

## Introduction

In the period prior to the beginning of occultation (260 A.H), Shi'ites were fortunate to have outstanding intellectual scholars who were trained by Imams (A.S) and to whom the principles were taught. Those principles were known as the "Four Hundred Principles" (Usul 'Arbi'a Mi'ah). Principles of Shi'ite jurisprudence and beliefs were explained by Imams (A.S) and were gathered in these collections of hadith. However, the situation was politically grave and critical. Imams of the Shi'ites were besieged and despite their firm *taqiyah* (prudent dissimulation); they were brought to Samarra from Medina to be kept under stricter control. Shi'ites' contact with Imams was very risky and difficult.

In that stage, when the struggle became so crucial and complex, the strategic plan of the Shi'ites was formed in the "Secret Network of Deputation"; a network which was founded during the age of Imam Sadiq (A.S) and came to power during the age of 'Askariyan (A.S) (the two imprisoned Imams i.e. the 10th and the 11th Imams). The secret network of deputation was a very complex organized system whose depth, complexity and significant role cannot be analyzed without an intensive study and analysis of its hidden aspects.

In that period, having hidden tactful contacts [with his companions] the Imams (A.S) developed that network and subsequently guarded, strengthened and developed the Shi'ite community.

During that momentous stage of oppositions, another step that Shi'ite Imams took was to support and advocate some of 'Alawis' oppositions in weakening the pillars of Abbasid government and preventing their tyranny and aggression.

From the social view, the Shi'ite community was under Caliphs' strong pressure and aggression. Their properties were confiscated and their lives were in danger. They were also unseated from important posts and positions and oppressed as much as possible. Some of them took important posts by practicing *taqiyah* so that they could help the poor and the oppressed and take appropriate measures when necessary.

Although Shi'ite leadership was kept under control, as with the other Imams (A.S), it had an outstanding authority among all social classes.

Kulayni quoted from a member of Banū Hanafah tribe living in Sīstān who had told him: “At the beginning of Mu'tasim's Caliphate, I accompanied Abu Ja'far, Imam Jawād (A.S), when he was going to Hajj. Then one day, when we sat to eat while some people of the royal court were with us, I told him: “O' May I be sacrificed in your way! Our governor is one who is among your Shi'ites and in his records (account book, record book) some taxes are assigned for me. I wondered if you think it is appropriate that you write a letter to him and tell him to have mercy on me [about this].”

Abu Ja'far (A.S) stated: “I do not know him.” I said: “O' May I be sacrificed in your way! As I mentioned, he is among your Shi'ites and your letter will be to my benefit.” So, he (A.S) took a paper and wrote:

“In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. And then; the carrier of this letter described your religion and undertaking as to be very nice. Surely, the beneficial deed for you is the one in which you do the good; then do well by your brethren and know (be aware) that the God Almighty will ask you about [your deed even if having] an amount of a particle.”

The man said: “when I came to Sīstān, I found that Husayn b. 'Abdullah Neyshābūrī, the governor, already knew about the matter. He came out of the city about two parasangs [about 11~12 kilometers] to welcome me; then I gave him the letter. He kissed it and put it on his eyes and asked me: “what do you want?” I said: “There is some tax assigned for me in your finance bureau.” He ordered to abolish that [unjust] tax from me.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Al-Kāfī, Vol. 5, pp. 111 & 112; Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 50, pp. 86 & 87.

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