

[Home](#) > [History of Shi'ism: From the Advent of Islam up to the End of Minor Occultation](#) > [Part 3: The Periods of Historical Development of the Shi'ah](#) > [Lesson 11: The Period of Imam as-Sajjad \('a\)](#) >
Lesson 11: Questions

Lesson 11: The Period of Imam as-Sajjad ('a)

The period of Imam as-Sajjad ('a) can be divided into two stages:

The first stage covers the events after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), the destabilization of the Umayyad rule and finally the end of rule of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the succession to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam), the internal struggle among the Umayyads and their entanglement with the uprisings and revolts up to the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis. The second stage covers the time of governorship of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf and the defeat of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr¹ in Mecca up to the commencement of the 'Abbasid movement, which is also related to the initial period of the Imamate {*imamah*} of Imam al-Baqir ('a).

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), the Umayyads were, on the one hand, entangled with the uprisings of the people of Iraq and Hijaz, and experiencing internal struggle on the other. The government of Yazid did not last long. Yazid died in 64 AH after three years of rule.²

After Yazid, his son Mu'awiyah II came to power. He ruled for not more than 40 years when he stepped down from the office of the caliphate and died soon after.³ With his death the internal squabble among the Umayyads began. Mas'udi describes the event after the death of Mu'awiyah II which indicates the intense greed and rivalry among the Umayyads over the leadership, as thus:

Mu'awiyah {II} died at the age of 22 and was buried in Damascus. With the burning ambition of becoming the next caliph, Walid ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan came to the front to lead the prayer for the corpse of Mu'awiyah {II}, but even before finishing the prayer he received a fatal blow and was killed. Then, 'Uthman ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan led the prayer for him, but he was also not approved by them to assume the office of the caliphate. So, he was forced to go to Mecca and join Ibn Zubayr.⁴

Three years had not yet passed when the rule of the Sufyanis came to an end. Many of the people throughout the Muslim lands including a number of the Umayyad chiefs and governors such as 'Ahaq ibn Qays and Nu'man ibn Bashir had inclined toward Ibn Zubayr. It was at this time when Ibn Zubayr

drove the resident Umayyads out from Medina including Marwan.

The Umayyads proceeded toward Sham and since there was no caliph in Damascus, the Umayyads elected Marwan for the caliphate, followed by Khalid ibn Yazid and after him 'Amru ibn Sa'id as his successor. After sometime, Marwan removed Khalid ibn Yazid and appointed his son 'Abd al-Malik as his successor. For this reason, Khalid's mother who was married to Marwan poisoned Marwan killing him. 'Abd al-Malik also removed 'Amru ibn Sa'id on his way and appointed his son instead as his heir apparent.⁵

Meanwhile, the Umayyads were gripped by revolts and uprisings. These upheavals can be divided into two distinct types: One type was the uprisings without Shi'ah underpinning. The Hirrah uprising and the revolt of Ibn Zubayr belonged to this type. The essence of Ibn Zubayr's revolt is obvious because the leader of the revolt, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr was a staunch enemy of the progeny of the Prophet (S).

He nursed this grudge in his heart owing to the defeat he and others, including his father, suffered in the Battle of Jamal (Camel) and the ensuing events. His brother Mus'ab, however, had Shi'ah inclination and married the daughter of Imam al-Husayn ('a), Sakinah.⁶ As such, his campaign gained momentum in Iraq and the Shi'ah of Iraq joined with him in the resistance against the Umayyads. After Mukhtar Ibrahim al-Ashtar was in his company and was killed beside him.

The Hirrah uprising had also no Shi'ah underpinning⁷ and Imam as-Sajjad ('a) had no hand in it. When Muslim ibn 'Uqbah was asking the allegiance of the people in Medina, compelling them to pay allegiance, like slaves, to the Umayyad caliph (Yazid), he accorded him due respect to Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and did not complain against the Imam ('a) (for not expressing allegiance).⁸

The other uprisings had Shi'ah underpinning.

The Shi'ah Uprisings

The uprising of the *tawwabun* {the repentant ones} and that of Mukhtar were Shi'ah uprisings. The base of these two uprisings was Iraq, Kufah in particular, and the constituent forces were Shi'ah of the Commander of the Faithful ('a). In the army of Mukhtar, non-Arab Shi'ah could also be amply noticed.

There is no doubt about the essence of the uprising of the *tawwabun*. This uprising was based upon correct motives and yearning for martyrdom, and it had no objective other than avenging the blood of Imam al-Husayn ('a) and wiping off their sin for not assisting the Imam ('a) by being killed in the way of fighting against his murderers.

After leaving Kufah, the *tawwabun* proceeded toward Karbala', rushing toward the grave of Imam Husayn ('a) for *ziyarah* and at the beginning of their movement, they thus said:

O God! We did not assist the son of the Prophet (S). Forgive our past sins and accept our repentance

{*tawbah*}. Shower mercy {*rahmah*} upon the soul of Husayn (‘a) and his righteous and martyred votaries. We bear witness that we believe in the things for which Husayn (‘a) was killed. O God! If You would not forgive our sins and reckon us under the scale of mercy and clemency, we will be doomed to perdition and wretchedness.^{[9](#)}

After the arrival of Muslim ibn ‘Aqil in Kufah Mukhtar was collaborating with him. But because of this collaboration, he was apprehended and imprisoned by ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad. After the event of ‘Ashura’ he was freed through the mediation and petition of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar, his brother-in-law (his sister’s husband).

He arrived in Kufah in 64 AH and after the *tawwabun* movement, he started his movement and by using the slogan, “*Ya litharat al-Husayn*” {O helpers of Husayn!} he was able to gather the Shi‘ah, the non-Arabs in particular, around him. With these forces, he succeeded in punishing the murderers of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) for what they had done, such that in one day he was able to kill 280 of these criminals and destroy the houses of those who escaped such as that of Muhammad ibn Ash‘ath, and on the contrary, he mended Hujr ibn ‘Addi’s house, a loyal supporter of ‘Ali (‘a), which was destroyed by Mu‘awiyah.^{[10](#)}

Contradictory views have been expressed about Mukhtar. Some have regarded him as a true Shi‘ah while others have said that he was a liar. Ibn Dawud thus says about Mukhtar in his book on *rijal*:

Mukhtar is son of Abu ‘Abid ath-Thaqafi. Some Shi‘ah ‘*ulama*’ have accused him of Kaysaniyyah and in this regard, they have cited Imam as-Sajjad’s (‘a) refusal of his gift. But this cannot be a reason for rejecting him because Imam al-Baqir (‘a) thus said about him: “Do not speak ill of Mukhtar because he killed our murderers, did not allow our spilled blood to be disregarded, gave our daughters in marriage, and at the time of difficulty he distributed properties among us.

When Abu’l-Hakam, son of Mukhtar, came to Imam al-Baqir (‘a), the Imam (‘a) showed him a great deal of respect. Abu’l-Hakam asked about his father, saying: “The people are talking about my father, but your view, whatever it is, is the criterion.” At that moment the Imam (‘a) praised Mukhtar and prayed for God to have mercy on him, saying: “Glory be to Allah! My father said that the affection of my mother was from the property that Mukhtar sent to my father.”

And the Imam (‘a) said many times: “May God have mercy upon your father! He did not allow for our right to be trampled. He killed our murderers and did not permit our blood to be disregarded.”

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) also said: “In our family there was a woman who did not comb and apply henna to her hair until Mukhtar sent the heads of the murderers of al-Husayn (‘a).”

It has been narrated that when Mukhtar sent the head of the accursed ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad to Imam as-Sajjad (‘a), the Imam (‘a) prostrated and made benevolent prayer for Mukhtar.^{[11](#)}

Meanwhile, the reports that have been transmitted to reproach Mukhtar are fabrications of the enemies.

With regard to the charge of Kaysaniyyah against Mukhtar and his alleged role in the creation of the Kaysaniyyah sect, while defending Mukhtar and rejecting this accusation against him, Ayatullah al-Khu'i thus writes:

Some Sunni '*ulama*' associate Mukhtar with the Kaysaniyyah sect and this is definitely a false statement because Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah never claimed Imamate {*imamah*} for himself for Mukhtar to call on the people to recognize his Imamate.

Mukhtar was killed prior to Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's demise and the Kaysaniyyah sect came into being after Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's death. But as to the fact that they regard Mukhtar as "Kaysan" (it is not because he was following the Kaysaniyyah sect), granting that this label is appropriate for him, its origin is traceable to the same questionable report from the Commander of the Faithful ('a) who is alleged to have said: "O Kays! O Kays!" Thus, he was called, "Kaysan". [12](#)

Stabilization of the Rule of Marwan's Descendants

As mentioned earlier, the second phase of Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period was the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). After the killing of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH, [13](#) the clan of Marwan stabilized its own rule, and on this path, they took advantage of the existence of notorious headsman such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf.

Hajjaj would not spare from committing any crime in the way of eliminating an enemy. He even targeted the *Ka'bah* destroying it by a shower of catapulted fire stones. He would kill the opponents of the Umayyads, Shi'ah or non-Shi'ah, wherever he would find them. The uprising of Ibn Ash'ath against him in 80 AH gained nothing, [14](#) and Hajjaj's despotism engulfed the whole of Hijaz and Iraq until 95 AH. [15](#)

Imam as-Sajjad lived during that period, conveying the Islamic and Shi'ah knowledge and teachings through supplications. During that period, the Shi'ah were either fugitives, languishing in prison, killed at the hands of Hajjaj, or exercising extreme dissimulation {*taqiyyah*} by hiding their true faith. As such, the people had no courage to approach Imam as-Sajjad ('a) and his close supporters were very few.

The late Majlisi thus narrates: "Hajjaj ibn Yusuf killed Sa'id ibn Jubayr because of his contacts with Imam as-Sajjad ('a)." [16](#) Of course, during that time, on account of the pressures exerted against the Shi'ah, they migrated to the various parts of the Muslim lands and became the agents of the spread of Shi'ism. During the same period, some Shi'ah in Kufah migrated to territories surrounding Qum, stayed there and contributed to the spread of Shi'ism in that place. [17](#)

The initial period of Imam al-Baqir's ('a) Imamate also coincided with the persistent dominance of the Umayyad rule. During at time, Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik, an authoritative and despotic caliph, summoned Imam al-Baqir ('a) along with his son, Imam as-Sadiq ('a), to Sham.

He did not neglect to annoy and vex them. [18](#) During his reign, Zayd ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn staged an

uprising and was martyred. Although the restraints and pressures exerted on the Shi'ah were somehow mitigated during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, the period of caliphate was, nevertheless, short. After two odd years of rule, he passed away in a suspicious manner.

Of course the Umayyads were not able to extinguish the light of truth through pressure and restriction, and failed to erase the virtues and excellence of the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a) from the people's memory, and that was the will of God. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid thus says in this regard:

If God, the Exalted, had not endowed leadership to this man ('Ali), even a single *hadith* concerning his virtues and excellences would not have been narrated because the Marwanis were so harsh in relation to the narrators of his virtues. [19](#)

Lesson 11: Summary

Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period can be divided into two stages. The first stage covered the instability of the Umayyad rule, the downfall of the Sufyanis (descendants of Abu Sufyan) and the ascendance to power of the Marwanis (descendants of Marwan ibn al-Hakam). The second stage covered the stabilization of the rule of the Marwanis.

During the first stage, the Umayyads were grappling with the Shi'ah and non-Shi'ah uprisings in Hijaz and Iraq.

The second stage began with the murder of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in 73 AH in which the Umayyads made use of the existence of notorious headsmen such as Hajjaj ibn Yusuf in a bid to stabilize their grip.

Lesson 11: Questions

1. How many stages can Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period be divided into?
2. How many types of uprisings were there during Imam as-Sajjad's ('a) period?
3. Describe the period of strangulation and stabilization of the Marwanis' rule.

[1.](#) The rule of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr in Mecca—from the time of his refusal to pay allegiance to Yazid and his call to the people to rally behind him up to 72 AH when he was killed at the hand of Hajjaj's army—lasted for 12 years. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih mentions it in the book, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, as the disturbance of Ibn Zubayr.

After the death of Mu'awiyah, when the governor of Medina asked Ibn Zubayr to give allegiance to Yazid, he went to Mecca simultaneous with the departure of Imam al-Husayn ('a) so as to refuse giving his allegiance to Yazid. In Mecca, the people were not paying much attention to him. As such, it was not in Imam al-Husayn's ('a) favor to stay in Mecca. He therefore used to say to the Imam ('a): "If I were you, being invited by them, I would have gone to Iraq."

After the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a), he hoisted the banner of opposition to Yazid. As such, in 62 AH Yazid dispatched Muslim ibn 'Uqbah along with an army to repress the uprising of the people of Medina and 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr (in Mecca) first to Medina and then to Mecca. But after the event of Hirrah, Muslim died on his way to Mecca. Hasin ibn

Numayr, his successor, arrived in Mecca with the army of Sham and in 64 AH they showered Mecca with catapulted stones of fire burning the clothe covering the Ka'bah.

During the course of the battle, however, the news of Yazid's death was reported in Mecca weakening the fighting spirit of the Sham army. Hasin advised Ibn Zubayr to pay allegiance to him, bring him to Sham and install him in the seat of power. Ibn declined this offer. After the death of Yazid, all the Muslim lands, with the exception of Jordan, paid allegiance to Ibn Zubayr as the caliph and recognized his government (in Mecca).

Yet, the Umayyads on the side of Marwan installed him as the caliphate. He in turn removed all those who opposed him in Sham along his way to power and after him, his son 'Abd al-Malik became the caliph. After defeating Mus'ab ibn Zubayr, 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr's brother, 'Abd al-Malik dispatched Hajjaj ibn Yusuf from Iraq to Mecca in order to repress 'Abd Allah.

For sometime, Hajjaj besieged Mecca, put catapults on top of Mount Abu Qubays, and destroyed the city of Mecca and the Ka'bah by showering catapulted stones. In this battle the supporters of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr abandoned him, but 'Abd Allah resisted until he was finally killed. In this manner the work of 'Abd Allah ibn Zubayr came to an end after 12 years. Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1409 AH), vol. 4, p. 366; 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasah al-A'lami Li'l-Matbu'at, 1411 AH), vol. 3, pp. 78-96; Sayyid Ja'far Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, 6th edition (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1365 AHS), p. 183.

[2.](#) Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1414 AH), vol. 2, p. 252.

[3.](#) Ibid., p. 256.

[4.](#) Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 85-86.

[5.](#) Ibid.

[6.](#) Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Muslim ibn al-Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'arif*, 1st edition (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Radi, 1415 AH), p. 214.

[7.](#) The Hirrah uprising took place in 62 AH. Mas'udi identified the reason and source of it as the displeasure of the people toward the pervert practices of Yazid and the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn ('a). In Medina which was the residential center of the relatives of the Prophet (S), the Companions and the Followers {tabi'un}, the people were agitated. The governor of Medina, 'Uthman ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Sufyan, who was a recklessly immature young man, sent a group of the prominent men of Medina in representation of the people of the city to Damascus in order for them to personally meet Yazid and receive his blessing so that upon their return to Medina, they can encourage the people to submit to his rule.

Pursuant to this design, 'Uthman sent off to Damascus a delegation of the leading figures of Medina in which 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah Ghasil al-Mala'ikah was also a part. Since he had no Islamic training or any policy of maintaining proper decorum, Yazid, without any inhibition, kept on his acts of perversion and debaucheries in front of them, though he gave them an extravagant reception and granted each of them previous gifts and robes of honor with the hope that they would praise him on their return to Medina. All these measures, however, had an opposite effect.

Upon their return to Medina, they announced in front of the people that they had been in the presence of a person who has no religion, drinks wine, plays on the tar and tambourine, plays with dogs, and engages in drinking spree overnight, while his musicians and lady singers are doing coquetry in his assemblage. Addressing the people of Medina, the members of the delegation said: "Now, bear witness that we deposed him (Yazid) from the office of the caliphate."

'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah said: "I had been in the presence of a person against whom I will wage war with the support of these sons that I have, even if no one assists me. He gave me presents and gifts, and accorded me due respect, but I accepted his presents and gifts only for the intention of spending it in the campaign against him."

Following this trend, the people of Medina paid allegiance to 'Abd Allah ibn Hanzalah, and expelled from the city the governor of Medina and all the Umayyads residing there.

Having received this news, Yazid dispatched to Medina Muslim ibn 'Uqbah, who was a well-experienced man and among the stalwarts of the Umayyads, along with a large contingent of army. Yazid instructed him, thus: "Give them three days of respite. If they do not surrender, wage war against them. Once you emerge victorious, plunder whatever possession they have for three days and leave the same at the disposal of the soldiers."

The army of Sham attacked Medina and a bloody war between the two parties ensued. Finally, the people of Medina were defeated and the leaders of the movement were killed. Muslim issued the order of massacring the people of the city for three days. The army of Sham committed crimes which the pen is ashamed to describe. Because of these crimes, Muslim earned the labeled "musrif" {squanderer}. After the end of killing and pillage, Muslim obtained the allegiance of the people as slaves for Yazid. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, *Al-'Aqd al-Farid*, vol. 4, p. 362; Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 250; Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 82; 'Izz ad-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad Abi'l-Kiram ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1402 AH), vol. 4, pp. 102–103, 255–256.

[8.](#) Ahmad ibn Dawud Abu Hanifah ad-Daynuri, *Akhbar at-Tuwal* (Qum: Manshurat ash-Sharif ar-Rida, n.d.), p. 266.

[9.](#) Ibn Athir, *Al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh*, vol. 4, pp. 158–186.

[10.](#) Akhtab Khwarazmi, *Maqtal al-Husayn* (Qum: Manshurat al-Mufid, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 202.

[11.](#) Rijal ibn Dawud (Qum: Manshurat ar-Radhi, n.d.), p. 277.

[12.](#) Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i, *Mu'jam Rijal al-Hadith* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.), vol. 18, pp. 102–103.

[13.](#) Ibn Wadhih, *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, vol. 2, p. 267.

[14.](#) In 80 AH Hajjaj appointed 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Ash'ath as the governor of Sistan and Zabulistan, though the former was nursing a grudge against the latter. Hajjaj instructed Ibn Ash'ath to expel Ratbil who has assaulted Sistan.

'Abd ar-Rahman went there, dispatched an army to repress the aggressors, and restored peace and order to Sistan. After that, since Hajjaj was tired of him, Hajjaj ordered him again to face another enemy. Ibn Ash'ath and his soldiers interpreted it as a form of conspiracy of Hujjaj for them to be killed at the hand of the enemies. So, they defied Hajjaj and went toward Iraq instead. In Khuzistan a confrontation ensued between them and Hajjaj's army.

The army of Hajjaj was initially defeated and thus, 'Abd ar-Rahman was able to arrive in Iraq occupying Kufah. Many of the chiefs of Basrah also cooperated with him. Hajjaj sought the assistance of 'Abd al-Malik (the then Umayyad caliph based in Damascus). A legion of soldiers from Sham was dispatched to him, and with the arrival of this force, Hajjaj went back into the battle. In this fierce fighting, which later became to be known as the "Dayr al-Jumajum Event", the people of Kufah and Basrah, including Qur'an reciters {qaris}, assisted 'Abd ar-Rahman on account of their enmity toward Hajjaj.

The contingent of the son of 'Abd ar-Rahman was so large that 'Abd al-Malik, clearly worried, sent a message to the Iraqis expressing his willingness to remove Hajjaj if that is what they were demanding. The people of Iraq, however, did not accept the compromise announcing the dismissal of 'Abd al-Malik from the office of caliphate. In this manner, he declared war against them, deceiving a group of Ibn Ash'ath's army chiefs.

One night he launched a surprise assault against Ibn Ash'ath's army disintegrating them. As such, Ibn Ash'ath was forced to flee and seek asylum in Ratbil. Later Ratbil killed him, owing to gifts and promises made to him by Hajjaj, sending his head to Hajjaj. Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, pp. 148–149; Shahidi, *Tarikh-e Tahlili-ye Islam ta Payan-e Umawi* {An Analytical History of Islam till the End of the Umayyad Rule}, pp. 185–186.

[15.](#) Mas'udi, *Murawwij adh-Dhahab*, vol. 3, p. 187.

[16.](#) Abi Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn 'Ali (Shaykh) at-Tusi, *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifah ar-Rijal* (Rijal Kashi) (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-Bayt at-Turath, 1404 AH), vol. 1, p. 335.

[17.](#) Shahab ad-Din Abi 'Abd Allah Yaqut Hamwi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 1st edition (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-'Arabi, 1417 AH), vol. 7, p. 88.

[18.](#) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Rustam at-Tabari, *Dala'il al-Imamah* (Najaf: Manshurat al-Matbu'at al-Haydariyyah, 1383 AH), p. 105.

[19.](#) Muhammad 'Abduh, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah* (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), vol. 4, p. 73.

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