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Imam and the 'Caliphs'

The Imam (a.s.) was contemporary to a short period of al-Rashid's regime during which he suffered the tragedy of the assassination of his father Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) and other Alawides. After the murder of his father, he was not safe from the moves of some of those who flattered the rulers and followed their course and pretended to show their loyalty by instigating enmity against the regime's opponents, encouraging their elimination, thinking that that would increase the rulers' liking for them and nearness to them, that it would strengthen their position and grant them unique distinctions and raise them to the highest pinnacles.

Attempts to Eliminate the Imam

Ja'far ibn Yahya says: "I heard Isa ibn Ja'far say to Haroun (al-Rashid) upon leaving al-Riqqa for Mecca, 'Remember your oath by the dignity of the descendants of Abu Talib that should anyone after Musa (al-Kazim, A.S.) claim Imamate, you would strike his head with the sword. This Ali, his son, claims so, and people are addressing him in the same way they used to address his father.' He looked at him angrily and said, 'Why? Do you expect me to eliminate each and every one of them?'" Musa ibn Mahran says that when he heard Ja'far ibn Yahya say so, he went to him (i.e. to Imam ar-Ridha') and told him what he had heard. Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) responded by saying, "What do I have to do with them? By God, they cannot hurt me in the least."

Such incitements were not confined within a reasonable limit but went beyond it to dangerous ones where instigation might cause al-Rashid to pay serious attention, for the Barmakis were most antagonistic towards the Descendants of the Prophet (S) and the most cruel among them in their grudge, so much so that it is reported that Yahya ibn Khalid al-Barmaki was the one who ordered the murder of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.)¹ when the Abbaside caliphate was under their mercy.² Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) rendered God's retribution against the Barmakis to their persecution and oppression the worst of which was suffered by Imam al-Kazim (a.s.).³ Suffices for proof is the fact that Yahya ibn Khalid was the one who plotted the ugly plot against Imam al-Kazim (a.s.) after causing Haroun al-Rashid to be angry with him, instigating al-Rashid against the Imam (a.s.) and using some naive weaklings among

the Alawides to achieve his goal.⁴

It was, indeed, an attempt which spelled the extent of grudge felt by Yahya ibn Khalid whose purpose was to pressure al-Rashid into murdering Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and make him join his father. He said to him one day: "This Ali, his son, has seated himself in place and claimed the matter (Imamate) for himself." He (al-Rashid) said: "Is it not enough for us what we have done to his father? Do you wish that we should kill them all?"⁵ Al-Rashid's answer points out to the extent of anguish he was suffering deep inside, and it reveals the bitter struggle exploding deep inside him. Suffices him to live carrying the guilt of murdering the pure soul of the Imam's father whom he subjected to numerous types of trials and tribulations till he joined his Lord well-pleased and satisfied after having faithfully executed the responsibilities of Imamate which were entrusted to him honestly and faithfully, while the tyrant's soul was no longer able to bear any bigger sin anymore.

Al-Rashid Moves to Eliminate the Imam

Finally, al-Rashid is surrounded by a large number of courtiers instigating him to kill Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), and they finally succeeded in stirring his feeling of anger against the Imam (a.s.), stimulating his beastly instinct to eagerly kill. Abul-Salt al-Harawi narrates saying that one day he was sitting with the Imam (a.s.) at his house when a messenger from Haroun al-Rashid came in and ordered the Imam (a.s.) to present himself before the caliph.

The Imam (a.s.) said: "O Abul-Salt! He does not call upon me at such a time of the night except for trouble. By God! He cannot do anything which I hate to me because of what I had come to know of certain statements said by my grandfather the Messenger of God (S)." Abul-Salt continues his narrative to say that he accompanied the Imam (a.s.) when he entered the court of Haroun al-Rashid.

When the latter looked at him, ar-Ridha' (a.s.) read those words of the Prophet (S), and when he stood before al-Rashid, the latter looked carefully at him and then said, "O Abul-Hasan! We have ordered a hundred thousand dirhams for you, and write down the needs of all your family." When the Imam (a.s.) left the court, the caliph kept looking at him as he was leaving and said behind his back: "I wished, and God wished otherwise, and what God wished was good." Thus did God save the life of the Imam (a.s.) who sought refuge with Him, seeking His assistance through the sincere words he had come to know that his grandfather the Messenger of God (S) had articulated. Al-Rashid, on the other hand, went back to himself satisfied after destiny had opposed his vicious intention just to realize that what God had done was indeed better than what he himself had intended to do.

Sincere Attempts

Contrariwise, there were sincere attempts to distance Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) from danger which were undertaken by some of his followers who had tasted the bitterness of pain during the adversity suffered by his father Imam al-Kazim (a.s.) who suffered a great deal of oppression and persecution at the hands

of the stubborn tyrant Haroun al-Rashid.

Those attempts required the Imam (a.s.) to cease publicly promoting his mission and to distance himself from the situations which would clearly attract the attention of the government to him and become a cause for its revenge and desire to eliminate him. But the Imam (a.s.) who was confident of his stance did not pay attention to those attempts, and he was of the view that they were simply unnecessary due to some knowledge he had learned from his forefathers which assured him that al-Rashid would not be able to harm him in any way.

For example, Safwan ibn Yahya is quoted saying: "When Abul-Hasan Musa (a.s.) passed away and ar-Ridha' (a.s.) started preaching his mission, we were worried about his life and we said to him, 'You have declared something of great magnanimity, and we worry about your safety because of this tyrant.' He said, 'Let him try his best, for he shall not have the means to hurt me.'" [6](#)

Muhammad ibn Sinan said: "During the reign of Haroun, I said to Abul-Hasan ar-Ridha' (a.s.), 'You have made yourself well-known because of this matter and followed in the footsteps of your father while Haroun's sword is dripping with blood.' He said, 'What made me bold in this regard is that the Messenger of God (S) had said: 'If Abu Jahl harms even one hair on my head, then bear witness that I am not a Prophet,' and I tell you that if Haroun took one hair away from my head, then bear witness that I am not an Imam.'" [7](#)

Vicious Intentions

Some Waqfis tried to warn him against declaring himself as the Imam (a.s.) and openly acting as such, and he answered them saying that such a matter did not require a warning, and that the fear that Haroun might hurt him was groundless. Those individuals had only one objective in mind: to discourage the ar-Ridha' (a.s.) from making himself known as the Imam and making his Imamate public so that they might be able to promote their "sect" which claimed that the Qa'im was Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) and that he was still alive as we mentioned above. Let us review the dialogue between the Imam (a.s.) and some of those Waqfis. Abu Masrooq has stated:

"A group of Waqfis entered the house of the Imam (a.s.) once and among them were men like Abu Hamza al-Bataini, Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Ammar, al-Husayn ibn Umran, and al-Husayn ibn Abu Sa'id al-Makari. Ali ibn Abu Hamza said to him, 'May my life be sacrificed for you! Tell us how your father is doing.' He said, 'He, peace be upon him, passed away.' He said, 'Who did he recommend to succeed him?' He answered, 'Myself.' He said, 'You are claiming something which none among your forefathers claimed, starting from Ali ibn Abu Talib downwards.'

He said, 'It was said by the best of my forefathers and the most distinguished among them: the Messenger of God (S).' He asked, 'Do not you fear them for your safety?' He said, 'Had I worried about my safety, I would have been in a position to do something to protect myself. The Messenger of God (S)

was approached once by Abu Lahab who threatened him; the Messenger of God (S) said to him: 'If I am scratched by you even slightly, then I am indeed a liar.'

That was the first time the Messenger of God (S) incited someone, and this is the first time I do likewise and tell you that if I am scratched by Haroun even slightly, then I am indeed a liar.' Al-Husayn ibn Mahran said to him, 'If this comes to pass, then we will have achieved our objective.' He said, 'What do you exactly want? Should I go to Haroun and tell him that I am the Imam (a.s.) and that he is nobody?

This is not how the Messenger of God behaved at the outset of his mission; rather, he said so to his family and followers and those whom he trusted from among the public. You believe that Imamate belongs to my father, claiming that what stops me from admitting that my father is alive is my own fear. I do not fear you when I say to you that I am the Imam; so, how can I fear you if my father is indeed alive?"⁸

The Imam's expectation proved to be true; al-Rashid breathed his last without hurting the Imam (a.s.) a bit.

From the Series of Tragedies

One incident that took place during the reign of al-Rashid reminds us of the chain of tragic events from which the Alawides suffered during the reign of al-Mansour. In Medina, Muhammad ibn Ja'far declared rebellion against the government; therefore, al-Rashid sent an army under the command of al-Jaloodi to crush his rebellion, ordering al-Jaloodi to behead the man if he could lay his hand on him.

Al-Rashid, furthermore, was not satisfied with just that. He instructed his commander to assault the houses of the descendants of Abu Talib and loot everything their women had without leaving even one piece of clothing on them. Al-Jaloodi tried to execute al-Rashid's order in person; therefore, he attacked the house of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) using his cavaliers. Having seen him, the Imam (a.s.) put all the women in one house, and he stood at its door.

Al-Jaloodi said to Abul-Hasan: "I have got to enter the house and strip the women of everything just as the commander of the faithful ordered me." Ar-Ridha' (a.s.) said: "I can do that for you, and I will not leave anything for them." The Imam (a.s.) kept requesting him to accept, swearing that he would do just that till the man calmed down and consented. Abul-Hasan took their wares, including their ear-rings, anklets, shirts, and every valuable item in the house, small or big.

This incident, if true, does not depict an unusual behavior by al-Rashid towards the Alawides since he was full of grudge and animosity towards them. What encourages us to believe in it is what Ibn al-Athir narrates about al-Rashid at the time of his death, shortly before meeting his Maker. He was moaning and groaning while saying, "How horrible my evil deeds are towards the Messenger of God! How Horrible!"⁹ This is a clear expression of the admission of the calamities he inflicted upon the family of the Prophet (S), of his horrible sins, of a bitter regret which was consuming his soul at the time of its

departure.

Imam During al-Amin's Reign

As regarding his life during the reign of al-Amin, we cannot review any incident regarding the government's stance towards Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), and this may be attributed to the confusing environment in which the Abbaside caliphate found itself due to internal dissents which led in the end to a serious split among the members of the ruling dynasty, the split which was caused by al-Amin deposing his brother al-Ma'mun from the post of heir to the throne and the nomination of his son Musa in his place after listening to the advice of al-Fadl ibn al-Rabee' who had a personal vendetta against al-Ma'mun and who feared him for his post should he become the caliph instead, since he had already opposed him openly. [10](#)

Such a shaky situation is credited for the fact that al-Amin and his ruling apparatus diverted their attention from Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and from pursuing him, and we can regard that period of the Imam's life as a peaceful respite with which circumstances blessed him in order to be able to dedicate his time to carry out the responsibilities of his mission and disseminate its pristine principles among the nation.

Imam During al-Ma'mun's Regime

As regarding the period of the Imam's life during which he was contemporary to al-Ma'mun's regime, this may be the richest and most eventful of all his life, for his personality enjoyed a significant role in the turning of events and their reflection thereupon. But first we have to provide a general expose of the intricate events which caused Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) to enjoy a significant role in the shaping of the events of that period. After that, we have to conduct a general study of the personality of al-Ma'mun and of its distinctions, since he was the number one man around whom the contemporary political events revolved. Such a study may even lead us to research some other leading personalities of the time that played and assumed a large role in the political wheel of the time.

Al-Ma'mun's Personality

As regarding al-Ma'mun, there is no doubt at all that he was one of the strongest personalities of the Abbaside caliphate during its first epoch, and one of the most moderate, highly intellectual and highly learned of its scholars. He encouraged scholarship during his regime and promoted free discussions out of his passion for increasing his own knowledge and expanding its spheres.

He was also known to demonstrate an inclination towards Shi'aism, preferring Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) to and recognizing his superiority over all other sahaba. Narrators of hadith have recorded lengthy dialogues with a number of narrators of *hadith* and scholars of the Sunnah and with orators which reveal a glorious intellectual depth and an absorption of his view which he strongly and enthusiastically advocated.

Al-Ma'mun's Inclination Towards Shi'aism

There is a disagreement regarding his school of thought. Some think that he was Shi'a, while others think that he only pretended to be so out of his regard for the feelings of Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) and other Alawides while in reality he was otherwise. But his discourses, debates, and his serious method in challenging what was regarded as accepted facts by those who opposed his views, all dispel any doubts regarding his acceptance of Shi'aism.

Moreover, there are certain noteworthy measures he undertook which support this view such as his belief that the Holy Qur'an was the Word of God created by Him, and his insistence that scholars and faqihs should indicate and promote this view, so much so that he caused quite a reaction among contemporary Islamic circles to the extent that it was referred to as the ordeal of the Holy Qur'an.

His father, al-Rashid, differed from him in this regard. When he heard that Bishr al-Marisi endorsed the concept that the Holy Qur'an was created by God, he said: "If I ever lay my hand on him, I shall strike his neck with the sword."¹¹ Also, he believed in the temporary marriage of *mut'a*, and he refuted the views of the second caliph in this regard with arguments which have already been recorded by foremost historians.

Add to all the above his preference of Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) over all other companions of the Prophet (S) and his view that Ali was more worthy of succeeding the Messenger of God (S) as the caliph. Yet another supporting argument is his serious attempt to make the cursing of Mu'awiya a tradition and enforce it on his subjects; he announced to people once the following:

"There shall be no pardon for anyone guilty of praising Mu'awiya, and the best of creation after the Prophet (S) is Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.)."¹²

That was in response to Mu'awiya who made the cursing of Ali a tradition which continued during the reign of all Umayyad governments till the days of the caliph Umer ibn Abd al-Aziz who put an end to it in order to safeguard the government of the Umayyads against the disgust people felt towards such ignominious tradition, sympathized with the Alawides, and returned Fedak to them when they requested him to do so.

Al-Ma'mun, in fact, sincerely felt guilty about the crimes his predecessors had committed against the Alawides as a letter he wrote to some Hashemites testified and in which he said: "The Umayyads killed anyone (among the Alawides) who unsheathed a sword, while we, the Abbasides, have been killing them *en masse*; so, ask the great souls of the Hashemites what sin they committed, and ask the souls of those who were buried in Baghdad and Kufa alive..."¹³

Al-Ma'mun's inclination towards Shi'aism is the result of many factors of a permanent impact upon his way of thinking, starting with his childhood when a Shi'a educator planted deeply in his soul the allegiance to Ali and the family of Ali (a.s.), and ending with his residence in parts of Khurasan where

mostly Shi'as lived. Al-Ma'mun himself narrates an anecdote with a moral which taught him to sympathize with Shi'as.

It involved an encounter with his father al-Rashid who was very well known for his cruelty, tyranny, arrogance and hatred of the Alawides, especially Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) whose life he ended with poison. Al-Ma'mun states that when Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) met al-Rashid at Medina, al-Rashid showed a great deal of humbleness before the Imam (a.s.) and a great deal of respect for him to a degree which attracted his own attention; so, he continues to say, "When there was nobody else present, I said, 'O commander of the faithful! Who is this man whom you have held with such a high esteem, respected a great deal, stood up to receive, and even seated in the most prominent place while seating yourself in front of him, and you even ordered us to hold the rein of his horse?'

He said, 'This is the Imam of the people, the Proof of God's Mercy to His creation (Hujjatullah) and His caliph among His servants.' I asked, 'O commander of the faithful! Are not all these attributes yours and fulfilled in your person?' He replied, 'I am the Imam of the masses by force and through oppression, while Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) is the Imam in truth. By God, son, he is more worthy of being the successor of the Messenger of God (S) as the caliph than I am and anyone else among the people! By God! If you yourself attempt to take such caliphate from me, I shall take it away from you even if that means pulling your eyes out, for power is blind!'"¹⁴

From all these arguments we can conclude that al-Ma'mun was indeed a believer in Shi'ism, convinced of the principles of this school of thought which are based on the preference of Ali (a.s.) for caliphate over all others upon which principle al-Ma'mun insisted while debating others. As regarding his conduct with Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), his forcing him to be his regent, and his possible assassination, all these fall under the same precept adopted by his father al-Rashid that "power is blind."

Differences of Personalities of al-Amin and al-Ma'mun

There was a clear difference in mentality and way of thinking between al-Amin and his brother al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mun was broader in mentality and more open-minded than his brother, and he was more receptive to new ideas, more deep in his political and theological philosophy. Al-Ma'mun, moreover, was more serious than his brother in the administrative management of the government.

Al-Amin did not enjoy these merits, and the reason may be the fact that he was pampered and spoiled by his parents, that he was brought up to feel distinctly superior to his brother al-Ma'mun. Add to this his temper of hereditary stubbornness which he inherited from his mother who was daughter of Ja'far son of (caliph) al-Mansoor; as regarding al-Ma'mun's mother, she was a woman who gave birth to several children, and her name was Marajil. Al-Amin's mother raised her son to be aware of the class distinctions by narrating to him some interesting anecdotes involving herself and al-Rashid whenever the latter felt a psychological and emotional inclination towards his son al-Ma'mun.

Al-Rashid Evaluates his Sons

Al-Rashid was aware of the intellectual differences among his sons, but he could not clearly express it out of his respect for the feelings of his favorite wife and to safeguard the status of her son. He is quoted as having said: "I am aware of the fact that Abdullah is gifted with determination like that of al-Mansour, with asceticism like that of al-Mahdi, and with dignity like that of al-Hadi.

Had I wished to link him to the fourth (meaning himself), I would have done so and preferred Muhammad over him. I am aware of the fact that he follows his own inclination, wastes what is in his possession, and shares slave and free women in his views. Had it not been for the mother of Ja'far, and the inclination towards the Banu Hashim, I would have preferred Abdullah over him."

Differences of Conduct of Both Brothers

The vast difference which separates the brothers unveils when we review the biography of each one of them and study its distinctions and attributes. Al-Ma'mun was a practical man, strong in his administrative management skills, serious, wise regarding his conduct, far-sighted in his political or academic ambitions, loves knowledge and scholars, so much so that he was nicknamed "scholar of the Banu al-Abbas (the Abbasides)."

Al-Amin was the opposite of all of this in his general conduct. He inclined more towards merry-making and entertainment which is the natural outcome of his spoiled childhood and adolescence. To prove this point, we have to read this interesting incident which spells out the type of general conduct of al-Amin during the moments which preceded his assassination. Ibn al-Athir states the following in his *Tarikh* (chronicle):

"Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi narrated saying that he was with al-Amin when he fell under the political pressure of Tahir. He says that al-Amin came out during one night to cheer himself up and forget about his depression, so he went to a house he had had in the Khuld suburb, then he sent for Ibrahim. When Ibrahim was brought to him, he said, 'Do you see how nice this evening is, how beautiful the moon appears in the sky and how its light is reflected on the water of the Tigris? Would you like to have a drink?' He answered that that was up to him, so he drank a bottle of wine, and Ibrahim entertained him with the songs he knew he liked best."¹⁵

It is beyond imagination to conceive how a monarch undergoing a horrible political crisis which was about to uproot his throne could resort to such an extravagant behavior so far from permitting him to contemplate upon the fate threatening him and jeopardizing his very existence. Some other such extravagant norms of behavior narrated about al-Amin the caliph since he ascended the throne and till his last moments clearly indicate that he was not a man of government in the wide sense of the word, nor were he a leader.

Dissension Begins

Indications of dissension between both brothers started appearing before al-Rashid's death, and historians render that to the fact that al-Rashid had handed the reins of government over to his son al-Ma'mun in Khurasan and secured the oath of allegiance to him from the army commanders and civilian dignitaries there, granting him all what he had of money and other items of value.¹⁶ When the news reached him in Baghdad, he did not relish it at all but considered it as a premature action undertaken by his departing father and something he himself was entitled to do in his capacity as the first regent who had the authority to determine such matters.

Confused Behavior of al-Rashid Towards His Sons

Al-Rashid seemed to sense deep inside his soul the psychological gap which separated his son al-Amin from him when he detained the messenger his son had dispatched to Khurasan in the pretext of bringing him back news about his father's health conditions whereas in reality he was carrying secret letters to army leaders and civilian notables to be delivered to them immediately after the death of his father al-Rashid.

The letters contained orders to carry out the duties the recipients were expected to perform. The objective was to depose his brother al-Ma'mun from actual authority vested upon him by his father. Al-Rashid tried to extract an admission from the messenger that he was carrying secret letters from al-Amin to army leaders and civilian notables, but he did not succeed even when his patience reached its limit and he threatened the messenger to have him killed, and he almost did so before death overtook him whereupon the messenger was subsequently released and the letters were delivered as planned. The result was the army leaders and their troops reneging on the promises they swore to al-Rashid, causing a great deal of political chaos.¹⁷

We can easily discern the confusing ordeal which dominated the conduct of al-Rashid regarding his arrangement of the issue of his own succession by his sons. He was not satisfied with just securing assurances and taking the most serious of oaths from his sons al-Amin and al-Ma'mun, so he went during the *hajj* season to Mecca to require his sons to write down their pledges, then he hung what they wrote down on the walls of the sacred Ka'ba in the presence of a multitude of people so that those who did not witness the event would be told by those who did so on that day.

Al-Rashid Divides the State

Yet he was still not quite satisfied, so he went a step further to divide the domains of the state to three sections, granting al-Amin authority over Iraq and Syria up to the end of his western possessions; to al-Ma'mun he gave the territories from Hamadan up to the eastern borders of his domains; to al-Qasim he gave the peninsula, the sea ports, and the metropolises after having secured the oath of allegiance for him after his brother al-Ma'mun and giving him the option to keep or depose al-Ma'mun.¹⁸

Thus, al-Rashid thought, the ghost of dissension would be averted, and the government after his death would be secured for all his sons since he gave each one of them a portion thereof whereby he would maintain a force strong enough to deter the transgression of any other brother. Despite all of that, however, al-Rashid could not put an end to the causes of his dilemma deeply rooted within himself as the incident of the messenger who was sent by his son al-Amin suggested.

Apprehension of the Public Regarding the Division

People predicted ominous consequences to take place because of what al-Rashid had done. Some of them said that he sowed the seeds of evil and war among them, and they feared the consequences, and indeed what they feared came to pass.^{[19](#)} Some wise men said that he caused them to fall into an inner conflict the perils of which victimized the subjects.^{[20](#)}

Ambition of Some Followers Deepens Division

The conflict among the two brothers was worsened by the incitement of some top rank politicians in each party, and there were many reasons for incitement and entrapment. On one hand, we find al-Fadl ibn al-Rabee', who caused the army to renege on its sworn promise of support for al-Ma'mun in Khurasan as soon as al-Rashid died and marched with it to Baghdad in order to strengthen al-Amin's position, trying to aggravate the tension between al-Amin and his brother al-Ma'mun, instigating the first to nullify the allegiance to al-Ma'mun and change it to his son Musa, depending in so doing on various means of incitement which in the end pushed al-Amin to assault his brother.

Al-Fadl, by doing so, was trying to get rid of al-Ma'mun as the regent for fear that should he come to rule, he would certainly seek revenge against him due to his going back on his promise to support al-Ma'mun whom he slighted and the allegiance to whom he broke after the death of al-Rashid.^{[21](#)}

On the other hand, we find al-Fadl ibn Sahl, the Khurasani leader, who was appointed in his post by al-Ma'mun, trying to secure the government for al-Ma'mun by his brilliant methods after pledging to help him reach the throne and dethrone his brother al-Amin at any price and stand in the face of al-Amin's attempts to deprive him of his regency. Al-Fadl and his brother al-Hasan ibn Sahl, in addition to the rest of Khurasani leaders and chiefs, were aware of the precarious situation in which they would find themselves should destiny decide that al-Amin must have victory over his brother al-Ma'mun especially since they had already declared their allegiance to al-Ma'mun and reneged in their promise to al-Amin.

War is Waged and al-Ma'mun Wins

The gap between the brothers became wider, and the presentiments of the tragedy to befall the two brothers were in sight when al-Amin announced in Baghdad his decision to drop the name of his brother al-Ma'mun from Friday sermons and substitute it with that of his own son Musa whom he named his successor, and he sent letters to places far and wide in this meaning. Al-Ma'mun rose to defend his

right and started planning to overrun Baghdad, the capital of the government, while al-Amin was gathering troops to take over his brother's domains.

Both armies finally clashed and fierce battles ensued in more than one location, and in the end al-Ma'mun came out victorious, took control of Baghdad and killed al-Amin. All of that became possible due to the planning of al-Fadl ibn Sahl, who was nicknamed "Dhul-Riyasatain," i.e., the man who had a say in two states, and his brother al-Hasan, assisted by an elite group of military experts and top political advisors.

Having won victory over his brother, al-Ma'mun tried to make Marw the base of power for the Abbaside dynasty instead of Baghdad due to the advice of his army leaders and top political aides who were credited with regaining his right to the caliphate after al-Amin had deposed him, and because of his own feeling of gratitude towards the city that assisted him and brought him victory during the darkest periods of his political crisis.

- [1.](#) 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 226.
- [2.](#) 'Umdat al-Talib, p. 185, 1st edition (Najaf, Iraq).
- [3.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 48, p. 249, quoting Al Kafi.
- [4.](#) Shaikh al-Toosi's Al Ghayba, p. 22.
- [5.](#) 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 2, p. 226.
- [6.](#) Al Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 487. It is also mentioned in Al 'Uyoon, Al Manaqib and Al Irshad.
- [7.](#) Rawdat al-Kafi, p. 257.
- [8.](#) A'yan al-Shi'a, Vol. 4, Part I, p. 138.
- [9.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 130.
- [10.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 138.
- [11.](#) Tarikh al-Khulafa by al-Sayyuti, p. 284.
- [12.](#) Ibid., p. 308.
- [13.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 49, p. 210 as quoted in Ibn Maskawayhi's book Nadeem al-Farid.
- [14.](#) 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 88.
- [15.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 162.
- [16.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 134.
- [17.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, pp. 134-135.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 112.
- [19.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 113.
- [20.](#) Tarikh al-Khulafaa by al-Sayyuti, p. 290.
- [21.](#) Ibn al-Athir, Vol. 5, p. 138.

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