

Political Situation

1. Transferring 'Askariy^عn (A.S) from Medina to Samarra and strict Control Over Them

In that period, the policy of the 'Abbasid Caliph Mutawakkil was the same as Ma'm^ن's against Imam Rid^ع (A.S) and Imam Jaw^د (A.S) and that was to draw Imam H^د (A.S) nearer to the court and limit him to the periphery of government to be able to control Imam totally and to know about all his movements and to isolate him from the Shi'ites. The same policy was followed with respect to Imam 'Askar^ع (A.S); therefore, similar to his father, he was kept under control in Samarra and had to call the Caliph's palace every Monday and Thursday.¹

The reason for calling Imam H^د (A.S) to Samarra was the reports that Mutawakkil had received about Imam's activities in Medina and people's attention and interest about him.² They brought Imam from Medina to Samarra forcibly³ and kept him under strict control and attacked his house at midnight and inspected it on the slightest pretext, such as that Imam had hidden money and weaponry.⁴

After Imam H^د (A.S) passed away, Imam 'Askar^ع (A.S) became the next Imam at the age of 22 and until his martyrdom at the age of 28, he was under control of the Caliph's agents in Samarra.

2. 'Askariy^عn's different methods of political oppositions

'Askariy^عn's political oppositions, similar to their intellectual oppositions, had different approaches and aspects; from the policy of *taq^وyah* to allowing some Shi'ites to assume positions in the government (in order to help the poor and the oppressed),⁵ preservation of the Shi'ites⁶, fulfilling their needs⁷, approving and supporting some opposing groups⁸ and most of all, developing and reinforcing the secret network of deputies; a network which was founded at the time of Imam S^د (A.S) and in 'Askariy^عn's period came to develop at a faster pace.

More about this network and the factors of its development in that period, its importance, features and

historical course will be discussed in detail in the next section; and are mentioned here just to introduce the matter. We will have a brief look at the policy of taqṣyah as the key to understand Imamate history.

With respect to taqṣyah, it should be briefly stated that it is a complex form of opposition. Taqṣyah is not doing nothing, but it is doing everything needed in secret; and in all its kinds, it is a kind of holy struggle and defense. We read in hadiths, “Taqṣyah is a part of my faith and my fathers’, and no one is faithful unless he practices taqṣyah [if needed]”;⁹ “Nine tenth of the religion is in taqṣyah, and no one follows the religion unless he practices taqṣyah”;¹⁰ “The faithful should be like descendants of Imam Ali. The faithful should be a [holy] struggler, but you are recommended to perform the practice of taqṣyah under an illegitimate government and to fight full-frontally under a legitimate one.”¹¹

Taqṣyah has been the reason for Shi’a’s survival against all illegitimate rulers and arrogant powers. The history of Imams’ taqṣyah is the key to understand the history of Shi’a, and without it, Imams’ movement will not be analyzable while it will also be considered as non-systematic, non-strategic, weak and cowardly. Inevitably, we have to pose this issue with three hadiths from Imam ‘Ali (A.S), Imam Ḥḍḍ (A.S) and Imam ‘Askarḡ (A.S) about the importance of taqṣyah.

Referring to the what happened after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, Imam Ali (A.S) states: “...I sat aside and thought whether I have to fight without hands or I must be patient with the blind unknowingness. This unknowingness which kills the old, ages the child and grinds the faithful down in pain till he meets his Lord. I found patience with this all better and wiser. So I tolerated with wet eyes and aching throat; while I was watching my heritage being robbed.”¹² And that is the very Imam ‘Ali’s taqṣyah. He had to forbear in loneliness.

Imam Ḥḍḍ (A.S) told Dḡwḡd Sarumḡ: “O’ Dḡwḡd! I would have been right if I had stated that the one who ignores taqṣyah is like the one who leaves daily prayer”.¹³ In this tradition, giving up taqṣyah is compared to giving up the prayer.

Imam ‘Askarḡ (A.S) told one of his Shi’ites who had advised his friend to practice taqṣyah: “You are the exemplar of what the Prophet (p.b.w.h) stated that: One who advises another to the good, it is as though he himself has done it.” Then Imam (A.S) continued:

God gave him reward for the sake of your friend’s *taqṣyah* as to the number of those who practiced it and those who gave it up (rightly) from among our followers and Shi’ites, as if the slightest amount of those rewards would absolve sins committed in a hundred years. Moreover, because of your advice you receive as much reward as your friend does.¹⁴

It is obvious that this much reward is for many fruits of *taqṣyah*. The amount of practice of *taqṣyah* during Imam’s (A.S) period was to such an extent that he would send his Shi’ites a message that they had to point or wave with their hands instead of saying hello to Imam (A.S) in order to save their lives.¹⁵

And once he (A.S) told one of his Shi’ites openly that: “If you did not practice *taqṣyah* you would be

killed; [you have to choose] either *taqiyah* and concealment or death and being killed.”¹⁶

1. Al-Ghaybah, Sheikh al-Tūsī, p. 139 (cited in Tārīkh Siyāsī Gheybat-e Imam-e Davūdāhom, p.78); Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, p.251; Manṣūb, Vol. 4, p.432; Dalā'il al-Imamah, p.226.

2. Al-Irshād, p. 333; Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, p. 200; Ithbāt al-Wasiyyah, p. 225 (cited in Tārīkh Siyāsī Gheybat-e Imam-e Davūdāhom, p.83).

3. Imam (A.S) himself stated: “They brought me from Medina to Samarra forcibly.” (Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, p. 129).

4. Muruj al-Dhahab, Vol. 4, p. 93; Al-Irshād, Vol. 2, p. 303.

5. Dr. Jāsim Hussain wrote that: “Imamate [deputies] network let its followers to work inside Abbasid Caliphate's government; therefore, Muhammad b. Isma'il b. Bazi, Ahmad b. Hamzah b. Qommī took prominent positions in ministry. (Rijāl Najīshī, p.254) Nooh b. Darrī first became Baghdad's judge and then Kūfah's judge and he concealed his faith during his working life because his relatives were among Imam Javīd's (A.S) officials. (Rijāl Najīshī, pp. 80 – 98) Some of the other Shi'ites like Husayn b. 'Abdullah Neishabūrī became Sīstān's governor and Hakam b. 'Ulyā As'adī was elected as the governor of Bahrain. Both these people paid Khums (the one fifth tax) to Imam Javīd (A.S) that suggested their allegiance to the Ninth Imam (A.S) (Al-Kūfī, Vol. 5, p. 111); (Al-Istībsār, Vol. 2, p. 58); Tārīkh Siyāsī Gheybat-e Emām-e Davūdāhom, p. 79.

6. Ref. Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, pp. 140, 254, 269, 270 and 298.

7. Ref. Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, pp. 259, 304; also ref. Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī, pp. 261– 266.

8. Ref. Tārīkh Siyāsī Gheybat-e Emām-e Davūdāhom, pp. 85 – 89; Many historians like Isfahānī say that 'Alawwīn's uprisings in 250 – 251 A.H began in Kufah, Tabaristān, Rey, Qazvīn, Egypt and Hijāz. It is possible that these uprisings had been led by one group or more precisely, one leader.... Despite the Zaydi frontier of the uprising, many devoted Shi'īs were involved. The leader of the insurgents was Yahya b. 'Umar who was assassinated (250 A.H.) while he was praised by Abu al-Qāsim Ja'farī, Imam Hādī's (A.S) deputy and gained his favor. (Tabarī, Vol. 3, p. 1522)

Additionally, Mas'ūdī said that Ali b. Mūsā b. Ismā'īl b. Mūsā al-Kādhim joined in the Rey's uprising but the caliph arrested him. Because this person was the grandchild of Ismā'īl b. Mūsā al-Kādhim and served as an envoy of Twelvers in Egypt, it seems highly likely that his uprising was for Twelvers' support (Murāj al-Zahab, Vol. 7, p. 404). In addition, relevant information about secret activities of Twelvers and their role in the uprising is mentioned by Tabarī. Government officials considered the uprising to be by Zaydis rather than Twelvers. Mas'ūdī also said that 'Abbāsī spies discovered some correspondence between the leader of the uprising in Tabarestan called Hasan b. Zayd and his nephew, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Khalaf al-'Atār. Both of them were devotees of Imam Hādī (A.S) (Tabarī, Vol. 3, pp. 1362, 1383; Ikhtīr, p. 68). The Twelvers denied anyone among 'Alawīs who claimed to be the promised Mahdi (A.S), but they used to support some 'Alawīs uprisings who were loyal to them. We can conclude that Imams (A.S) planned two ways to reach their goals. First they developed scientific, cultural and religious activities among people without their explicit engagement in political affairs. Next, they covertly supported some of the uprisings of their devotees in the hope that they could gain the power.

9. Wasā'il al-Shī'a, Vol. 11, p. 160.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. p. 464.

12. Nahj al-Balāghah, Sermon 3 (known as Shaqshaqiyyah).

13. Wasā'il al-Shī'a, Vol. 11, p. 466 (quoted from Ibn Idrīs, Sarīr); Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, p. 181.

14. Al-Ihtijāj, Vol. 2, p. 266 (quoted from Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī, p.240).

15. Bihār al-Anwār, Vol. 50, p. 269. (quoted from Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī, p. 237).

16. Ithbāt al-Wasiyyah, p. 243. (quoted from Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī, p.238).

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