand of Allah and those who try to fix certain times for it are liars.”³⁵ Thus the teachings and doctrine of the followers of the second *safīr* dominated Imamite circles, whereas the other groups disappeared. During the time of the third and the fourth *safīrs* we find the new generation of Imamites more obedient to the *safīrs* and willing to accept their statements as the statements of the twelfth Imam. They were all the more willing because, as we have noted, all the pronouncements (*Tawqī‘āt*) issued to the four *safīrs* and attributed to the twelfth Imam were written in the same handwriting and in the same style.³⁶ The identical handwriting explains the consensus among the Imamites to be obedient to the last pronouncement of the fourth *safīr*, by which the first occultation came to an end and the second began.

There is evidence that when the last pronouncement of the twelfth Imam proclaimed the end of direct communication with the fourth *safīr*, the agents ceased their underground activities and in particular refrained from collecting the *khums*. In other words the Imamite underground organization (*al-Wikāla*), which had been established during the time of al-Šādiq (d. 148/765), was dissolved by that pronouncement. Henceforth anyone claiming to be the *safīr* of the Imam was considered an unbeliever and imposter. For this reason the Imamites cursed Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Uthmān al-‘Umārī, known as Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, the nephew of the second *safīr*, when he claimed that he was the *safīr* of the twelfth Imam.³⁷ Al-Ṭūsī gives an example of how the agents refrained from collecting the *khums*:

Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Walīd al-Qummī came to Basra as the representative of his father and the group (i.e. the agents in Qumm). The Imamites questioned him concerning

rumours that he was the deputy of the Imam. But he denied them, saying: "I have no right in this matter" So they offered him money as a test, but he rejected it and said, "It is forbidden for me to take it, because I have no right in this matter (i.e. the deputyship of the Imam), and I have never made such a claim."³⁸

Perhaps these two examples are a further evidence that the theory of the occultation of the twelfth Imam was not "the creation of politicians" to further their own ends. In fact, there were some people motivated by political and worldly aspirations, such as al-Shalmaghānī and Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, whose followers held that they were the *safīrs* of the hidden Imam. However, the Imamites totally rejected their claim.³⁹

The agents' decision to end their activities led the Imamite narrators (*al-Muḥaddīthūn*, *al-Ruwāt*) to the belief that since no new *safīr* had been appointed, the second occultation which they called the "period of trial and confusion" had begun. They supported their conclusion with traditions attributed to the previous Imams indicating that *al-Qā'im* would have two forms of occultation before his rising, one of them being short and the other long. Al-Nu'mānī may have been the first scholar to give this particular interpretation to existing traditions. After quoting nine traditions predicting the two forms of *Ghaybas* and attributed to al-Ṣādiq on the authority of seven of his disciples⁴⁰, al-Nu'mānī comments:

The authenticity of these traditions mentioning that *al-Qā'im* has two occultations has been proved – Praise be to Allah. For by bringing about the occultation He has authenticated the statements of the Imams.

As for the first occultation, it is that during which there were *safīrs* between the Imam and the people, *safīrs* who had been appointed by the Imam and who carried out their activities while living amongst the people. . . This is the short occultation, whose days have come to an end and whose period has passed away.

The second occultation is the one during which the *safīrs* and the mediators have been removed for a purpose intended by Allah and planned for in the creation. In other words, throughout this period testing, examination, trial, sifting and purification will be the lot of those who claimed (to be

Imamites), just as is stated in the Qur'an: *It is not (the purpose) of Allah to leave you in your present state till He shall separate the wicked from the good. And it is not (the purpose of) Allah to let you know the unseen.* (Al-Imrān III, 179). . . This explains our statement that the Imam has two occultations and that we are living in the second.⁴¹

Al-Nu'mānī's interpretation of the two *Ghaybas* became the foundation for most explanations put forward by the Imamite jurists from the time of al-Sadūq (d. 381/991) in *Kamal al-Dīn wa-Tamām al-Ni ma* and al-Khazzāz al-Rāzī al-Qummī (d. 381/991) in *Kifayāt al-Athār fī al-Nusūs alā al-Ā'imma al-Ithna 'Ashar* through the period of al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1700) in *Biḥār al-Anwār*.

However, a contemporary scholar, Sachedina, writes as follows:

It is plausible to maintain that the division of the *Ghayba* into short and long is the innovation of the Imamite jurists. In support of this division, traditions were either invented or interpreted to accommodate the situation as it appeared to them.⁴²

But Sachedina's hypothesis does not bear scrutiny, because the belief in two *Ghaybas* did not come newly into being after the death of the fourth *saḥīr* in 329/941, nor was it invented by al-Nu'mānī and those scholars who followed his footsteps, such as al-Ṣadūq, al-Khazzāz, al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) and al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). They merely clarified the consistency between the two concealments of the twelfth Imam and the traditions predicting their occurrence.⁴³ From the historical viewpoint there are several reports which reveal that the traditions speaking about two concealments already existed prior to the year 329/941 when the second occultation began and that they were used by the Wāqifa and the Imamites.

The Wāqifa who stopped at the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim (d. 183/799) contending that he was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, had narrated these traditions. Among the Wāqifite narrators is Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Aḥmad al-'Alawī, who wrote a book in support of Wāqifite doctrine called *Fī Nusrāt al-Wāqifa*. He mentions this tradition attributed to al-Ṣādiq:

The *Ṣāhib al-Amr* (i.e. *al-Qā'im*) will have two occultations, one of which will be longer than the other. Finally people will say that he has died and others will say that he has been killed. Only a few of his followers will continue to support his

Imamate, and no one will know his whereabouts and his affairs except his servant.⁴⁴

As we have seen (p.58), one group of the Imamites held that the eleventh Imam had not died in 260/874, but had merely disappeared and would return and be recognized, only to disappear again before finally rising as *al-Qā'im*.⁴⁵ According to al-Nawbakhtī (d. ca. 310/922) this group based its claim on the generally accepted narration which states that *al-Qā'im* will have two concealments.⁴⁶ Agha Buzurg reports that such traditions were included by al-Hasan b. Mahbūb al-Zarrad in *Kitāb al-Mashyakha*,⁴⁷ and by al-Faḍl b. Shadhān (d. 260/873) in *Kitāb al-Ghayba*,⁴⁸ but these works are not extant. Fortunately, al-Kulaynī, who lived during the short occultation, has included three of these traditions in *al-Kāfī*. According to one of these traditions, al-Ṣādiq said:

Al-Qā'im will have two concealments, one of them short and the other long. In the first only his intimate partisans will know his whereabouts, while in the second only his close associates will know his whereabouts.⁴⁹

These traditions predicting the two concealments of the twelfth Imam which are reported by al-Hasan b. Mahbūb, al-Faḍl b. Shadhān and al-Kulaynī were not invented by the Imamite narrators as is Sachedina's belief. On the contrary, such traditions were the main reason why Imamite scholars like Ibn Qubba⁵⁰ and al-Nu'mānī put forward the claim that the twelfth Imam was *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, since they applied them to the historical circumstances which accompanied the career of the twelfth Imam from 260/874 until the discontinuation of his direct communication with his followers after the death of his fourth *saḥīr* in 329/941. Thus al-Nu'mānī, after narrating such traditions, states,

Considering the large number of traditions predicting the concealment transmitted through the centuries, if the concealment had not occurred the very principle of the *Imāma* would be invalid. However by its occurrence Allah the Exalted has proved the authenticity of the Imams' warnings about the occultation and the correctness of their belief in it which they held generation after generation. In so doing, Allah obliged the Shī'a to accept it.⁵¹

4. The Attitude of the Ordinary Imamites towards the Second Occultation

Despite the fact that the Imamite narrators like al-Nu'mānī accepted the second occultation of the twelfth Imam and contented themselves with the traditions going back to before 260/874 which predicted its occurrence, the vast majority of the ordinary Imamites disagreed with them. They argued that if the Imam was born in 256/870, he was 73 years old by the end of the first occultation in 329/941, and this accords with the life span of a normal person. They concluded that he had probably died, since death is the natural end for a person living to such an age. Al-Nu'mānī describes the confusion among the Imamite populace as follows:

The majority of the Imamites asked regarding the successor of al-Ḥasan, "Where is he?", "How could this happen?", "For how long will he be concealed?" and "How much longer will he live, since he is now about 73 years old?" Some of them believed that he was dead. Other groups denied his birth or even his existence, and mocked those who believed in him. Some merely found it difficult to accept the prolongation of his concealment because they could not imagine that it was within the power of God. . . to prolong the age of His *walī* (i.e. the Imam) . . . and cause him to reappear afterwards.⁵²

According to al-Nu'mānī the bulk of these groups abandoned their belief in the hidden Imam. In fact those who continued to hold a firm belief in his Imamate were a small minority belonging to the circles of narrators, like Ibn Qubba and al-Nu'mānī himself, who based their belief on the traditions of the Imams.⁵³

Many scholars shared the perplexity of the Imamite masses over the prolonged occultation of the twelfth Imam. According to Ibn al-Nadīm, Abū Sahl Ismā'īl b. 'Alī al-Nawbakhtī was the first to hold the opinion that the twelfth Imam had died during his occultation, that his son had succeeded him, and that the *Imāma* would continue in his progeny until Allah resurrected the twelfth Imam.⁵⁴ The attribution of this statement to Abū Sahl may be sound, because in his defence and vindication of the concealment of the Imam written around the year 290/902, he does not expect the concealment to last beyond the life span of an ordinary person. He writes,

Until the present time there has been one of his hidden and reliable adherents, who claims that he is the Imam's Gate (*Bāb*) and the intermediary for his commands and orders to his followers. The period of the occultation (of the Imam) has not become so prolonged that it is exceptional and beyond the length of the concealments of those who went into concealment before him.⁵⁵

Muḥammad b. al-Hasan b. Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Ṣalt al-Qummī was another Imamite scholar baffled by the discontinuation of direct communication with the Imam because of his prolonged occultation. Thus he went along with a philosopher from Bukhara in doubting the Imam's existence.⁵⁶

Several remarks made about twenty years after the beginning of the second occultation (around the year 352/963) suggest that confusion and despair over the immediate return of the twelfth Imam became a dominant feature in Imamite circles. Moreover harsh attacks on the concealment of the twelfth Imam by such Mu'tazilites as Abū al-Qāsim al-Balkhī⁵⁷ and such Zaydites as Abū Zayd al-'Alawī⁵⁸ and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād⁵⁹ increased this confusion among the Imamite populace from Nisapur to Baghdad, so that many Imamites abandoned their belief.⁶⁰

The confusion over the prolongation of the occultation along with the attacks from opposition groups encouraged the Imamite narrators to justify the *Ghayba* by composing works. At first they gathered their material from traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams. Such works are exemplified by al-Nu'mānī's *Kitāb al-Ghayba* and al-Ṣadūq's *Kamāl al-Dīn*. The latter explains that he composed his work while he was living in Nisapur, because concealment of the Imam caused perplexity and bafflement among the majority of the Shī'a who used to visit him and consequently they had gone astray. Their number included even the well-known Qummī scholar Muḥammad b. al-Salt. This situation provoked him into writing a work quoting the authentic narrations attributed to the Prophet and the Imams on this issue. According to him, these narrations had already been assembled in *al-Uṣūl al-Arba'mi'a* and had been written down before 260/874 by the followers of al-Ṣādiq and the other Imams.⁶¹ He also devotes a chapter to people who lived to be more than 100 years old in order to vindicate the advanced age of the twelfth Imam during his occultation.

By the end of the 4th/10th century, it seems that the argument based on traditions and employed by al-Kulaynī, al-Mas'ūdī, al-Nu'mānī, al-Ṣadūq and al-Khazzāz were no longer sufficient.⁶² Hence the Imamite scholars resorted to theological arguments (*Ilm al-Kalām*) and used them extensively to vindicate the Imam's concealment. Al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) was perhaps the pioneer in this period. In his work *al-Fusūl al-Ashara fī al-Ghayba* he tries to prove the existence of the hidden Imam on the basis of two principles: the necessity of the existence of an Imam at every period of time and the infallibility of this Imam. Al-Mufīd's treatment of this subject became the framework for later Imamite scholars like his pupil al-Karajakī (d. 449/1057), al-Murtada and al-Tūsī. In *al-Ghayba*, the last of these advances both the traditional and the theological arguments for vindicating the complete occultation of the twelfth Imam. However that may be, the theological approach goes beyond the historical approach of the present work and pertains to a later period.

5. The Application of the Epithet *al-Mahdī* to the Twelfth Imam

The traditions used by the Imamites during the short occultation to support the view that the twelfth Imam was the one who will rise with the sword (*al-Qa'im bi-l-sayf*) were the same traditions talking about the twelfth Imam as the expected Mahdī. In other words, the two ideas, *al-Qa'im* and *al-Mahdī*, were already combined and applied to the twelfth Imam at the time of the Prophet. But, as we have already seen (pp 21- 23, 30) the Imams due to certain reasons revealed it only to a few of their followers instructing them not to publicize it. In spite of this Sachedina holds that

... the Mahdīism of the twelfth Imamite Imam was a later development in the theory of the Imamate of the hidden Imam, which combined the already known belief in the coming of *al-Mahdī* to restore justice and equity with the prolonged occultation of the twelfth Imam.⁶³

Sachedina reached this conclusion after examining the *Kutub al-Ziyarāt*⁶⁴ which was included by al-Majlisī in his work *Bihār al-Anwār*.⁶⁵ According to Sachedina the earliest work of this literary

genre is related on the authority of the twelfth Imam himself in reply to a letter written by Abd Allah al-Himyari (d. 290/902). Sachedina says,

In this *Ziyarah* which I have carefully examined, there is no mention of the title *al-Mahdī* at all. The twelfth Imam is not addressed as the Mahdī, the one promised by the Prophet. This is the first *Ziyarah* mentioned in this section of the *Book on the Shrines*.⁶⁶

From the historical point of view there are several points in Sachedina's thesis which are open to question.

Firstly, according to sayings attributed to al-Bāqir and al-Jawād, all the Imams hold the title *al-Qā'im*, inferring that they have been entrusted with the execution of Allah's order (*Kullunā Qā'imun bi-Amr Allāh*); in addition, they all hold the title *al-Mahdī*, whose duty is to guide people to the Religion of Allah (*kullunā Nahdī ilā Dīn Allāh*).⁶⁷ For this reason, we find that in the books on pilgrimage or *Ziyara*, all the Imams are addressed as *al-A'imma al-Rashīdūn al-Mahdiyyun*.⁶⁸ Consequently the twelfth Imam must hold the title of *al-Mahdī* in this meaning, even though here the word has quite a different meaning from the epithet *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, the one promised by the Prophet who will rise with the sword.⁶⁹

Secondly, in the Imamite works there is a certain consistency between the signs indicating the rise of *al-Qā'im* and his performance of his duty on earth following his return and those pointing to the rise of *al-Mahdī*. This can be noted in such statements as the following:

وان المهدي انتصر به لديني واطهر به دولتي وانتقم
به من اعدائي واعبد به طوعا وكرها .
واذا قام القائم سار فيه بالسيف والسيوف
وذلك انه يهزم ان يشيعته لم يظهر اعيانهم
من بعده احد .⁷⁰

It becomes clear from numerous statements of this nature that the Imams used two different titles when referring to one person. A tradition attributed to al-Sādiq makes the identity between the two figures explicitly for when he was asked by his follower Abū Sā'id al-Khurasānī, "Are *al-Mahdī* and *al-Qā'im* one and the same person?" He replied "Yes."⁷¹ Hence we find that al-Nu'mānī sometimes refers

to the twelfth Imam as *al-Qā'im* and sometimes as *al-Mahdī* without imagining that such an application of the two terms would lead to confusion among the Imamites. It is clear that the two titles refer to the same person since al-Nu'mānī also reports a narration attributed to al-Bāqir revealing that *al-Mahdī* is *al-Qā'im bi-l-Sayf*:

When the *Qā'im* of the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*) rises he will distribute equally among the people and deal justly with his subjects. He is called *al-Mahdī* because he will be the Guide to secret matters.⁷²

For this reason al-Nu'mānī refers to the twelfth Imam as *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.⁷³ Moreover it is clear that the expected Mahdī acquired this title because he will be 'guided' by Allah and will guide men to undertake a spiritual transformation of society, just as he acquired the title *al-Qā'im bi-l-Sayf* because he will rise by militant means to put into practice this transformation, namely the establishment of a truly Islamic State based entirely upon the *sharī'a* as interpreted and implemented by the Prophet and his rightful successors, the Imams. This can also be seen in al-Mufīd's interpretation of the doctrine of return (*al-Raj'a*):

I say that Allah the Exalted will return some of the dead people to the present world in the physical forms which they had before. He will do this to honour one group and to debase another, to grant superiority to the faithful over the deniers, and to judge between the oppressors and the oppressed. This will take place after the rising of *al-Mahdī* of the Family of Muḥammad.⁷⁴

Moreover most of the 'Alids who had been inspired by the Prophetic tradition predicting the rise of *al-Mahdī* held the title *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* when they rose in arms, like Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who rose in 199/814.⁷⁵

Thirdly, al-Kulaynī and al-Mas'ūdī, both of whom lived during the period of the short occultation, report a tradition which explicitly refers to the twelfth Imam as *al-Mahdī*: 'Alī b. Abī Tālib said,

I thought about a child who will be from my flesh, the eleventh from my line of descendants. He is the *Mahdī* who will fill the earth with justice and equity when the height of injustice and tyranny in the world has been reached. He will live in a state of occultation as a result of which a group of people will go astray and another will remain faithful.⁷⁶

Al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991) includes similar traditions referring to the twelfth Imam as *al-Mahdī* and as *al-Qā'im*.⁷⁷ He also cites the text of a visit (*ziyara*) to the twelfth Imam during his occultation which is attributed to the second *ṣafīr*, Abū Ja'far, (d. 305/917), who addresses the twelfth Imam as *al-Hujja al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*.⁷⁸

In the light of these points one can conclude that after the twelfth Imam went into occultation for the first time, the Imamite scholars considered him as *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, the one who will rise with the sword. This was a strongly supported belief by the time of the occurrence of the second or complete occultation.

6. The Effect of the Complete Occultation on the Position of the Imamite *Fuqahā'*

The occurrence of the second occultation of the twelfth Imam, followed by the immediate dissolution of the Imamite *Wikāla* after the death of al-Sammārī, the fourth *ṣafīr* in 329/941, left a serious vacuum in the Imamite leadership. This situation allowed the Imamite jurists (*al-Fuqahā'*) to extend their activities. They reached a consensus that the concealed Imam would be alive until the moment of his rising in arms, irrespective of the length of his concealment. They based their view upon such traditions as that attributed to al-Ṣādiq, who says to his adherent Hāzim,

O Hazim, the *Sāhib al-Amr (al-Qā'im)* has two occultations and will rise after the second one. Anyone who comes to you claiming that he has purified his hands in the soil of his grave (i.e. the grave of *al-Qā'im*), do not believe him.⁷⁹

But in reality they found themselves in need of a leader to save the congregation from possible disintegration, and there was no one to undertake this task except themselves. By the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century the ordinary Imamites were accepting the statements of the jurists as the actual statements of the twelfth Imam, but they did not consider their authority equal to his.⁸⁰ In other words the *fuqahā'* were considered the spokesmen for the Imam's views concerning Islamic doctrine and law. But they were not in charge of the office of the *Imāma* because as is explained by authors such as al-Ṭūsī and al-Majlisī, it is not possible for anyone to hold the position of Imam before the rise of *al-Qā'im*.⁸¹

For this reason the eminent leaders of the Imamites, al-Mufīd (d.413/1022) and al-Tūsī (d. 460/1067), refused to give themselves authority over the half of the *khums*⁸² which was set aside for the Imam. Al-Mufīd held that any faithful follower who wanted to pay the Imam's share should put it aside and either keep it in a safe place or bury it. In case of his death, he should turn it over to a trustworthy person to give to the Imam when he rises. As for the other half of the *khums*, which is called *sadat* share, it should be divided into three shares and distributed equally among the needy members of the Prophet's family, i.e. the orphans, the poor and the penniless travellers.⁸³ Al-Mufīd's view was also held by such later scholars as al-Tūsī, Abū al-Ṣalāḥ and Ibn Zahra al-Halabī. This consensus among the *Fuqahā'* concerning the *khums* continued until the 7th/13th century. But since the twelfth Imam's occultation prolonged, the believers did not know what to do with the Imam's share in the *khums*, which they have been trusted with by their predecessors. By the beginning of the 7th AH/13th century the Imamite *Fuqahā'*, in particular, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hillī wanted to solve this problem. He began receiving the Imam's share in the *khums* and spent it on religious activities serving the Shī'ite cause. This step taken by the later *Fuqahā'* marked a break with the authority of the earlier *Fuqahā'*. It was a factor along with other previous factors for the extension of the role of the *Fuqahā'* after the second occultation which can be seen in the following points:

Firstly, the prolongation of the occultation of the twelfth Imam enabled the Imamite *fuqahā'* to develop their role from mere narrators of traditions into *mujtahidūn*. It has been noted that as regards legal statutes (*al-Aḥkām*) the *fuqahā'* used to consult the twelfth Imam via his four representatives during the time of the short occultation (260-329/874-941). In other words their main function was to narrate the traditions of the Imams, and they continued to perform this function in the early years of the second occultation.⁸⁴ Thus they rejected the arguments based on reason (*ʿAql*) put forward first by Ibn ʿAqīl al-ʿUmanī (in the first half of the fourth/tenth century and then by Ibn al-Junayd al-Askafī (d. 381/991). Both of these figures refined Imamite jurisprudence, put forward new ideas, separated the discussions about principles (*usūl*) from those about subordinates (*furūʿ*) and based their method on the basic principles of jurisprudence. Their method was rejected by the Imamite *Fuqahā'* because it might lead to wrong inference in finding the religious rules.

They considered it a sort of wrong analogy (*qiyās fāsīd*) similar to that which was established and implemented by non-shī'ite jurists.

The prolongation of the twelfth Imam's concealment, which was attacked by Zaydite scholars and others, led the Imamite jurists to introduce rational arguments in order to defend their belief in the existence of the twelfth Imam.⁸⁵ Men who had been mere narrators of traditions became scholastic theologians (*Mutakallimūn*). This change in the role of the *Fuqahā'* can be seen in al-Mufīd's works. His works mark a break with earlier Imamite writing like al-Saffar and al-Kulaynī's works which are purely collections of traditions, whereas al-Mufīd's are mainly treatises written in defence of the Imamite doctrine, in particular, the belief in the twelfth Imam's occultation. Al-Mufīd also was a narrator of traditions (*Muḥaddith*), but since he gave priority to the theological issues he was named the speaker of the Shī'ites (*Mutakallim al-Shī'a*). Moreover with the passing of time new situations arose to which the *sharī'a* had to be applied, and since direct communication with the twelfth Imam had come to an end, someone had to be found to give an answer to these questions. Thus the Imamite *Fuqahā'* expanded their role by undertaking *Ijtihād*⁸⁶ to answer such questions and to fill the vacuum which had been brought about by the concealment of the twelfth Imam. Al-Mufīd may have been the first jurist to practice *Ijtihād*. Then al-Tūsī (d.460/1067) gave a definite shape to it.⁸⁷

Secondly, in light of the first point it is clear that during the last quarter of the fourth/tenth century the Imamite *Fuqahā'* acquired authority to give legal judgements (*fatwā*) to a much greater extent than those who had been contemporary with the beginning of the second occultation and the dissolution of the underground organization. It has already been noted that after the death of al-Sammārī in 329/941 the Imamite agents and such *fuqahā'* as Muhammad b. Ahmad b. al-Walīd were expecting the Imam's reappearance with the sword in the near future, and for this reason they refused to receive any of the *khums* supposing that it was forbidden for them to do so.⁸⁸ But ever since the time of al-Mufīd the *fuqahā'* have granted themselves authority to receive the *sadat* share of the *khums* in order to distribute it amongst the needy of the Prophet's kindred. Since nothing was stipulated concerning the direct deputyship of the twelfth Imam,⁸⁹ the Imamite *fuqahā'* gradually gained enough authority to act as his indirect representatives. They based their new position on traditions which lay down the role they

were to have while the Imam was in hiding. Below are the main traditions which have been used in supporting the authority of the *fuqahā'*:

i) The twelfth Imam issued a pronouncement (*Tawqī'*) in reply to Ishāq b. Ya'qūb via his second *safīr*:

As for the events which will occur, turn to the narrators of our traditions, because they (the narrators) are my proof to you, while I am the proof of Allah to them.⁹⁰

ii) Al-Ṭabarsī mentions this tradition attributed to the eleventh Imam:

It is obligatory for the populace to follow the jurist who refrains from committing wrong, mentions his faith, opposes carnal desire, and obeys Allah's command.⁹¹

iii) Al-Ṭabarsī reports another transmission on the authority of the tenth Imam concerning the role of the *fuqahā'*:

After the occultation of your *Qā'im* a group of the '*ulamā'* will call people to believe in his (*al-Qā'im's*) Imamate and defend his religion by using proofs sent by Allah, so that they might save the weak-minded faithful from either the deceptions of Satan and his followers, or the deceptions of the anti-*'Alids* (*al-Nawāsib*). If none of these '*ulamā'* remain, then everyone will stray from the religion of Allah. However, as the pilot holds the rudder of the ship, the '*ulamā'* will hold firmly onto the hearts of the weak-minded Shī'ites, preventing them from straying. Those '*ulamā'* are the most excellent in the view of Allah the Exalted.⁹²

It is clear from the above traditions that the *fuqahā'* must possess two qualities before they can acquire the right to be the deputies of the Imam without direct stipulation. Firstly they should be knowledgeable in the law. Secondly they should be just. Then, irrespective of their family, whether they are from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn or not, they are entitled to be deputies. It is worth repeating that the four *safīrs* of the twelfth Imam were not descendants of 'Alī. This may indicate that the twelfth Imam wanted to train and raise his followers to accept, after his complete occultation, the leadership of the just and knowledgeable *fuqahā'*, even if they were not *'Alids*. Moreover, it can be noted that after the beginning of the complete occultation, the

majority of able *fuqahā'* were not from the progeny of 'Alī. Among such *fuqahā'* were al-Nu'mānī (d. 360/970), al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022).

In short the authority of the *fuqahā'* became so well-established amongst the Imamites that a considerable number of the later *fuqahā'*, such as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hillī (d. 676/1277) granted the *faqīh* complete authority over the deputyship of the hidden Imam.⁹³ He gave himself as a *faqīh* the right to deal with the Imam's share of the *khums* while the early *fuqahā'* like al-Mufīd only gave themselves authority over the part of the *khums* (*sadat* share) intended for the orphans, the poor, and the penniless travellers of the Prophet's kindred. Al-Hillī argues that if the first half of the *khums* (the Imam's share) is obligatory, then it must be distributed even during the Imam's occultation, because that which Allah has made obligatory cannot be abrogated on account of the occultation of the Imam. He continues to assert that the one who is charged with distributing the share of the Imam according to the needs of the Prophet's kindred must hold the deputyship of the Imam in legal matters i.e. that he must be one of the just Imamite *fuqahā'*.⁹⁴

The extension of the authority of the Imamite *fuqahā'* as a result of the prolongation of the Imam's occultation was a positive factor contributing to the unity of the Imamite community. It has been noted that after the death of each Imam, the Imamites split into various factions. This trend reached its peak on the death of the eleventh Imam in 260/874, when his followers divided into fourteen groups. But after the occultation of the twelfth Imam, the *fuqahā'* became united in their attempt to establish their own religious and political authority. The force which united them was the belief in the Imamate of the concealed Imam. As a result, Shi'ism was saved from splitting into further factions. Consequently, the number of its followers increased. The death of a *faqīh* who believed in the Imamate of the hidden Imam did not lead to a split amongst the *faqīh*'s followers, and they usually accepted the leadership of another Imamite *faqīh*. Thus all the fourteen factions which had grown up among the followers of al-ʿAskarī disappeared around the year 373/983 except for the one group which supported the Imamate of the twelfth Imam, who was in a state of complete occultation.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the present work can be summarized as follows:

i) The problem of the nature of the *Ghayba* of the twelfth Imam is an old one in the history of Shi'ism and is closely connected with the question of the *Imama*. From the beginning the Shi'ites held that the Prophet could not have left his community without a leader to supervise the interpretation of the *shari'a* and its implementation in society. On the contrary, he had appointed 'Alī as his successor and stipulated that the leadership of the community should pass to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and thereafter to the eldest son of each subsequent Imam from the line of al-Ḥusayn until the rise of *al-Mahdi*.

However, the Imams were unable to rule the whole community after the death of the Prophet. Since political power had been usurped by others, the Imams were forced to seek to regain it according to those methods which they felt to be sound and legal, even though the political and economic resources of their opponents were stronger than their own, especially after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn. None of the Imams after al-Ḥusayn involved themselves directly in any obvious political activities or took part in direct incitement to revolt. In fact it seems that they restricted their activities to three major areas:

a) They encouraged the dissemination of Prophetic traditions amongst the people to acquaint them with the right of the People of the House of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) to lead the community and to show them that their exclusion from actual political leadership did not mean that they were content to adopt a purely spiritual stance, nor did it imply tacit support of the government of the day. Indeed they were totally committed to their struggle to regain control, but only when circumstances indicated the probable success of their rebellion, and when they were sure of the support of a sufficient

number of faithful followers to aid the revolution and to implement Islam according to the Imamite approach.

b) From the Imamate of al-Šādiq the Imams circulated Prophetic *Ḥadīth* amongst the Imamites themselves concerning the rise of an Imam from *Ahl al-Bayt* who would establish the righteous state. This Imam would be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, who was mentioned in the Prophetic traditions. He would first go into a state of concealment from which he would continue to direct the affairs of the *Imama*. Then he would go into total occultation. But the majority of the traditions did not specify which Imam this would be, nor did they stipulate a definite date for his uprising. This obscurity allowed some 'Alids to use these traditions to support their own political aims, without heeding the instructions of the Imam as regards the correct circumstances for the concealment and rising of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. A clear example of this is seen in the case of the Ismā'īlīs, who broke away from the Imamites and continued to carry out their activities secretly between the years 145-296/762-908, until one of them managed to reach power in the year 296/908, claiming the title *al-Mahdī*.

The Zaydites also used these traditions in their attempts to gain control, but lacked the precaution and careful planning of the Ismā'īlīs and the Imamites. In fact the obscurity of these *Ḥadīths*, related from al-Šādiq was one of the reasons that some Imamites believed that the concealed Imam was Mūsā al-Kāzim, who would rise as *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. These people were called the Waqifa.

c) The early Imams believed that any of them could be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* if the conditions were right but after the failure of their intended revolt in 140/757, they decided that it would be ill-advised to fix a particular date for another uprising. In this way the Imams hoped to encourage their followers in religious activities which would pave the way for more political matters at the appropriate time. At the same time they also secretly encouraged their most faithful followers, who found that they had no option but to rebel against unjust and tyrannical rulers. One of the results of these policies was the establishment of the *Wikāla* during the Imamate of al-Šādiq as a means of supervising the activities of the Imamites and guiding them towards the final aim of the Imams, namely the establishment of a truly Islamic state based entirely upon the *sharī'a* as interpreted and implemented by the Prophet and his Household.

ii) The 'Abbāsīd authorities were aware of the danger posed by the Shi'ites and especially by the Imamites. So they tried to turn the attention of the people away from the rights of *Ahl al-Bayt* (the People of the House) by fabricating Prophetic traditions which stated that the Imam after the Prophet was al-'Abbās and not 'Alī. Simultaneously, they worked to divide the Shi'ites internally by appointing men from the *Jarīriyya* to certain sensitive posts, so that the *Jarīriyya* could investigate the Imamites and spread propaganda against them. After the failure of this policy, from the time of al-Ma'mūn the 'Abbāsīds instituted a new plan which was intended to curtail the revolutionary activities of the Shi'ites. Part of this plan was to make the Imams their courtiers so that they could watch their every move. This can be observed in the policy of al-Ma'mūn, who brought al-Riḍā from Medina to Merv and appointed him his heir apparent, keeping him under house arrest. Al-Ma'mūn followed a similar policy with the ninth Imam al-Jawād. Later the 'Abbāsīd caliphs followed al-Ma'mūn's lead in their attitude towards the tenth Imam, al-Hādī, and his son al-'Askarī, both of whom were kept under house arrest in Sāmarrā for most of their lives. It thus became extremely difficult for the Imams to have normal relations with their followers, except their closest associates with whom they held secret meetings.

It seems likely that the house arrest of the later Imams led them to expand the role of the organization, the *Wikāla*, and to entrust the *saḥīf* with more authority to supervise the Imamites' activities. From the time of al-Jawād onwards, the Imam began to guide the activities of his followers through his *saḥīf*. The ordinary Imamites found such a situation strange and had to be educated to accept such indirect communication with the Imam. However the role of the *saḥīf* during this period is not as obvious as his later position during the first occultation of the twelfth Imam, because the Imam's whereabouts were well-known and his position clear.

It also seems that the continuation of the house arrest encouraged the Imams to find a means which might release them from its restrictions. From the years 245-250/859-64 onwards statements related on the authority of al-Hādī and al-'Askarī, indicating that an unnamed twelfth Imam would go into concealment, were circulating amongst the Imamites. Furthermore al-Hādī and al-'Askarī ordered their close agents to follow the instructions of 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-'Umarī and his son Abū Ja'far (i.e. the first and the second *saḥīfs*). It appears therefore that outwardly and historically the Imam's first

concealment grew from the desire of his fathers to evade the surveillance of the government of the day, so that he could safely perform the duties of the *Imama*.

iii) An attempt has been made in this study to prove that the eleventh Imam, al-‘Askarī, left a single male successor, whose name was Muḥammad and who was smuggled by his father from Sāmarrā to Medina in 259/873. He was the twelfth Imam and his concealment began during the years 260-329/874-941. This was regarded as his first occultation, during which he continued to carry out his activities without disclosing his identity or his whereabouts, except to his four *safīrs* and certain select followers.

The first occultation was distinguished by the widening of the role of the *Wikāla*. Throughout this period the four *safīrs* directed the Imamites' activities. Their names were ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-‘Umarī, Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. ‘Uthmān, al-Ḥusayn b. Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī and ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Sammārī. Baghdad was the centre of activities for the *safīr*, who had agents in other provinces, beneath whom were many local agents.

A critical study of this period reveals that the main function of the *safīrs* was to perform certain tasks previously undertaken by the Imams so as to save the Imam from the political pressure of the ‘Abbāsids, which had been directed toward his predecessors from the time of al-Ma’mūn. The split amongst the Imamites after the death of al-‘Askarī in 260/874 led the first and the second *safīrs* to concentrate their efforts upon re-uniting the Imamite ranks by proving the existence of the twelfth Imam and emphasizing that he was *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī*; that is, he who would undertake the elimination of oppressive government by militant means.

While the Imam was in hiding the role of the *safīr* continued to increase so that by the time of the fourth *safīr*, his statements began to be regarded as the statements of the Imam himself. It seems that the increased role of the *safīr* was the result of the instructions of the Imam himself, who wanted his followers to accept the leadership of the jurists until the moment of his reappearance.

iv) On the death of the fourth *safīr* in 329/941 no further *safīr* was appointed and all direct communications with the Imam came to an end, which meant the end of the Imamite *Wikāla*. This was also considered the beginning of the second occultation. At this stage the Imamites expected the Imam's reappearance in the near future, and as a result none of the jurists dared to act on behalf of the Imam.

However the prolongation of the occultation led them to attempt to fill the vacuum left by the death of the fourth *safīr*. They turned their attention to theological matters and became the leaders of the Imamites in this field. Gradually they came to be seen as the hidden Imam's indirect deputies, who were leading the community and instructing in the law during his occultation.

Finally the concealment of the twelfth Imam seems to have been closely connected with two important phenomena: Firstly, with the occurrence of the second occultation, most of the Shī'ite revolts, particularly those of the Zaydite and the Imamites, gradually disappeared. Secondly, when the Imams were openly living amongst their followers, they suffered along with them from the oppression of the government, which was suspicious of their ambitions. But after the second occultation this oppression all but disappeared, and the Imamite jurists (*Fuqahā*) began to carry out their activities without encountering the difficult conditions faced by their predecessors. This encouraged one to put forward the idea that Imams were throughout their lives trying to recover their usurped right, the political leadership of the Islamic state, by means which they believed to be correct and legal, while after the second occultation this task fell upon the Imamites themselves under the leadership of the *Fuqahā*, a situation which has continued until the present day.

In other words, as long as the Muslims are not ready for such political transformation the rise of the hidden Imam, the expected Mahdi, will be far. During his occultation it is the task of his followers in particular the *Fuqahā* to make Muslims ready for this transformation. They should struggle to make them true committed Muslims practicing the *sharī'a* in its true sense in their daily life and in all aspects of society. The *Fuqahā* should convince the Muslims that their rightful leader is the hidden Imam, the expected Mahdī, who was divinely appointed and that he acquired this title, the Mahdī, because he will be 'guided' by Allah and will guide men to undertake a spiritual and political transformation of society.

Before the reappearance of the hidden Imam, the *Fuqahā* can assume political authority in order to disseminate the above tasks and to implement the rules of the *sharī'a*.

NOTES:

INTRODUCTION

1. The founder of this sect was Abū al-Jārūd Ziyād b. al-Mundhir, the companion of the fifth Imam, al-Bāqir. After the revolt of Zayd b. ʿAlī, Abū al-Jārūd abandoned his allegiance to al-Bāqir and put forward the claim of Zayd, establishing a new sect called al-Zaydiyya al-Jārūdiyya. Some later representatives of this sect agree with the Imamites that the series of the Imams ended with the number twelve but others claim that there were thirteen by including Zayd.
2. Aḥmad b. al-ʿAbbās al-Najāshī, *Kitāb al-Rijāl* (Tehran, n.d.), 12, 19; Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Fihrist* (Mashhad, 1972), 14; Ibn Dāwūd al-Hillī, *Kitāb al-Rijāl* (Tehran, 1964), 15, 416.
3. *al-Najāshī*, 193; *T. al-Fihrist*, 216-7.
4. *al-Najāshī*, 32-3; *T. al-Fihrist*, 97-8.
5. Muhammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī fī ʿIlm al-Dīn* (Tehran, 1381), I, 335-6; *al-Najāshī*, 39.
6. *al-Najāshī*, 191; *T. al-Fihrist*, 226.
7. *al-Najāshī*, 235-6.
8. al-Galbāgānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar* (Tehran, n.d.), 467.
9. Buzurg, *al-Dharīʿa*, XX, 201.
10. Buzurg, *al-Dharīʿa*, XVI, 82; *al-Galbāgānī. op.cit.*, 467.
11. al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār* (Tehran, 1395), LI, 300-1.
12. *N. al-Ghayba*, 143, 156, 163, 185.
13. *N. al-Ghayba*, 82-6, 100.
14. *N. al-Ghayba*, 91-2.
15. *Kamāl*, 19.
16. *Kamāl*, 127, 133, 187, 211, 222, 174, 381.
17. Sachedina, *A Treatise on the Occultation of the Twelfth Imamite Imam*, *Studia Islamica* (Paris, 1978), XLVIII, 117-24.
18. al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd, al-Imāma* (Cairo, 1963), II, 176, 182.

19. al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (Beirut, 1973), 24, 51-2.
20. Ibn Ḥazm, ‘Alī b. Muḥammad, *al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa-l-Ahwā’ wa-l-Niḥal* (Cairo, 1317-21), IV, 180, 188; al-Shahristānī, *al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal* (London, 1864), 128.
21. *al-Najāshī*, 288; *T.Rijāl* 458.
22. *al-Najāshī*, 197.

CHAPTER I.

1. *E.I.*¹, art. “al-Mahdī”, 112.
2. Sachedina, *op.cit.*, 6-7.
3. Ibn Hishām, *Das Leben Muḥammads* (Wustenfled, Gottingen, 1859), II, 1024.
4. Goldziher, *al-‘Aqida wa-l-Sharī‘a*, tr. Muḥammad Yūsuf (Cairo, 1378/1959), 327-8, 376-8.
5. *D.Sunan*, IV, 201; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, I, 16; Ibn A‘tham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ* (Hyderabad, 1972), V, 31, 34.
6. *Ṭabarī*, II, 546. Ibn A‘tham reports a letter attributed to the Kufans, sent to al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī encouraging him to rebel against the Umayyads, in which they used the title *al-Mahdī* for al-Ḥusayn as an honorific adjective:

فَافْخِرْ إِلَيْنَا فَرْحًا مَسْرُورًا مَبْرُورًا سَدِيدًا
وَسَيِّدًا أَمِيرًا مَطَاعًا إِمَامًا خَلِيفَةً عَيْنًا مَهْدِيًا

- Ibn A‘tham, *op.cit.*, V, 47.
7. Rajkowski, *op.cit.*, 166-7. There is evidence which supports the claim that Ka‘b narrated traditions attributed to the People of the Book which predict the rise of *al-Mahdī*. It is obvious from a line of poetry attributed to the poet Kutayr that those who applied this term to Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya were influenced by Ka‘b. This can be noted in Kuthayyir’s saying: *Huwa al-Mahdī Akhbarnāhu! Ka‘bun Akhū al-Akhbār fī al-Ḥuqab al-Khawālī*; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh* (Beirut, 1953), 41.
 8. *Kamāl*, 30-2.
 9. Al-Nawbakhtī thinks that Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya died in 81/700 (*Firaq*, 24), whereas al-Ṣadūq puts his death in 84/703; *Kamāl*, 36; *Ikhūyār*, 126.
 10. *B. Firaq*, 33-4.
 11. *N. Firaq*, 25-6; *Milal*, 111-2; *B. Firaq*, 17, 27-8, 38.

12. *N. Firaq*, 29-30, 42-3. For a full account of the fact that the ʿAbbāsīd propaganda was the outcome of a branch of the Kaysāniyya movement, see al-Ansārī, *Madhāhib ibradaʿathā al-Siyāsa fī al-Islām* (Beirut, 1973), 152-8, 199-214.
13. *Kamāl*, 32-4; al-Zubayrī, *op.cit.*, 41-2.
14. *N. Firaq*, 54; ʿUyūn, 155; *Maqātil*, 359; *B. Firaq*, 44.
15. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl*, 53.
16. *N. Firaq*, 57; *Kamāl*, 37.
17. al-Ḥasanī, *Sīrat al-Aʿimma al-Ithnā ʿAshar* (Beirut, 1977), 370.
18. *Kamāl*, 40.
19. *al-Kāfī*, I, 341; *Kamāl*, 325, 330; *N. al-Ghayba*, 75.
20. Ibn al-Furat, *al-Taḥṣīn*, quoted by al-Majlisī in *Bihār*, LI, 50; *Kamāl*, 351.
21. *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 287.
22. Ibn Hawshab, *Kirāb al-Kashf* (London, Cairo, Bombay, 1952), 6.
23. *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 287.
24. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, VIII, 114-6.
25. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, VII, 250; Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr, *al-Mahdī*, (Tehran, 1358), 11.
26. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* (Najaf, 1387), II, 68, 84, 205-6; *T. al-Ghayba*, 120; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān*, VIII, 404.
27. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, II, 519; Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, II, 208.
28. *al-Tirmidhī*, IX, 74, 75; and the Cairo edition, IV, 505-6.
29. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, II, 1368.
30. *Kamāl*, 286-7. Al-Tirmidhī mentioned the same tradition on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd without any details concerning the occultation of the Mahdī. *Al-Tirmidhī*, IV, 505-6; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, IV, 151.
31. *Mizān*, III, 160; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, II, 1368; *al-Muṣannaf*, XI, 372.
32. al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-Majālis*, 363; al-Kanjī, *op.cit.*, 327.
33. al-Haythamī, *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-Muḥriqa*, 100.
34. Osman, *Mahdism in Islam*, Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh, 1976), 204.

35. Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym b. Qays* (Najaf, n.d.), 56, 159-62. Although this book has received some criticism with regard to its authenticity, a careful examination of its contents which show that it was regarded as a source by such writers as al-Kulaynī in *al-Kāfī*, al-Masʿūdī in *al-Tanbīh wa-l-Ishrāf* and al-Nuʿmānī in *Kitāb al-Ghayba*.
36. ʿAbd al-Muhsin al-ʿAbbād, *ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Athar fī al-Mahdī al-Muntazar*, al-Hādī (Qumm, 1971) I, part 1, 33-5; al-Ṭabsī, *al-Shīʿa wa-l-Rafʿa* (Najaf, 1966), 36-54.
37. For the Umayyad and the ʿAbbāsīd use of the epithet *al-Mahdī* so as to gain political success, see al-Iṣḥfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, XVI, 88; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, IV, 152.
38. Watt, *The Majesty that is Islam*, 169-70.
39. al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo, 1355), IV, 175; *M. Ṣaḥīḥ*, III, 190-3; *al-Tirmidhī*, IV, 501; Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Masnad* (Cairo, 1313), V, 294.
40. al-Kharraz, *Kifāyat al-Āthār*, quoted by al-Galbāygānī, *Muntakhab al-Athar*, 28.
41. Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, I, 398; al-Karājukī, *al-Istibṣār*, 12.
42. Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, V, 86-90, 92-101, 106-8.
43. *N. al-Ghayba*, 48-9; *Kamāl*, 270-3.
44. For the biography of ʿAbbād and his Shīʿite sympathies see Ibn Hibbān, *al-Majrūhīn*, II, 172; *Mizān*, II 379-80, IV, 149; *al-Najāshī*, 225.
45. al-Hillī, *al-Idāh*, 176; al-Galbāygānī, *op. cit.*, 5.
46. *Mizān*, II, 379-80
47. Ibn Hibbān, *al-Majrūhīn*, II, 172.
48. al-ʿAṣfarī, *Aṣl Abū Saʿīd al-ʿAṣfarī*, Ms. f. 1-2.
49. al-ʿAṣfarī, *Aṣl Abū Saʿīd al-ʿAṣfarī*, f. 2. Al-Kulaynī includes these traditions in his work *al-Hujja*, but, according to his transmission, the Prophet mentioned twelve Imams from his descendants and not eleven. Thus the number of the Imams along with ʿAlī would be thirteen. Because al-Kulaynī transmitted his narration on the authority of al-ʿAṣfarī, it appears that the latter's version is more accurate. *al-Kāfī*, I, 533-4.
50. Ibn ʿUqda, *Kitāb al-Malāḥim*, f. 74-5.
51. See as note 1.
52. *N. al-Ghayba*, 7, 48, 57-61, 31, 45; al-Sadūq, *Khiṣāl*, 436-45; ʿUyūn, 323, al-Karājaki, *al-Istibṣār*, Ms. f. 11-12; *al-Kāfī*, I, 534; al-Ṭabsī *al-Shīʿa wa-l-Rafʿa* (Najaf, 1966), 129-30; *Kamāl*, 279.

53. al-Barqī, *Kirāb al-Rijāl*, 4,7,8,9.
54. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, I, 535; *N. al-Ghayba*, 47.
55. al-Hilālī, *Kirāb Sulaym b. Qays*, 135-7.
56. *Ibid.*, 109-10, 124-5, 165-6, 201, 204-6.
57. al-Hilālī, *op. cit.* 94; *Kamāl*, 285.
58. al-Hilālī, *op. cit.* 95.
59. al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbih*, 198.
60. *al-Kāfī*, I, 529; *N. al-Ghayba*, 38, 46, 274-8; *T. al-Ghayba*, 99.
61. *al-Tirmidhī*, IV, 505-6; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, IV, 151.
62. *Kamāl*, 259-61.
63. *Kamāl*, 280. Another narration has been narrated by the companion Jābir al-Anṣārī, which confirms that *al-Mahdī* would be from the progeny of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn (al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī* II, 251), but al-Šāhib b. ʿAbbād doubts its authenticity; *Nuṣrat, Madhāhib al-Zaydiyya*, 208-9.
64. *al-Kāfī*, I, 531-3; *al-Irshād*, 393; *Dalāʾil*, 236-8, 249-51.
65. al-Ḥadramī, *Aṣl Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Shurayḥ*, Ms. f. 32b; for other similar traditions see *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 167, 536; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl*, 431.
66. al-Saffār, *Basāʾir al-Darajāt*, f. 19b, 49b; for similar traditions see *al-Kāfī*, I, 243, 281, 338, 372, 411, 496, 536.
67. *Kamāl*, 377. Al-Ṭūsī reports another narration attributed to the tenth Imam who stated explicitly that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Mahdī* (*T. al-Ghayba*, 92). However, it might be that such narrations were not common among the Imamites. When the traditionist al-Faḍl b. Shādhān (d. 260/874), talks about the role of *al-Qāʾim al-Mahdī*, he does not attach this epithet to the twelfth Imam; Ibn Shādhān, *al-Iqāh*, 475-6.
68. *al-Irshād*, 411; see also al-Šanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf*, XI, 472.
69. See Chapter II.
70. *N. al-Ghayba*, 104, 107, 159; al-Ḥadramī, *op. cit.*, f. 48a; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 264.
71. *N. al-Ghayba*, 106-7; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 264, 310.
72. *N. al-Ghayba*, 94, 96.
73. *al-Kāfī*, II, 223.
74. *N. al-Ghayba*, 158.

75. *al-Kāfī*, I, 342; *Kamāl*, 325.
76. *T. al-Ghayba*, 278.
77. *al-Kāfī*, I, 368-9; *Bihār*, LII, 212.
78. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, II, 1366; al-Kanjī, *op. cit.*, 314.
79. *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 225; *N. al-Ghayba*, 106, 160; al-Ṭabsī quotes a statement from Ibn Aḥṭam attributed to ʿAlī which states that the partisans of *al-Mahdī* will start their activities from al-Ṭalqān in Khurasān; *al-Shīʿa wa-l-Raʿa*, 141.
80. *Kamāl*, 654.
81. *N. al-Ghayba*, 104, 122, 123. Al-Ṣaffār reports that *al-Qāʾim* will apply Islamic law according to the books of ʿAlī which he related directly from the Prophet; *Baṣāʾir al-Darajāt*, f. 124.
82. al-Ṣaffār, *op. cit.*, f. 50; *al-Kāfī*, I, 298.
83. *N. al-Ghayba*, 124, 125-6; al-Ṭabsī, *op. cit.*, 218; ʿAlī b. Ṭāwūs, *al-Malāḥim wa-l-Fitan* (Najaf, 1367), 53; Najm al-Dīn al-ʿAskarī, *al-Mahdī al-Mawʿūd al-Muntaẓar* (Beirut, 1977), II, 10.
84. Ibn Shādhān, *Iḥbār al-Raʿa*, quoted by al-Ṭabsī, *op. cit.*, 221; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 233; al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal*, II, 267; al-Majlisī includes in his work *al-Bihār* a book attributed to al-Mufaddil b. ʿUmar which deals with the occurrence which will take place after the rise of *al-Qāʾim*; *Bihār*, LIII, 1-38; *Dalāʾil*, 239, 260; *N. al-Ghayba*, 148.
85. *al-Kāfī*, I, 465; al-Tūsī, *al-Amālī*, II, 33; al-Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal*, 229; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Iqbāl*, 186.
86. *N. al-Ghayba*, (the second edition), 308, 319.
87. al-Ḥimyarī, *op. cit.*, quoted by al-Galbāgānī, *op. cit.*, 305.
88. *al-Kāfī*, I, 407-8.
89. *N. al-Ghayba*, 103.
90. *N. al-Ghayba*, 105.
91. *al-Kāfī*, I, 240, 281, 370-2. Diʿbil the poet recited a line of poetry concerning the militant role of *al-Qāʾim* in the presence of al-Riḍā; the latter confirmed this by saying that *al-Qāʾim* would be from the progeny of al-Ḥusayn. Diʿbil, *Dīwān*, 73, 76; *Kamāl*, 327-4.
92. *N. al-Ghayba*, 134, 139-40; *Kamāl*, 649; *T. al-Ghayba*, 286; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 225, 310.
93. *N. al-Ghayba*, 136; *T. al-Ghayba*, 286; *Bihār*, LII, 232.

94. *N. al-Ghayba*, 94.
95. For his biography, see Ibn Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Rijāl*, 104.
96. *N. al-Ghayba*, 163-4.
97. *N. al-Ghayba*, 135, 138, 144-5; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 224-5.
98. *N. al-Ghayba*, 137; *Biḥār*, LII, 232.
99. al-Ḥadramī, *Kitāb Jaʿfar b. Shurayḥ*, f. 39.
100. *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 209-210; *al-Irshād*, 404.
101. It is reported that the Prophet said, "The *Mahdī* is from my progeny. His name is similar to mine" (*al-Tirmidhī*, IV, 505). According to Abū Dāwūd, the Prophet also added, "And his father's name is similar to my father's name" (Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan*, IV, 106-7). According to the last phrase the name of *al-Mahdī* is Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh. Perhaps al-Manṣūr took this point into account when he called his son, "Muḥammad al-Mahdī" (*al-Bidāya*, X, 89). For a full account see Osman, *op. cit.*, 266-9.
102. See Chapter II.
103. *Ithbāt*, 205.
104. *Ithbāt*, 205.
105. *Ikhtiyār*, 603, 607; *al-Kāfī*, I, 501-2; *T. al-Ghayba*, 226-7.
106. *Ithbāt*, 262.
107. *Kamāl*, 46. For examples, see al-ʿAṣfarī, *Aṣl Abū Saʿīd al-ʿAṣfarī* f. 1-2; *Mizān*, II, 379-80; *Biḥār*, L, 185; al-Kindī, *op. cit.*, 229.
108. *al-Kāfī*, I, 526-7, 338.
109. Ibn ʿUqda, *Kitāb al-Malāḥim*, f. 72. According to al-Muʿīd only the Zaydites denied the death of Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar and held that he was *al-Mahdī* (*al-Fuṣūl al-Ashara*, 30). But incidents seem to indicate that there was a common belief among the Imamiyya and the Jārūdiyya from the years 245-60 onwards that the twelfth Imam would be *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, but they were not sure about his identity, and whether or not he would be the son of al-ʿAskarī.
110. Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, II, 1368.
111. *Tabarī*, III, 1683.
112. Ibn ʿUqda, *Kitāb al-Malāḥim*, f. 73.
113. *Murūj*, VII, 404.
114. *Tabarī*, III, 1683-4; *al-Kāfī*, I, 500.

115. *T. al-Ghayba*, 141, 226; *al-Kāfī*, I, 508.
116. *T. al-Ghayba*, 98.
117. *Kamāl*, 381; *al-Kāfī*, I, 328, 332-3.
118. *al-Kāfī*, I, 333.
119. *Kamāl*, 325, 330; *al-Kāfī*, I, 341.
120. *T. al-Ghayba*, 139-40.

CHAPTER II

1. Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī* (Najaf, 1964), III, 90; Ibn Khaldūn, *al-'Ibar wa-dīwān al-Mubtadā' wa-l-Khabar* (Cairo, 1867-70), III, 173, *Tabarī*, III, 33-4, 37; al-Hilālī, *op.cit.*, 186.
2. Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Sharīf, *al-'Ālam al-Islāmī fī al-'Asr al-'Abbāsī* (Cairo, 1967), 19-25; Watt, *The Majesty that was Islam*, 28-30, 95-8. According to al-Najāshī, amongst the Imamites who participated in the 'Abbāsīd propaganda was Yaḥyā b. Mūsā, who was their propagandist in Kufa; *al-Najāshī*, 209.
3. al-Jahshayārī, *Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa-l-Kuttāb* (Cairo, 1938), 86; *al-Ya'qūbī*, III, 89-90, 92; *Tabarī*, III, 27, 34; Ibn al-Ṭaḥṭaḥ, *al-Fakhrī fī al-Adāb al-Sulṭāniyya* (Cairo, 1927), III, 2; Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh, 1973), 153-4.
4. al-Mas'ūdī, *Ithbāt al-Wuṣṣiyya* (Najaf, 1955), 181-2; *Maqātil*, 209; Omar, F., "Some Aspects of the 'Abbāsīd-Husaynid relations during the early 'Abbāsīd period (132-193/750-809)," *Arabica*, XXII, 171.
5. Kāshif al-Ghītā', *Aṣl al-Shī'a wa-isṭilāḥā* (Qumm, 1391), 51; Aḥmad Amīn, *Dhuḥā al-Islām* (Cairo, 1956), III, 281-2; al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, XI, 300.
6. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was one of the companions of the Prophet. He was born three years before the Prophet's emigration to Medina and in the year 68/687 in Ṭā'if. He was famous in his deep knowledge about the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition. Thus he acquired the title *Hibru-l-Umma*, the learned man of the nation. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, II, 330-4.
7. Muḥammad Fiḍā al-Muzaḥḥar, *al-Saqīya* (Najaf, 1965), 69-70. An example of the cooperation between the 'Abbāsīds and 'Alī during his regime: he appointed Quthum b. al-'Abbās as governor of Mecca and al-Ṭā'if, 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abbās in Yemen and Bahrain and 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās in Baṣra. When 'Alī died 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās associated with al-Ḥasan as a leader in his army. *Tabarī*, V, 64-5, 137, 141-3, 155, 158-9; al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* (Cairo, 1964), 205; al-Qarashī, *al-Imām al-Ḥasan* (Najaf, 1973), 49-54.

8. *al-Kāfī*, I, 203-4, 545-6, 516. Several sources report that the other Imams received the *khums* and voluntary gifts from their followers, some of whom were working in the 'Abbāsid offices, such as Ḥasan b. 'Alayā al-Asadī, who was the governor of Bahrain. According to another report, the ninth Imam, al-Jawād, ordered his followers to send him his share of the booty which they had seized from the Khurramiyya. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Istibṣār* (Tehran, 1970), II, 58, 60-2; *Maqātil*, 333.
9. *al-Kāfī*, I, 279-81.
10. Omar, *op. cit.*, *Arabica*, XXII (1975), 175-6.
11. For a full account of al-Ṣādiq's statements concerning the future *Mahdī* see *Kamāl*, 333-59.
12. *Ikhtiyār*, 290-3, 321, 323, 326. For detail about Abū al-Khaṭṭāb's activities see al-Shibī, K. M., *al-Ṣila bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa-l-Tashayyū'*, Baghdad, 1966, 141-6; Ivanow, *The Alleged founder of Ismā'īlism* (Bombay, 1946), 113-51; B. Lewis, *The origins of Ismā'īlism* (Cambridge, 1940). 32, 39, 66. B. Lewis, "Abū al-Khaṭṭāb", *E.I.*²
13. *N. Firaq*, 56-66, al-Shibī, *op. cit.*, 206-31; C. Huart, "Ismā'īliyya" *E.I.*²
14. *N. Firaq*, 65. For an account of the Fathiyya see Watt, "Side-lights on Early Imamite Doctrine", *Studia Islamica*, MCMLXX, vol. XXXI^o, 293-5; al-Ḥasanī, *op. cit.*, II 369-77.
15. *Ṭabarī*, III, 261-3, 377-8; *Mizān*, IV, 211.
16. *Murūj*, VI, 224; Shaban, *Islamic History* (C.U.P., 1976), II, 21.
17. *al-Kāfī*, I, 478; *Murūj*, VI, 227.
18. Omar, F., "Some observations on the Reign of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mahdī (158-169/775-785)", *Arabica*, XXI, 139.
19. Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah al-Ash'arī al-Qummī, *al-Maqalāt wa-l-Firaq* (Tehran, 1963), 89.
20. Watt, *Formative Period*, 155.
21. *al-Kāfī*, I, 484.
22. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Baghdadī, *Tārīkh Baghdad* (Beirut, 1931), XIII, 31; *Ṭabarī*, III, 533; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Shadharāt al-Dhahabiyya* (Beirut, 1958), 96.
23. *Ṭabarī*, III, 506-7; *al-Fakhrī*, 136.
24. *Ṭabarī*, III, 508; al-Ṣadūq agrees with al-Ṭabarī about the persuasion of Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd, but he mentions that he was converted to the Imamite school about 179/795. See *ʿUyūn*, 60. However, Ya'qūb belonged to a Shī'ite family from Merv. His father and uncle helped promote 'Abbāsid propaganda in Khurasān. Later Ya'qūb himself was associated with al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in his

- revolt in 145/762, after which he was imprisoned until 158/774-5. Shaban, *op. cit.*, 21.
25. *N. Firaq*, 43; Watt, *Formative Period*, 155; according to al-Balkhī this claim was invented by the Rawandiyya after the death of al-Mahdī. However, it appears that the Rawandiyya had held this claim at the instigation of al-Mahdī himself. *Al-Qāḍī* ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *op. cit.*, II, 177
 26. *Ṭabarī*, III, 486-7.
 27. *Ikhtiyār*, 265-6, 501. All these groups derived their names from various companions of al-Sādiq: i.e. ʿAbd Allah b. Abī Yaʿfūr, Zurāra b. Aʿyūn, ʿAmmār b. Mūsā al-Sābātī and Hishām b. Sālim al-Jawālīqī respectively. *al-Najāshī*, 132, 157, 223, 338; *T. al-Fihrist*, 141-3, 235, 356.
 28. *Ikhtiyār*, 335.
 29. *Ikhtiyār*, 269-70.
 30. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 142. It is clear from the prominent persons who took part in this revolt that it was Zaydite, for example Yahyā, Sulaymān and Idrīs, the brothers of al-Nafs al-Zakiyya, who rebelled in the year 145/762 against al-Manṣūr. Moreover Ibrāhīm b. Ismāʿīl Ṭabāṭabā was the father of Muḥammad b. Ṭabāṭabā, the spiritual leader of the Zaydite revolt which took place in Kufa in 199/814 (*Maqātil*, 297, 304). It is worth mentioning that al-Šāhib b. ʿAbbād considered the individuals mentioned above as Zaydite: al-Šāhib b. ʿAbbād. *Nuṣrat Madhāhib al-Zaydiyya* (Baghdad, 1977), 222.
 31. *Ṭabarī*, III, 552-3, 557-9; *Murūj*, VI, 226-7; *Maqātil*, 298.
 32. *ʿIbar*, III, 215-6. Al-Isfahānī mentions two narrations about the attitude of al-Kāzim. The first one reveals that he refused to participate in the revolt, while the second shows that he ordered Yahyā al-Mahd to rise in arms; *Maqātil*, 298, 304. There is evidence showing that al-Kāzim did not take part in this revolt but encouraged the rebels to fight the ʿAbbāsids vigorously; *al-Kāfī*, I, 366.
 33. al-Galbāyḡānī, *op. cit.*, 219, quoted from al-Khazaz al-Rāzī al-Qumī, *Kifāyat al-Athar fī al-Nuṣṣ ʿala al-Imām al-Thānī* ʿAshar.
 34. *al-Kāfī*, I, 494. The Imamite activities in Egypt may have started in Akhmim during the time of al-Sādiq, because some people of Akhmim such as ʿUthmān b. Suwayd al-Akhmīmī and Dhū al-Nūn al-Misrī were students of Jābir b. Ḥayyān al-Kūfī, who was a student of al-Sādiq (al-Qiftī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamāʾ* [Leipzig, 1903], 185; al-Shibī, *op. cit.*, 360). Among al-Kāzim's Kufan agents in Egypt were ʿUthmān b. ʿIsā al-Rawasī and al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-ʿUyūn, 92; *al-Najāshī*, 52, 230.
 35. *Ikhtiyār*, 442.
 36. *Ikhtiyār*, 433. For a full account of other names see *al-Najāshī*, 104, 158, 254-5.
 37. *Ṭabarī*, III, 561, 609, 612, 740; *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 166; *al-Kāfī*, II, 224-5. Al-Kashshī mentions that the family of Banū al-Ashʿath sent the *zakāt* (30,000 dinars) to

- the agent of al-Kāzim in Kufa, which seems to confirm their Imamite inclinations; *Ikhtiyār*, 459.
38. ⁶*Uyūn*, I, 18, 24, 25-6, 92; *Ikhtiyār*, 405, 468; *al-Fakhrī*, 145-6; al-Haythamī, *al-Šawā'iq al-Muḥriqa* (Cairo, 1312/1894), 101.
 39. *N. Firaq*, 63-4.
 40. Ivanow, W., *The Rise of the Fātimids* (Bombay, 1946), 49-52, quoting from an Ismā'īlī Ms entitled *Zahr al-Ma'ānī*.
 41. *N. Firaq*, 64.
 42. Al-Kulaynī mentions this on the authority of 'Alī b. Ja'far al-Sādiq. His narrations states that Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl met his uncle al-Kāzim in Mecca and asked him to allow him to go to Baghdad. Al-Kāzim did so and gave him 300 dinars and 3000 dirhams for the expense of his journey. Then he warned his nephew not to bring about his death by giving the authorities information concerning his activities. However, Muḥammad contacted the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and informed him that his uncle was considered the real caliph by the people who had visited him; *al-Kāfī*, I, 485-6. Also see *Ikhtiyār*, 263-5; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat Anṣāb al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1971), 60.
 43. *al-Fakhrī* (Gotha, Greifswald, 1860), 195-6, 227-8; *al-Kāfī*, I, 366.
 44. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Leiden, 1866-1876), VI, 61.
 45. *Tabarī*, III, 612-3; *al-Fakhrī*, 231; al-Kulaynī records a correspondence between Yaḥyā al-Maḥdī and al-Kāzim, which indicates that the latter had nothing to do with this revolt; *al-Kāfī*, I, 366-7.
 46. Aḥmad b. Khālīd al-Misrī al-Salāwī, *al-Istāqṣa li-Akḥbār al-Maghrib al-Aqsā (al-Dār al-Bayḍā*, 1954), I, 67-9.
 47. *Ṭabarī*, III, 606.
 48. *Ibid*, III, 614, 616.
 49. *Ibid*, III, 613-16; *al-Ya'qūbī*, III, 145-6; *Ibar*, III, 218; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 85.
 50. Because Sulaymān succeeded in killing Idrīs, the Caliph al-Rashīd appointed him to the *barīd* of Egypt, and had the previous official Wāḍih, who had helped Idrīs in his escape to al-Maghrib, killed; *Ṭabarī*, III, 561.
 51. *Ṭabarī*, III, 561, 649; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 106-8.
 52. Osman, *op. cit.*, 300; *Q. Maqālāt*, 88; *Ikhtiyār*, 598-9.
 53. *Ikhtiyār*, 258-63.
 54. al-Tabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj* (Najaf, 1966), 161; *Ikhtiyār*, 262. Some of the Imamites accused the Ismā'īlīs of provoking al-Rashīd against al-Kāzim. They mentioned that Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl informed al-Rashīd about al-Kāzim's

- underground activities (*al-Kāfī*, I, 485-6). Whereas the arrest of al-Kāzīm was part of the general plan of the Caliph which he carried out against the Imamites, several remarks suggest that the viziers Banū al-Marmak were behind al-Rashīd's plan, in order to bring about the fall of their Imamite competitors in the 'Abbasid ministry, the family of Banū al-Ash'ath; *al-Kāfī*, II, 224-5; *Ikhtiyār*, 258.
55. *al-Kāfī*, I, 476; *N. Firaq*, 71-2.
 56. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'* (Cairo, 1956), 244.
 57. According to al-Najāshī and al-Ṭūsī, Hishām's death occurred in 199/814. But it seems that he died before that. Al-Kashshī associates his death with the arrest of al-Kāzīm in 179/795. In that year Hishām attended a theological symposium in the presence of al-Rashīd and Yaḥyā al-Barmakī. Later al-Rashīd issued an order to arrest al-Kāzīm and his partisans. Hence Hishām escaped to Madā'in, then to Kufa where he died two months later; *al-Najāshī*, 338; *T. al-Fihrist*, 355; *Ikhtiyār*, 255-6, 258-62.
 58. *N. Firaq*, 67; *Ikhtiyār*, 258; *al-Kāfī*, I, 258-9; al-Ya'qūbī relates that the 'Alid underground activities were probably quite strong in Baṣra. The increase in the activities of the missionary of this group, Aḥmad b. 'Isā al-'Alawī, who spent sixty years hidden there, finally caused al-Rashīd to pursue them. Aḥmad b. 'Isā was imprisoned, but he managed to escape to Baṣra in 188/803. Then 'Abbāsīd spies detected the missionary and the agent of his group, Ḥādir, who refused to reveal the place of his leader; so they killed him and impaled his body in Baghdad; *al-Ya'qūbī*, III, 160.
 59. 'Uyūn, I, 89-90, II, 143.
 60. *N. Firaq*, 67-8, 70; *Q. Maqālāt*, 89-91; *al-Najāshī*, 61, 258, 230-31. It seems from the report of al-Kashshī that Muḥammad b. Bashir and his followers applied the term *al-Mahdī* to al-Kāzīm, whose death they denied, giving him the epithet *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* (*Ikhtiyār*, 478). Such evidence indicates that the Imamites already knew about the rise of one of their Imams under the title of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*, but they were not sure who this would be.
 61. al-Ṣadūq, *Ilāl al-Shārā'ī'* (Najaf, 1966), I, 235; 'Uyūn, 91-2; *Ikhtiyār*, 459-60, 467, 468, 493. The leaders of the *Wāqifa* were Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Shammūn and 'Alī b. Abī Ḥamza; *Ikhtiyār*, 444; *al-Najāshī*, 230-1.
 62. *al-Kāfī*, I, 333-43.
 63. *al-Kāfī*, I, 312; *Q. Maqālāt*, 89.
 64. *Ikhtiyār*, 464-5, 472.
 65. *Ibid.*, 591-2.
 66. Most of the eastern Sufī movements trace their origins to Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), who was a companion of al-Riḍā. They regarded al-Riḍā as of the Sufī movement, but at the same time they did not believe in his Imamate. For an account of this relation see al-Shībī, *op. cit.*

67. ^c*Uyūn*, II, 234-5.
68. Watt, *Formative Period*, 176; *al-Fakhrī*, 159-61; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 227.
69. Ibn A^ctham al-Kūfī, *op. cit.*, VIII, 312-3. The most dangerous revolt was the rebellion of Naṣr b. Shabth in al-Jazīra. Another serious revolt was the protest of the populace (*al-Āmma*) of Baghdad against the installation of al-Riḍā as heir-apparent by al-Ma'mun. Thus they installed Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi as a caliph there; *Bidāya*, X, 280-2; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 230.
70. It is clear from the reports of al-Ṭabarī and al-Najāshī that the rebels did not believe in the Imamate of a specific 'Alid Imam, but they supported the Imamate of him who would rise in arms in order to establish his rights to this office (*Ṭabarī*, III, 979, 1019; *al-Najāshī*, 194). They wrote on the coins which they mined in Kufa a Qur'anic verse (*al-Saff*, LI, 4) revealing their revolutionary inclination. Al-Iṣfahānī and al-Ṣāhib b. 'Abbād considered it a Zaydite uprising; *Maqātil*, 347, 350; ^c*Uyūn*, II, 235; Ibn 'Abbād, *op. cit.*, 222.
71. *Murūj*, VII, 56.
72. A considerable body of the followers of al-Riḍā participated in this revolt without his instruction. Perhaps they noticed that the brothers of their Imam were prominent leaders of the revolt, and thought that al-Riḍā was behind their participation. Hence they joined it. There were men like Muḥammad b. Muslima al-Kūfī (*Ṭabarī*, III, 989), who was regarded by al-Najāshī as trustworthy (*al-Najāshī*, 286; ^c*Uyūn*, II, 234-5). It seems from al-Riḍā's interpretation of a dream of one of his partisans concerning an expected uprising that he already knew of the activities of his kinsmen; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 257.
73. *al-Da'wa li-l-Riḍā min Āl Muhammad wa-'Amal bi-l-Kitāb wa-l-sunna*.
74. *Ṭabarī*, III, 976-79.
75. *al-Kāmil*, VI, 214-16; *Maqātil*, 355; *Ṭabarī*, III, 981-3, 988. Al-Azraqī reports that Abū al-Sarāyā sent a *kiswa* of silk to the Ka'ba in two colours, white and yellow, the former of which was the colour of the 'Alids' standard. Between the two parts was written: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. May God bless Muhammad and his progeny, the noble descendants, the pure, and the best of the human race. Abū al-Sarāyā, he who invites people to rally behind Āl Muhammad has ordered that this *kiswa* be made for the holy House of God." al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka* (Mecca, 1965), I, 263, 264.
76. *al-Najāshī*, 194; *Maqātil*, 354; Gibb, H. A. R., "Abū al-Sarāyā", *E.I.*²
77. *Maqātil*, 363-6; *Ṭabarī*, III, 985-6.
78. *Ikhtiyār*, 472.
79. Al-Kulaynī reports several traditions on the authority of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn and al-Ṣādiq regarding this point, *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 264, 310.
80. *Ṭabarī*, III, 990.

81. *Maqātil*, 359; *Uyūn*, 155.
82. *al-Kāfī*, I, 491; *Maqātil*, 360.
83. *al-Kāfī*, I, 488-9; *Uyūn*, II, 146; *Ṭabarī*, III, 1000.
84. *Maqātil*, 360; *al-Yāfiʿī*, *al-ʿIqd al-Thamīn*, I, 444-5.
85. *al-Kāfī*, I, 489, VIII, 151; *Uyūn*, 138-40; *Ṭabarī*, III, 1012-3.
86. *Khātib*, X, 184. Concerning Umm Habība, al-Ṭabarī thinks that she was al-Ma'mūn's daughter (*Ṭabarī*, III, 1029), but Ibn Ṭūlūn reports that she was his sister. The age of al-Ma'mūn at that time was 30; therefore one is inclined to accept Ibn Ṭūlūn's report; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *op. cit.*, 97.
87. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 185; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 227.
88. Watt, *Formative Period*, 176. Al-Kulaynī reports that al-Ma'mūn asked al-Riḍā to write to his followers in the areas of revolt, asking them to stop their support of the rebels; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 151.
89. Several anecdotes indicate that the 'Alids' standard was white. The followers of Abū al-Sarāyā were called "al-Mubayyida" in reference to the standard of 'Alī (*al-Azraqī*, *op. cit.*, I, 263-4). Na'im b. Khāzim, an Arab advisor of al-Ma'mūn, warned the latter against adopting the advice of al-Faḍl b. Sahl in installing al-Riḍā. He pointed out to him that his vizier was not sincere to the 'Alids, because he suggested the green colour, the sign of his ancestors, the Sasanids, instead of the white, the standard of 'Alī and his sons (*J. Wuzarā'*, 313). When al-Ma'mūn asked al-Riḍā to perform the Friday prayer, the latter wore a white turban and white clothes (*Uyūn*, II, 149). Finally the Imamites narrate that the banners of the followers of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī* would be white (Najm al-Dīn al-ʿAskarī, *al-Mahdī al-Mawʿūd al-Muntazar* [Beirut, 1977], I, 177).
90. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1019-20; also *al-Kāmil*, VI, 242.
91. *Ṭabarī*, III 1029; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 248.
92. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 184, 190.
93. *N. Firaq*, 72-3; *Ikhtiyār*, 501-2; *Uyūn*, II, 151-2.
94. Ibn Hibbān, *Kitāb al-Majrūhīn* (Halab, 1976), II, 209-10.
95. *al-Kāfī*, I, 486, 490; *Murūj*, VIII, 57, 61; *Uyūn*, I, 186, 188; Shaban, *op. cit.*, 47.
96. *al-Kāmil*, VI, 253; Aḥmad b. Ṭāhir b. Ṭayfūr, *Tārīkh Baghdad* (Cairo, 1949), 10.
97. *Uyūn*, II, 188.
98. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 204; according to the account of al-Kulaynī both were Imamites and the father of the first, Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn, supported the Imamate of al-Riḍā (*al-Kāfī*, I, 316). Al-Najashī reports that the grandson of the second,

Yaḥyā b. Ahmad b. Muhammad, was a prominent Imamite in Nishapur; *al-Najāshī*, 345; Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Basharī*, II, 32.

99. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1039; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 253.
100. Abū al-Fidā, *op. cit.*, II, 25-6.
101. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1040.
102. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1062-3; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 269.
103. *N. Firaq*, 85-7; *Q. Maqālāt*, 93-5; *al-Najāshī*, 19.
104. *Ithbāt*, 213-5.
105. *al-Najāshī*, 21, 67-8, 141, 294.
106. *al-Kāfī*, I, 494.
107. *al-Najāshī*, 191.
108. *Ikhtiyār*, 611-2; *al-Najāshī*, 265.
109. *al-Kāfī*, V, 111.
110. *Bihār*, L, 44-5.
111. *Ikhtiyār*, 487; *al-Najāshī*, 180.
112. *Ithbāt*, 213, 215.
113. *al-Kāfī*, I, 548; *T. al-Ghayba*, 227; *Bihār*, L, 37-8.
114. *al-Najāshī*, 254.
115. *Ibid.*, 80, 98; *Mizān*, IV, 276.
116. *al-Kāfī*, V, 111; *al-Tūsī*, *al-Istibṣār*, II, 58.
117. *al-Azdī*, 368.
118. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, IV, 397; *al-Azdī*, 368.
119. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1092-3, 1102; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 264, 293.
120. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1102.
121. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1103; *al-Azdī*, 399.
122. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1106, 1111; *al-Kāmil*, VI, 286-7.

123. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim was the Imam of the revolutionary Zaydites during al-Jawād's period. When al-Muḥtasim endeavoured to arrest him, he escaped from Kufa and revolted in al-Ṭāḳān. But al-Muḥtasim captured him and imprisoned him in Sāmarrā. Then he disappeared from jail mysteriously. Thus a considerable body of the Zaydites in the districts of Kufa, Ṭabaristān, Daylam and Khurasān held that he did not die but was alive and would rise in arms to fill the earth with justice after it had been filled with tyranny; *Murūj*, VI, 116-7.
124. *Ithbāt*, 220; *Bihār*, L, 15-17; *al-Irshād*, 297, 307.
125. al-Ṭūsī, *al-Istibṣār*, II, 60-2.
126. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, IV, 389.
127. *Maqālāt*, 99.
128. The flourishing state of the ʿAbbāsīd economy can be noted in al-Muḥtasim's ability to recruit a new garrison, mainly from the Turks of Caucasus, and to establish a new capital, Sāmarrā. His successor al-Mutawakkil followed in his footsteps, establishing another garrison, which he called *al-Shākiriyya*, by recruiting people from the western provinces of the empire. Later al-Shākiriyya garrison was enlarged by al-Mutawakkil until it became his official army. Furthermore he established a new capital called *al-Jaʿfariyya*. According to al-Masʿūdī, after his death he left four million dinars and seven million dirhams in the treasury. *Murūj*, VII, 276-7; Shaban, *op. cit.*, 76.
129. *Maqālāt*, 394; *al-Fakhrī*, 176.
130. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 216.
131. *Ṭabari*, III, 1368.
132. Shaban, *op. cit.*, 73; al-Tikritī, *al-Mutawakkil bayn Khusūmih wa-Anṣārih*, Bulletin of the College of Arts, Basrah University, 1976, 113.
133. *Ṭabari*, III, 1373-5; see also *al-Kāfī*, I, 498.
134. Shaban, *op. cit.*, 72-5; 76.
135. Al Masʿūdī and Ibn Ḥazm mention that Jaʿfar b. Ismāʿīl b. Mūsā al-Kāzīm was killed by Ibn al-Aghlab in al-Maghrib during the caliphate of al Muḥtazz (*Murūj*, VII, 404; Ibn Ḥazm, *op. cit.*, 64), which suggests that Jaʿfar may have been sent there by his father to preach to the people concerning the ʿAlids' rights to the caliphate.
136. *Ikhtiyār*, 513-4.
137. *al-Yaʿqūbī*, III, 217.
138. *Ikhtiyār*, 603, 607; *T. al-Ghayba*, 226-7; *Bihār*, L, 183.
139. *Ikhtiyār*, 513-4.

140. *Iṭḥbāt*, 225-6; *Bihār*, L, 209.
141. *Ṭabarī*, III, 407; *Murūj*, VII, 302. Many early sources represent the ʿAbbāsīd view, and contemporary scholars claim that the reason behind the demolition of al-Ḥusayn's tomb was that the Shīʿa had made it an alternative centre for pilgrimage (*Maqātil*, 395; al-Tikrītī, *The Religious Policity of al-Mutawakkil ʿAla Allah al-ʿAbbāsī* [232-47/847-68], M. A. Dissertation [McGill University, Canada, 1969], 58, 63). But all the narrations espousing this view are attributed to a single narrator called Aḥmad b. al-Jiʿd who was a loyal supporter of the ʿAbbāsīds. Perhaps he gave this interpretation to excuse the action of the caliph, whose aim was to stop the underground activities of the Shīʿa, who used their visit to the tomb of al-Ḥusayn as a means of communication. In addition the caliph wanted to eliminate any sign of the grave, which might revive the revolutionary trends amongst the Shīʿa.
142. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1404.
143. al-Kindī, *Wilāi Miṣr*, (Beirut, 1972), 177-8.
144. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Kash al-Maḥajja* (Najaf, 1950), 124; al-Sadr, *Fadak fī al-Tārīkh* (Najaf, 1955), 23.
145. *Maqātil*, 396.
146. *Murūj*, VII, 238-9; *al-Kāfī*, I, 500.
147. al-Kindī, *op. cit.*, 230.
148. *Bihār*, L, 185.
149. *Murūj*, VII, 207
150. *Ibid.*, VII, 302
151. al-Kindī, *op. cit.*, 229.
152. *al-Kāfī*, I, 511, 513.
153. *Manāqib*, IV, 416.
154. al-Arbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, III, 247. The *qāḍī* of Kufa at that time was Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid. The caliph al-Mustaʿīn removed him from this office and exiled him to Basra where he died in 257/780; *Mizān*, I, 413.
155. Ibn ʿUqda, *op. cit.*, f. 74-5.
156. Ibn ʿUqda, *op. cit.*, f. 75; *al-Najāshī*, 280-1. Ibn ʿUqda, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (249-333/863-944) is a Kufan *Muḥaddīth*. He belonged to the Zaydite sect, al-Jarūdiyya. Al-Nuʿmānī relied on him in writing his work *al-Ghayba*. Buzurg, *Nawābiḡh al-Ruwāt*, 46-7.
157. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1522.

158. *Murūj*, VII, 404.
159. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1362, 1683; *Ikhtiyār*, 68.
160. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1683-4.
161. *T. al-Ghayba*, 141, 226; *Bihār*, L, 206-7.
162. The majority of the Imamite scholars believe that al-Hādī was poisoned at the instigation of the ʿAbbāsids; *Manāqib*, IV, 401; *Bihār*, L, 206-7.
163. *T. al-Ghayba*, 139-40.
164. *Manāqib*, IV, 427-8; *Bihār*, L, 283-4.
165. *T. al-Ghayba*, 147, 226; *Bihār*, L, 303; *Ṭabarī*, III, 1709.
166. *al-Kāfī*, I, 503.
167. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.
168. *al-Kāfī*, I, 450

CHAPTER III

1. *N. Firaq*, 65-6, 77, 79.
2. The reports of the early Shīʿite authors like al-Kulaynī, Saʿd al-Qummī and al-Mufīd did not reveal any external cause for al-ʿAskarī's death (*al-Kāfī*, I, 509; *Q. Maqālāt*, 101-2, *al-Irshād*, 377, 383, 389; al-Mufīd, *al-Muqniʿa fi al-Fiqh* [Iran, 1274], 72-5; and his *Taṣḥīḥ fī ṭiqādāt al-Imamiyya* [Tabriz, 1371], 63,) but the later Shīʿite authors followed al-Ṭabarī, who claimed that the Imam was poisoned or killed. He based this assumption on a tradition whose chain of transmitters related to al-Sādiq, who said, "None of us die naturally, but are killed or martyred." (al-Ṭabarsī, *ʿIlām al-Warā*, 349; Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil al-Imāma* [Najaf, 1369], 223, Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, IV, 421; *Bihār*, L, 236-8, 335, Muhammad al-Sadr, *Tārīkh al-Ghayba al-Sughrā* [Beirut, 1972], 230-4).
3. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, III, 533; *Iḥbār*, 262; Subḥī, *Nazāriyyat al-Imāma* (Cairo, 1969), 394.
4. Al-Kulaynī and al-Mufīd report the same chain of transmitters for their information about al-ʿAskarī's death (*al-Kāfī*, I, 503-5; *al-Irshād*, 381-2, 389). Al-Nawbakhtī agrees with Saʿd al-Qummī that Abū ʿIsā prayed ʿAskarī's body (*N. Firaq*, 79; *Q. Maqālāt*, 102). But Saʿd dates al-ʿAskarī's death in Rabiʿ II, which agrees with al-Masʿūdī's report (*Iḥbār*, 248). Al-Kulaynī's report seems to be more reliable than the latter, since it adds several supporting reports.

5. *N. Firaq*, 79; *Q. Maqālāt*, 102.
6. *al-Irshād*, 389-90; *Kamāl* (Tehran 1378/1958), I, 101.
7. Al-Barqī and al-Kulaynī mention many traditions with different chains of transmitters asserting that the world cannot be without a Proof(Hujja); al-Barqī, *al-Mahāsīn* (Tehran, 1370/1950), 92, 234-6; *al-Kāfī*, I, 178-80, 514; see also *Dalā'il*, 229-30; Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj* (Najaf, 1966), II, 48-9, 78.
8. *al-Kāfī*, I, 285-6; *al-Ghayba*, 146.
9. *al-Kāfī*, I, 276-7.
10. *Q. Maqālāt*, 109.
11. Because of the way al-Shahristanī classifies his information on these schisms, it seems that his study is based on the works of al-Nawbakhtī and al-Ash'arī. Al-Nawbakhtī deemed the Imamite sub-divisions to be as many as fourteen, although his work in its present form counts only thirteen. Fortunately al-Mufīd, who discusses the various factions on the authority of al-Nawbakhtī, mentions the fourteenth faction, which is missing from al-Nawbakhtī's work. Al-Mas'ūdī does not give any details on the splits. Later al-Nawbakhtī's work became more circulated than Sa'd al-Qummi's work, because the latter contains opinions on the occultation which contrast with the official opinion of the later Imamites from the fifth/eleventh century onwards; al-Qummi's book was gradually withdrawn from these circles; *N. Firaq*, 79; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 258-60; *Murūj*, VIII, 50, *Milal*, 130-1.
12. *Kamāl*, 40.
13. *al-Kāfī*, I, 178-80, 514.
14. *Q. Maqālāt*, 106; *N. Firaq*, 78-80; *Milal*, 129.
15. *Q. Maqālāt*, 106-7.
16. *al-Kāfī*, I, 178; al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (ed.), *Nahj al-Balāgha* (Beirut, 1967), 497; *N. Firaq*, 80-1.
17. *Q. Maqālāt*, 107.
18. *N. Firaq*, 89-90.
19. *Q. Maqālāt*, III; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 259.
20. *Al-Faḥḥiyya*: A Shī'ite sect which arose after the death of Ja'far al-Šādiq, the sixth Imam, who contended that the Imamate had passed on from al-Šādiq not to Mūsā but to his eldest son, 'Abd Allah, according to the tradition which says that the Imamate can only be vested in the eldest son, with the condition that he should be free from any bodily defects (*al-Kāfī*, I, 285; *Ikhtiyār*, 282-3). They were also called al-Faḥḥiyya as an allusion either to 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far

- because he had broad feet or was broad-headed, or it referred to their leader, who was called 'Abd Allah al-Aftah: *N. Firaq* 65; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 248-51; *Ikhtiyār*, 254.
21. *N. Firaq*, 93; *Q. Maqālāt*, 111-2.
 22. *Al-badā'* means the appearance of something or some knowledge after it has been concealed. In theological terms, it is a dogma which deals with the question of whether or not it is possible for God to change His decision about something. The theologians maintain that this is impossible, even if it often appears to happen, as for example, when Ja'far al-Sādiq designated Ismā'īl as his successor according to God's command. For when Ismā'īl died, God then ordered Ja'far to designate Mūsā al-Kāẓim as his successor. So it seems that God changed his decision about who was to succeed Ja'far. But in fact, God's eternal knowledge never changes. What changes is the degree to which men are cognizant of that knowledge. Hence the doctrine of *al-badā'* states that God's ultimate judgement about something often appears to men only after first having been concealed. It declares that God cannot have changed His decision, for that would imply that His knowledge changes, or that He was ignorant and then gained knowledge. Finally, the Imāmites hold that God does allow certain people to have knowledge of His ultimate judgement. Bandar, A., *'Aqīdat al-Badā'* (Baghdad, 1976); also a letter from the author dated 15th January 1978.
 23. *N. Firaq*, 99; al-Shahrastānī's information concerning this sect is confused. He claims that Fāris b. Hātim, not his sister, was a follower of Ja'far, but Faris had been assassinated by the order of al-'Askarī himself; see *Milāl*, 129; *Ikhtiyār*, 524.
 24. For the dogma of Fāris b. Hātim, his political activities in Qazwīn and Sāmarrā, and his assassination, see *Ikhtiyār*, 522-8; *al-Najāshī*, 238; *T. al-Ghayba*, 238.
 25. Al-Nawbakhtī and al-Qummī mention that a group maintained that Ja'far was the Imam after al-'Askarī not by the testament of his brother but by that of his father. Thus they held that the adoption of the Imamate of al-'Askarī was incorrect and that people should go back to the Imamate of Ja'far; *N. Firaq*, 82-3; *Q. Maqālāt*, 110-1; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 259.
 26. For this tradition see *al-Kāfī*, I, 285-6; *T. al-Ghayba*, 146.
 27. *N. Firaq*, 79; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Qubba, *al-Inṣāf fī al-Imāma*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 55.
 28. *Kamāl*, 51-3.
 29. *Ibid.*, 511; *Biḥār*, LIII, 190-1.
 30. *Q. Maqālāt*, 112-3; *N. Firaq*, 88-9, Ibn Qubba, *op. cit.*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 59. About Ibn Qubba and his work see al-Najāshī, 290-1, *T. al-Fihrist*, 297-8.
 31. *Q. Maqālāt*, 103.
 32. *Q. Maqālāt*, 109.

33. *N. Firaq*, 84.
34. *T. al-Ghayba*, 128-9; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 259.
35. *Q. Maqālāt*, 114; *N. Firaq*, 84-5; *Milal*, 130.
36. *Kamāl*, II, 78, 109-10; see al-Galbaygānī, *op. cit.*, 356.
37. *Q. Maqālāt*, 114; *T. al-Ghayba*, 147; al-Mufīd also mentions this faction but thought that they held the same dogma as al-Qat'iyya (The Twelvers); *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 259-60.
38. *Q. Maqālāt*, 114; *N. Firaq*, 85; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 261; *Milal*, 130.
39. Al-Nawbakhtī's information about this sect is confused, whereas al-Qummī and al-Mufīd are much clearer in their presentation; *N. Firaq*, 85-6; *Q. Maqālāt*, 114-5; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 260.
40. *T. al-Ghayba*, 60.
41. *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 260.
42. *Q. Maqālāt*, 102-4; Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 88; *al-Inṣāf*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 61.
43. This group dated his birth as mentioned but the later Imamites differ about it. Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī dates it as 15th Sha'bān 257, while al-Kulaynī mentions several traditions giving the dates 252, 255 and 256 respectively. Al-Ṣadūq and al-Mufīd follow al-Kulaynī on this point. Some of the factions opposed to the Imamites may have abandoned their claims and joined the Imamites, who then accepted their differing transmissions concerning the birth of the twelfth Imam; *al-Kāfī*, I, 514-16; *Dalā'il*, 271; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 258; *Kamāl*, 430.
44. *al-Inṣāf*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 55-6.
45. *N. Firaq*, 90-91.
46. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, (Tehran, 1972), 225; *Kamāl*, 482; *Q. Maqālāt*, 106.
47. *Milal*, 130-1; *N. Firaq*, 88-9.
48. *Q. Maqālāt*, 107-8.
49. *Q. Maqālāt*, 108-9; *T. al-Ghayba*, 147.
50. *Kamāl*, 485, 487.
51. *al-Kāfī*, I, 518-9.
52. *T. al-Ghayba*, 142-6; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 261.
53. *Irhbāt*, 248. For the later authors who named her as Narjis see *al-Irshād*, 390; *T. al-Ghayba*, 153, 158; *Uyūn*, 32-3.

54. *Biḥār*, LI, 28, quoted from *al-Dirūs*.
55. *Kamāl*, 431-2.
56. *Kamāl*, 317-23.
57. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1434.
58. *Ikhtiyār*, 147-8; *al-Najāshī*, 298; Ibn Dāwūd, *al-Rijāl*, 541.
59. *al-Kāfī*, I, 323.
60. *N. al-Ghayba*, 84, 85, 120; *Kamāl*, 329.
61. *Kamāl*, 280, 345; al-Marwazī, *Kirāb al-Fitan*, Mss fol, 150-63.
62. *T. al-Ghayba*, 134-9; *Dalā'il*, 262-4.
63. *al-Irshād*, 390-1.
64. *Kamāl*, 431.
65. *al-Najāshī*, 268.
66. Ibn Qubba, *Naqḍ Kitāb al-Ashhād*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 113.
67. *al-Kāfī*, I, 178; *N. Firaq*, 91.
68. *al-Kāfī*, I, 285-6; Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī states in his work *al-Tanbīh* that the main argument used by the Imamites to prove the existence of the twelfth Imam was the traditions of the preceding Imams, which had been narrated before the death of the eleventh Imam in 260/874; quoted in *Kamāl*, 92-3; also see *N. Firaq*, 90-91; *Q. Maqālāt*, 102.
69. *N. al-Ghayba*, 90.
70. *T. al-Ghayba*, 90.
71. Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī, *al-Tanbīh*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 92-3.
72. For example, see *al-Kāfī*, I, 514; *Kamāl*, 424; *al-Irshād*, 390. However, Ibn Rustam al-Ṭabarī mentions that al-^ḥAskarī's son was born on the 8th of Sha^ḥbān, 257/870; *Dalā'il*, 272.
73. *Q. Maqālāt*, 114; al-Ṣadūq reports a narration the authority of Ya^ḥqūb b. Manfūsh who claimed that al-^ḥAskarī had shown him his son, whose age at that time was between eight and ten years old; *Kamāl*, 407.
74. *al-Kāfī*, I, 329; *al-Irshād*, 390-1.
75. *T. al-Ghayba*, 150-1, 153.
76. *al-Kāfī*, I, 514-5.

77. *Ibid.*, I, 328; *al-Irshād*, 394.
78. *Q. Maqālāt*, 114; *N. Firaq*, 85.
79. *Kamāl*, 33.
80. According to al-Tabarī, Abū Hāshim al-Jaʿfarī died in 261/875; *Ṭabarī*, III, 1887.
81. *al-Kāfī*, I, 328.
82. *Ithbāt*, 251.
83. According to al-Kulaynī the tenth Imam, al-Hādī, died on 26 Jumādā II, 254/2 June 869; *al-Kāfī*, I, 497.
84. *Kamāl*, 432.
85. *al-Kāfī*, I, 329, 514; *Kamāl*, 430; *T. al-Ghayba*, 144.
86. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1813; *al-Kamīl*, VII, 157.
87. *Ithbāt*, 261-2.
88. According to al-Kulaynī each Imam when he comes out from the womb of his mother puts his hands on the ground and holds his head towards the sky, and then recites some Qurʾānic verses; *al-Kāfī*, I, 386.
89. *al-Qaṣaṣ*, XXVIII, 5-6.
90. *Kamāl*, 424-6; the account of the birth of the twelfth Imam has been related in the Imamites' works with some differences in detail. See *Ithbāt*, 248-50; *T. al-Ghayba*, 150-4; *Dalā'il*, 269-70. All the Imamite sources agree that al-ʿAskarī left only one son; al-Ṣadūq, however, reports a narration on the authority of Ibrāhīm al-Māzyār which indicates that al-ʿAskarī had two sons, Muḥammad and Mūsā, who were living in Hijaz. A critical study of the context of the narration and its chain of transmitters suggests it was invented, mainly because the narrator Ibrāhīm b. al-Māzyār died before 260/874, whereas according to the narrative al-ʿAskarī's sons were mature, and this is unlikely if the twelfth Imam was born in 256/874; *Kamāl*, 445-53.
91. *ʿIlal*, 243-4; *Kamāl*, 24; *N. al-Ghayba*, 86-7; *al-Kāfī*, I, 340; al-Murtadā, *Mas'ala waḥīda fī al-Ghayba*, 11; *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿAshara*, 16.
92. *N. al-Ghayba*, 101; *Kamāl*, 303, 485.
93. *ʿIlal*, 245; *Kamāl*, 316.
94. *al-Kāfī*, I, 336.
95. *al-Kāfī*, I, 369.
96. *Ibid.*, I, 328, 330.

97. *al-Kāfī*, I, 333.
98. *Ibid.*, VIII, 247.
99. The Imamite works record the names of many individuals who saw the son of al-^ʿAskari. One report attributed to Muḥammad b. ^ʿUthmān, the second *ṣafīr* of the twelfth Imam, says that al-^ʿAskari gathered together forty of his reliable followers and showed them his son; *Kamāl*, 435; *al-Kāfī*, I, 330-1; *T. al-Ghayba*, 148, 152.
100. *Kamāl*, 429.
101. *Ithbāt*, 247-8, 253.
102. *al-Kāfī*, I, 328, 240; *N. al-Ghayba*, 99-100; *T. al-Ghayba*, 149.
103. ^ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī, *al-Muṣannaf* (Beirut, 1972), XI, 371; *N. al-Ghayba*, 98-9.
104. *al-Kāfī*, I, 339.
105. *al-Fuṣūl al-^ʿAshara*, 13.
106. Al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad was related to an Umayyad family called Āl Abī al-Shawārib. During the ʿAbbāsīd period most of his relatives worked in the office of Judge (*al-Qadāʾ*). As part of his anti-shīʿite policy al-Mutawakkil included al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Shawārib among his courtiers (*Tabarī*, III, 1428). Later al-Muʿtazz appointed him chief judge in 252/866 (*Tabarī*, III, 1684). Three years later he was discharged from his office, but recovered it during al-Muʿtadid's regime. He continued in this office until his death in Mecca in 261/875; *Tabarī*, III, 1787, 1790-1, 1891, 1907.
107. *al-Kāfī*, I, 505; *Kamāl*, 43.
108. *Kamāl*, 43.
109. *Ibid.*, 476-8.
110. *Kamāl*, 473.
111. *Ibid.*, 476.
112. *Ibid.*, 474.
113. *al-Fuṣūl al-^ʿAshara*, 13.
114. According to Imamite law, if a dead person leaves a mother and a son and a brother, the brother has no right to take anything from the estate; al-Ṣadūq, *al-muqniʿa* (Tehran, 1377), 171; *Kamāl*, 47, 58.
115. Muḥammad al-Sadr, *op. cit.*, I, 314.

CHAPTER IV

1. Javad ^ʿAli, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 212.
2. *T. al-Ghayba*, 224-5. Al-Tūsī thinks that Ibn al-Ḥajjāj died during the time of al-Riḍā, but al-Mas^ʿūdī reports that he was still alive after al-Riḍā's death in 203/818; *Iḥbāt*, 213.
3. *al-Kāfī*, II, 557; *Ikhtiyār*, 381; al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh (al-Mashyakha)*, IV, 67. The date of his death is not mentioned. However, al-Kashshī reports that Dāwūd b. ^ʿAlī, who killed Mu^ʿallā, died a few days after Mu^ʿallā, and according to al-Dhahabī, Dāwūd died in 133/750 (*Mizān*, II, 14). So the persecution of Mu^ʿallā must have occurred in the same year.
4. *Ikhtiyār*, 459-60.
5. *al-Najāshī*, 21, 231, 250, 348.
6. *Iḥbāt*, 213.
7. *al-Najāshī*, 250.
8. *Ibid.*, 209.
9. *Ikhtiyār*, 258; *N. Firaq*, 67-8, ^ʿUyūn, 194-5.
10. ^ʿUyūn, I, 89-90, II, 143.
11. For a full account of these traditions see Chapter I pp 17-30; however the *Wāqifa* report a tradition attributed to al-Ṣādiq which states that *al-Qa'im* would be the seventh Imam; *Ikhtiyār*, 475; *al-Kāfī*, I, 320-1.
12. *Ikhtiyār*, 463-7, 475-8; *T. al-Ghayba*, 227-8.
13. ^ʿIlal, I, 235; *T. al-Ghayba*, 46-7; *Ikhtiyār*, 459-60, 466-7.
14. *Ikhtiyār*, 597-9.
15. *Ibid.*, 483, 506, 591-2.
16. *al-Najāshī*, 148.
17. *T. al-Ghayba*, 224-5; al-Tūsī states that ^ʿAbd Allah b. Jandab was the agent of the seventh and the eighth Imams but it seems that his career in the organization was earlier than that. According to Ibn Shu^ʿba, he was the agent of the sixth Imam, al-Ṣādiq; Ibn Shu^ʿba, *Tuhaf al-ʿUqūl*, 223.
18. *Iḥbāt*, 213-5.
19. *al-Najāshī*, 80, 98, 254; al-Tūsī, *al-Istisbār*, II, 58-61; *al-Kāfī*, V, 111.

20. *al-Ya'qūbī*, III, 217.
21. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manaqib*, IV, 389.
22. *al-Kāfī*, I, 324.
23. *Ikhtiyār*, 513-4; according to another letter the agent of al-Hādī in Baghdad and its environs was ʿAlī b. al-Husayn b. ʿAbd Rabba. After his death in Mecca in 229/843, Abū ʿAlī b. Rashīd assumed his post; *Ikhtiyār*, 510.
24. *al-Najāshī*, 191.
25. *Kamāl*, 442; *al-Kāfī*, I, 518.
26. *Ikhtiyār*, 608, 611-2, 557.
27. Ibn Dāwūd, *al-Rijāl*, 248; *al-Kāfī*, I, 519; *Ikhtiyār*, 608; *al-Najāshī*, 265-6.
28. *Ithbāt*, 215; al-Barqī categorized him as one of the close followers of al-Hādī; *al-Rijāl*, 60.
29. The representatives of this trend throughout the time of the tenth and the eleventh Imams were mainly such extremists as Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Sayyārī, Jaʿfar b. Wāqīd, Abū al-Samharī, ʿAmr b. Yahyā al-Dihqān, Fāris b. Hātim al-Qazwinī and Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr al-Numayrī; *Ikhtiyār*, 525, 529, 573, 606.
30. *N. al-Ghayba*, 92.
31. al-Saḍr, *op. cit.*, I, 341-6.
32. *T. al-Ghayba*, 56, 109.
33. *Ibid.*, 157.
34. *al-Kāfī*, I, 505; *Kamāl*, 441-2.
35. *T. al-Ghayba*, 157; *al-Kāfī*, I, 330.
36. For a full account of the traditions which were used by the Imamites during the short occultation, see *al-Kāfī*, I, 525-35; *N. al-Ghayba*, 26-47; al-ʿAṣfarī, *Aṣl Abū Saʿīd al-ʿAṣfarī*, f. 1-3.
37. *Kamāl*, 476-8; Javad ʿAli, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 197-227.
38. al-Saḍr, *op. cit.*, I, 377-9.
39. *al-Najāshī*, 343; *T. al-Fihrist*, 48.
40. Javad ʿAli, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 199; Rajkowski, *op. cit.*, 667; *al-Najāshī*, 222; *T. al-Fihrist*, 243; al-Ṭūsī mentions that the grandfather of ʿUthmān was ʿAmr, however, he does not link him with ʿAmr b. Hurayth; *T. al-Ghayba*, 231.

41. Javad ^ʿAli, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 199.
42. *Dalā'il*, 217.
43. *T. al-Ghayba*, 229.
44. *Ikhtiyār*, 526.
45. *T. al-Ghayba*, 229-31.
46. *T. al-Ghayba*, 231-2; *Kamāl*, 435; for a full account of those men see *al-Najāshī*, 41, 202, 323.
47. *T. al-Ghayba*, 231.
48. *Kamāl*, 90, 441-2; *al-Kāfī*, I, 329-30; *T. al-Ghayba*, 157.
49. For a full account see chapter III, pp. 56-67
50. *al-Kāfī*, I, 517-8, 522-3.
51. Al-Kashshī gives his statement as regards al-Hasan b. al-Nadr along with his account of Abū Hamīd al-Marāghī. He does not name explicitly the city which al-Hasan belonged to; *Ikhtiyār*, 535. According to al-Mustawfī Marāgha is a large town, and was formerly the capital of Azerbaijan; al-Qazwīnī, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 88. However, there is evidence to support the claim that al-Hasan b. al-Nadr was a native of Qumm. Al-Sadūq reports that al-Hasan was from Qumm and listed him among the people who saw the twelfth Imam; *Kamāl*, 442.
52. Al-Kulaynī reports in his account of the birth of the twelfth Imam sixteen narrations, elucidating the activities of the first *ṣafīr* with his followers. Most of these narrations indicate that he practiced miracles to persuade them that he was rightfully appointed by the Imam; *al-Kāfī*, I, 514-24, narrations nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12-17, 20, 21, 23, 28.
53. *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿAshra*, 13.
54. *T. al-Ghayba*, 157-8, *al-Kāfī*, I, 329-30.
55. ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mugnī* (Cairo, 1963), II, 176; quoted from al-Balkhī.
56. *Milal*, 128; *Faṣl* IV, 181, however some later sunni scholars such as Abū Nuʿaym al-Aṣfahānī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿranī al-Mālikī, al-Kunjī al-Shāfīʿī and Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī held that al-Hasan al-ʿAskarī had, in fact, left a son. For full account of the later sunnite views concerning the existence of the twelfth Imam, see Sulaymān al-Qandurī, al-Hanafī; *Yanābiʿ al-Mawadda* (al-Iṣtāna, n.d.), 451, 471, 491; Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, 65-7.
57. al-Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, II, 31.
58. al-Kanjī, *op. cit.*, 336-7.

59. Ibn Khaldūn writes that the twelfth Imam disappeared in a cellar in Hilla. However, Hilla was established in 495/1101 by Banū Mazyad whereas the occultation of the Imam, according to al-Dhahabī took place in 265/878. Thus it appears that Ibn Khaldūn also relied in his report on the popular belief; *al-Muqaddima* (Cairo, 1322), 157.
60. Al-Ṭūsī states that the second *ṣafīr* saw the twelfth Imam in Mecca holding the drapes of the Kaʿba. According to another report a certain Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Jaʿfari on his way to Syria in 309/921 saw the Imam (*T. al-Ghayba*, 162, 166). For a full account of the letters of the Imamites and their answers by the Imam, see *T. al-Ghayba*, 184-93; Muḥammad al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, I, 403,430.
61. *Kamāl*, 442-3.
62. Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, II, 80-1; *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 219-20.
63. *Ikhtiyār*, 518, 520, 555.
64. *Ibid.*, 521.
65. According to al-Ṭabṛānī (a Nuṣayri writer), the Nuṣayriyya movement was established by ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Ṭarbāʾi, who during the time of al-ʿAskarī gained thirty-five partisans in the village of Ṭarbāʾ and other followers in Ninawā near Hilla. Then he attracted Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr to his side. The latter led the movement along with his student al-Husayn b. Ḥamdān during the time of the short occultation. In 336/947 the movement became independent from the Imamites, and gave more emphasis to the role of the Gate (*Bāb*) than the Imam himself; al-Ṭabṛānī, *Sabīl Raḥat al-Arwāḥ*, in *Der Islam*, XXVII (1946), 129-31.
66. *T. al-Ghayba*, 259.
67. Al-Ṭūsī mentions that al-Sharīfī was an adherent of the tenth Imam and that he is not sure about his real name. Al-Kashshī mentions a certain Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Sharīfī or al-Sharīfī amongst the *Ghulāt* during the time of the tenth Imam. It is most likely that he is the same person discussed by al-Ṭūsī; *Ikhtiyār*, 521
68. *T. al-Ghayba*, 258.
69. Javad Alī, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 203; In his account of al-Karkh district al-Baghdādī states that many places were inhabited by Rāfiḍites (Shīʿites); *al-Khṭīb*, I, 81.
70. *T. al-Ghayba*, 229.
71. *Ikhtiyār*, 532.
72. *Ibid.*, 580.
73. al-Qummī, *Tārīkhī Qumm*, 211.
74. *al-Kāfī*, I, 517-8.

75. *Dalā'il*, 272, 275-7.
76. *Bihār*, LI, 316-7.
77. *Qarmisīn*: A small town in the province of Jabal about thirty-one farsakhs from Hamadān. Ibn Khurdādhba, *al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik* (Leiden, 1889), 41, 198.
78. *Bihār*, LI, 300-3; *Dalā'il*, 283-5.
79. *al-Irshād*, 399. For the relations of al-Qaṭṭān with the eastern provinces, see *Ikhtiyār*, 535.
80. *Kamāl*, 488, 499; *al-Kāfī*, I, 521; *Bihār*, LI, 294, 295-6.
81. *Ikhtiyār*, 531.
82. *al-Kāfī*, I, 518; *al-Irshād*, 397.
83. *al-Fuṣūl al-ʿAshara*, 17; According to al-Mufīd Banū al-Rakūlī were the agents of the Imam in Kufa; however, after the death of the first *saḥīf*, the sources begin to refer to Banū Zuzāra and Banu al-Zajawzī as the agents in Kufa. The two different names الزجوزي . الوكولي seem to refer to one family. Perhaps the correct spelling of this name is الزجوزي but the copyist of al-Mufīd's work misread it as الوكولي .; *T. al-Ghayba*, 198-200.
84. *al-Kāfī*, I, 518-9.
85. *Kamāl*, 496-7; al-Sadūq reports that al-ʿArīdī knew the place of the twelfth Imam in Medina and guided a person from Kashmir to the Imam; *Kamāl*, 497, 440.
86. *al-Irshād*, 401.
87. *al-Kāfī*, I, 523.
88. *al-Kāfī*, I, 523. Al-Mufīd relates the same report but both of them did not give the name of the agent of the Imam in Sāmarrā, *al-Irshād*, 401.
89. *Ikhtiyār*, 527; *al-Kāfī*, I, 519.
90. *T. al-Ghayba*, 216.
91. *al-Najāshī*, 264.
92. *al-Kāfī*, I, 519-20.
93. According to al-Tūsī, al-Ṣafwānī was the assistant of al-Qāsim b. al-ʿAlā during the time of the third *saḥīf*; another report indicates that he met the second *saḥīf* in Baghdad in 307/919; *T. al-Ghayba*, 203-5.
94. Al-Ṣafwānī reports that Arrān was a city in Azerbayjān, but it is well known among the geographers that Arrān is a province and that its capital was

- Barda^c. It is included in the great triangle of land lying to the west of the junction point of the rivers Āyrūs (Kur) and Araxas (al-Rās); *T. al-Ghayba*, 204.
95. *T. al-Ghayba*, 204.
 96. Ibn Hawqal, *al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*, 264; al-Subkī, *op. cit.*, III, 230, 233.
 97. *T. al-Ghayba*, 229-30.
 98. *al-Najāshī*, 162-3.
 99. *Bihār*, LI, 300, quoted from *Kitāb al-Nujūm*.
 100. *Ikhtiyār*, 542-3, 527.
 101. Al-Kashshī's report indicates that the relations between the Khawārij and the Imamites in Sijistān were tense. He states that al-Faḍl b. Shādhān escaped from the Khawārij when they attacked Bayhaq, but he died during his escape; *Ikhtiyār*, 543. Al-Isfahānī reports that the Khawārij killed an 'Alid called Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Muḥammad; *Maqāril*, 453.
 102. *Ikhtiyār*, 509-10, 575-8.
 103. *al-Kāfī*, I, 523-4; *Ikhtiyār*, 509-10, 575-80.
 104. *al-Najāshī*, 264-5.
 105. *al-Kāfī*, I, 524.
 106. Although there is no clear statement concerning the links between al-Rāzī and Hamadān, there is ample evidence that al-Rāzī controlled the activities of all the agents in Iran, so it is more than probable that he directed those of al-Ḥasan b. Hārūn, especially in view of this narration.
 107. Hāshim al-Ḥasanī, *op. cit.*, II, 568.
 108. Javad Alī, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islam*, XXV (1939), 205.
 109. *T. al-Ghayba*, 235.
 110. *al-Najāshī*, 65.
 111. *T. al-Ghayba*, 260.
 112. *Ibid.*, 232. Although Ibn Barīna states that the location of the grave was on the western side of Baghdad, today there is a grave within a mosque located in an avenue leading to the Maydān crossroad on the eastern side of Baghdad. The Imamites believe that this is the grave of 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd.
 113. *T. al-Ghayba*, 232-3.

CHAPTER V

1. *T. al-Ghayba*, 230-1, 233, 236; *Kamāl*, 432.
2. *T. al-Ghayba*, 235; *Kamāl*, 510.
3. *T. al-Fihrist*, 50-1; *T. Tahdhīb al-Ahkām*, IV, 134; *T. al-Ghayba*, 100-1. Most of the narrations attributed to Ibn Hilāl come on the authority of Saʿd al-Ashʿarī al-Qummī, which reveals that Ibn Hilāl had a high position among the Imamites before he was excommunicated by the *ṣafīrs* (*Ikhtiyār*, 18, 141, 503, 603). For the narration concerning the twelfth Imam being *al-Qā'im* related on the authority of Ibn Hilāl, see *Kamāl*, 252-3, 350, 649; *al-Kāfī*, I, 342; *N. al-Ghayba*, 175, 100-1, 149, 283.
4. *Ikhtiyār*, 535.
5. al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, I, 501.
6. *al-Najāshī*, 65.
7. al-Sadūq, *Mashyakhat al-Faqīh*, IV, 128. *Al-Naṣb* literally means to declare war on someone, or to show open hostility to someone. In the Shīʿite works the term *al-naṣb* has been used to define a doctrine of a group of people called *al-Nawāṣib* (pl. of *nāṣib*). The *Nawāṣib* were mainly distinguished by their hostility towards the People of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*). Al-Kulaynī considers Ahmad, the son of the ʿAbbāsīd vizier ʿUbayd Allah b. Khāqān, as one of them, and adds that *al-Qā'im* would order them to pay the *jizya* (*al-Kāfī*, I, 503, 508, VIII, 227, 101, 160-1). The Khawārij were amongst the *Nawāṣib* and al-Ṭūsī considered them as infidels (*kuffār*) and forbade the Shīʿites from having any social relations with them. Furthermore, he permitted the Imamites to confiscate their money; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Ahkām*, IV, 22; *al-Istibṣār*, III, 183-4.
8. *T. al-Fihrist*, 50-1; al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, II, 289.
9. *T. al-Ghayba*, 260.
10. *Kamāl*, 489; al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, I, 500.
11. *Ikhtiyār*, 536-7.
12. *Ibid.*, 537.
13. According to the Imamites, Islam is based on five pillars: prayer, *zakāt*, fasting, pilgrimage, and the *wilāya*, that is, the recognition of the Imam, to which they gave priority over the pillars. Therefore if a person spends all his life performing the other four Islamic pillars but does not recognize the Imam, his worship is invalid. For a full account of this point, see *al-Kāfī*, I, 181-4, 374-5, II, 18-19.
14. *T. al-Ghayba*, 260.

15. Al-Dihqān is ʿUrwa b. Yaḥyā al-Nakhhās al-Baghdādī; he is said to have been the *wakīl* and treasurer of the eleventh Imam, al-ʿAskarī. But he was deposed and cursed because he seized the money of the organization and burnt the documents of the Imam, which were kept in the treasury; *Ikhtiyār*, 573, 579.
16. *Ikhtiyār*, 536-7.
17. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 260.
18. *al-Najāshī*, 254-5; *Ikhtiyār*, 564, 566.
19. al-Barqī, *al-Rijāl*, 57, 61.
20. Al-Kashshī mentions a document attributed to al-ʿAskarī containing instructions to his agents in Iraq and Khurasan, in which he ordered Ishāq al-Nisābūrī to contact al-Bilālī in Baghdad; *Ikhtiyār*, 579.
21. *al-Kāfī*, I, 328; *Kamāl*, 499.
22. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 260.
23. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 261.
24. *Ibid.*, 261.
25. *Ikhtiyār*, 517-21, 528-9.
26. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 259. Javad Alī and Rajkowski think that Ibn Nuṣayr was an eminent citizen of Baṣra. Moreover the latter thinks that he was of Persian origin. However, both base their accounts on al-Khāṭib al-Baghdādī (*al-Khatib*, III, 163-4) and al-Kashshī, whereas the latter refers to two people bearing the same name. The first one was his teacher in Baṣra and the second was the above extremist. Al-Kashshī attributed the latter lineage to the Arab tribe Fahr and criticized him bitterly; *Ikhtiyār*, 5, 278, 503, 520.
27. *Ikhtiyār*, 520-1.
28. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 259.
29. *N. Furāt*, 78. Al-Ṣābī reports that Banū Furāt used to inhabit a village called Bābīlī Ṣaṣfrīn in the district of upper Nahrawān, and that there were more than 300 people in this village (Hilāl b. Muḥsin al-Ṣābī, *al-Wizāra* [Cairo, 1958], 11-12). They named themselves after their great-grandfather, Furāt b. Aḥnaf al-ʿAbdī, who had lived and died in Kufa around 120/737 and was a close associate of al-Sajjād and al-Bāqir (al-Barqī, *al-Rijāl*, 8-9, 16). Another member of this family was ʿUmar b. Furāt, who was executed on the orders of Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in 203/808, as a punishment inflicted on him for his propaganda in favour of the vizier Ibn Sahl. See for details, D. Sourdel, "Ibn al-Furāt", *E.I.*²; Rajkowski, *op. cit.*, 769-70.
30. *al-Khāṭib*, III, 163-4; al-Ṣābī, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

31. Rajkowski, *op. cit.*, 772-3, quoted from al-Khaṣībī, *Dīwān*, f. 49b, 4, 5a.
32. *al-Khāṣīb*, VI, 380; Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-ʿAlī, “*al-Madāʾin fī al-Maṣādir al-ʿArabiyya*”, *Sūmar*, XIII (1967), 50.
33. Javad Ali, *op. cit.*, in *Der Islām*, XXV (1939), 206.
34. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 233-4.
35. *al-Kāfī*, I, 329, 331.
36. *Kamāl*, 435.
37. *Ibid.*, 440.
38. *Ibid.*, 442.
39. *al-Kāfī*, I, 330.
40. Abū al-Fidā, *op. cit.*, II, 69; *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 80; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 192.
41. *Ikhtiyār*, 532.
42. al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, II, 297-301.
43. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 240.
44. Concerning the activities of al-Qaṭṭān, see *al-Kāfī*, 520; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 190-1; *Bihār*, LI, 302, 217; *Kamāl*, 409-1; *al-Irshād*, 398-9. For Ḥājjiz’s relations with the *safīr*, see *Bihār*, LI, 294, and for Aḥmad b. Ishāq’s contacts with the *safīr* and other agents, see *Dalāʾil*, 272; *Ikhtiyār*, 556-7.
45. *Kamāl*, 442.
46. *Ikhtiyār*, 535.
47. *al-Irshād*, 399.
48. *Dalāʾil*, 272. According to al-Ṣadūq, Aḥmad b. Ishāq died in Ḥilwān before 260/874, but this cannot be accepted because there are several indications that he outlived al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/874). Moreover al-Ṣadūq relates his report on the authority of Muhammad b. Bahr, who was well-known for fabricating narrations; *Kamāl*, 454, 466-7; *al-Najāshī*, 298.
49. *Kamāl*, 488.
50. *al-Kāfī*, I, 525.
51. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 191-2.
52. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 242.
53. *Ibid.*, 240-1.

54. According to Ibn Rustam, after the death of al-^ʿAskarī in 260/874, al-Baqṭānī claimed that he was the agent of the twelfth Imam (*Biḥār*, LI, 300). But later he appears to have abandoned his claim and served both the second and third *saḡīrs* (*T. al-Ghayba*, 242). Al-Wajnā' was amongst those who had seen the Imam (*Kamāl*, 443). He was resident in Baghdad during the time of the second *saḡīr* (*al-Kāfī*, I, 521). However it appears that he had some relations with the political bases of the Imamites in Mosul in 307/919; *T. al-Ghayba*, 205.
55. *T. al-Ghayba*, 198.
56. *T. al-Ghayba*, 193, 195.
57. *al-Najāshī*, 198; Buzurg, *Nawābigh al-Ruwāt*, 186.
58. *N. al-Ghayba*, 179; *Mizān*, II, 69-70, 399; Buzurg, *Nawābigh al-Ruwāt*, 53-55, 161-3; *al-Najāshī*, 132-3.
59. al-Khirsān, *Sharḡ Mashyakhat Tahdhīb al-Aḡkām* (Najaf, 1963), 13-16.
60. *T. al-Ghayba*, 235.
61. *Kamāl*, 485.
62. *Kamāl*, 504.
63. *T. al-Ghayba*, 205-6.
64. al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma*, IV, 409; *Biḥār*, LI, 56-7; al-Irbilī does not mention the year in which Ibn Ḥamdān controlled Qumm; however, Ibn al-Aṡīr reports that he was installed in this post in 296/908. Consequently the contact between the second *saḡīr* and Ibn Ḥamdān must have occurred after that date; *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 14, 32.
65. *Kamāl*, 493, 495.
66. *Ibid.*, 488, 486; *Biḥār*, LI, 294, 325.
67. *T. al-Ghayba*, 202.
68. *Ibid.*, 192-3.
69. Al-^ʿAbbāsiyya was a fief in Baghdad granted to al-^ʿAbbās, the brother of the caliph al-Manṡūr. According to al-Kḡāṡib al-Baḡhdādī there were two fiefs of the same name, one on the eastern side of Baghdad and the other on the western side. Because the house of Abū Ja'far was on the western side, the meeting may have occurred there; *al-Kḡāṡib*, I, 79, 95.
70. *Kamāl*, 498.
71. *T. al-Ghayba*, 192.
72. *Kamāl*, 499.

73. Al-^ʿAbbās b. Ma^ʿrūf was a companion to the tenth Imam, al-Hādī. He devoted his time during the short occultation to relating Imamite narrations; therefore, perhaps, Abū Ja^ʿfar originally ordered al-Aswad to hand the money over to Ibn Ma^ʿrūf because al-Aswad, at that time, was not aware of the necessity of the underground organization. For a full account of the career of Ibn Ma^ʿrūf as a narrator of Imamite narrations which criticise those Shī^ʿites who considered Ibn al-Ḥanafīyya or the seventh Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim, as the hidden Imam, see *Ikhtiyār*, 315, 461; *al-Najāshī*, 215-6, 151; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, IV, 122, 137, V, 292, VI, 122, 194.
74. *Kamāl*, 502.
75. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 241.
76. *Tabarī*, III, 1857, 2024, 2109; for a full account of the Zanj revolt see the two important articles by Nāji, “*Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī Maṣḍaran ‘an Thawrat al-Zanj’*”, *al-Mawrid*, VII, No. 2 (1978), 37-92; and “*al-Tanzīm al-^ʿAskarī li-jaysh Ṣāhib al-Zanj’*”, *al-Mu^ʿarikh al-^ʿArabī*, VII (1978), 116-157; Fayṣal al-Sāmīr, *Thawrat al-Zanj* (Basra, 1952).
77. al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghaṣṣa*, IV, 428; *Bihār*, L, 293.
78. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2099.
79. Al-Ṭūsī reports that the tomb of al-Ḥusayn collapsed in 273/886 probably due to an act of sabotage, especially if one bears in mind the fact that an attack upon the grave of ^ʿAlī was foiled about the same time; al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, VI, 111-12.
80. For the distinction between the Mubārakiyya and the Qarāmīta, see *Q. Maqālāt*, 80-6; *N. Firaq*, 67-74; *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 247-8.
81. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 39, 130. The Ismā^ʿīlī writer Ibn Ḥawshab narrates in *al-Kashf* several Qur’anic verses about the Last Day, which for him means the rise of *al-Qā’im al-Mahdī* (*al-Kashf*, 5-6, 10, 11, 14, 24; Abū Ya^ʿqūb al-Sijistānī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (Teheran, 1949, 81-3). Moreover, Ibn Ḥawshab mentions a narration attributed to al-Ṣādiq, stating that *al-Qā’im* will rise in Mecca. Thus he agrees with the Imamite reports regarding this point; *al-Kashf*, 32-5.
82. Ibn Hawshab, *Asrār al-Nuṭaqā’*, 51-3, 90-2. For the details of the Ismā^ʿīlī use of these traditions in their activities with the tribe of Kitāma in 280/893, see *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 24-5, 26.
83. Ibn Ḥawshab, *al-Kashf*, 62; *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 22-3; Ivanow supports this point in suggesting that “the terrible slaughter of the pilgrims in the Ka^ʿba itself, and the seizure of the sacred relics were not acts of wanton cruelty, but were connected with some expectations of a religious character, such as the return of Muḥammad b. Ismā^ʿīl in full glory, etc., which most probably was expected to be due about that time.” Ivanow, “Ismailis and Qarmatians”, *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XVI (1940), 82; also see W. Madelung, “Qarmatī”, *E.I.*2.
84. *N. Firaq*, 76; al-Ṭabarī confirms this number; *Ṭabarī*, II, 2218.

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85. *Q. Maqālāt*, 86.
86. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2124.
87. *al-Kāmil*, VII, 340-1, VIII, 21-2. There is evidence which encourages the present writer to link the activities of the Qarāmiṭa with those of the Ismāʿīlīs. Ibn Ḥawqal mentions that after the establishment of the Qarāmiṭa state in Bahrain they used to send the khums to the *Ṣāhib al-Zamān*, that is the Ismāʿīlī leader in Egypt; Ibn Ḥawqal, *op. cit.*, 21-3.
88. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2218; Ibn Ḥawqal, *op. cit.*, 29.
89. *Ṭabarī*, III, 1757. Shaban put forward the theory that the Ismāʿīlī movement in Iraq and Bahrain was called the Qarāmiṭa after a specific race called al-Qaramāṭiyyūn. They came originally from Libya and they could hardly speak Arabic. They took part in the Zanj revolt and joined the Ismāʿīlī movement when the revolt collapsed. (Shaban, *op. cit.*, 130).
90. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2202.
91. *Maqālāt*, 85.
92. *Kamāl*, 483, 485.
93. *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 311, 376.
94. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2127-8; *al-Kāmil*, VII, 311.
95. al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin*, 58; Ibn Shādhān, *al-Idāh*, 475.
96. Later in 300/912 Muḥsin was arrested in the suburbs of Damascus. His head was sent to Baghdad, where it was impaled on a bridge in the eastern side of the city, an area which was inhabited by a large Shīʿite population; *Maqātil*, 449; al-Kubaysī, *op. cit.*, 446.
97. ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā, who was known for his anti-ʿAlid attitude, was called a Qarmāṭi by his personal enemies; as a result he was dismissed from office (ʿArib, *op. cit.*, 59). Al-Qāsim al-Khāqānī was discharged in the same manner. Later al-Hallāj was arrested on the accusation that he was a Qarmāṭian missionary; *Nujūm*, III, 182; Ibn Taymiyya, *Jāmiʿ al-Rasāʾil*, I, 188.
98. al-Ṣābi, *al-Wuzarāʾ*, 292-3; *Ṭabarī*, III, 2123.
99. *al-Kāmil*, VII, 333.
100. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2123. ʿUbayd Allah b. Sulaymān was a close associate of al-Muwaffaq in Sāmarrā in 264/878, but four years later he was imprisoned. When al-Muʿtaḍid became the heir-apparent to al-Muʿtamid, ʿUbayd Allah was promoted to the office of the *wizāra*, whereupon he used his office to pursue his rivals such as Banū Furāt. At the same time he managed to uncover the activities of the agents of the second *saḡīr*. He died in 288/900; *al-Kāfī*, I, 525; *al-Kāmil*, VII, 219, 227, 309; *al-Fakhrī*, 302.

101. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2148; *al-Muntazam*, V, 150.
102. Al-Isfahānī mentions that two ʿAlids, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, were tortured along with the Qarmāṭi Ṣāhib al-Kāhl, whose hands and legs were cut off, yet they did not support the Qarāmiṭa nor did they have any relations with them (*Maqātil*, 446). Al-Ṭabarī states twice that the ʿAbbāsid troops arrested a group of Qarāmiṭa in 286/899 and investigated them. They disclosed the name of their leader, Abū Hāshim b. Ṣadaqa al-Kātib, who was arrested and put in jail (*Ṭabarī*, III, 2179). Al-Muʿtadid's investigation of the Qarāmiṭa leader, Abū al-Fawāris, shows that he differentiated between the doctrine of the Qarāmiṭa and the Imamites; *al-Kāmil*, VII, 354.
103. *al-Kāfī*, I, 525.
104. *al-Kāfī*, I, 525.
105. *al-Kāfī*, I, 525; *al-Irshād*, 402; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 183-4. This order is believed to have come from the Imam himself.
106. al-Rāwandī, *al-Kharāʾij wa-l-Jarāʾih* (Bombay, 1301), 67. Al-Ṭūsī mentions the names of two of the three soldiers: Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allah and Rashīq, the servant of al-Muʿtadid. It appears that al-Ṭūsī's report is sound, because al-Ṭabarī confirms that Rashīq was the personal soldier (*ghulam*, *khādim*) of al-Muʿtadid and took part in the fighting against the Zanji revolution; *Ṭabarī*, III, 1953, 2003, 2007, 2017-9, 2082-3; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 160-1.
107. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 163-5.
108. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, VI, 46.
109. *Kamāl*, 92-3, quoted from *Kitāb al-Tanbīh* by Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī.
110. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 166, 195-6.
111. *Ibid.*, 165.
112. *Kamāl*, 440.
113. The Prophet's companion ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀs used to narrate a Prophetic tradition predicting the rise of al-Qaḥṭānī, whose rising is only a sign for the rise of *al-Qā'im al-Mahdī*. However, Muʿāwiya prohibited this companion from narrating the tradition, because he thought that the spread of such traditions would encourage the people to overthrow him; *B. Ṣaḥīḥ*, 384.
114. *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 209, 264, 265, 274, 310, 331; from 273/886 onward ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Taymalī used to narrate other signs of *al-Qā'im's* uprising (*N. al-Ghayba*, 131, 164; *Kamāl*, 649-656; al-Ḥaḍramī, *Aṣl Jaʿfar b. Ṣhuraḥ al-Ḥaḍramī*, f. 37a, 39a, 48a).
115. *Ṭabarī*, III, 2225.

116. Al-Nu'mānī devotes a section of his work *al-Ghayba* to the refutation of the claims of the Ismā'īlīs (N. *al-Ghayba*, 53-7, 176-80); al-Kulaynī reports a narration on the authority of al-Sādiq, forbidding his follower 'Umar b. Ḥanzala from taking part in any 'Alid revolution before the outcry in the sky; *al-Kāfī*, VIII, 310. See also *Ikhtiyār*, 262-3.
117. *Bihār*, LI, 161.
118. For a full account of the increase of the role of the Imamite *fuqahā'*, see Chapter VII.
119. *Kamāl*, 484.
120. Al-Ṭūsī gives two dates for the death of Abū Ja'far, the first of which, 304/916, is on the authority of the grandson of Abū Ja'far, Hibat Allah. The second report attributed to Abū Ghālib al-Zurāri, the agent of Ibn Rūh in Kufa puts the date at 305/917. Because the latter had close relations with Abū Ja'far and was his contemporary, it seems that his report is more likely to be accurate; Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 238-9; *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 80; Abū al-Fidā, *al-Mukhtaṣar*, 11, 69.
121. Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 238-9. On the eastern side of Baghdad there is a tomb situated in a mosque called *al-Khullānī*. The people believe that it is the grave of Abū Ja'far. Since al-Ṭūsī mentions that his grave is on the western side it is possible that his corpse was transported to the new grave, but there is no available source to support such a claim.

CHAPTER VI

1. Ibn Sahr Āshūb, *Manāqib*, I, 458.
2. *Ikhtiyār*, 557. The work of Ibn Abī Ṭayy is not extant, but al-Dhahabī used it in writing al-Nawbakhtī's biography; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, f. 132.
3. Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 209-10; Iqbāl, *Khāndān Nawbakhtī*, 214.
4. Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 252-3.
5. *Ibid.*, 250-2.
6. *Ibid.*, 242-3; *Bihār*, LI, 355.
7. The narrator of this report is Abū Ghālib al-Zurāri. He reports that he used to contact the second *safīr* via al-Nawbakhtī, who when he became the third *safīr*, contacted the agents of Kufa through al-Shalmaghānī; Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 202.
8. Ṭ. *al-Ghayba*, 242.
9. *Kamāl*, 505-6.

10. The testament of the second *safīr* to Ibn Rūḥ al-Nawbakhtī was reported on the authority of the agents, Muḥammad b. Humām and Jaʿfar b. Aḥmad b. Maṭīl, who were present at that meeting and bore witness to the designation. Moreover Ibn Barīna, the grandson of the second *safīr*, also reports the testament and agrees with the other agents in regard to its authenticity. *Kamāl*, 503.
11. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 242-3.
12. *Ibid.*, 240.
13. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 255.
14. Sachedina, *The Doctrine of Mahdism in Imāmī Shīʿism* (Ph.D.) Thesis, Toronto University (Canada, 1976), 137.
15. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, f. 132.
16. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 240. According to some reports, the decision that Ibn Rūḥ would be the successor of Abū Jaʿfar had already been revealed by Abū Jaʿfar himself to a few agents three years before his death in 305/917. Jaʿfar al-Madāʾinī and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Aswad were amongst the agents who received these instructions. *Kamāl*, 501-2.
17. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 256.
18. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, f. 132 b.
19. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 250-1.
20. For a full account of the career of Ḥāmid b. al-ʿAbbās, see al-Kubaysī, *op. cit.*, 190-9.
21. *Bihār*, LI, 320-1; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 212, 242-3.
22. *Iqbāl*, *op. cit.*, 216.
23. *Bihār*, LI, 371; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 263.
24. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 197-8, 212.
25. *al-Najāshī*, 293-4; Buzurg, *Nawābigh al-Ruwāt*, 289.
26. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 205-6; Buzurg, *Nawābigh al-Ruwāt*, 96.
27. *Kamāl*, 504.
28. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 240.
29. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 176, 179-80.
30. *Kamāl*, 443-4.
31. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 255.

32. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 202-5. According to Buzurg, al-Qāsim died in 304/916. But al-Ṭūsī refers to his activities during the time of the third *saḡfir* (305-26/917-37), so his death must have occurred after 304/916; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 202.
33. *al-Najāshī*, 289.
34. *Kamāl*, 502.
35. *Ibid.*, 516-7.
36. *Kamāl*, 518-9.
37. al-Jahshayārī, *al-wuzarā'*, 300.
38. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 199.
39. Iqbāl, *op. cit.*, 217.
40. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yan* (Cairo, 1948), III, 99.
41. al-Ṣābi, *op. cit.*, 40-1.
42. Ibn Miskawayh, *op. cit.*, I, 123.
43. Ibn Miskawayh, *op. cit.*, I, 120-7.
44. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 200; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, f. 132a.
45. ⁶Arīb, *op. cit.*, 141.
46. ⁶Arīb, *op. cit.*, 141; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 200.
47. Iqbāl, *op. cit.*, 220.
48. Ibn Miskawayh, *op. cit.*, I, 225.
49. al-Ṣūlī, *al-Awraq*, 87.
50. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb*, II, 27; Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 296; *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, V, 288.
51. *al-Najāshī*, 293-4; *T. al-Fihrist*, 305-6; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 158, 221, 267. It seems that the extant work called *Fiqh al-Riḍā* is in fact *Kitāb al-Taklīf* of al-Shalmaghānī because it has a tradition concerning testimony (*al-Shahāda*) and another concerning the definition of the measure called *kurr* which al-Shalmaghānī gave in contrast to the other Imamites.
52. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 212, 263.
53. Ibn Ḥawqal, *op. cit.*, 211.
54. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 301-3, *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 218-9.

55. *Biḥār*, LI, 374; Hāshim al-Ḥasanī, *op. cit.*, II, 575.
56. *Biḥār*, LI, 372; al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, I, 516.
57. Such a claim obviously contradicts the beliefs of both the *Shīʿa* and the *Sunni* alike. For details of God's essential nature according to the Imamites, see al-Ḥillī, al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf, *Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt* (Teheran, 1338), 77-85, and his *al-Bāb al-Hādī Ashar, A Treatise on the principles of Shīʿite theology*, trans. from Arabic from W. Miller (London 1958), 15-52.
58. *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 218-9.
59. *T. al-Ghayba*, 268.
60. *Ibid.*, 265.
61. *T. al-Ghayba*, 253-4.
62. *Ibid.*, 264.
63. *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 218.
64. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 302; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubab*, II, 27.
65. *T. al-Ghayba*, 266.
66. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 302-3; al-Shībī, *op. cit.*, 203.
67. al-Dhahabī, *al-Ibar*, II, 191.
68. Ibn Miskawayh, *op. cit.*, I, 123.
69. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 303.
70. al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, 517-8.
71. *T. al-Ghayba*, 269.
72. *al-Kāmil*, VIII, 217.
73. Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 299.
74. *al-Najāshī*, 289, 294.
75. Al-Shaybānī seems to have been an Imamite *Muḥaddīth*, but after the deviation of al-Shalmaghānī he inclined toward him, ignoring the Twelfth Imam's pronouncement against him; *T. al-Fihrist*; 299; al-Najāshī, 309.
76. al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, I, 527; Hāshim al-Ḥasanī, *op. cit.*, II, 575.
77. Ibn Miskawayh, *op. cit.*, I, 215-7, 223.
78. *Ibid.*, I, 267.

79. al-Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh*, 343; Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb*, I, 299-304.
80. al-Sūlī, *op. cit.*, 104.
81. *T. al-Ghayba*, 252.
82. At the present time the grave of Ibn Rūḥ is situated on the eastern side of Baghdad, whereas al-Ṭūsī mentions that this grave was in the Nawbakhtiyya district at the avenue which leads to Qanṭarat al-Shawk, which was located in the western side of Baghdad; Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, IV, 191; al-ʿAmīd, *op. cit.*, 70.
83. *Kamāl*, 517.

CHAPTER VII

1. *T. al-Ghayba*, 256.
2. al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, II, 296-7.
3. Buzurg, *Nawābiḥ al-Ruwāt*, 200. Ṣaymara was the name of a town in the region of al-Jabal in Iran (Ibn Ḥawqal, *op. cit.*, 158, 259), but it seems that the surname of the fourth *ṣaḡḡr* is derived from the river al-Sammar in Baṣra, because most of his relatives lived there; *Ithbāt*, 246-7; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shaḡḡriyya*, III, 339.
4. *Ithbāt*, 246-7.
5. *Bihār*, LI, 23.
6. *Ithbāt*, 240.
7. *al-Kāfi*, I, 524.
8. *Kamāl*, 517.
9. *T. al-Ghayba*, 257-8; *Bihār*, LI, 362.
10. Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, I, 532.
11. *Kamāl*, 516; *T. al-Ghayba*, 257; al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, II, 297; Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ṣadr, *op. cit.*, 179-80.
12. *Kamāl*, 516.
13. *T. al-Ghayba*, 237-8.
14. *Kamāl*, 516.
15. *Ibid*.

16. *Kamāl*, 516.
17. *Ibid*.
18. *N. al-Ghayba*, 92.
19. *al-Irshād*, 399; *Bihār*, LIII, complete work.
20. *Kamāl*, 516.
21. Rajowski, *op. cit.*, 673-4.
22. al-Ḥasanī, *op. cit.*, 278.
23. For these traditions see al-ʿAṣfarī, *op. cit.*, f. 1-2.
24. *Kamāl*, 442-3; *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 231-2.
25. *Ithbāt*, 247-8.
26. *al-Kāfī*, I, 329-30.
27. Watt, *The Majesty that is Islam*, 170-1.
28. *al-Kāfī*, I, 183, 375, al-Tūsī, *al-Amālī*, I, 124. Al-Kulaynī devotes a complete section to the principle of *wilāya*. He records about 90 narrations containing an exegesis of Qur'anic verses concerning it, *al-Kāfī*, I 412-38.
29. *al-Kāfī*, I, 355, 339. For a full account of these traditions, see al-Saffar, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, f. 23b; al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maḳālāt*, 8; *al-Kāfī*, I, 177-8, 184.
30. al-Saffar, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, f. 23b-24a.
31. *Ikhtiyār*, 464-5.
32. This can be noted in the tradition attributed to the ninth Imam, al-Jawād, who said, "If my son, ʿAlī, died, a light from him will appear and when this light went off, another light will be concealed. I warn those who doubt what will happen." *N. al-Ghayba*, 99.
33. For all these traditions see al-ʿAṣfarī, *op. cit.*, f. 1-2 (Appendix); *Kamāl*, 349.
34. See Chapter I, p. 20.
35. al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, II, 283.
36. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, *Baḥth Hawla al-Mahdī*, 69-70.
37. *Bihār*, LI, 377-78.
38. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 270.

39. Incidents recorded by Ibn Taghrī Bardī indicate that the adherents of al-Shalmaghānī continued their underground activities until the year 341/952, when the ʿAbbāsids discovered their cells. For a full account, see *Nujūm*, III, 307-8.
40. The disciples of al-Sādiq who narrated these traditions on his authority were Ishāq b. ʿAmmār al-Sayrafī, Ibrāhīm b. ʿAmr al-Kannasī, Hishām b. Sālim, al-Mufaddil b. ʿUmar, Hāzim b. Habīb, Abū Basīr and Muḥammad b. Muslim; *N. al-Ghayba*, 90-1.
41. *N. al-Ghayba*, 92.
42. Sachedina, *op. cit.*, 125.
43. *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 110.
44. al-ʿAlawī, *Fi Nusrāt al-Wāqifa*, quoted in *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 44.
45. *Q. Maqālāt*, 106.
46. *N. Firaq*, 97.
47. Buzurg, *al-Dharīʿa*, XXI, 69.
48. Quoted in the *Ṭ. al-Ghayba*, 274.
49. *al-Kāfī*, I, 340.
50. *Kamāl*, 112.
51. *N. al-Ghayba*, 6.
52. *N. al-Ghayba*, 80.
53. *Ibid.*, 99; Ibn Qubba quoted in *Kamāl*, 112.
54. Ibn al-Nadīm, *op. cit.*, 225.
55. Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh*, quoted in *Kamāl*, 3.
56. *Kamāl*, 3.
57. Quoted by al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī*, II, 176, 182-3.
58. Quoted in *Kamāl*, 94-122, 126.
59. Ibn ʿAbbād, *Nusrāt Madhahib al-Zaydiyya*, 211.
60. *Kamāl*, 2-3, 16.
61. *Kamāl*, 2-3, 19.

62. There are two reports which support this point. First al-Ṣadūq mentions that the Zaydites accused the Imamites of inventing the Prophetic traditions which indicate that his successors will be twelve Imams (*Kamāl*, 67-8). The Zaydite al-Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād (d. 381/991) held this claim against the Imamites (Ibn ʿAbbād, *Nuṣṣarāt Madhāhib al-Zaydiyya*, 209-12). Also the Ismāʿīlīs did so. Ivanow (ed.), *Zahr al-Maʿāni*, 51.
63. Sachedina, *op. cit.*, 83.
64. *Kutub al-Ziyarāt* are the books which give details of how to undertake pilgrimages to the shrines of the Imams.
65. *Biḥār*, CII, 81.
66. Sachedina, *op. cit.*, 86-7.
67. *al-Kāfī*, I, 307, 536; *Kamāl*, 263; al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, II, 249-50; *Iṭḥbāt*, 178-9.
68. al-Ṣadūq, *Man lā Yahduruhu al-Faqīh*, II, 371; al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tahdhīb*, VI, 114; *N. al-Ghayba*, 45.
69. al-Saffar (d. 290), *Basāʾir al-Darajāt*, f. 50a; *al-Kāfī*, I, 243.
70. *N. al-Ghayba*, 122.
71. *T. al-Ghayba*, (Najaf, 1965), 296.
72. *N. al-Ghayba*, 125.
73. *Ibid.*, 125.
74. al-Mufīd, *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt*, 50.
75. *Maqātil*, 359.
76. *al-Kāfī*, I, 19, 35, 338; *Iṭḥbat*, 260.
77. *Kamāl*, 256, 260, 280, 289, 333, 338, 342.
78. *Ibid.*, 512, 513.
79. *N. al-Ghayba*, 91; *T. al-Ghayba*, 274-5; *Ikhtiyār*, 476.
80. *Kamāl*, 81.
81. *T. al-Ghayba*, 215; *Biḥār*, LII, 99.
82. The *khums* (the fifth) in Shīʿite law is an obligatory tax based on the following Qurʾānic verse: "And know ye that whatever of a thing ye acquire, a fifth of it is for God, and for the Apostle, and for the Apostle's near relatives and the orphans and the needy and the penniless traveller" (*al-Anfāl*, VIII, 41). The Imams collected the *khums* from their followers and used the first three shares

- for the benefit of the congregation and the kindred of the Prophet, and the second three shares for distribution among the orphans, the needy, and the penniless traveller (wayfarer) of the Prophet's family; *Asīl* 'Asim b. Hamīd al-Hannat, f. 22; *al-Kāfī*, II, 626-8.
83. al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *al-Muṭabar fī sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar* (Qumm, 1318), 298; *al-Jawāmi'* *al-Fiqḥiyya* (Iran, 1276), 12, 76.
 84. For details see Ibn Dāwūd, *al-Rijāl*, 110; *T. al-Fihrist*, 268, 363; Ibn Qubba, quoted in *Kamāl*, 120; *al-Najāshī*, 315.
 85. al-Sāhib b. 'Abbād, *op. cit.*, 211.
 86. *Ijtihād*, in Sunnī law means the pronouncing of independent judgements on legal or theological questions based on the interpretation and application of the four principles, the Qur'an, traditions, consensus, and reason (*'Aql*). According to the Imamites, *Ijtihād* is employing all one's power to arrive at speculative probability (*ẓann*) in a case or in a rule of divine law depending mainly on the Qur'an and traditions; al-Ghurayfī, *al-Ijtihād wa-l-Fatwā* (Beirut, 1978), 9.
 87. For the role of al-Tūsī in the formulation of Imamite *ijtihād*, see Maḥmūd Rāmyar, *Shaykh Tūsī*, Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh, 1977), 88-92.
 88. *T. al-Ghayba*, 270.
 89. al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukuma al-Islāmiyya*, (Beirut, 1978), 48.
 90. al-'Amilī, *al-Wasā'il*, XVIII, 101; *Biḥār*, LIII, 181; al-Khumaynī, *op. cit.*, 77.
 91. al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, II., 263-4; al-'Amilī, *al-Wasā'il*, XVIII, 94-5.
 92. al-Ṭabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, II, 260.
 93. al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *al-Muṭabar*, 298.
 94. al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, *al-Muṭabar*, 298.
 95. *al-Fuṣūl al-Mukhtāra*, 261.

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