

Chapter 13: The Time of The Imam

The time of Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, was called the Golden Time. It was the most brilliant and wonderful of all the times in Islamic history. That is because building prospered; agriculture developed; the Islamic state dominated most regions of the world as well as Baghdad became the capital of Islamic world; rather the capital of the world, for it was the greatest city to which scholars and diplomats from everywhere in the world came in order to obtain an office in the state or to present the needs of their countries in the fields of administration, economy, and science.

We must mention the affairs of that time, for there is a close relationship between them and the research on the life of Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him.

The Scientific Life

The scientific life in the time of Imam al-Ridha’ bloomed, and its activities in all kinds of science grew. That was the most developed kind of civilization progress which the ‘Abba’sid state reached in all periods of its reign. We will briefly present some aspects of this scientific progress as follows:

The Satellite of Ibn al-Muqanna’

Among the most marvelous inventions of that time was the satellite which was made by ‘Ata” al-Khurasani, better known as Ibn al-Muqanna’. That satellite appeared and the people saw it from a two-month distance, and then it disappeared from them, and concerning it Abu’ al-‘Ala” al-Ma’arri has said:

Be watchful! The satellite whose head is masked

is error and enticement just as the satellite of al-Muqanna’. [1](#)

The poet Abu’ al-Qa’sim Hibat Allah b. Sana” al-Mulk has referred to it in a poem, saying:

To you, the satellite of al-Muqanna’ when rising is not

more charming than that of the turbaned one.[2](#)

However our references have not mentioned how that satellite was made and its apparatuses as well as they have not referred to the country where the satellite was made. More likely, it was made in Baghdad, the Capital of the 'Abba'sid government in that time, any how, the making of that satellite is regarded as the greatest scientific achievement in those times.

Yet another example of the scientific achievements in those times was the usage of crystal in making ships. This has been mentioned by some historians.

[The Institutes and Libraries](#)

The 'Abba'sid government established institutes and libraries in Baghdad, that Islamic and non-Islamic sciences might be studied therein. The Government founded therein thirty marvelous schools; the most famous of them was al-Niza'miya.[3](#) Moreover it established therein public libraries the most important of which is:

[The Depository of Wisdom](#)

Ha'ru'n al-Rashid brought to it his personal library and added to it the books which were collected by his father al-Mahdi and his grandfather al-Mansu'r. Then al-Ma'mu'n asked the Emir of Siquiya for some philosophical and scientific books. He added these books to the Depository of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikma*) after he had received them as well as he brought to it many books from Khurasa'n. Wherever he heard of a book, he brought the book to it.[4](#)

SAhl b. Ha'ru'n b. Ra'hbu'n was a scribe in the Depository of Wisdom, and then he was appointed by al-Ma'mu'n as a keeper of the philosophical books which were brought from the Island of Cyprus. When al-Ma'mu'n made peace with the leader of the Island, he asked him to send him the books which were collected by the Greeks in a house and which none came to know except them. So the leader of the Island gathered his retainers and men of opinion and counseled with them about carrying the books to al-Ma'mu'n, and they advised him not to carry them to him except one archbishop who said to him: "I think that you should be quick in sending the books to him, for if these sciences enter a state, they will corrupt it and sow division among its scholars; therefore, send them to al-Ma'mu'n." Al-Ma'mu'n became delighted at them and appointed SAhl as a keeper over them.[5](#) It is worth mentioning that Ghayla'n al-Fa'risi was the general keeper of the library and was scribe of al-Rashid and al-Ma'mu'n.

This library continued supplying researchers and scholars with various kinds of science. When Hulagu, the Mongol shedder of blood, occupied Baghdad, he destroyed the library, and hence Islam world lost its most important heritage.

The Translation of Books

Among the aspects of the development of the cultural and scientific life in that time was translating books from foreign languages into Arabic including medical, mathematical, astronomical books as well as philosophical and political sciences. In his book *al-Fihrast*, Ibn al-Nadim has mentioned many names of these books. Hanin b. Isha'q was the head of the Translation Department. Ibn al-Nadim narrated: "Al-Ma'mu'n exchanged letters with the Romanian King. He turned to him for help, wrote to him, and asked permission to send him what he chose of the old books stored in Rome. He (the Romanian King) responded to him after a refusal.

Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n delegated for that a group of persons including al-Hajja'jj b. Matar, Ibn al-Batriq, Salam (the keeper of the House of Wisdom), and others. They chose books from what they found. When they brought them to al-Ma'mu'n, he ordered them to carry the books to the Depository of Wisdom.⁶

Of course, the books translated into Arabic developed Arab and Islamic thought and, in addition, they contributed in improving sciences in Islamic world, for many students worked in studying and understanding them.

The Maps and Observatories

Among the aspects of the scientific progress of that time is that al-Ma'mu'n ordered a world map to be drawn and it was called al-Ma'mu'n's Map (*al-Sura al-Ma'mu'niya*), and it was the first world map to be drawn during the 'Abba'sid time, as well as he ordered an observatory to be established, and it was established at al-Shamma'siya, a district in Baghdad.⁷

The Dominating Sciences

As for the sciences which dominated that time, they were the sciences of the Qur'an, which are as follows:

1. The Interpretation of the Qur'an

This science means interpreting the verses of the Holy Qur'an, clarifying their meanings, distinguishing the abrogating verses from the abrogated, the unlimited verses from the limited, the general from the specific, and so on. The interpreters followed two ways in their interpretations:

A. Interpreting the Qur'an according to transmitted traditions, by this we mean interpreting the Holy Qur'an according to the traditions transmitted from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and the good Imams; this method was followed by most Shi'ite interpreters such as the Interpretation of al-Qummi, al-Burha'n, al-'Askari, and others. The argument of Shi'ites concerning this method of

interpreting is that it is the Imams who were singled out for the knowledge of the Qur'an, and that it is they who were knowledgeable in interpreting it. Imam Abu' Ja'far al-Ba'qir, peace be on him, said: "None can claim that he has knowledge of the surface and deep meaning of the Qur'an except the testamentary trustees (i.e. the Imams).[8](#)"

Shaykh al-Tu'si, Shaykh of the Shi'ite Sect, said: "It is not permissible to interpret the Qur'an except with the authentic traditions transmitted from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, and the Imams whose statement is an argument like that of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family."[9](#)"

B. Interpreting the Qur'an according to opinion, by this we mean interpreting the Qur'an according to the approved, rational considerations. This method was followed by the interpreters from among the Mu'tazilites and the Ba'tiniya who did not take care of the traditions reported from the Imams of guidance, peace be on him, concerning the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an, who interpreted the Qur'an according to their approved, rational considerations only.[10](#) As for interpreting the Qur'an according to the surface meanings, it is not regarded as a method of interpretation, but it is not objected.

It is worth mentioning that the first school to be established in Islam for interpreting the Qur'an according to the transmitted traditions was at the time of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, for he was the first interpreter of the Qur'an, and under him studied 'Abd Allah b. 'Abba's, the scholar of the community, and other prominent companions (of the Prophet). Then, after him, the pure Imams began, through their lectures, interpreting the Qur'an, the causes of the revelation of the Qur'an, and the excellence of reciting its verses.

[2. The Hadith \(Tradition\)](#)

Among the sciences which dominated that time is the science of the hadith, by this we mean the traditions transmitted from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, or from one of his testamentary trustees, the pure Imams, namely their words, their actions, their justifications, for they are part of the Sunna, and in the Sunna just as in the Holy Qur'an there is the general, the specific, the unlimited, the limited, and the like.

The Shi'ites were the first to write down the traditions, for the Imams of guidance urged their companions to do that. In this connection, Abu' Basir narrated, saying: "I went in to Imam Abu' 'Abd Allah al-Sa'diq, peace be on him, and he said: 'What has prevented you from writing down (our traditions)? You will not memorize (our traditions) unless you write (them). A group of the Basrans asked me about something, wrote them down, and departed.'[11](#)" A group of the companions of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, collected the authentic traditions in big, comprehensive books which are the first comprehensive books of the Imami Shi'ites and regarded as the foundation of writing down the four comprehensive books by the three Muslim Shaykhs.[12](#)

3. Science of Islamic Jurisprudence

Science of Islamic jurisprudence is the greatest of all Islamic sciences and most distinguished of the them, so it was widespread in that time and the rest of times. This honorable science is responsible for rendering knowledge of required, religious duties imposed on the bounded who are responsible before Allah for following and putting them into practice.

The Imams of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on him, played an active role in establishing a jurisprudence school which included the eminent jurists and scholars such as Zara'ra, Muhammad b. Muslim, Ja'bir b. Yazid al-Ju'fi, Abu' Hanifa, and the like. These jurists and scholars recorded what they had heard from the pure Imams in their fundamentals which they are about four hundreds, and which were rectified and gathered in the four books to which the Imami jurists refer for concluding lawful precepts.

The Shi'ites are regarded as the first to record jurisprudence. In this regard Mustafa' 'Abd al-Razza'q said: "The Shi'ites were the quickest of the rest of the Muslims in inclining to writing down jurisprudence. It is rational that the Shi'ites were the quickest in clinging to recording the lawful rules because their belief in the infallibility or semi infallibility of their Imams urged them to write down their legal decisions, their formal and legal opinions. [13](#)"

4. Science of Fundamentals

Among the sciences which were studied in those times and the like was deriving religious decisions (*ijtiha'd*); this science was founded by the greatest Imam Abu' Ja'far Muhammad al-Ba'qir, peace be on him. [14](#)

5. Grammar

Grammar was among the sciences which played an important role during the 'Abba'sid time, for some of its matters and researches were the object of heated argument at gatherings held in the palaces of the Caliphs; disputes and heated arguments concerning some of its matters took place among the leading grammarians in the presence of the 'Abba'sid Caliph. A group of great figures specialized in this science; at their head were al-Kisa'i, al-Farra', Sibawayh, and this science was established by Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, the pioneer of wisdom and knowledge in Islam.

6. Theology

As for theology, it was widespread in that time. The scholars and the theologians discussed important researches on this science in order to defend their beliefs. On the top of the theologians was Hisha'm b. al-Hakam, the student of Imam Ja'far al-Sa'diq, peace be on him, who disproved the beliefs of his opponents and established with his definite proofs the creed of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on him, which Allah has chosen for His servants.

Some Sunni famous theologians were Wa'sil b. 'Ata", Abu' al-Hudhayl al-'Alla'f, Abu' al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, and Hujjat al-Islam al-Ghaza'li.

7. Medicine

Medicine was widespread during that time. Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was at the head of the scientists in this science, and his dissertation in medicine is regarded as the most marvelous medical research, hence it has been called the Golden Dissertation (*al-Risa'la al-Dhahabiya*). The 'Abba'sid kings encouraged people to study this science and spent a lot of money on the specialists in it such as Gabriel b. Bakhtishu', the skillful doctor.

8. Chemistry

Chemistry was among the most important sciences which attained great care in that time. Ja'bir b. Hayya'n, the pride of the Arab east, was specialist in it; he received his researches from the greatest figure of Islamic thought, Imam Ja'far al-Sa'diq, peace be on him, whom some western scholars called the thinking brain of humanity, for it was he who established this science.

9. Architecture and Civil Engineering

Architecture and civil engineering reached zenith in that time, for the architects were creative in their designing the palaces of the caliphs whether in Baghdad or in Sa'mra". Those palaces were the largest building throughout history. An example of the marvelous architectural designs is the ponds which were made in Sa'mra", which the poets adored, and which astonished the minds of the scholars, in addition to that there were wonderful paintings and the Hanging Gardens the like of which has not been made even in this century when architecture and technology have reached top.

10. Astronomy

Astronomy was among the dominating sciences in that time. Al-Ma'mu'n, the 'Abba'sid, was one of those who were specialists in it. These are some sciences which dominated that time, and which represented intellectual freedom and technology in the time of the Imam, peace be on him.

The Scientific Centers

1. Baghdad

Baghdad was one of the cities of knowledge in Islamic world, for it was, as we have mentioned before, the capital of the supreme authority and of knowledge; various kinds of culture dominated it; in it spread institutes, schools, the Depository of Wisdom, public and private libraries.

2. Yathrib

As for Yathrib (Medina), it was the most important scientific center in Islamic world, for the school of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, was established wherein, and it included the leading jurists and religious scholars who took care of recording the traditions of the Imams of guidance, peace be on them, especially as it concerns their traditions on jurisprudence, which is the most perfect system in Islam. The school of the next generation (*ta'bi'in*) was also established therein; it was the school which took great care of the jurisprudence which was narrated on the authority of the companions (of the Prophet).

3. Ku'fa

Ku'fa was more important than Yathrib, for in it was the greatest mosque (*al-ja'm' al-A'zam*) which was a public center for Islamic studies and, in addition, there were seminars including hundreds of students who studied under professors specialist in Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, the interpretation of the Qur'an, the hadith (tradition), and Arabic. The school of Ku'fa objectively took care of the sciences of the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them. Al-Hasan b. 'Ali al-Washsha' reported, saying: "I met nine hundred shaykhs in this mosque (i.e. the mosque of Ku'fa) and all of them said: 'Ja'far b. Muhammad related to me (traditions).' [15](#)"

Important families of knowledge graduated from the mosque of Ku'fa. They are as follows: the family of Hayya'n al-Taghlubi, the family of A'yun, the children of 'Atiya, the house of the children of Darra'jj, and others. [16](#)

A grammar school was established in Ku'fa; one of its prominent teachers was al-Kisa'i, whom (Ha'ru'n) al-Rashid entrusted with teaching his two sons, al-Amin and al-Ma'mu'n. [17](#)

4. Basrah

As for Basrah, it was an important center of grammar. Abu' al-Aswad al-Du'ali, the student of Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, was the first to establish this school. This school competed with the school of Ku'fa (for Arabic Grammar). The Basran grammarians were called the men of logic in order to distinguish them from the Ku'fans grammarians. Among the leading grammarians of this school was Sibawayh, who compiled *Kita'b Sibawayh* (the Book of Sibawayh) in grammar, which is the ripest of Arabic books and the best of them in depth and originality. Daybu'r said: "If we look at the book of Sibawayh, we will find it a ripe work and great effort to the extent that the later authors said: 'The book must be the fruit of cooperating efforts of many scholars just like the Law (*qa'nu'n*) of Ibn Sina'.' [18](#)"

Basrah was not only an important center of grammar but also was a school of the science of interpreting the Holy Qur'an. Among the prominent scholars in this science was Abu' 'Amru' b. al-'Ala". Besides Basrah was the school of prosody and linguistics. Among the specialists in these two sciences was al-

Khalil b. Ahmed, the author of the book *al-'Ayn*, which is the first linguistic dictionary written in Arabic. [19](#)

These are some aspects of the cultural and scientific life of that time; generally speaking, Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, was the first pioneer of the scientific movement, for the scholars and the jurists gathered around him in order to study his pure sciences, as well as sessions were held in the 'Abba'sid palace including the great scholars whom al-Ma'mu'n summoned in order to test Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, but they went out of the palace and announced the Imam's excellence and mentioned with admiration his many scientific abilities.

The Economic Life

Islam takes great care of combating against poverty, for it regards it as a destructive disaster which should be driven away from the public life, and hence it has made it incumbent on Muslim rulers to develop economy, to increase individual income, and to spread welfare among people. Among the things which Islam takes care of is improving economy, so it has made it obligatory on Muslim rulers to spend the state money on the public interest through developing agriculture, establishing public projects and others through which the land is prosperous. It also prevents them from taking something from state treasury for themselves and their relatives. However, the 'Abba'sids turned aside from this creative policy; they seized the money of Allah and enslaved His servants, spent a lot of money on their desires and pleasures, building their palaces and songsters, so this policy led to critical crises and divided society into two classes:

The first class included the capitalists who controlled the wealth of the community, while they had no work except unemployment, amusement, and extravagance in the unlawful.

The second class included workers and farmers. This class was miserable, for poverty and deprivation spread among it. This division among the classes of society resulted in losing the balance of the economic life, tranquillity in both political and social lives. [20](#)

We will briefly talk about the matters of the public economic life, unhappiness and deprivation which the citizens faced.

The Revenues of the State

As for the returns of the state during the time of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, they were plentiful, for examples only the incoming of land taxes was counted and it was four hundred million dirhams. [21](#) It is worth mentioning that money was not counted but weighed because it was abundant, so they said: "It (money) is six or seven thousand quintals of gold. [22](#)"

Unfortunately, this plentiful money was not spend on improving the life of the Muslims, helping the poor and the deprived; rather most this money was spent by kings, their ministers, their children, and their retinues on their pleasures and desires. They spent on their red nights countless money; as well as the

singers, the mischievous, and the dissolute became extremely rich.

Extravagance and Wastefulness

The 'Abba'sid kings were so extravagant that they spent the money of the Muslims on their pleasures and desires, for example, al-Ma'mu'n faced financial straits when he was in Damascus, hence thirty million dirhams of the money of land taxes were carried to him, and he ordered twenty-four dirhams to be spent on his companions and the remainder of the money to be spent on his soldiers.²³

Wasting the money of the Muslims was a dominating phenomenon with the 'Abba'sid kings, for example, al-Mahdi built a park and spent on it fifty million dirhams.²⁴ Al-Mutawakkil spent fifty million dirhams on his palace called al-Ma'hu'za, thirty million dirhams on his palace called al-'Aru's, and twenty-five million dirhams on the lobby (*bahu'*). Al-Sha'bishti said: "As al-Mutawakkil was among the men of taste and sociability, he devoted himself in an amazing manner to building sixteen magnificent palaces in Sa'marra" and spent on them an unbelievable amount of money.²⁵" Yet a further example of his wastefulness is that he spent eighty-six million dirhams on the circumcision of his sons.

Al-Ma'mu'n takes Boura'n in Marriage

Another example of wasting the money of the Muslims is the abundant, astonishing amount which al-Ma'mu'n spent on his taking lady Boura'n in marriage; the like of what he spent on that marriage has not occurred since Allah created the earth.

Al-Ma'mu'n gave his wife one million dinars as a dowry. It is worth mentioning that the value of a dinar was equal to a camel. Al-Hasan b. Sahl, the father of lady Boura'n, stipulated that al-Ma'mu'n should marry his daughter in his village situated at Fam al-Sulh²⁶, and he responded to that. When he wanted to marry her, he traveled to Fam al-Sulh and spent one million dinars on the soldiers who were with him. He took with him thirty thousand young boys and seven hundred slave-girls. As for the soldiers who were with him, they were four hundred thousand horsemen and three hundred thousand infantry soldiers. As for al-Hasan b. Sahl, he slaughtered thirty thousand sheep, a similar number of chicken, four hundred cows, and four hundred camels. The people called this invitation the Invitation of Islam, but this title is wrong, for such extravagance from the money of the Muslims does not belong to Islam. The expenditures of al-Ma'mu'n on this marriage were thirty-eight million dinars²⁷ apart from what he gave to her father, for he gave him ten millions dirhams from the land taxes of Fars (Iran) and the lands of al-Sulh.²⁸

Anyhow, when al-Ma'mu'n married Boura'n, ambergris hazelnuts were scattered from the roof of the house of al-Hasan b. SAhl, but the people disdained them and abstained from them, so a person called out to them, saying: "Whoever has taken a hazelnut, let him break it, for he will find in it a piece of paper on which it has been written either one thousand dinars or ten silk garments or five garments or a retainer or a slave-girl." Those who obtained pieces of paper sent them to the Divan and received what

was written on them.²⁹ Likewise, al-Ma'mu'n spent one million dirhams on the commanders of his army.³⁰ Congratulating al-Hasan b. SAhl, his daughter, and al-Ma'mu'n, al-Ba'hili said:

May Allah bless al-Hasan and Boura'n regarding the

marriage. O son of Ha'ru'n, you have gained, but whose

daughter is she? ³¹

When the hour of wedding came, Boura'n was seated on a mat made of gold. Then al-Ma'mu'n came in to her and he was accompanied by his aunts and a group of the 'Abba'sid women, so al-Hasan b. SAhl scattered three hundred pearls over al-Ma'mu'n and his wife. The weight of each pearl was a weight (*mithqa'l*). None stretched out his hand to take them, so al-Ma'mu'n ordered his aunts to take them; he stretched out his hand to take one, and thus the 'Abbasid women hurried to take some. Accordingly, al-Ma'mu'n said: "May Allah kill Abu' Nu'a's! He described wine as if he was present at this gathering of ours; he said:

'Its small and big bubbles are like pearl pebbles on a 'ground of gold!³²"

Al-Ma'mu'n and al-Hasan b. SAhl spent on his marriage abundant money which was, without doubt, stolen from the Treasury of the Muslims, and which had to be spent, according to Allah's Law, on combating poverty and removing misery from the world of Islam.

It is worth mentioning that when Ha'ru'n al-Rashid married lady Zubayda, he made a banquet the like of which was not made in Islam. He ordered the gifts to be unlimited, hence gold wares full of silver, silver wares full of gold, pieces of musk and ambergris were offered (to the guests). This is the extravagance and wastefulness which Islam has forbidden in order to protect the economy of the community from collapse.

The Misery and Wretchedness of the Common People

During the time of al-Ma'mu'n and others, the overwhelming majority of Islamic society led a life of misery and deprivation, for it fell down under terrible poverty and wretchedness. Now let us listen to Abu' al-'Ata'hiya in order that he may tell us about the misery and wretchedness of the common people. Addressing the 'Abba'sid king, he said:

Who gives on my behalf successive pieces of advice to the
Imam.

Surely I see that the prices of the subjects are high.

And I see that the earnings are insignificant. And I see that

the necessity is widespread.

And I see that the worries of the time come and go.

And I see that the orphans are in the miserable, empty
houses.

They, hopeful male and female, yearn for you.

They complain (to you) of hard work with weak, loud
voices.

They hope for your relief out of what they have faced, that
they may see well-being.

The misfortunes of hunger enter into evening and upon
the morning (causing) hunger.

Who relieves the hungry stomachs and naked bodies?

I have reported to you conclusive news from the subjects.

This social poetry gives an account of the state which dominated the time of Abu' al-'Ata'hiya, for millions of Muslims were naked, weak, and hungry, while the treasuries of the 'Abba'sid kings were full of the money of the Muslims, but this money was not spent on the interest of the Muslims; rather it was spent on the pleasures of the kings and the ways through which they corrupted the life of the common people.

Now, let us listen to the following poetry lines in which Bashsha'r praises Yazid b. al-Muhallab, the governor of al-Mansu'r al-Dawa'niqi over Africa. He says:

The boys whose eldest is still young frequent to you out
of fear of tribulations.

Don't you see, and you are aware of me, that I am the
seeker of good whose steps are short?

The drought and the corrupt time have driven him; rather
a mad seller has stolen my sleep.

He walks through his own written skin; his dangerous meeting me terrifies me.

I am terrified by seeing him; he frightens me and I have no protector.

I am grateful (to you) for your favor. Is there anyone to change the harm which has befallen me?[33](#)

Have you seen how famine dominated the early 'Abba'sid ages? This poet seeks the aid of Yazid b. al-Muhallab in order to save him from poverty and misery. Hoping for Ya'qu'b b. Da'wud, he says:

O man who goes early in the morning for his need with the Caliph, who some times postpones it and sometimes accomplish it,

The doors to the needs have been closed, so send for (the one with) high rank, Ya'qu'b b. Da'wud.

Futayma said: Fast among us. So I said to her: If Ya'qu'b (b. Da'wud) desires, we will fast, O daughter of munificence.

If (Ya'qu'b) b. Da'wud gave me a relief, I would be free from need and would not return (to beg him).[34](#)

Have you seen this submissiveness and entreaty? All avenues of livelihood were closed before most people, and they suffered from famine and deprivation.

Heavy Taxes imposed on Inheritances

Another example of the oppression and tyranny of the 'Abba'sids is that they imposed heavy taxes on the inheritances of the dead. In his poetry lines, Ibn al-Mu'taz gives us an account of the condition of the people, their sufferings, oppression and tyranny which they faced. He says:

Woe unto him whose father dies rich, isn't this clear and famous?

His prison is in the Abode of Tribulation, and it is said:

Who knows that you are his son?

So he says: My neighbors and those who know me. So

they pull out his mustache, to the extent that he perishes;

they go too far in boxing and pushing him; and their palms

of the hand rush to slap him.

He is still in the narrowest prison until he throws the sack

(of money) to them.[35](#)

The 'Abba'sid kings went too far in oppression and tyranny, hence they plundered the properties of the people without any right. The historians said: "After the death of the possessors of wealth, many ('Abba'sid) rulers tried (to say) that they had no inheritors in order to control their inheritances.[36](#)" This severe procedure clashes with the Islamic teachings which decide that what the dead leaves as inheritance is for his own inheritor, and that the ruler has no authority over it. Yes, he who dies and has no inheritor, his inheritance is moved to Muslims' Public Treasury. Torture and confiscating the properties of the people was not confined to a special class of people; rather they included the mothers of the Caliphs, for example, al-Qa'hir, the 'Abba'sid, tortured the mother of his brother al-Muqtadir. He hung her from her leg in order that she might bring out her properties, carry her endowments, and entrust selling them to (him). She refused (to do that), but al-Qa'hir forced her to do it after severe torture and punishment.[37](#)"

Cruelty in taking Land Taxes

The Muslims were subject to cruelty during taking land taxes from them, for the government employed over them terrorist collectors who did not respect Allah; nor did they fear the evil reckoning. They were more wicked than snakes, for they hung the fat person from one hand to the extent that he was about to die. Hence, in his poetry lines, Ibn al-Mu'taz describes this abominable manner through which land taxes were taken:

Many times I saw the helpers take to prison and to the

Divan a noble man with a great mount.

That he might be stood in the inferno of the midday heat;

and his head was like a boiling pot.

They placed around his hand hemp ropes which cut off the

limbs.

They hung him on the wall handles as if he was (iron)

filings.

They slapped his back as the drum is slapped and

installed him in front of the eyes of the gloaters and the

bosom friends.

When he appealed for the help against the blaze of the sun, a jailer answered him with kicking; and a jailer poured oil on him, and after that he looked like a brown-red horse.

When the exertion lasted long and there was no escape for him from what they wanted, he said: Give me a permission to ask the merchants for a loan; otherwise, I will sell an immovable property.

But they annoyed him and appointed four (days), and he found no profit in the speech.

The dissolute helpers came to him and loaned him one for ten.

Then he paid what was against him and went out, while he had not craved after the nearness of relief.

The helpers came to him in order to ask him as if they were pampering him.

If he lagged, they took his turban, smashed his two jugular veins and his head.

Now, all of that has vanished, and tyranny is repressed by justice.[38](#)

Ibn al-Mu'taz describes the extreme cruelty which the collectors showed toward the people in order to take land taxes from them. They made them tired and tortured them. An example of their torturing them is as the historians say: "They hit them on the head with the iron whips[39](#) and the tips of reed were stabbed into their finer-nails.[40](#) As for al-Mansu'r (al-Dawa'niqi), he would hang the people from their legs in order that they might pay what was imposed upon them.[41](#)"

As for land taxes during the time of al-Mahdi, the 'Abba'sid, they were taken with extreme cruelty, for the people were tortured with various kinds of torture such as (employing) beasts of prey and wasps.[42](#)

As for (Ha'ru'n) al-Rashid, he was very cruel in taking land taxes. He punished the people severely and appointed over them collectors who had neither compassion nor mercy. For example, he appointed 'Abd Allah b. al-Haythem as governor for taking this tax, and he tortured the people with terrible kinds of painful torture, so Ibn 'Ayya'd came in to him. He saw his cruelty and torturing the people, so he said to him: "Raise (torture) from them! Surely, I heard Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, say: 'On the Day of Resurrection Allah will torture him who tortures the people in this world.'" So he ordered torture to be raised from the people.[43](#)"

About the extreme cruelty toward the people upon whom land taxes were imposed, Abu' Yu'suf wrote to (Ha'ru'n) al-Rashid, saying: "I have been informed that the governor respects some of his retainers and uses the rest as means, while they are not pious nor righteous. He (the governor) seeks help through them and employs them in his works in order not to violate (men's) rights and sacredness, but they do not keep what they have been ordered to; nor do they treat the people with justice. Rather their only concern is to take something from land taxes or from the properties of the people. Then they take all of that, as I have been informed, by tyranny, oppression, and aggression.[44](#)"

He added, saying: "Likewise, I have been informed that they (land tax collectors) make men of land taxes stand in the sun, hang on them jars, and shackle them with that which prevent them from performing prayer, and this is (something) dreadful with Allah and ugly in Islam.[45](#)"

Through this cruel procedure the land tax collectors opposed the Islamic teachings which ordered them to treat people kindly and to refrain from cruelty. However, the 'Abba'sid kings turned aside from these teachings and went far away from them.

The Inheritance of the 'Abba'sid Kings

The treasuries of the 'Abba'sid kings were full of the abundant funds which were taken from the Muslim nations by force and overcoming. The following is the list of the inheritances which some of their kings left behind:

1. The Inheritance of al-Mansu'r

After his death, al-Mansu'r al-Dawa'niqi left behind him fourteen million dinars and six hundred million dirhams.[46](#)

2. The Inheritance of al-Mahdi

Al-Mahdi left twenty-seven million dirhams in his treasuries.[47](#)

3. The Inheritance of al-Rashid

As for Ha'ru'n al-Rashid, he left behind him nine hundred million dirhams.[48](#)

The 'Abba'sid kings left behind them such funds while they had not gathered them; rather it was the Muslims who gathered them through enduring poverty, misery, and depravation. These are some aspects of the economic policy which was practiced throughout the 'Abba'sid reign. In short this policy was not based on sound foundations; nor did it match the Islamic economy, which aimed at refreshing the nations, spreading welfare among them, destroying misery and poverty. Like the Umayyad king, the 'Abba'sid one was the Shadow of Allah on earth, so he moved about in the abilities of the people according to his desires. Did (al-Mansu'r) al-Dawa'niqi not say: "Men, I am the Authority of Allah on His earth and rule you according to success and guidance from Him. I am His treasurer over war booty gained without fighting. I work in accordance with His desire, divide it (among you) according to His will, and give it (to you) according to permission from Him. Allah has made me as a lock for it. If He wills to unlock me, He unlocks me; and if He wills to lock me, He locks me![49](#)"?

Islam does not adopt this unjust policy, for the properties of the Muslims belong to them. They should be spent on their interests and to raise their economic and intellectual levels. As for the head of the state, he has no authority over them.

The Muslims hate the 'Abba'sid Government

The Muslims hated the 'Abba'sid government, were very indignant with it, and had wished that the Umayyad government would have return to them regardless of its cruelty and torture, for they (the Abba'sids) ruled the community with oppression and tyranny. 'Abd al-Rahma'n al-Afriqi said to al-Mansu'r al-Dawa'niqi: "Oppression has appeared in our country, so I have come to inform you (of it). Suddenly, (I have seen) oppression comes out of your country; I have seen evil deeds and widespread oppression. I think that oppression has occurred because the country is far from you. The more I approach you, the more dreadful the matter is!"

Al-Mansu'r was very displeased with these words of 'Abd al-Rahma'n al-Afriqi and ordered him to be driven out.[50](#)

Al-Mansu'r asked b. Abu' Dhu'ayb: "Which a man am I?"

He answered him with the statement of the free one who does not submit to authority, saying: "By Allah, you are the most wicked man in my opinion! You have seized the property of Allah and His Apostle, the share of the near of kin, the orphans, the needy! You have destroyed the weak and followed the strong and taken hold of their properties![51](#)"

The policy of the 'Abba'sid kings was the same in oppression and tyranny. Ahmed b. Abu' Na'im says:

I do not think that tyranny will terminate while over the
people is an Emir from the family of 'Abba's!

Because of this line poetry, al-Ma'mu'n banished him to al-Sind.[52](#) Abu' 'Ata' al-Sindi says:

I wish that the tyranny of the Banu' of Marwa'n lasted for
us and wish that the justice of the Banu' of 'Abba's was in
the Fire![53](#)

Salim al-'Adawi urged the community to revolt against the 'Abba'sid government, saying:

Till when will we not see justice pleasing us and not see
helpers for those who undertake the truth?

We are clinging to the truth and undertaking it when the
tyrants are changeable.

O men, surely this is an illness for which there is no
medicine, and a blind leader who leads blind people!

Sudayf, the poet of the free, says:

We hope that our friendliness will return after the
alienation, the enmity, and the malice, and that the state

whose leaders (implement) among us laws like those of people worshipping idols will terminate.

This poetry spread and al-Mansu'r heard of it, so he ordered his governor 'Abd al-Samad to bury him
(Sudayf) alive, and he did.[54](#)

Dr. Ahmed Mahmu'd Subhi says: "However, that ideal of justice and equity for which the people waited
from the 'Abba'sids was one of the imaginations, for the wildness of al-Mansu'r and al-Rashid, their
greediness, the oppression of the sons of 'Ali b. 'Isa' and their playing with the properties of the Muslims
remind us of al-Hajja'jj, Hisha'm, and Yu'suf b. 'Amru' al-Thaqafi. Displeasure dominated the people
when Abu' 'Abd Allah better known as al-Saffa'h and al-Mansu'r started (their government) with going
too far in shedding blood in a manner which had never been known before.[55](#)"

The Muslims were indignant with the 'Abba'sid government, for it did not achieve their aims and hopes.
Rather it was busy with recklessness, violence and forcing the people to do what they hated.

Discords and Popular Revolts

Discords surged over Islamic world and popular revolts spread in it. Without doubt, these discords and revolts resulted from the evil 'Abba'sid policy, which did not take care of the interests of society and its ambitions aiming at achieving political and social justice among the people. The following is an example of the important revolts which broke out during the time of Imam al-Ridha':

The Revolt of Abu' al-Sara'ya'

As for the revolt of Abu' al-Sara'ya', it was among the most important revolts which broke out in that time. At this revolt the Muslims lost two hundred fighters. We will talk about some characteristics of this revolt as follows:

The Leader of the Revolt

As for the leader, designer, and planner of this revolt, he is the great 'Alawide, Muhammad b. Ibra'him, better known as al-Taba'taba'i.⁵⁶ This great, noble 'Alawide saw that the 'Alawides and the Muslims were liable to oppression, persecution, exemplary punishments, and exhaustion, so he got ready to announce his revolt in order to save them from the ruling 'Abba'sid band. The historians said that he was gentle and kind to the poor and the deprived. One day while he was walking in a street in Ku'fa, he saw an old woman following the loads of dates, picking up those falling dates and putting them into a ragged garment. He asked her about that and she answered him: "I am a woman with a husband who undertakes my provisions, and I have daughters who do nothing, so I follow these dates on the road. My children and I live on them."

When he heard these words, his strength collapsed, he burst into tears, turned to her and said to her warmly: "By Allah, you and the like of you will make me go out (with the sword) and my blood will be shed."⁵⁷

This mercy toward the poor moved him to announce his revolt, that he might save them from the oppressive who plundered the properties of the community.

Accordingly, Muhammad began making arrangements through communicating with men of opinion and influence from among Arab leaders and Muslim great figures. He asked them to join him and to take part in resisting oppression and overthrowing the standing government, and hence he met the great Arab leader Nasr b. Shayth and presented the matter before him, and he began announcing his support to him and urging him to revolt against the government, saying to him: "Till when will you be submissive, your Shi'ites oppressed, and your right usurped?"⁵⁸

These words moved the sentiments and feelings of Muhammad and he hurried to revolt against the 'Abba'sid government. That was when he saw that the 'Abba'sids were different, their word was

separated, and their unity was broken up because of the dreadful discord which took place between al-Amin and al-Ma'mu'n, and which split the government and made society think of a revolt against them to save itself from the persecutions of the 'Abba'sid government.

Abu' al-Sara'ya' joins the Revolt

The revolt increased in strength and firmness when Abu' al-Sara'ya', the experienced leader, joined it. Abu' al-Sara'ya' was an 'Alawide in opinion, so he felt burning desire for the 'Alawides who suffered from the persecutions of the 'Abba'sids. It is an act of good to talk about some affairs of this inspired leader.

He is al-Sari b. Mansu'r al-Shayba'ni. He was a brave revolutionist from among the 'Usa'mi commanders. He took part in many battles. When the discord took place between al-Amin and al-Ma'mu'n, he joined the army of Herthama b. 'Ayun along with two thousand fighters. Then he was given the title of Amir (i.e. commander). When al-Amin was killed, Herthama decreased the gifts and salaries of the army. This step displeased Abu' al-Sara'ya', and he decided to leave him. Abu' al-Sara'ya' asked Herthama for permission to make the pilgrimage, he permitted him and gave him twenty thousand dirhams. He took this sum of money and divided it among his followers, and with this he was able to make their hearts incline to him, and then he ordered them to follow him to 'Ayn al-Tamr. When they arrived at it, they captured its governor and took his belongings. They met another 'Abbasid governor and took his properties and divided them among themselves. When Herthama heard of this news, he lost his mind and sent an army to fight against Abu' al-Sara'ya'. When the two armies met, a violent battle occurred between them, hence the army of Herthama suffered heavy casualties and turned the back in flight. Then Abu' al-Sara'ya' headed for al-Anba'r (a city in Iraq). When he arrived in it, he controlled the local administration, killed its governor Ibra'him al-Sharwari, and confiscated all his properties.

Abu' al-Sara'ya' meets Muhammad

Abu' al-Sara'ya' and his army continued their advance towards the 'Abba'sid centers. When they arrived in a certain country, they killed its 'Abba'sid governor. Then they reached al-Riqqa and therein they met the great leader Muhammad b. Ibra'him. They held talks and discussed the oppression of the 'Abba'sids toward the Muslims. As a result they decided to put an end to the 'Abba'sid government and to summon (the Muslims) to pledge allegiance to al-Ridha' from among the family of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family.⁵⁹

Muhammad entrusted the general military leadership to Abu' al-Sara'ya', gave him confidence, and entrusted him with all the affairs and plans of the revolt.

The Declaration of the Revolt

Abu' al-Sara'ya' declared the revolt against the 'Abba'sid government; he took his army and advanced towards Naynawa'. Then he headed for the Holy Shrine of the Father of the free and master of martyrs, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him. He visited the Pure Shrine for a long time. Then he recited the following poetry lines of al-Nimry, saying:

May my own soul be sacrificed for al-Husayn when he

left early in the morning for death running, not returning.

That day attacked with its sword the hump and shoulder of Islam.[60](#)

You hurried (to death) lest an urgent vengeance should befall the people.

Allah does not hasten when you hasten; your Lord is not heedless of what you see.

She (Fa'tima) is wronged and the Prophet, her father, turns (his) eye in all directions, (and he is) interested (in the tragedy).

Are there any brave men to rise for her through drawing their sharp swords and spears?

Then he said in a loud voice: "If there is anyone of the Zaydiya, let him rise!"

A group of the army rose and he delivered a long sermon in which he lauded the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, mentioned their laudable deeds and excellent merits, oppression and persecution caused to them by their opponents and enemies, and then he reminded them of the master of martyrs, Imam al-Husayn, peace be on him, saying: "People, suppose that you were not present with al-Husayn and did not help him, then what has prevented you from (helping) him whom you have met and followed, while he will tomorrow go out (in revolt) to avenge his blood, his right, the heritage of his fathers and to establish the religion of Allah? What has prevented you from helping and supporting him? From this direction of mine, I am heading for Ku'fa to carry out Allah's command, to defend His religion, and to help the members of the House (*Ahl al-Bayt*)? So if you intend to go, then follow me!"

The Zaydiya and others responded to him, so Abu' al-Sara'ya' and his army headed for Ku'fa.

As for Muhammad, he declared the revolt on the same day when Abu' al-Sara'ya' declared his revolt, and many people supported him. He impatiently waited for the arrival of Abu' al-Sara'ya'. Many days passed to the extent that Muhammad's followers scattered from him and blamed him for seeking help from Abu' al-Sara'ya'. Muhammad was sad because of Abu' al-Sara'ya's delay. While he was anxious and worried, Abu' al-Sara'ya' and his army reached them. So he became very pleased. He rose for him and embraced him. He stayed with him for some days, then they headed for Ku'fa. When they arrived in it, they were warmly received by its people who were delighted at their arrival and pledged allegiance to

them.⁶¹

The army of Abu' al-Sara'ya' occupied Ku'fa and plundered the palace of al-Fadl b. 'Isa', the governor of Ku'fa, of all things available in it. As for Abu' al-Sara'ya', he was displeased with this behavior of his army, so he ordered it to refrain from taking anything and to return the looted things to their owners.

Al-Hasan b. SAhl, who was appointed by al-Ma'mu'n as a ruler over Iraq, dispatched three thousand horsemen under the leadership of Zuhayr b. al-Hasan in order to fight against Abu' al-Sara'ya'. When they arrived in Ku'fa, they met the army of Abu' al-Sara'ya' at a violent battle. As a result, they turned the back in flight, and the army of Abu' al-Sara'ya' took all their weapons.⁶² Abu' al-Sara'ya' gained a marvelous victory over the 'Abba'sids, hence fear and terror spread among them, most of them were sure that the revolt was successful, and that they would face a dreadful fate.

The Death of the Leader Muhammad

Unfortunately, Muhammad b. Ibra'him, the great leader, died. Most historical sources believed that he died a natural death, but some sources said that Abu' al-Sara'ya' put poison in food and gave it to him in order to assassinate him and get rid of him. More likely, he died a natural death, and Abu' al-Sara'ya' had no role in his death, for the revolt was at the beginning. It was not possible, any how, for Abu' al-Sara'ya' to assassinate him in those critical circumstances, for he was not sure of the success of the revolt.

Any how, Abu' al-Sara'ya' prepared Muhammad's pure corpse for burial. He ordered it to be washed and shrouded. Then the people carried it to the cemetery of al-Ghary in the darkness of night.⁶³ They buried it there, and then they returned to Ku'fa. In the morning Abu' al-Sara'ya' gathered they people and announced the death of the great leader Muhammad b. Ibra'him and condoled them. The people wept in loud voices, so Abu' al-Sara'ya' turned to them and said: "Abu' 'Abd Allah has appointed Abu' al-Hasan 'Ali b. 'Ubayd Allah as his testamentary trustee. If you consent to him, then he is the consent; otherwise, choose (someone else) for yourselves."

The members of the army kept silent. So Muhammad b. Muhammad, an 'Alawide young man, addressed the 'Alawides, saying: "O family of 'Ali, surely the religion of Allah is not supported by failure, and the hand of this man (i.e. Abu' al-Sara'ya') is not evil with us, for he has given vent to our anger and avenged (the blood of al-Husayn)."

Then he turned to 'Ali b. 'Ubayd Allah and asked him: "What do you say, Abu' al-Hasan? For he advised us (to choose) you. Stretch out your hand, that we may pledge allegiance to you."

'Ali b. 'Ubayd Allah replied: "Surely, Abu' 'Abd Allah (i.e. Muhammad b. Ibra'him), may Allah have mercy on him, chose (me). He had confidence in himself, and he did his best to (accomplish) Allah's right. (As for me), I will not refuse his will neglect his command and leave this (matter). However, I fear that I may busy myself with it and leave other things which are more praiseworthy and better than it in the final

result. So undertake leadership, may Allah have mercy upon you. We have entrusted you with leadership over us. You are the consent with us and confidence in ourselves.”

Then he turned to Abu' al-Sara'ya' and asked him: “What do you see? Are you content with him?”

“My consent conforms with your consent and my view conforms with your view,” replied Abu' al-Sara'ya'.

Muhammad b. Muhammad stretched out his hand, and the people pledged allegiance to him. In the meantime he began organizing the affairs of his government with firm resolution, and then he appointed governors over the Islamic cities conquered by Abu' al-Sara'ya' as follows:

1. He appointed Isma'il b. 'Ali as governor over Ku'fa.

2. He appointed Ibra'him b. Imam Musa' b. Ja'far as governor over Yemen.

3. He appointed Zayd b. Musa' as governor over Al-Ahwa'z.

4. He appointed al-'Abba's b. Muhammad as governor over Basrah.

5. He appointed al-Hasan b. al-Hasan al-Aftas as governor over Mecca.

6. He appointed Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Zayd as governor over Wa'sit.

He also appointed Rouh b. al-Hajja'jj as commander over the police and entrusted the judiciary to 'Asim b. 'Amir.

Currency was minted in Ku'fa and it was written in it this holy verse: *Surely Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall.*

The Muslims were tired of the 'Abbasid government, so they happily responded to the 'Alawide government, and the revolt quickly began to spread in Islamic world.

The 'Abba'sids understood the danger which would threaten their lives and remove their authority. The ruler of Iraq, al-Hasan b. SAhl, was defeated, so he wrote to Ta'hir b. al-Husayn in order to join him in

the fighting against Abu' al-Sara'ya. But a letter was written to him in which were the following poetry lines:

Certainty uncovers the mask of doubt; and the sedate

opinion is your best scheming.

Act carefully before he will execute against you an affair

whose evil will excite a hidden illness.

Do you entrust Ta'hir with fighting the people while he has

adopted support for them and obedience to them?

He will cause to you difficulties which will result in a fierce war.

And he will send out the things hidden in his heart; when

the safeguarded things manifest, they will not disappear.

So take care of sureness, for its features have become

luminous, while doubts have become dark.

Then take what you want through a decisive opinion;

consider it carefully and leave that which does not occur.

When al-Hasan read these poetry lines, he changed his mind and wrote to Herthama b. A'yun asking him to come quickly to him and delegated al-Sindi b. Sha'hik to meet him. There was an enmity and mutual alienation between al-Hasan and Herthama. When al-Sindi met him and handed him the letter. He read it and said: "We paved the way to the caliphate and cleared its sides for them, and then they took hold of the affairs and possessed alone the direction over us. When they face a certain attitude because of their bad direction and their losing the affairs, they want to set it right through us. No, by Allah, we will not honor them until the Commander of the faithful (i.e. al-Ma'mu'n) know their evil traces and ugly deeds."

Al-Sindi turned away from him and despaired of him. Then a letter came to him from al-Mansu'r b. al-Mahdi. When he read the letter, he responded and returned to Baghdad. When he arrived at al-Nahrwa'n, the people of Baghdad went out to receive him. At the head of them were the prominent figures and the commanders of the army. When they saw him, they dismounted. He stopped at his house. Al-Hasan b. SAhl ordered the records of the army to be brought to him. They were brought to him and he chose whomever he liked of men. The public Muslim treasuries were opened for him. So

Herthama gathered an army and made arrangements to fight against Abu' al-Sara'ya'. When he completed his army, which was composed of thirty thousand fighters ranging between horsemen and infantry soldiers, he took them and advanced towards Ku'fa. In the first place, he passed through al-Mada'in, defeated its governor and occupied it. Then he advanced towards Ku'fa and his army met the army of Abu' al-Sara'ya'. They clashed and terrible fights occurred between them. Many followers of Abu' al-Sara'ya' were killed and his military forces collapsed. Abu' al-Sara'ya' was unable to protect Ku'fa, his Capital, so he left it for al-Qa'disiya (in Iraq), and then he left it for al-Su's, whose inhabitants closed the gates at his face. He asked them to open the gates and they did. Then a fight took place between the inhabitants of al-Su's and Abu' al-Sara'ya', who was forced to leave the city for Khurasa'n. He stopped in a village called Barqa'na'. The governor of Khurasa'n went to him and gave him security, and he responded to him. In the meantime the governor sent Abu' al-Sara'ya' to al-Hasan b. SAhl, who was then in al-Mada'in. When Abu' al-Sara'ya' arrived in al-Mada'in, al-Hasan b. SAhl ordered him to be killed, and he was killed. Then he ordered his head to be crucified at the eastern side of Baghdad as well as he ordered his body to be crucified at the western side of it.⁶⁴ The period between Abu' al-Saraya's revolt and his murder was ten months.⁶⁵

With that this important revolt ended and about two hundred thousand fighters were killed during it. Without doubt this revolt and the like resulted from the bad 'Abba'sid policy which spared no effort to oppress the people and to force them to lead a life of abasement and enslavement.

Any how, the political life in the time of the Imam, peace be on him, was disorderly and ugly, for disorders spread and rebellions against the 'Abba'sid government dominated most regions of Islamic world.

Severe Punishments on the 'Alawides

The 'Abba'sids openly persecuted the 'Alawides, inflicted severe punishments on them, and killed them. As for Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, he witnessed some of these severe punishments.

Al-Mansu'r al-Dawa'niqi was the first to bring about the discord between the 'Alawides and the 'Abba'sids.⁶⁶ It was he who said: "I killed one thousand or more (persons) of the progeny of Fa'tima, and I left their master, protector, and Imam, Ja'far b. Muhammad.⁶⁷"

He killed this number of the children of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, that he might make them provisions for him through offering them to Allah, the Exalted, and their grandfather, Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family. It was he who left behind him the case of the heads of the 'Alawides, and attached to each head a piece of paper on which he wrote the name of the 'Alawide. The case contained the heads of old men, children, and youths.⁶⁸

He said to Imam al-Sa'diq, peace be on him: "I will kill you and your family, that I may leave none of you on earth!⁶⁹"

When Abu' al-Qa'sim al-Rassi escaped from al-Mansu'r and went to al-Sind, he said:

The tyrant is not satisfied with our blood which he sheds
every where, and he does not fall short of looking for (us).

Nothing will quench his thirst except that he will not see
on earth a son belongs to the daughter of the Prophet.[70](#)

Al-Sayyid Amir 'Ali said: "Shedding the blood of the children of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, is the worst page in the history of the 'Abba'sid state."[71](#)

In the time of al-Ha'di, the 'Alawide family suffered from fear and terrorism, for he (al-Ha'di) terrified them, looked for them, stopped their livelihoods, and wrote to (the governors of) the distant regions in order to summon them.[72](#) He was the leader at the Battle of Fakh, which was similar to the Battle of Karbala" in tragedies, for the number of the heads which were sent to him was more than one hundred. Children and women were captured. The captives along with the children were killed.[73](#)

In the time of al-Rashid, the 'Alawides suffered from severe and cruel oppression. In this regard al-Fakhri said: "He (i.e. al-Rashid) was not afraid of Allah and His acts with respect to the leading members of 'Ali, while they were the innocent children of the daughter of his Prophet."[74](#) He swore (by Allah) that he would kill them and their followers. He said: 'Till when will I be patient toward the family of Abu' Ta'lib? By Allah, I will kill them and their followers.'[75](#)" He ordered his governor over Medina (Yathrib) to force the 'Alawides to guarantee each other.[76](#) It was he who demolished the grave of the master of martyrs and sweet basil of Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, Imam al-Husayn. He ordered the nabk in whose shade the visitors sat to be cut down. This was done by his governor over Ku'fa Musa' b. 'Isa' al-'Abba'si.[77](#)

The most dreadful sin which he committed was his assassinating the Imam of the Muslims and master of the Allah-fearing, Musa' b. Ja'far, peace be on him. That was after he had spent many years in his (al-Rashid's) prisons.

In his poem al-'Asma", Di'bil al-Khaza'i lamented for Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and described the sufferings of the 'Alawides such as killing, prison, and torture at the hands of the 'Abba'sids. He says:

We know that all the districts which belong to Dhi

Yama'n, Bakr, and Mudar took part in shedding their blood

just as the gamblers take part in gamble.

They killed them, took them as captives, burnt them, and

plundered them just as the invaders did toward the People of Rome and Khazar.

I think that the Umayyads were excused when they had done (what they did), but I think that the 'Abba'sids have no excuse.[78](#)

Mansu'r al-Nimri says:

The family of the prophet and those who love them hide themselves out of fear of killing.

The Christians and the Jews feel secure, while they (the Prophet's family) eternally belong to the community of monotheism.

In his poem in which he laments for Yahya', the immortal martyr, Ibn al-Ru'mi, a great poet, displays the sufferings of the 'Alawides as follows:

O people, your harm has lasted (through your losing) the family of Allah's Messenger. So fear (Allah) or hope for (Him).

Every time one of the pure (children) of the Prophet Muhammad is killed and stained (with his own) blood.

Through him, you sell the religion to evil Imams.[79](#) So, by Allah, the religion of Allah is about to be corrupt and confused.

Then he says:

O children of the Chosen One (the Prophet), until when do the people kill your children?

Your tribulation will soon be dispelled.

Isn't there anyone who conforms to the right of his Prophet and fears his Lord?[80](#)

In their many poems, the free poets have shown that the tyrannical rulers persecuted and oppressed the 'Alawides. We have mentioned many of their poems in our books on the Imams of the members of the

House (*Ahl al-Bayt*), peace be on them, that the dear reader may refer to them. We will end this research with the following letter, which shows the sufferings of the 'Alawides.

The Letter of al-Khawa'rizmi

In his letter to the people of Nisha'bu'r, al-Khawa'rizmi demonstrated the ordeals and tribulations which befell the 'Alawides. We will narrate some of the letter as follows: "When they (i.e. the Umayyads) violated that sanctity and committed that dreadful sin, Allah became angry with them and removed the dominion from them, so He sent against them (Abu' Mujrim), not Abu' Muslim, and he looked, may Allah not look at him, at the firmness of the 'Alawides and at the leniency of the 'Abba'sids, so he left his reverential fear and followed his caprice, and sold his hereafter for his world through his killing 'Abd Allah b. Mu'a'wiya b. 'Abd Allah b. Ja'far b. Abu' Ta'lib, and empowered the tyrants of Khurasa'n, the Kurds of Asfaha'n, and the Kha'rijites of Sijsta'n over the family of Abu' Ta'lib.

He killed them everywhere, and sought them in every plain and mountain until Allah empowered over him the most lovable of people to Him, and he killed him as he killed the people in obeying him, and punished him as he punished the people in pledging allegiance to him; it does not benefit him that he has made Allah angry through his pleasure, and committed what He does not desire. Al-Dawa'niqi dominated the whole world, so he oppressed and wronged (the people) and treated (them) unjustly, hence his prisons were full of the members of the House of the Message (*Ahl Bayt al-Risa'la*), the source of goodness and purity.

He traced their absent and arrested their present until he killed 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah al-Husayni in al-Sind at the hand of 'Umar b. Hisha'm al-Tha'labi; then what do you think of those who were close to him and easy for him to arrest? This is little in comparison with those of them Ha'ru'n killed, and with what Musa' had done toward them before him. You have come to know what al-Husayn b. 'Ali faced at the hand of Musa' at (the Battle of) Fakh; (what) 'Ali b. al-Aftas al-Husayni (faced) at the hand of Ha'ru'n (al-Rashid); (what) Ahmed b. 'Ali al-Zaydi and al-Qa'sim b. 'Ali al-Husayni (faced) in prison; (and what) Ghassa'n b. Ha'dir al-Khaza'i (faced) when he ordered him to be taken. Generally speaking, before his death, Ha'ru'n had reaped the Tree of Prophethood and uprooted the Plant of the Imamate; you, may Allah set you right, have a greater share in religion than al-A'mash, for they have cursed him; more than Shurayk, for they have removed him (from the office); more than Hisha'm, for they have frightened him; and more than 'Ali b. Yaqtin, for they have accused him...."

After this part of his letter, al-Khawa'rizmi mentioned the Umayyads, and then he mentioned the 'Abba'sids, saying: "And say about the 'Abba'sids, for you, through praising Allah, will find a statement; pass through their wonders and you will see whatever you like.

"Their (the Imams') war booties are collected and divided among the Daylami and the Turkish and they are carried to the Moroccan and the Forgha'ni, but when one of the Imams of guidance or one of the 'Alawides from among the Household of the Chosen One (*al-Mustafa'*, i.e. the Prophet) dies, none

follows his coffin or plasters his grave. However, if insignificant one of them (the 'Abba'sids) dies, men of justice and judges follow his coffin. The leaders and the governors go to mosque for condolences on his behalf. They (the 'Abba'sids) give security to him who is an atheist or sophisticate, and they do not oppose him who reads a philosophical or Ma'ni book. However, they kill him who is a Shi'ite and shed the blood of him who names his son 'Ali.

“If none of the Shi'ites of the *Ahl al-Bayt* other than al-Mu'illa' b. Khanis, killed by Da'wud b. 'Ali, was killed, and if none of them was imprisoned apart from Abu' Tura'b al-Marwazi, then that would be a wound which never recovered, anger which never calmed, a crack which never closed, and an injure which never healed. It is sufficient for them that the poets of Quraysh in the pre-Islamic times composed poems in which they satirized the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, and opposed the poems of the Muslims; yet their poems have been reported, and their stories have been recorded and transmitted by narrators like al-Wa'qidi, Wahab b. Munabbih al-Tamimi, al-Kalbi, al-Sharqi b. al-Qata'mi, al-Haythem b. 'Adi, and Da'b b. al-Kin'ani. Some Shi'ite poets spoke of the laudable deeds of the Revelation; rather they mentioned the miracles of the Prophets, may Allah bless him and his family; nevertheless their tongues were cut off and their divans were torn, as it was done toward 'Abd Allah b. 'Amma'r al-Barqi, as it was wanted toward al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadi, as the grave of Mansu'r b. al-Zubraqa'n al-Nimri was dug up, and as it was schemed against Di'bil b. 'Ali al-Khaza'i. They (the 'Abba'sids) associated with Marwa'n b. Abu' Hafsa al-Yama'mi and 'Ali b. al-Jahm al-Sha'mi for nothing except for their extremism in opposition (to the Imams), and their worthiness of the detest of the Lord, to the extent that Ha'ru'n b. al-Khayzara'n and Ja'far, who relied on Satan not on the Merciful (Allah), did not give money to anyone except to those who cursed 'Ali b. Abu' Ta'lib and supported the creed of his opponents such as 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ab al-Zubayri, Wahab b. Wahab al-Bakhtari, and the poet Marwa'n b. Abu' Hafsa al-Amawi. During the days of Ja'far, there were (persons) such as Bakka'r b. 'Abd Allah al-Zubari, Abu' al-Samt b. Abu' al-Jawn al-Amawi, and Ibn Abu' al-Shawa'rib al-'Abshami.”

After this speech he (al-Khawa'rizmi) mentioned the Umayyads and their oppression toward the 'Alawides, and then he continued his speech about the 'Abba'sids, saying: “And this is not more amazing than the shouting of the poets of the 'Abba'sids at their heads with the truth, even if they hated it. Giving details of him whom they (the 'Abba'sids) disparaged and killed, Mansu'r b. al-Zubaraqa'n said on Ha'ru'n's carpet:

“The family of the prophet and those who love them hide themselves out of fear of killing.

The Christians and the Jews feel secure, while they (the Prophet's family) eternally belong to the community of monotheism.’

“Di‘bil, the creature of the ‘Abba’sids and their poet, said⁸¹: ‘Do you not see that I have gone and come for thirty years, and I am always in sorrow? I see that their booty is divided among other than them, and their hands are void of their booty.’

“Ali b. al-‘Abba’s al-Ru’mi, al-Mu‘tasim’s retainer, said: ‘I have sworn that none of you will be hit on the forehead. We will be patient toward you, O the Banu’ al-‘Abba’s, just as the brave one heavily armed is patient toward the sword. Every time one of the pure (children) of the Prophet Muhammad is killed and stained (with his own) blood.’

“Ibra’him b. al-‘Abba’s al-Sawli, who was the scribe of the people and their governor, said concerning al-Ridha’ when al-Ma’mu’n brought him near: ‘He bestows upon you through your properties, and you are given one percent.’

“And how does a group of people not revolt against them (the ‘Abba’sids), while they have killed their cousins, filled the houses of the Turks and the Daylamis with silver and gold, ask for the help of the Maghribi and the Fargha’ni; the black Nabatis have undertaken their ministries; the non-Arabs (*‘ajam*) and the *Timtimis*⁸² have surrounded their leadership; nevertheless the family of Abu’ Ta’lib have been deprived of the inheritance of their mother and of the booty (*fayya’*) of their grandfather; the ‘Alawide feels appetite for a certain meal, but he is deprived of it; he asks the days for the appetite but he does not get it. The land tax (*khara’jj*) of Egypt and of al-Ahwa’z, the alms of the two sacred cities (Mecca and Medina) and of al-Hija’z are spent on Ibn Maryam al-Madini, Ibra’him al-Mousili, Ibn Ja’mi’ al-Sahmi, Zalzal al-Da’rib, and Barsoma’ al-Za’mir. The feudal estates of Bakhtishiyu’ al-Nasra’ni, Ja’ri al-Turki, and al-Afshin al-Ashrawasani are enough to be the food of a country and sufficient to numerous communities.

“They claim that al-Mutawakkil spends the night with twelve thousand mistresses, while the Sayyid from among the Sayyids of the Household is chaste through a Negro or a Sindi woman; the choice of the fund of land tax is confined to the provisions of the Safa’ina, the dining tables of the Makha’tina, the foods of the Kalla’bin, the rites of the Qarra’din, Makha’riq, ‘Ilwiya the singer, Zarzar, and ‘Umar b. Ba’na al-MAhlabi, while they (the ‘Abba’sids) are miserly toward the Fa’timids through a meal or a drink. They (the ‘Abba’sids) spent it on a Danek (weight) of a meal; they buy the songstress for ten thousand dirhams and spend on her (an amount) sufficient to the provisions of an army.

“While the people to whom one-fifth (*khums*) is lawful, alms is unlawful, dignity and love is obligatory, beg out of distress and perish owing to poverty; they mortgage their swords, sell their garments, look at their booty (*fayya’*) with a satisfied eye, and are strong toward their time through weak souls. They have no guilt except that their grandfather is the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, their father is the testamentary trustee (*wasi*), their mother is Fa’tima, their grandmother is Khadija, their creed is faith, and their Imam (leader) is the Qur’an; yet their rights are spent on the woman housekeeper, the barmaid, the masseuse, and the dressmaker; and their one-fifth (*khumus*) is divided among the pecking of the blood roosters, monkeys, the heads of the games, and the she-camel of journey.

“What shall I say concerning the people who incited the wild animals and birds to attack the Muslim women, plowed the grave of al-Husayn, peace be on him, and banished his visitors from their regions? What shall I say in the description of the people who were the sperms of the drunk in the wombs of the songstresses? What shall I say concerning the household from whom prostitution stemmed, through whom effeminacy spread, and through whom sodomy was known? Ibra’him b. al-Mahdi was a singer; al-Mutawakkil was lowly and womanish; al-Mu’tazz was feminine; Ibn Zubayda was an idiot masseur; al-Ma’mu’n killed his brother; al-Muntasir killed his father; Musa’ b. al-Mahdi poisoned his mother; and al-Mu’tazid killed his uncle.”

After this paragraph al-Khawa’rizmi presented the tragedies which the Umayyads committed, and then he ended his letter with mentioning the defects of the ‘Abba’sids, saying: “These defects though big, many, ugly and horrid are small and few in comparison with the defects of the ‘Abba’sids, who built the city of the tyrannical and spent the funds of the Muslims on amusement centers and sins.⁸³”

I (i.e. the author) think that there is no inclusive political document similar to this one, for it contains all qualities of the ‘Abba’sid kings and gives an account of their evil policy of which is the extreme cruelty towards the ‘Alawides and depriving them of their natural rights, to the extent that they could not bear poverty; the ‘Abba’sids spent enormous funds on lusts, the mischievous, the singers, and the dissolute, whereas the Household (of the Prophet) and their followers were unable to find a loaf of bread, a garment, and other life requirements.

Similarly, this document gives an account of affairs of great importance; there is no need to explain them, for their meanings are clear.

The Wa’qifities

Another example of the events which occurred in the time of Imam al-Ridha’, peace be on him, and annoyed him very much was that the creed of the Wa’qifities spread among the classes of the Shi’ites. The Wa’qifities maintained that Imam Musa’ b. Ja’far, peace be on him, was alive, did not die, and would never die, that he was raised to the heaven just as al-Masih b. Maryam was raised, and that he was the awaited one who would undertake (the office of the Imamate, *al-qa’im*) and fill the world with justice and fairness as it was filled with oppression and tyranny. They claimed that the one who was in the prison of al-Sindi was not Imam Musa’, peace be on him, rather the people imagined that he was in prison. It is necessary for us to give a brief account of this group of people.

1. The Cause for the Wa’qifites’ doctrines

As for the reason for the Wa’qifites’ doctrines, it is that when Imam al-Ka’zim, peace be on him, was in the prison of Ha’ru’n (al-Rashid), he appointed some agents on his behalf in order to collect the legal rights which had come to him from his Shi’ites, so some agents gathered many funds, for example, Ziya’d b. Marwa’n al-Qandi collected seventy thousand dinars, and ‘Ali b. Abu’ Hamza gathered thirty

thousand dinars. When the Imam died, they denied his death and bought country estates and houses for the money which they had. When Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, demanded them to give the money to him, they denied the death of his father and refused to hand it over to him.[84](#)

2. The Wa'qifites' doctrines spread

The Wa'qifites' doctrines were spread by the summoners who lavishly spread enormous properties in order to buy the minds and to misguide the people. In this connection Yunus b. 'Abd al-Rahma'n narrated, saying: "Abu' Ibra'him Musa', peace be on him, died and every one of his people had a lot of money; this is the reason for their doctrines and their denying his death as a sign of desire for the properties, for example, Ziya'd b. Marwa'n al-Qandi had seventy thousand dinars, and 'Ali b. Abu' Hamza had thirty thousand dinars. When I saw that, I realized the truth and knew the affair of Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha', peace be on him. I began speaking and summoning the people to him. So they sent for me and said: 'What makes you do this? If you want money, we will help you.' They guaranteed me ten thousand dinars and said: 'Refrain from (this matter).' However, I refused (that) and said to them: 'We have been told on the authority of the two truthful ones, peace be on them, who said: 'When heresies appear, then it is obligatory on (religious) scholars to manifest their own knowledge. If they do not do (that), they will be deprived of the light of faith.' Any how, I will not leave jiha'd according to Allah's command. Accordingly, they showed enmity toward me and harbored malice against me.[85](#)"

Through such deceiving ways, the Wa'qifites spread their doctrines, but shortly after that they were destroyed and their false claims were discovered.

The Imam condemns the Wa'qifites' doctrines

Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, condemned the Wa'qifites for their creeds. One of his followers (Shi'ites) had written to him and asked him about them, and he, peace be on him, replied: "The Wa'qifite has deviated from the True Religion and persisted in his evil deed. If he dies for it, then his abode is hell; and evil is the resort.[86](#)"

A Shi'ite asked Imam al-Ridha' whether it was permissible for him to pay *zaka't* (alms) to the Wa'qifites, and he prevented him from that, saying: "They (the Wa'qifites) are unbelievers, polytheists, and hypocrites.[87](#)"

Muhammad b. Fudayl visited Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and told him about the conditions of the leaders of the Wa'qifites, saying: "May I be your ransom, I have left Ibn Abu' Hamza, Ibn Mahra'n, and Ibn Abu' Sa'id (who were some leaders of the Wa'qifites), while they are the most violent of people in showing enmity toward Allah, the Most High."

The Imam answered him: "He who goes astray does not harm you when you are rightly guided. They (the Wa'qifites) have accused Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, of lying; they accused so-and-so, so-and-so of lying; and they have accused Musa' b. Ja'far, peace be on him, of

lying; and I follow my fathers' example.”

“You said to Ibn Mahra'n: ‘May Allah take away the light of your heart and enter poverty in your house,’” retorted Muhammad.

“How is he, and how are his brothers?” asked the Imam, peace be on him.

Muhammad told him about the acceptance of his supplication and about their being miserable and poor, saying: “They are in the worst condition; they are grieved in Baghdad.”

The Imam, peace be on him, was severe in his attitude toward the Wa'qifites, who mutinied against the True Religion and to denied the Imam.

1. The Imam and al-Husayn Bin Mahra'n

As for al-Husayn b. Mahra'n, he was among the eminent figures of the Wa'qifites; and he wrote to Imam al-Ridha' with an accent showing his hypocrisy and unbelief, for he ordered and prohibited the Imam; he did not respect the position of the Imam; and through that he did not conform to high moral traits in addressing. Accordingly, the Imam wrote a letter and ordered his companions to copy it, lest Ibn Mahra'n (i.e. al-Husayn) should conceal it. The letter is as follows:

“In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, may Allah make you and me well; your letter have come to me; in it you have mentioned the man who is accused of treason and deception; and you say: ‘Beware of him.’ And you have mentioned that through which he received me, and sent to me other than him, so you have advanced (many things) as arguments; and you have claimed an affair against him and wanted to enter upon the like of it... You say: ‘He has worked for my affair through his reason and his stratagem, seeking it for his own soul and willing to make the hearts of the people incline to him, that the affair may be at his hand and work according to his own viewpoint; and he claims that I have obeyed him in what he has advised me; and now you have counseled me according to what is right with you through reason and stratagem after you (through other than you). The affair is not right except through the two affairs: Either you accept the affair as it is or you give the people what they have demanded and put an end (to their demand); otherwise the matter is crooked in our viewpoint; and the people will not hand over my property which is in their hands and take it along with them; therefore, the matter is not according to your reason and stratagem.

“And we will not do what you have granted through opinion and consultation, but the affair belongs to Allah, the Great and Almighty, the One, and there is no partner with Him. He does toward His servants whatever He desires; he whom Allah guides is not misguided by anyone; and he whom He misguides is not guided by anyone, and you will not find any saint to guide him.

“You said: ‘And work through their affair and practice stratagem therein; and how is the stratagem? And Allah says: *And they swear by Allah with the most energetic of their oaths: Allah will not raise up him*

who dies. Yea! it is a promise biding on Him, quite true, but most people do not know, to these words of Him, the Great and Almighty: *And that they may earn what they are going to earn (of evil)*. If you answer them concerning what they have questioned, they will be righteous and hand over; and what I have ordered you belongs to me; you and they have denied after me; and my meeting has been lengthened for me; and that has not occurred through me except that I have hoped for righteousness according to the words of the Commander of the faithful, peace be on him: 'Approach and question (me).' He began rubbing his belly and saying: 'I have not filled it with food, but I have filled it with knowledge. By Allah, I know whether a verse was sent down on the sea or a land or a plain or a mountain, and I know concerning whom it was revealed.' Similarly, Abu' 'Abd Allah, peace be on him, said: 'I complain to Allah of the people of Medina; I am among them just like a hair, for I do not move; they want me not to say the truth. By Allah I will always say the truth until I die.' I say the truth in order to spare your blood and unify you as you had been before, that your secrets may be hidden with you and not spread among those other than you.

"And Allah's Apostle, may Allah bless him and his family, already said: 'A secret about which Allah secretly told Gabriel; and about which Gabriel secretly told Muhammad, and about which Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his family, secretly told 'Ali, and about which 'Ali secretly told whomever he wished.'"

Then he said: [Abu' Ja'far, peace be on him, said:] "Then you speak about it on the road, so I want, as you your leader (*sa'hib*), to explain you affair for you; lest you should place it in other than its place and ask about it other than its men, and hence your ruin occurs through your questioning them. How many a person claimed (the affair) for himself and he did not fall under (it). Then you said: 'If that belongs to him, it is necessary for him to maintain it and not to turn from it to other than it.' I said: 'Because he practiced precautionary dissimulation, and refraining from (it) is better. If he speaks, then it is obligatory on him to answer everything about which he is questioned. And what you claimed and demanded has occurred. So the affair concerns other than you and it is incumbent on you to follow them regarding it; but you have put into (effect) that which is right according to your reason, your viewpoints, and your analogy. When you claimed that my order was incorrect, you regarded your order as correct.'

"If you say that your leader (*sa'hib*) was not such, then you have discarded the command of your Lord behind your backs. Accordingly, if I follow your caprices, then I will go astray and I am not among those who are rightly guided, and there will be no escape for you from that you will be like those who had been before you, while you have been told that the laws (*sunan*) and the examples are tit for tat.

"The refraining from harm which you demanded in the first place and the answer in the end will not make well your chests; nor will it take away your doubts; nor there will be an escape from that which occurred through you; nor will it leave your hearts until Allah takes it away from you. If all people are able to love us, recognize our rights and submit to our command, they will do, but Allah does whatever He wills and guides to Him those who turn (to Him in repentance).

“I already answered you about many questions. Then you and those who asked such questions must carefully consider the answers. If there is no cure in the answers, then I already gave you something which was regarded as an argument and a lesson. The many questions (which are asked as a sign of) blame are reprehensible in our viewpoint, for the questioners want nothing except to examine (us) in order to find a way to vague errors and mischief; and he who wants to make (things) unclear, Allah makes them unclear to him and entrusts him with his own soul; you and your companions do not see that I have answered (your questions); therefore, that is up to me. If I will and determine, that is up to me, not up to what you and your companions say. You do not know so-and-so; rather there is no escape for us from that, for we are sure of it, while you are doubtful about it.[88](#)”

This is the end of this letter which the Imam sent to al-Husayn b. Mahra'n. It contains ambiguous matters as well as there is no logical coherence in its paragraphs. It is more likely that something necessary for logical coherence and clarity has been omitted from it.

Any how, this letter has expressed the hardships which the Imam and the community received from the Wa'qifites, whom the world deceived.

2. Al-Husayn Bin 'Umar

He said: [I did my best with Yahya' b. Akthem (the judge of Sa'mrra)]; I debated with him, conversed with him, communicated with him, and asked him about the knowledge of Muhammad's Household; yet I heard say:] “One day while I was circling the grave of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, I saw Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Ridha', peace be on him, circling it, so I debated with him on some questions which I had, and he answered them. Then I said to him: 'By Allah, I want to ask you a question but I am ashamed of that, so he said to me: 'I will answer you before you question me, you want to ask me about the Imam.' So I replied: 'By Allah, this is what I want,' and he said: 'I am he.' Then I asked him: 'Is there any sign?' There was a rod in his hand, and the rod uttered and said: 'Surely my master is the Imam of this time, and he is the argument.'[89](#)”

Al-Husayn b. 'Umar b. Yazid narrated, saying: “I went to al-Ridha', peace be on him, and I was then a Wa'qifite; my father had asked his father about seven questions, and he answered him about six of them and refrained from (answering) the seventh (question). So I said: 'By Allah, I will ask him about what my father had asked his father in order to know whether he is able to answer as (his father did).' Then I asked him, and he answered six questions just as his father did, and he refrained (from answering) the seventh (question).

“My father had said to his father: 'I will protest against you before Allah on the Day of Resurrection, for you have claimed that 'Abd Allah is not an Imam, so he, peace be on him, put his hand on his neck, and then he said to him: 'Yes, protest against me through that before Allah, the Great and Almighty. If there is any sin therein, then it is in my neck (i.e. I will shoulder the responsibility for it), and so on.'[90](#)”

3. Al-Washsha”

Al-Washsha" reported, saying: "When I was a Wa'qifite, I went to Khurasa'n; I carried a mask with me; there was with me a brocaded garment in one of the parcels, but I did not know where I had put it. When I arrived in Khurasa'n and stopped at one of its houses, a Medinan man came and said to me: 'Abu' al-Hasan al-Ridha' say to you: 'Send me the brocaded garment which is with you.' So I asked the man: 'Who told Abu' al-Hasan about my arrival and having a brocaded garment?' He went to him and told him, and then he came back to me and said to me: [He (al-Ridha') says to you:] 'It is in the place so-and-so.' I looked for it where he said, and then I sent it to him.⁹¹" This was the reason for his being rightly guided.

These are some believers whom Allah guided to faith, who withdrew from the Wa'qifites' doctrines and adopted the Imamate of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him.

The Problem of creating the Qur'an

Among the important event in the time of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, is the problem of creating the Qur'an, for the religious scholars extremely differed over it, and a group of them suffered from the displeasure and vengeance of the state along with the anger of the people.

This opinion occurred at the end of the Umayyad government; al-Ju'd b. Dirham, the teacher of Marwa'n b. Muhammad, the last Umayyad caliph, was the first to originate it. He was the first to speak about it; he already wrote and explained its chapters, and then he announced it in Damascus. However the authorities there summoned him, but he left it for Kufa. Al-Jahm b. Safwa'n, to whom the Jahmi sect belonged, learned from him.⁹² In this respect Ibn al-Athir said: "Surely, Hisha'm b. 'Abd al-Malik ordered al-Ju'd to be captured and to be sent to Kha'lid al-Qasri, the governor of Iraq, in order to kill him. Kha'lid imprisoned him and did not kill him. When Hisha'm heard of that, he wrote to him, blamed him, and commanded him to kill him. Hence Kha'lid ordered al-Ju'd to be brought in chains out of prison. After he had performed the prayer of 'Id al-Addha', he said at the end of his sermon: 'Go and sacrifice (animals), may Allah accept (that) from you, for, today, I will sacrifice al-Ju'd, who says: 'Allah did not speak to Musa'; nor did Allah take Ibra'him as a bosom friend.' Allah is far above what al-Ju'd says.' Then he descended (from the pulpit) and killed him.⁹³"

This idea remained hidden until the time of Ha'ru'n al-Rashid. When the Mu'tazilites appeared, they announced that the Qur'an was created. Bishr al-Marisi was the most important person in summoning the people to this idea. He wrote many books on it. When Ha'ru'n heard of him, he said: "By Allah, if I find him, I will kill him." When Bishr hear of that, he hid himself throughout the government of Ha'ru'n.⁹⁴

When al-Ma'mu'n undertook the government, he said that the Qur'an was created, forced the people to believe in this idea, and subjected them to vengeance and torture when they opposed it. Accordingly, this movement became active, and the idea grew and spread widely.

This matter is regarded as the most important event in the time of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him; the

philosophers from among the Mu'tazilites and others presented it and explained its sides. It is worth mentioning that this idea belongs to the psychological branches and researches. Had it not been for that the chapter would be diffuse and the book become too long, we would speak about it in detail.[95](#)

Fabricating Lies against the Imams

Fabricating traditions and lies against the Imams, peace be on them, was famous in the time of Imam al-Ridha', peace be on him, and other times. Some people fabricated traditions and ascribed them to the Imams in order to degrade their rank and decrease their importance. Among the fabricated traditions is that which narrated by Abu' al-Salt, who asked Imam al-Ridha', saying: "O Son of Allah's Apostle, what do the people narrate on your authority?"

"What is it?" asked the Imam.

"They say that the people are your slaves," replied Abu' al-Salt.

The Imam denied that and renounced it, saying: "O Allah, the Creator of the heavens and earth, Knower of the things unseen and seen, You bear witness that I have never said that; nor have I heard any of my fathers say it. You know that this community has practiced injustices toward us; this is one of them."

Then he turned to Abu' al-Salt and asked him: "'Abd al-Sala'm (i.e. Abu' al-Salt), if all people were our slaves, as they say, then to whom should we sell them? 'Abd al-Sala'm, do you deny our authority, made obligatory by Allah, as the others do?"

Al-'Alla'ma al-Sayyid Ha'shim Ma'ru'f al-Husayni commented on this narration, saying: "The Imam criticized the questioner for that accusation through which their enemies wanted to defame them; he regarded it as one of the injustices which the community practiced toward them, for ascribing that to them means that they broke the laws of Islam and the texts of the Qur'an, which demonstrates that there is no difference between a person and other except through reverential fear (*taqqwa*)[96](#)"

With this matter we will end our talk about the time of Imam al-Ridha'. I (the author) have mentioned a detailed research about this time in my book *Haya't al-Imam Musa' Bin Ja'far*, peace be on him, so I do not want to mention it again.

- [1.](#) Al-A'la'm, vol. 5, p. 29.
- [2.](#) Ibn Khullaka'n, Wafaya't al-A'ya'n, vol. 2, p. 426.
- [3.](#) Rihlat Ibn Jubayr, p. 208.
- [4.](#) Haya't al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 197.
- [5.](#) Tamhid Li Ta'rikh al-Falsafa, p. 47.
- [6.](#) Ibn al-Nadim, al-Fihrast, p. 339.
- [7.](#) 'Asr al-Ma'mu'n, vol. 1, p. 375.
- [8.](#) Al-Tibya'n, vol. 1, p. 4.
- [9.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Ba'qir, vol. 1, p. 181.
- [10.](#) Ibid.

- [11.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 194.
- [12.](#) Muqaddamat al-Muqni' wa al-Hida'ya, p. 10.
- [13.](#) Tamhid Li Ta'rikh al-Falsafa al-Isla'miya, pp. 202-203.
- [14.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 195.
- [15.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 1, p. 82.
- [16.](#) Ta'rikh al-Isla'm, vol. 2, p. 338.
- [17.](#) Haya't al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 191.
- [18.](#) Ta'rikh al-Falsafa fi al-Isla'm, p. 39.
- [19.](#) Haya't al-Imam Muhammad al-Jawa'd, p. 192.
- [20.](#) Al-Ida'ra al-Isla'miya fi 'Aiz al-'Arab, p. 82.
- [21.](#) Al-Muqaddamat, pp. 179-180.
- [22.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far.
- [23.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Ta'rikh, vol. 6, p. 433.
- [24.](#) Mu'jam al-Bulda'n, vol. 3, p. 175.
- [25.](#) Al-Dira'ya't, p. 364.
- [26.](#) Fam al-Sulh, a district north of Wa'sit. It had a river called Fam al-Sulh, which took water from the Tigris on the eastern side. Mu'jam al-Bulda'n, vol. 5, p. 177.
- [27.](#) Al-Muwafaqa't, p. 98.
- [28.](#) Nisa" al-Khulafa", p. 68.
- [29.](#) Al-Tabari, Ta'rikh.
- [30.](#) Tazyin al-Aswa'q, vol. 3, p. 117.
- [31.](#) Al-Hada"iq al-Wardiya, vol. 2, p. 220.
- [32.](#) Hida'rat al-Isla'm.
- [33.](#) Bashsha'r, Divan, vol. 3, p. 190.
- [34.](#) Ibid., p. 59.
- [35.](#) Al-Hida'ra al-Isla'miya, vol. 1, p. 199.
- [36.](#) Ibid., vol. 1, p. 200.
- [37.](#) Ibid., p. 234.
- [38.](#) Ibid., pp. 132-133.
- [39.](#) Ahmed b. Yahya', Dhikr al-Mu'tazila, p. 92.
- [40.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Ta'rikh, vol. 8, pp. 181-182.
- [41.](#) Al-Maha'sin wa al-Masa'wi', p. 339.
- [42.](#) Al-Wizara" wa al-Kitta'b, p. 142.
- [43.](#) Al-Ya'qu'bi, Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 146.
- [44.](#) Al-Khara'jj, p. 116.
- [45.](#) Ibid., 118.
- [46.](#) Al-Mas'u'di, Muru'jj al-Dhahab, vol. 3, p. 318. Al-Bid' wa al-Ta'rikh, vol. 6, p. 92. 'Umara" al-Shi'r al-'Arab fi al-'Asr al-'Abba'si, p. 35.
- [47.](#) Al-Zubayr, p. 23.
- [48.](#) 'Asr al-Ma'mu'n.
- [49.](#) Al-Tabari, Ta'rikh.
- [50.](#) Ta'rikh Baghdad, vol. 10, p. 215.
- [51.](#) Al-Imama wa al-Siya'sa, vol. 1, p. 145.
- [52.](#) Niha'yat al-Irab
- [53.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha', p. 108.
- [54.](#) Ibn Rashiq, al-'Umda, vol. 1, p. 75.
- [55.](#) Nazariyat al-Imama, p. 381.
- [56.](#) He was given this name because there was a stutter in his tongue when he was a child. It was his father who had given

him this name. Ibn Khaldun, vol. 4, p. 8.

[57.](#) Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin, p. 539

[58.](#) Ibid., 519.

[59.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, pp. 400–401, quoted from Ibn Khaldun's Ta'rikh, vol. 7, p. 243.

[60.](#) The poet has likened Islam to a camel.

[61.](#) Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin, p. 533.

[62.](#) Ibid.

[63.](#) Ibid.

[64.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, pp. 403–406, quoted from the book Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin and the like.

[65.](#) Al-Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 10, p. 231. Ibn al-Athir, Ta'rikh, vol. 5, p. 177.

[66.](#) Al-Siyu'ti, Ta'rikh al-Khulafa", p. 261. Al-Mas'u'di, Murujj al-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 222.

[67.](#) Al-Adab fi Zil al-Tashayyu', p. 68.

[68.](#) Al-Tabari, Ta'rikh, vol. 10, p. 446.

[69.](#) Al-Mana'qib, vol. 10, p. 446.

[70.](#) Al-Maqrizi, al-Niza' wa al-Takha'sum, p. 51.

[71.](#) Mukhtasar Ta'rikh al-'Arab, p. 18.

[72.](#) Al-Ya'qu'bi, Ta'rikh, vol. 3, p. 136.

[73.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far.

[74.](#) Al-Ada'b al-Sulta'niya, p. 20.

[75.](#) Abu' al-Faraj al-Asfaha'ni, al-Agha'ni, vol. 5, p. 225.

[76.](#) Al-Wila't wa al-Quda't, p. 198.

[77.](#) Al-Shaykh al-Tu'si, al-Ama'li, p. 330.

[78.](#) Di'bil, Divan.

[79.](#) By the evil Imams the poet means the 'Abba'sid kings.

[80.](#) Maqa'til al-Ta'libiyyin, p. 646.

[81.](#) Di'bil al-Khaza'i was not the creature of the 'Abba'sis; rather he was the creature of the members of the House (Ahl al-Bayt), peace be on them, and their poet. For them, he faced difficulties and persecutions.

[82.](#) The Timimis are those who speak Arabic incorrectly.

[83.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Ridha', pp. 100–106, quoted from al-Khawa'rizmi's Letters.

[84.](#) Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 2, p. 308.

[85.](#) Ibid., vol. 12, p. 308.

[86.](#) Haya't al-Imam al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, p. 207.

[87.](#) Biha'r al-Anwa'r, vol. 2, p. 909.

[88.](#) Al-Kashi, Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith, vol. 6, pp. 104–107.

[89.](#) Usul al-Ka'fi, vol. 1, p. 353.

[90.](#) Ibid.

[91.](#) Ibid., vol. 1, p. 354.

[92.](#) Sarh al-'Uyua'n, p. 159.

[93.](#) 'Asr al-Ma'mu'n, vol. 1, p. 395.

[94.](#) Al-Nuju'm al-Za'hira, vol. 1, p. 147.

[95.](#) Haya't al-Imam Musa' b. Ja'far, vol. 2, p. 213.

[96.](#) Sirat al-A'Imma al-Ithna' 'Ashar, vol. 2, p. 359.

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